ENGENDERING INEQUALITY:
MASCULINITY AND RACIAL EXCLUSION IN CUBA, 1895-1902

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ABSTRACT

BONNIE A. LUCERO: Engendering Inequality: Masculinity and Racial Exclusion in Cuba, 1895-1902
(Under the direction of Dr. Louis A. Pérez, Jr.)

This dissertation explains the rise of a culture of racial silence in a time of heightening racial exclusion in Cuba at the turn of the twentieth century. Employing a case study of Cienfuegos, a port city on the south-central coast of the island, I examine gendered articulations of inequality among Cuban separatists between the outbreak of the war of independence in 1895 and the inauguration of the Cuban republic in 1902. I argue that Cuban struggles for political power in the wake of the American military intervention (1898) and military occupation (1899-1902) fundamentally transformed separatist visions of citizenship, increasingly restricting its boundaries along racial lines.

Separatists expressed racial exclusion in terms of masculinity. During the first years of the war, a discourse of racial brotherhood afforded inclusion to all men regardless of race or class. There were two key turning points thereafter. When Cubans entered the final year of the anticolonial struggle and especially after the American intervention, diverse groups of separatists struggled to secure access to political power. Hierarchical visions of masculinity stood in for racial inequality, resulting in the general exclusion of men of African descent from political power. The second transformation unfolded during the military occupation. Manliness, and by implication political power,
became increasingly contingent upon collaboration with American military authorities. Failure to cooperate with Americans supposedly equated with supporting black rule in Cuba. Collaboration with the Americans, however, meant preserving racial order and sacrificing the revolutionary promise of social justice.

Manliness provided a strategy by which political elites could preserve the discourse of racial brotherhood which afforded them political legitimacy among their fellow separatists. Simultaneously, they were able to justify the racial exclusion that earned them the esteem of American military authorities. Poor and working-class black men and women appropriated this gendered language to protest social inequality, marking the consolidation of the discourse of racial brotherhood amidst a general silence on issues of race.
DEDICATION

To my mother, Blythe A. Lucero, for being the symbol of strength in the hardest of times.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Working in Cuba can be an incredibly rewarding experience, but it is never easy. This dissertation arises from four years of collaboration and struggle, cooperation and obstruction, realization and frustration. It is built upon more than seven years of discovering how to live and work there, each breakthrough serving as further proof of how much more there is to learn. The highs and the lows of working in Cuba have only solidified my love of the island, its people and the treasures of its history.

I am forever indebted to my wonderful adviser, Dr. Louis A. Pérez, Jr., for his invaluable feedback on my work, his patience with my persisting imperfections, and his unending support for my professional development. He has always been supportive of my aspirations and his advice and admonitions have always been well-founded. He so generously shared his connections with scholars in both the United States and Cuba, from Rebecca Scott to Pepe Vega Suñol to Eduardo Torres-Cuevas. Professor Pérez was instrumental in helping me establish connections with Orlando García Martínez in Cienfuegos, without whom research in that city would have been impossible.

In his infinite wisdom and encyclopedic knowledge of local history, Orlando has oriented me in the rich history of Cienfuegos, guided me in my research and allowed me into the local scholarly community. He helped me gain access to the invaluable collections of the Archivo Provincial Histórico de Cienfuegos, despite certain resistance therein. Orlando welcomed me into his family, which became my own, my familia
cienfueguera. His daughter, Anabel García García has been and continues to be a friend and a colleague. Together we spent numerous afternoons browsing documents and confronting the usual archival obstacles and weekends sharing, debating, and discussing ideas and research trajectories and others cogiendo brisa on the Malecón. Ileana, Yoany, Pocho, Dianelis, and the whole García clan provided a necessary social network. Aníbal Barreño generously shared his historic maps and images which form the base of many of the city maps in this dissertation and his beautiful family.

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wonderful family, especially Milja. My time at the Cuban Heritage Collection was more than just a rich space for scholarship and exchange. It was an opportunity to become part of the CHC family. The Massachusetts Historical Society also generously funded my research. The wonderful staff, especially Conrad Wright and Kate Viens, welcomed me into a vibrant scholarly community, out of which many ideas and friendships emerged, including Nicole George.

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Finally, my mother, who has believed in me even when my own confidence was shaken, provided the needed strength to get through the difficult moments.

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<td>AHNE</td>
<td>Archivo Histórico Nacional de España, Madrid, Spain</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMHT</td>
<td>Archivo Municipal Histórico de Trinidad, Trinidad, Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Havana, Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APHC</td>
<td>Archivo Provincial Histórico de Cienfuegos, Cienfuegos, Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNJM</td>
<td>Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Havana, Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHC</td>
<td>Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOC</td>
<td>Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MHS</td>
<td>Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSU</td>
<td>Mississippi State University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USNA</td>
<td>United States National Archives, Washington, D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRD</td>
<td>Walter Royal Davis Library, University of North Carolina</td>
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INTRODUCTION

“I notice negroes come into the plaza now, which was never allowed before,” wrote, Edwin F. Atkins, an American planter in Cienfuegos in January 1899.\(^1\) In this statement, he identified a crucial change in the way men and women of African descent inhabited the urban space in this central Cuban port city. This shift came at a pivotal juncture in Cuban history and race relations. Cubans had recently emerged from the war of independence against Spain (1895-1898) and entered the first year of the American military occupation (1899-1902). The anti-colonial insurrection transformed racial attitudes and challenged the very foundations of the colonial social hierarchy with a revolutionary discourse of racial brotherhood. Insurgents reportedly claimed there was no such thing at the black man or the white man, only the Cuban. The military ascension of black men to high-ranking positions in the Cuban Army seemed to corroborate the centrality of social revolution to Cuba Libre.\(^2\)

After the war, challenges to the racial order were particularly evident among Cuban veterans. Insurgents apparently showed little regard for racial etiquette, as black and white men gathered, consorted, and organized together, united by the bonds of military service. Atkins described the crowd gathered to greet revered insurgent chief Máximo Gómez on his visit to Cienfuegos in February 1899: “all the insurgents of the

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\(^1\) Edwin F. Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1926), 297.

neighborhood came to the station to meet him, some four hundred and fifty, and only
some half a dozen white men.” Atkins even disdained the behavior of white
insurgents, who shamelessly presented their black lovers in public. “One dignified officer
was seen marching with a negress on his arm (so the boys said) and everything was
mixed.”

The cross-racial alliance so loudly touted by the insurgents during the war,
transformed the way black men and women occupied the urban space of Cienfuegos and
how veterans of all colors interacted with one another. This worried some men with
vested interests in preserving the racial status quo.

The racial anxieties emerging after the war provided a convenient pretext for
realizing a historic American aspiration: the annexation of Cuba. After thirty years of
armed anti-colonial struggle against Spain, Cuban separatists gained only conditional
freedom as American military rule replaced Spanish colonialism. Americans had
intervened on behalf of the Cubans, many believing the Cuban cause equally noble and
righteous as the American Revolution. Yet, once in Cuba, American sentiments toward
the Cuban separatists quickly changed. Imperialists and advocates of annexation pointed
to several factors contributing to Cuban unfitness for self-government including the
longstanding Spanish tyranny, the widespread economic devastation, and especially the
unfavorable racial composition of the Cuban population. These factors, they claimed,
certainly implied a need for benevolent American tutelage.

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3 Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba*, 300.
4 Ibid.
The length and outcome of the period of American rule were both uncertain. Instead of attempting to mold Cubans into American citizens, the American military occupation attempted to create a society in which Cuban political elites willingly favored American economic interests. In April 1899, General James H. Wilson, Commanding General of Matanzas and Santa Clara Provinces, wrote that the Cubans “should necessarily go through a period of tutelage, the length of which will depend altogether on their own behavior during the occupation of the island by the United States forces.” Wilson underlined what became the core policy of the American military occupation: the political future of Cuba depended on the cooperation of the Cuban political elites with the commercial goals of Americans.

Guaranteeing American interests in Cuba involved two main projects. First, Cuban political elites were charged with ensuring a stable workforce for American business. Sugar planters especially relied heavily on a cheap and obedient labor force, historically guaranteed by slavery and preserved to a large degree with the post-emancipation racial order, at which the revolution had chipped away. Second, political stability was required to ensure consistent international trade. However, stability often entailed collaboration with American military officials and favoring wealthy (especially American) capitalists, rather than simply fostering a peaceful and democratic political realm. Both these goals relied on the preservation of the racial order. In public, Cuban political elites remained silent on issues of race. At the same time, they enacted policies aimed at preserving a racial order that placed men and women of African descent distinctly at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

This dissertation examines the paradoxical coexistence of racial silence with increasing racial exclusion in Cuban society at the turn of the twentieth century. To address this question, this study focuses on the political struggles of Cuban separatists and the personal experiences of poor and working-class black men and women during the war and the transition to sovereignty (1895-1902). The emphasis on the everyday personal experiences and interactions required a reduction in the scale of analysis to the local level. Therefore, the primary methodological approach used here is a case study of a medium-sized port city called Cienfuegos, located on the south coast of central Cuba.

I argue that the negotiations among various groups of separatists and American military officials resulted in a transformation of the agenda of the Cuba Libre from concern about social justice to struggle for political power in the emerging republic. The American military intervention in Cuba in 1898 fundamentally altered the course of the separatist movement by favoring socially-conservative veterans whose political legitimacy hinged on repression of blacks. Race-based social and political mobilization came to represent more than a mere threat to the social order; they emerged as the single greatest threat to Cuban self-government.

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This project builds on nearly a century of scholarship on the American military occupation of Cuba and a growing body of literature on race, racism, and the struggle for equality. Both Cuban and American research on the American occupation has been defined by prevailing political currents in U.S.-Cuban relations at least since the advent of the Platt Amendment in 1901. Much of the scholarship in Cuba has approached the American intervention with a nationalist agenda, protesting the role of American imperialism in Cuba.\(^7\) To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the inauguration of the Cuban republic, prominent nationalist historians like Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring and Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez published lengthy studies of the American occupation, characterized by a strongly critical tone against the intervention, its American representatives, and the Platt Amendment, which the Cubans had successfully abrogated in 1934.\(^8\) With the triumph of the 1959 revolution, scholarly accounts of the occupation continued in a similar nationalist vein, though usually emphasizing the role of class conflict and imperialism in shaping developments in Cuba.\(^9\) Post-1959 accounts tended to validate the Cuban revolution by protesting the injustices of American rule.

After 1959, American accounts of the military occupation have attempted to explain how the Cuban Revolution emerged in a society the Americans had supposedly

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cured of its revolutionary tendencies. Scholars like James H. Hitchman and David Healy argued that the premature departure of American troops from Cuba in 1902 left Cubans inadequately prepared for self-government, which ultimately resulted in the success of the rebellious caudillo, Fidel Castro. Philip S. Foner, as a marked contrast, was much more sympathetic to the Cuban perspective, articulating a cogent critique of the occupation of Cuba as a founding moment for American empire.

While previous accounts tended to emphasize the homogeneity of Cuban and American “nations,” the scholarship of the 1980s began to uncover political fragmentation among Cubans during the occupation. A groundbreaking study in 1983 by Louis A. Pérez, Jr. transformed the field by employing both Cuban and American archival sources to study the political developments between 1878 and 1902. By emphasizing the interplay among different groups of Cubans, Pérez opened the door to a new generation of historians concerned with the social and cultural developments during the military occupation. Cuban historian Marial Iglesias Utset built upon this foundation with a seminal study of the material culture of Cuban nationalism during the occupation.


Strikingly absent from the scholarship of the American military occupation were studies centering the experiences of men and women of African descent. Studies of race abound for other time periods. Most scholars have addressed the struggle for racial equality either before or after the American military occupation. The early work of Rebecca Scott elucidated the process of gradual emancipation and struggles over the meaning of freedom in late-nineteenth century Cuba. More recently, she explored Atlantic definitions of freedom by juxtaposing the post-emancipation societies of central Cuba and Louisiana. Although this study does encompass the period of American rule, the longer durée approach centers on questions of post-emancipation freedom in rural Cuba, rather than access to citizenship among urban dwellers. In her study of the racial politics of the Cuban anticolonial struggle, Ada Ferrer argued that the Cuban revolution ultimately failed to overturn racism in Cuba, despite the persistence and entrenchment of racial brotherhood as a national patriotic discourse.

The work of Scott and Ferrer demonstrated that black Cubans waged a protracted struggle for freedom and citizenship under Spanish rule. Although they did not gain full equality, they established a framework for protest and a legacy of struggle, gradually expanding their autonomy and rights. This trajectory laid an important foundation for the goals and strategies of Cuban separatists. They attempted to appeal to men of African descent by offering the fulfillment of their aspirations for equality within the Cuban army. Furthermore, it shaped the expectations of men of African descent during their service to Cuba Libre, empowering them to reclaim the promises of equality. The


15 Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba.
experience of war under the discourse of racial brotherhood led many men to believe that the trajectory of increasing inclusion and social justice would continue after the war.

It did not. In contrast to the gradual expansion of rights for black Cubans in the late colonial period, stark racial inequality defined the early Cuban republic. Alejandro de la Fuente argued that the failure of the government to take direct action against racism contributed directly to the persistence of racial inequalities, especially in the sectors of education, labor and access to power in the twentieth century. Melina Pappademos corroborated the prevailing narrative of thwarted aspirations and narrowing citizenship in the early republic in her account of black political activism. These studies emphasized the failure to dismantle the structures of racism despite the persistence of the discourse of racial brotherhood, which supposedly attested that racism did not exist.

The limitations of black mobilization were even reinforced by political fragmentation and socio-economic stratification among people of African descent since the military occupation. Frank Guridy explored the ways black Cubans and African Americans appropriated the transnational connections of empire to forge diasporic networks after the American military intervention. Even in his agency-driven narrative, the limitations of an implicitly racialized Cuban nationality become evident in the persistent emphasis on the culture of black respectability that led black elites to reject the Africanist cultural practices of the black masses.


When considering the colonial scholarship and the republican scholarship together, a clear paradox emerges. A trajectory of expansion in rights for people of African descent in the late colonial period was transformed into a violent rejection of black inclusion and a frustration of aspirations for racial equality in the early republic, which continues to a degree today. Few studies have addressed this apparent contradiction. One of the closest approximations to a study of race during the American occupation was a 1983 conference paper by Cathy Duke. Therein, she argued that “American racial ideas and practices were imbibed and institutionalized” during the occupation, leaving behind “a legacy of racism unlike anything that had come before.”

This interpretation draws upon a history of scholarship arguing that American race relations were fundamentally distinct from and more virulently racist than Iberian race relations. Few would disagree that Duke afforded Americans an exaggerated role in determining the Cuban racial climate. However, it is also difficult to deny that the American military occupation influenced the meanings of race in post-war Cuba to a degree. More recent studies have challenged the idea that the inculcation of American


racial values produced *ipso facto* black disenfranchisement in Cuba. In her 1995 monograph, *Our Rightful Share*, Aline Helg contended that "Cuba’s racial system was not a product of U.S. influence." Helg addressed the first military occupation in two chapters discussing the "making of the new order," and the "frustration" of black hopes for equality and political power in the Cuban republic, both narratives that span the period from 1899-1906. This declensionist narrative of black political power in the early republic has defined recent scholarship on race in early republican Cuba.

Other historians have emphasized the role of military organization during the war in the formation of early-republican networks of political patronage. Orlando García Martínez and Michael Zeuske both juxtapose the prevalence of wartime discourse of racial brotherhood with the post-war disenfranchisement of men of African descent. According to Zeuske, most of leadership of the Cuban army concurred in the "ideals of Martí" until 1898. However, "under the impact of the Spanish-Cuban-American war and the first year of the occupation, the ideas of the high officials, many of who were white, shifted toward more opportunistic ends, making use of the positions of power obtained before." The transformative moment was the American intervention, not because it brought American racism to Cuban soil, but rather because it set in motion a process of

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22 Ibid., 91-140.

23 Fernando Martínez Heredia, Rebecca J. Scott, and Orlando F. García Martínez, eds., *Espacios, silencios y los sentidos de la libertad: Cuba entre 1878 y 1912* (Havana: Ediciones Unión, Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, 2001).

transformation within the Cuban army. García identified a pivotal shift in the social composition of the Cuban army when wealthy sectors joined *en masse* following the announcement of American intervention. He charted the development of “two armies” within the military branch of *Cuba Libre*, one that fought for patriotic ideals, and the other group that joined for political power. Both García and Zeuske showed the marginal role of black veterans through surveys of political appointments during the first decade of the republic. These studies suggest that the revolution failed to transform the lives of black Cubans.

This dissertation brings together studies of the American occupations and accounts of race to explain the coexistence of racial brotherhood with increasing racial exclusion in Cuba at the turn of the twentieth century. I build on these fields of study in two main ways. First, by examining the developments that informed the political shift Zeuske and others identified, this study shows how the political context of the American intervention and military occupation helped socially-conservative ideas to overtake the revolutionary agenda of social justice. Second, this study focuses on the consequences of the transformation of the goals of Cuban separatists for poor and working-class black Cubans, especially considering how they experienced and responded to these changes. While the electoral politics and policies of the ruling elite provide a framework for understanding the shift in visions of *Cuba Libre*, the protagonists of this study are not

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political elites, but rather men and women whose exclusion from the political realm made their every private move a political act. In the words of feminist Carol Hanisch, “the personal is political.”

Microhistory and the Microcosm of Cienfuegos

A microhistory of Cienfuegos can help cast light on broader national developments because the city and its hinterland reflect broader patterns island-wide. While smaller than Havana, Cienfuegos was nonetheless one of the most populous, prosperous, and well-connected Cuban cities because of its rich sugar economy and profound integration into Atlantic networks of trade and cultural exchange. Cienfuegos was a key port city for the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in the nineteenth century, and its expanding wealth and fertile lands attracted investment from all over the world, but most notably from American capitalists. Cienfuegos emerged as a product of the very forces that defined Cuban society in the nineteenth century: slavery and gradual emancipation, sugar plantation economy, American investment, and anti-colonial struggle.

Map 1: Island of Cuba, 1898

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The demographics of Cienfuegos closely resemble national patterns. In 1899, the population of Cienfuegos district was 59,128, and the population of the city proper was 30,038. In the district of Cienfuegos, nearly half of the employed people earned their livelihoods from agriculture. In the city, the most common sectors of employment included domestic service, manufacturing, and trade. In the 1899 census, just over half of the population was classified as native-born white, while about 10% were foreign white, and just over 30% were of African ancestry. In almost every instance, the demographic data for Cienfuegos resembles that of national averages to a greater degree than does the data from Havana. This is especially noteworthy for the proportion of foreign-born whites. In Havana, the proportion of foreign-born whites was more than twice the national average, suggesting they wielded greater influence over Havana society than they did over other areas of Cuba. Considering that most studies of Cuba are based upon data collected in and about Havana, the demographic idiosyncrasies of that city might suggest a unique historical experience as well (See Table 1).
Admittedly, Cienfuegos is not without its own particularities. For example, the province of Santa Clara was one of the only regions to increase its populations between the census of 1887 and that of 1899. Moreover, the black population of that province increased by approximately 10 percent. For most other parts of the island, population decreases were far more common. Yet, the post-war demographic transformation of Santa Clara province does highlight a national redistribution of the population that may have resulted from the centrality of the province in the war of independence. Despite these differences, the demographic proportions of Santa Clara province and Cienfuegos district more specifically tend to reflect national trends, and can therefore provide a counterpoint to the Havana-centric nature of most studies of the island.

Table 1: Populations Statistics by Race (per 100), for selected geographic zones, 1899

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Native White</th>
<th>Foreign White</th>
<th>Negro</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Havana City</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cienfuegos City</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cienfuegos District</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td><strong>57.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>17.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>.9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara Province</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Cuban historiography, Havana has often stood in for Cuba, even though the history of the island has been intensely regionalized. Nationalism has been a powerful

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force in Latin American historiography. This concept relies on a unified national community, the nation, frequently represented by the capital city as the pinnacle of civilization and culture. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Cuba, where the bustling metropolis of Havana has loomed large over the rest of the provinces. The overwhelming emphasis on the nation, however politically convenient, tends to obscure the diverse historical experiences emerging from the peculiar socio-political conditions of each unique locality.

Sub-national history offers a way to challenge the conflation of capital city and nation. Two approaches in particular, regional history and microhistory, provide a framework for a critical re-assessment of the role of place in historical narratives and the role of scale in historical research. Regional history is based on the idea that “region” is a hypothesis, rather than a given natural category. In microhistory, this critical perspective expands beyond place to encompass the object of analysis. Although microhistory often takes the form of a local, regional or provincial case study, it also permits transcending place and tracing one individual, family or commodity through time and space. By reducing the scale of analysis, sub-national history can help reveal the

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multitude of chronological and spatial variation, while moving beyond the ideologically-constructed naturalness of the nation-state.

Cienfuegos is an ideal case study for approaching the problem of race in Cuba, because it is in many ways a microcosm of Cuban society at the turn of the twentieth century. A center of both Spanish loyalty and the early incursion of American capital, the regional economy was based on sugar and, consequently, on slavery. While its port opened the city to the world of Atlantic commerce, it is still small enough to make personal and micro-level analysis feasible in a way that it would not be in a place like Havana. The manageable size of Cienfuegos allowed me to get acquainted with many of the individuals, families and networks defining the black life in the city. In addition, the locality is endowed with a rich provincial archive and its transnational history has helped preserve the local history in the written record in numerous Spanish, American and Caribbean archives. The wealth of archival materials on the city and municipality of Cienfuegos has contributed to a burgeoning body of historical scholarship on the region, especially on the history of slavery, emancipation and black participation in the wars of independence.33

I search for an explanation to the historiographical paradox of expanding rights in the colonial period and heightened exclusion in the Republic in the intensely local interactions and struggles of three main groups of people: poor and working-class men and women of African descent, white Cuban patriot-politicians, and American military officials. I argue that these three groups envisioned and sought to create fundamentally different societies after the war. One of the most significant divergences in their visions of Cuba Libre was the role of race in determining access to political power and republican resources. In their zeal to secure power from the hands of both their Spanish and American enemies, white Cuban patriots subordinated the ideal of racial brotherhood in practice and to quell fears that they would threaten the interests of wealthy plantation owners. Simultaneously, they upheld it as a patriotic discourse that ensured their continued patriotic legitimacy among their fellow separatists. Political elites devised new ways to explain racial exclusion, among which was a language of masculinity.

Masculinity and the Measures of Citizenship

Citizenship in Cuba, like in other Latin American republics, was a masculine realm at the turn of the twentieth century. The implicit gendering of discourses and practices of citizenship has not escaped the attention of historians in recent years, though historians have typically paid less attention to the links between masculinity and

citizenship than to the feminine exclusion from it.34 Fewer scholars have explored the relationship between masculinity and citizenship in the specific contexts of Latin America. “We need studies that concentrate on men and masculinities, on men as engendered and engendering beings in Latin America,” wrote Matthew C. Gutmann.35 This project attempts to contribute to this nascent body of scholarship by employing a gendered analysis to explore the intersections of race, masculinity and class in their specific social and cultural context in Cienfuegos at the turn of the twentieth century.

Citizenship is about defining the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in a particular political community.36 This idea typically refers to the rights, responsibilities, privileges and duties of belonging to a particular nation-state. In this project, citizenship can be operationalized most effectively by equating it to access to political power, whether the right to vote or the ability to hold office. The first boundary of citizenship was gender. In Cuba, like in many emerging Latin American republics, one of the most important criteria necessary to become a citizen was being a man.37 Indeed, the idea of Cuban citizenship was born in the manigua, the almost exclusively male and intensely


36 As James Holston and Arjun Appadurai note, the historical emergence of the idea of citizenship proved to be “revolutionary and democratic, even as it has also been conservative and exclusionary.” James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, “Cities and Citizenship,” Public Culture 8 (1996): 187.

multi-racial domain of the separatist military camps. Cuban ciudadanos, as the separatists often called themselves, fostered unity among the soldiers by constructing an inclusive Liberal citizenship that extended belonging to men regardless of race, class, or place of origin. The discourse of racial brotherhood became a rhetorical device to unify men across race and class under the political banner of Cuba Libre. Service to the Patria, in the form of joining the anti-colonial insurrection became a demonstration of two diverging, almost contradictory forms of masculinity: the violence of military combat and the gentility of self-abnegation.

The purpose of focusing on the evolving and diverging meanings of masculinity is to elucidate the ways race, as an unspoken category of difference, operated in the daily lives of Cienfuegos residents, even when racial categories were rare in the language Cubans used to talk about inequality. I distinguish between the physicality of being a “man”—masculinity—and the moral and normative aspects employed in constructing and differentiating between “good” men and men who fail to achieve the ideal—manliness. This distinction emerges from acknowledging that gender, its physicality, the discourses about it, and its outward display and embodiment are socially constructed. Masculinity, articulated during the early year of the war as appeals to a common manliness, masked

38 The conception of Cuban nation emerged much before the outbreak of the wars of Independence. Josef Opatrný, Antecedentes históricos de la formación de la nación cubana (Prague: Universidad Carolina, 1986).

39 Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba, 7.


racial and class differences by deploying a seemingly more “natural” social ordering based on gender and honor. While it seemed to provide a theoretical basis for inclusion of all Cuban men, this form of inclusive masculinity actually encapsulated the inequalities of race and class.

Hegemonic masculinity, the idea that there is certain way of being a man against which all men are measured, can explain the increasingly exclusive and hierarchical nature of Cuban citizenship during the transition from colony to republic.\(^42\) In this study, “masculinity” is used to refer to a system of thinking about how to be a man, usually encompassing the most basic physical definition of “man.” “Manliness,” on the other hand, is used to denote the realization or perceived fulfillment of the highest conception of what it meant to be a man as defined by the particular notion of hegemonic masculinity at that moment. This distinction can help explain how some “men” could be ineligible to enjoy the rights of citizenship supposedly available to all “men.”

Constantly evolving in definition and deployment, dominant ideas of masculinity came to define inclusion, status and belonging within the emerging conception of Cuban citizenship. As visions and practices of masculinity changed, so too did the boundaries of citizenship. During the war, access to citizenship supposedly rested upon upholding an idealized patriotic masculinity, the highest virtues of manliness. The ideal Cuban man was “respectable,” “honorable,” values that implied a host of other qualities including chivalry, self-restraint, and self-abnegation, especially among middle-class men. More

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virile forms of manliness most closely associated with the working class, however, became increasingly prominent in performances of masculinity amidst military conflict. The idea of valor, bravery, and military prowess accompanied the potentially more dangerous tendencies toward violence, sexual aggression, and even lawlessness.

These competing ways of being a man had no explicit racial implications. In practice, however, the lines of inclusion and exclusion closely resembled racial lines, and the qualities of patriotic masculinity seemed to be applied more severely to people of African descent. Indeed, the virile working-class masculinity seemed to be acceptable only when enacted by whites. They were considered far too threatening if deployed by a black man. The association of blackness with hypermasculinity, a way of being a man that was so manly as to be threatening, in the very moment of political uncertainty would endure through the war and into the occupation. It provided the pretext for the campaign to exclude blacks from the rights of being a man, namely political power, because of the perceived threat to racial order and sexual morality.

Thus, manliness as perceived under hegemonic masculinity emerged as an implicitly racialized (and classed) notion of how to be a good man. Being a good Cuban man, then, equated not only to upholding the values and customs of white middle class men, but the selective acceptability of performing male virility. Fears of alleged black hypermasculinity, in turn, emerged as a justification for an increasing emasculation of black men through political and physical marginalization. Moreover, the language of masculinity allowed political elites to avoid explicit reference to race when explaining racial inequality. Amidst a discourse of racial inclusion, racial exclusion persisted.
For the purposes of this study, it is possible to identify two main turning points in which definitions of masculinity shifted. The first transitional moment occurred between late 1897 and 1898, when participation in the insurgent army began to have direct political implications. Before late 1897, military service supposedly provided a common bond of brotherhood regardless of race or class. This relative equalization was sustainable because few immediate benefits were expected for individuals who served. This changed when a series of military defeats turned into a succession of military victories, bringing the Cuban army closer to what they viewed as an eminent victory over the Spanish. With the American military intervention the rank and file of the Cuban army swelled as men of diverse political tendencies sought to secure access to the political fruits of the separatist toil.

As Cubans contemplated victory, the anxieties over who would wield political power after the war produced a readjustment of what it meant to be a man. Previously, service to the Patria, in the form of fighting in the insurrection, had been sufficient for a man to demonstrate his manliness. The increasingly evident political implications of claims to masculinity, however, necessitated differentiation among men “fit” for political power and men considered unsuitable for such office. The qualities of middle-class manliness, which included literacy, formal education, gentility, self-restraint, wealth, networks of patronage and the nebulous concept of morality, formed the basis of categorizing men into two main groups: the manly men who would occupy positions of political power and the men who failed to achieve manliness and thus were ineligible for political power. These characteristics provided an implicitly racialized and classed vision of citizenship, one that privileged educated urban men from prominent Creole families as
the standard by which all others would be judged. Although the Liberal ideal of national
inclusion persisted, sectors of the population considered undesirable, in one way or
another, were excluded from the rights of citizenship. There was a marked difference
between being called a citizen and being able to exercise the rights that it supposedly
afforded.43

The second watershed for local conceptions of masculinity occurred around 1900,
when access to and preservation of political power for civil authorities began to depend
on cooperation and collaboration with the American military authorities. Service to the
war and even belonging to prestigious local families were necessary, but no longer
sufficient to demonstrate “fitness” for political power. In the political arena, masculinity
among local ruling elites became increasingly defined as the ability to preserve order,
which implied cooperation with American military authorities and repression of poor and
working-class blacks. Ironically, the claims of white socially-conservative veterans to
power rested upon the support of and submission to American military authorities. These
veterans served as middlemen between an ever-more-narrowly defined Cuban citizenry
and the American military, thereby defining the masculinity of the political elite in terms
of their relationship to Americans.

Under the occupation, political beliefs, especially attitudes toward Americans and
policies toward wealthy property owners became increasingly significant in determining
access to the rights and privileges of citizenship. Consequently, under American rule,

43 Doris Sommer, “Irresistible Romance” in Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National
historia patria”; Fernando Unzueta, “Scenes of Reading: Imagining Nations/Romancing History in Spanish
America,” in Castro Klarén and John C. Chasteen, *Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century
Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 115-60; Jorge Myers, “Language,
History, and Politics in Argentine Identity, 1840-1880,” in *Nationalism in the New World*, eds. Don H.
hegemonic masculinity became associated not only with whiteness, but also with social conservatism and pro-American attitudes. The central point of negotiation between Cuban ruling elites and American military officials became not whether or not Cuban citizenship would be narrowly defined, but rather how to articulate exclusion. While Americans resorted to race as a measure of masculinity, Cuban civil authorities observed the discourse of racial brotherhood by articulating racial exclusion in terms of masculinity. In other words, the defect was not the racism of society, but rather the faltering masculinity of the individual.

The supposedly hegemonic masculinities operating in each of the three periods (1895-1897, 1897-1900, 1900-1902) did not preclude the development of dissenting visions of how to be a man. This project focuses most intensely upon the “counterhegemonic” masculinities that emerged during the military occupation. While political elites subscribed to and embodied shifting definitions of manliness to consolidate political power, poor and working-class men and women of African descent contested their political exclusion with two main strategies. First, they articulated a different vision of what it meant to be a man, one that often employed the discourse of racial brotherhood as its foundation. This was most common in the earlier years of the occupation. Second, they appropriated “hegemonic” visions of masculinity and transformed them into discourses that suited their needs and supported their causes. This became one of the dominant strategies for men and women of African descent to protest racial exclusion in a context in which explicit reference to race was deemed unpatriotic and dangerous.

44 Bederman, Manliness & Civilization, 5.
A Note on Sources

This study employs archival documents from over one dozen archives and libraries in Cuba, from Havana to Cienfuegos, and in the United States, from Mississippi to Massachusetts. The bulk of the materials informing this study come from four places: Cienfuegos, Havana, Washington, D.C., and Boston. In the absence of a solid collection of local newspapers from the time period under study, I relied on city council meeting minutes in the provincial historical archive of Cienfuegos (APHC) to identify key debates, political shifts, and social issues. Several important collections in the provincial archive allowed me to “meet” some of the men and women who would become the protagonists of this narrative. The personal papers of local female patriot Rita Suárez del Villar, especially the correspondence with key insurgent leaders of Cienfuegos helped me reconstruct the networks of power and patronage forming during the war, and even the ways these relationships persisted under American rule.

The provincial archive also contained a variety of textual sources created by or referring to men and women of African descent. The records of several black recreational associations, religious societies and clubs provided a rare opportunity to access the voices and daily experiences of local black elites and, at times, those of poor and working-class people of African descent. I was able to trace the lineages and generational trajectories of numerous black families by examining property transactions, loan agreements, and mortgages contained in the notarial records. For example, notarized power of attorney documents often provided specific information about the marital status and history, offspring, business relations, property ownership, and economic status of the participants. The two oversized boxes of unsorted papers pertaining to the port workers’ movement
provided a glimpse into the struggles of working-class men under American rule. The meeting minutes and books of members illuminated the ways in which unionized black stevedores negotiated the increasing state suppression of organized labor. By reading elite-produced sources against the grain and juxtaposing them with documents produced by black men and women, I crafted a narrative that privileges the voices of the latter.

I focused my research on specific individuals related to Cienfuegos to navigate the heavily Havana-centric collections of the National Archives of Cuba (ANC). I explored the regional dimensions of the war through the personal letters and war diaries of insurgent leaders and soldiers operating in the central provinces, contained in the Personal Collection of Máximo Gómez. As well, I leafed through thousands of pages of personal correspondence concerning black leaders in Cienfuegos and occasionally a rare newspaper, newsletter, leaflet, manifesto, or pamphlet contained in the Acquisitions Collections, the Donations and Remissions, and the Papers of the Secretariat of Government. One of the most valuable resources was a collection of letters by Nicolás Valverde, a tailor, journalist and local black leader in Cienfuegos, including one issue of a publication dedicated to local race issues that he edited during the American occupation. By first getting acquainted with the local personalities, activists and political leaders in Cienfuegos in the provincial and parochial archives was essential for finding relevant local materials.

In the National Archives of the United States (USNA), I consulted the military government of Cuba records and the records of the United States Army Overseas Operations. Both these extensive and underutilized collections provided resources documenting every aspect of life and society under American rule, from the suppression
of organized labor to the regulation of prostitution, to countless reports of assassinations, crime and banditry. Within the military government of Cuba records were the letters individual men and women, including widows, black veterans, Spaniards, and indigent farmers, who wrote to American military officials about the social conditions, poverty, and political anxieties of post-war Cuba. In addition, I used court martial records to uncover some of the violent conflicts between Cubans and Americans that were endemic in American-occupied Cuba. Another important resource in the United States National Archives was the records of the Spanish Treaty Claims, a bureaucratic organ created after the 1898 Treaty of Paris to administer the suits for reparations of American businessmen who suffered damages during the war of independence. The diverse array of documents and interviews conglomerated in this collection sometimes featured the voices of black veterans in depositions, and they proved invaluable for reconstructing life during the war.

The Atkins Family Papers housed at the Massachusetts Historical Society were another pillar of this research. Edwin F. Atkins, a Boston merchant who owned the largest sugar plantation in Cuba, kept meticulous records about his sugar business, the political conditions of the island, the attitudes and behaviors of laborers, and his own commentary about the society more generally during and after the war. The abundant personal correspondence between Atkins and key military officials in Cuba as well as important political figures in the United States government reveal the perspective of one American businessman, who wielded a strong influence over military officials in Cienfuegos. The views of Atkins reveal broader patterns of thought regarding issues of race, political transition and Cuban self-government prevailing among a larger group of men involved in the sugar industry and commerce in Cienfuegos. These men (including
Emilio Terry, Elias Ponvert, the owners of Constancia Sugar Company, among others) usually had strong ties to the United States, including prolonged periods of residence, education, and often citizenship. I refer to this group as wealthy property owners.

With these diverse primary sources, this study situates the local case study of Cienfuegos within a broader geographical and theoretical context. Employing the transnational scales of empire and Diaspora, this study illuminates national questions of citizenship within the local context of urban Cienfuegos during the transitions from Spanish colonialism to American empire to Cuban republic. Because this project privileges the continuing and evolving dialogue between the local, the national and transnational, it broaches the problem of scale defining studies of colonialism and empire.

**Chapter Outlines**

This study is structured into two main parts. The first part provides a survey of the war and post-war political context. In chapter 1, I argue that Cuban insurgents employed a discourse of masculinity in response to racially divisive Spanish propaganda, aiming to unifying black and white Cubans under the umbrella of patriotic masculinity. In chapter 2, I show how this unity slowly began to disintegrate amidst military setbacks. Insurgent chiefs in central Cuba responded to critiques of their military inadequacies by targeting black Cuban officers, promoting racial hierarchy within the army. Although Cuban remained united as they approached victory, post-war images of the insurgents as black served to exacerbate existing tensions, and foment American reservations about supporting separatist political pretensions—the subject of chapter 3. In chapter 4, I examine the role of American political engineering in the gradual rise of conservative separatists to political power.
These chapters corroborate the conventional wisdom of black political exclusion, but advance two further arguments. First, American rule did not create racial discrimination in Cuba; rather, the racial thinking and anxieties of the post-emancipation, post-Reconstruction United States found resonance among certain segments of the Cuban population, namely, those with interests in the plantation economy. Second, although some veterans may have shifted their ideals to gain access to the political benefits of the occupying government, many veterans remained steadfast in their opposition to the occupation. Therefore, rather than an overall transformation of values among veterans, the American occupation contributed toward a conservative shift in Cuban politics, as American military officials supported the candidacy of conservative political hopefuls.

While some historians have stubbornly persisted in their search for black political participation in the midst of explicit and pervasive marginalization, this study instead seeks to access the experiences and struggles of poor and working-class blacks outside the realm of formal politics. The second half of the dissertation examines dissenting visions of masculinity articulated by poor and working-class blacks and black veterans by studying the ways poor and working-class black urbanites experienced this political shift under American rule.

The focus of chapter 5 is the conflicts between American military officials and Cuban civil authorities who advocated for absolute Cuban self-government during the first six months of the military occupation. This antagonism between civil authorities and American military officials erupted in two major public disturbances in May and June 1899, both of which originated with violent confrontations between American soldiers and civilian employees and black Cuban veterans. Because civil authorities and police
intervened against unruly Americans, military officials condemned them as allies of black criminals and unfit for self-government. These two incidents consolidated the unacceptability of explicit white political alliances with blacks. Access to political power hinged not only on the rejection of black political power, but the active suppression of black urban authority.

The remaining three chapters show a shift in the policies of civil authorities, from protecting local residents to suppressing them. Chapter 6 charts the rise in police brutality against poor and working-class blacks, beginning with the murder of black General Dionisio Gil. In this chapter, condemnations and commemorations of his death unveil dissenting voices against a hegemonic masculinity bent on violently excluding men of African descent. Chapter 7 examines the physical marginalization of urban black populations through the relocation of the tolerance zone from the city center to the outskirts of the city. The petitions of marginalized residents for improvements in their neighborhood based on paterfamilial honor suggest a gradual appropriation of hegemonic discourses of masculinity. Chapter 8 follows the rise of collective action as a source of power for working-class blacks, and the disintegration of the union under civil and military repression. An examination of the claims made by unionized stevedores reveals a unique deployment of discourses of respectability, formerly limited to white middle-class articulations of masculinity. Together these chapters center poor and working-class blacks in local history.

By focusing on the experiences of men at women at the physical and social margins of urban life, these chapters present an alternative narrative of life under American rule. A period typically defined in the historiography by intense struggles for
political power in which black Cubans were largely peripheral emerges as a time in which black men and women actively demanded access to urban spaces, state resources and respectability. Black veterans claimed a share in post-war urban spaces. Poor and working-class black urbanites demanded infrastructure and sanitation in their neighborhoods after facing removal from the urban center to the hazardous health conditions of the western margins of the city. Black workers demanded a family wage, exacting concessions from some of the most powerful men in the city. Amidst physical and political marginalization, these men and women succeeded in appropriating prevailing state concerns of order and sanitation, employing the very same gendered language and arguments that white political elites had used against them, to secure improvements in their standard of living.

The gradual subjugation of each of these successive claims to power by black men might appear to suggest the slow and silent death of the ideal of racial brotherhood. Instead, this project suggests that exactly the opposite was the case. The increasing avoidance of racial language in the protests of poor and working-class blacks in Cienfuegos shows that the myth of racial brotherhood was perhaps stronger than ever before. Although this ideal is often interpreted as a symbol of anti-racism, the pages that follow demonstrate that the discourse of racial brotherhood, which marked a fundamental continuity between the late colonial and early republican periods, actually helped foster a culture of silence on issues of race. Although this inclusive discourse may have afforded expanding opportunities for “those below,” it also allowed racial discrimination to thrive under a veil of patriotism. This dissertation explores that paradox.

CHAPTER 1
Cowardly Spaniards, Heroic Cubans:
Race and the Politics of Masculinity during the War of 1895

The late rise of a slave society in Cuba delayed the process of independence from Spain. The demise of St. Domingue as largest sugar-producer following the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) catalyzed a sugar revolution in Cuba. Slavery quickly became the predominant form of labor on Cuban sugar plantations. Massive slave imports transformed the demographic composition of the island from majority white to majority black, generating anxiety among planters over possible slave uprisings. As most Spanish American colonies liberated themselves from Spanish rule, Cuban planters clung to the empire that provided relative safety from a slave revolt that would allegedly transform the “Pearl of the Antilles” into “another Haiti.” In essence, Cubans exchanged loyalty to the Crown for Spanish preservation of slavery.

The decline of sugar in the East in the second half of the nineteenth century gave rise to a regionalized anticolonial struggle. Eastern patriots freed their slaves and formed a multi-racial army that became the basis for the emergent national discourse of racial brotherhood. Not until the official abolition of slavery in 1886, however, could the anticolonial war expand beyond the eastern extreme of the island to the central and western provinces where sugar cultivation still thrived. During the war of 1895, insurgents built upon the idea of colorblind patriotism employed during the first two wars, as black chiefs rose through the military ranks to positions of authority in the army.
The radical social agenda of the anti-colonial insurrection tested the ability of Spanish colonial administrators to maintain racial order. Spanish war-time propaganda sought to undermine the Cuban cause by depicting the insurrection as black uprising, beckoning back to the times of slavery in which Spanish rule supposedly delivered Cubans from racial disorder. By contrasting the alleged racial anarchy of the insurrection with the so-called racial order of Spanish rule, Spanish military officials bolstered support for their cause among the wealthiest sectors of society, while undermining support for the Cubans. The Spanish charge that the Cuban insurgents fomented social anarchy aimed to undercut the Cuban cause both domestically as wealthy whites were less likely to support the rebels, and abroad, as Americans were similarly less sympathetic to armed colored insurgents.

Realizing the stakes of Spanish accusations, insurgent chiefs responded to the racialization of their struggle by attacking the manliness of Spanish officers and soldiers. Citing the cruel treatment of women and noncombatants, Cubans argued that the Spaniards were cowardly and dishonorable. In turn, insurgent discourse depicted Cubans as valiant and honorable, because they apparently protected women and treated their enemies with mercy. By attacking Spanish manliness, Cubans inverted the typical colonial discourse of a masculine colonizer and a feminine colonized. At the same time, they consolidated a supposedly united front against a common enemy by upholding manliness as a common feature of all Cuban patriots.

This chapter charts the emergence of a discourse of masculinity within the revolution through which insurgents articulated a new social hierarchy. Although the racial anxieties voiced in Spanish propaganda may have resonated to a degree with some
socially-conservative veterans, insurgents generally recognized that their success rested on the heavy participation of blacks. Because the insurrection held as one of its core values the ideal of racial brotherhood, and black participation deterred wealthy white support, insurgent chiefs were forced to abandon race as an explicit discursive tool. Instead, they inverted the Spanish visions of social hierarchy that delegitimized insurgents because of their supposed blackness, by deploying a discourse of masculinity. This discourse enabled Cubans to redirect Spanish racial critiques of the revolution into gendered critiques of Spanish colonialism. By silencing race and articulating hierarchy in terms of gender, insurgents bolstered the legitimacy of the revolution among men across the racial and socio-economic spectrum.

**Just Another Black Rebellion**

“Prepare yourselves soldiers, nine thousand *oriental* negroes are coming.”

This message appeared on a sign posted on the dwelling house of La Flora, an estate on the Central Hormiguero just outside of Cienfuegos in late 1895. Between August and December 1895, insurgents in Cienfuegos benefited from the favor of the advancing eastern troops, as new recruits filled the ranks of the army in anticipation of the arrival of war heroes Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo. Like the Spanish sign suggested, the invasion from the east brought thousands of black insurgents to an “imminently Spanish”

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46 “Testimony of Antonio Betancourt Díaz,” March 25, 1904, Case 293, Box 142, Part 4, Folder 3, folio 31, United States National Archives, Spanish Treaty Claims Commission, Record Group 76, Entry 352 (Hereafter, USNA/STCC/RG 76/E 352).

zone, known for its heritage and loyalty to the metropole. With these men also came the values and regional history of revolution that had fostered the military ascension of black men into positions of military power and prestige in the eastern regiments.

Spanish propaganda had long depicted anti-colonial struggle as race war, drawing on the fears of white planters who were often outnumbered by the masses of impoverished black laborers that produced tremendous wealth in the sugar economy. Spanish General Camilo García Polavieja believed that blacks unanimously supported the revolution. In his memoirs, he recollected of the wars that “the majority of the colored race, when we broke their bondage, became separatists…” With the outbreak of the insurrection in 1895, Spaniards were vigilant about the activities of blacks, having conflated blacks with social and political radicalism. As early as the February 1895, Spanish military officials kept a close eye on the “attitude of the negroes in Cienfuegos.” Spanish preoccupations about the revolutionary tendencies of the numerous population of black in Cuba fueled propaganda depicting the revolution as a black uprising. Ironically enough, just as Spanish propaganda condemned the Cubans for

48 José Braulio Alemán to Máximo Gómez, April 20, 1896, Box 6, File 867, Fondo Personal Máximo Gómez, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (Hereafter, ANC/FPMG).


50 Camilo García de Polavieja y del Castillo, *Relación documentada de mi política en Cuba: lo que vi, lo que hice, lo que anuncié* (Madrid: Imprenta Emilio Minuesa, 1898), 97.

51 General Luque to Civil Governor of Santa Clara, “Telegram,” February 24, 1895, Fondo Ultramar, Archivo Histórico Nacional de España, Madrid (Hereafter, AHNE/FU). Thank you to Orlando García Martínez for sharing this document.
the racial composition of the insurgent army, Weyler himself traveled escorted by “a contingent of 600 cavalry soldiers of the colored race.”

Spanish propaganda employed race to delegitimize the Cuban insurrection. Racializing the insurgents served three main purposes. First, Spanish depictions of the insurgents as black aimed to mobilize racial fears among white Cubans to reinforce their loyalty to Spain and deter new enrollments in the insurgent army. Second, by portraying the insurrection as black, and regional, the Spanish government implied that it would fail just like the previous uprisings, namely those in 1868 and 1879, had. Finally, by depicting Cuban insurgents as black, Spain relied on discourses linking blackness to criminality to communicate the illegitimacy of Cuban demands.

Spanish propaganda drew from two main currents in Cuban history: the series of black uprisings in Cuba after the Haitian Revolution, and prevailing understandings of the purpose of Spanish rule. As enslaved men and women overthrew the colonial yoke and severed the chains of servitude in St. Domingue, Cuban slaves saw inspiration for their own freedom struggles. At the same time, Cuban planters sought to expand slave-based production to replace St. Domingue as the foremost global sugar-producer. The contradictory influences of the Haitian Revolution in Cuba meant a rapid expansion of slavery, and tighter control over slaves. Yet, the rapid changes in the scale of slavery in Cuba and the spread of ideals of liberty among Cubans, black and white, launched Cuba

52 José Rogelio Castillo y Zúñiga, Autobiografía del General (Havana: Rambla y Bouza, 1910), 180.

53 Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba, 8.

into a series of slave uprisings, proving the necessity of Spanish military force in maintaining the social order and ensuring slavery as the basis for Cuban wealth.\textsuperscript{55}

At the same time as Creoles in mainland Latin America rose up to claim their rights as men and citizens, Cubans clung to Spanish rule as the guarantor for slavery and wealth. Gradual emancipation of slaves declared by 1870 meant that the very premise of Spanish rule in Cuba began to unravel. By 1886, slavery had come to an end, and the colonial pact between Cubans and the motherland had finally collapsed. Cuban insurgents, who from the early days of anti-colonial struggle had incorporated a discourse of racial brotherhood, thus found no reason to tolerate subordinate status. Many white planters, some Cuban, some foreign, however, were not so convinced of the dispensability of Spanish rule. The Cuban insurrection threatened to overturn a racial order that had been entrenched in Cuban society for centuries, and that benefited wealthy property-owners, whose wealth was earned on the backs of unskilled black labor. Spanish propaganda targeted these anxieties over societal change and social anarchy.

Race provided a powerful metalanguage through which to harness anxieties stemming from the recent social transformations of emancipation and war to categorically undermine the Cuban cause.\textsuperscript{56} An article in the conservative newspaper \textit{Diario de la Marina} in April 1895 depicted the insurrection as a vehicle for transforming


\textsuperscript{56} Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham’s concept of race as a metalanguage for a broad array of othering practices is instructive in the Cuba case, because preliminary racializations of the Cuban insurrection prevailed throughout the war and largely defined they ways in which Cuban insurgents approached race and power during and after the war. In addition, interactions between Cubans and Americans after the war exhibited the same tensions of articulating, representing and contesting other-ness in terms of race. See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race,” \textit{Signs} 17: 2 (1992), 251-274.
colored laborers into powerful chiefs. Colored laborers into powerful chiefs. Other articles described the insurgents and black and barbaric, and claimed black insurgent chiefs refused to enlist white soldiers and sought to establish a black dictatorship. So pervasive was the racialization of the insurgent forces that it was considered a greater prize among Spanish forces to kill a white insurgent than a black one. Describing a sea of corpses left after one battle, a Spanish soldier, Paulino Castro Rodríguez, lamented that: “there was only one insurgent corpse, and his was a negro – a greater misfortune.” This perspective of Castro rested on the principal assumption that more insurgents were black than white.

Spanish soldiers used racial epithets in their encounters with Cubans to insult and enrage their enemies. In Rodas, the Spanish entered the house of one pacífico, thirty-year-old Desiderios Vida, who supported his mother, wife and children by working as a small farmer. “Thou art a Mambí. Come scoundrel. Tell us what thou knoweth of the Mambis,” Flint remembered the Spanish saying to Vida. “Calling them a traitor, a shameless one and a náñigo, they dragged him from his house and took up their march, leading him, with his arms tied above his elbows, off among the cane fields, until he was lost to sight of his home,” where the Spaniards slashed him to pieces by machete. According to Flint, “náñigo” was “a term of reproach,” originally referring to blacks.


58 Helg, Our Rightful Share, p. 80.

59 “Testimony of Paulino Castro Rodríguez,” February 24, 1904, Case 293, Box 142, Part 3, Folder 1, folio 30, USNA/STCC/RG 76/E 352.

60 Grover Flint, Marching with Gómez: A War Correspondent’s Field Note-Book Kept During Four Months with the Cuban Army (Boston: Lamson, Wolffe and Company, 1898), 98.

61 Flint, Marching with Gómez, 99.
“addicted to mysterious voodoo practices.” The Spaniards often used this term to describe insurgents.\textsuperscript{62}

At the same time as Spanish propaganda directly employed racial descriptors, race also implied crime and criminality. For example, in July 1895, for example Agustín Luque, the Civil and military governor of the province of Santa Clara issued a decree condemning the insurgents: “The savagery of those who set fire, rob and kill in the name of “Viva Cuba Libre!” and the propagandists who dishonor the Cuban people, recruiting adepts to the hordes led by arsonists and bandits,” Luque declared, forced him to implement severe measures of control upon the population of the province to deter the insurrection.\textsuperscript{63}

On at least one occasion, Weyler publically denounced the insurgents as bandits, a label frequently associated with blacks because of the ties to vagrancy. This incensed certain white Cuban patriots like José B. Alemán. Responding to the Spanish allegations, Alemán wrote a 22-page letter to the Generalísimo of the Cuban Army, Máximo Gómez “refuting the lies of the miserable Weyler tells of us, calling us bandits. I prove to him the falsity and calumnies of his assertion and qualification, reminding him of his [Weyler’s] crimes…”\textsuperscript{64} Prominent white insurgent chiefs like Alemán rejected the label of bandit because of its links to criminality and the implicit racial undertones.

\textsuperscript{62} Flint, \textit{Marching with Gómez}, 94.

\textsuperscript{63} D. Agustín Luque, “Bando,” July 17, 1895, \textit{Diario Nuevo}, Microfilm Reel #5, WRD/UNC/USCC.

\textsuperscript{64} “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” June 18, 1897, Box 104, File 171, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (Hereafter, ANC/FDR).
Resonance of Spanish Propaganda

Spanish propaganda seemed to resonate with some wealthy property owners. Planters in and around Cienfuegos emphasized the violent and destructive acts perpetrated by the insurgents, descriptions that echoed the reports of banditry before the outbreak of the war. Numerous Cubans who had acquired American citizenship reported the wanton destruction of their properties by insurgent forces in late 1895 and 1896. For example, Francisco Javier Terry, a member of one of the wealthiest families of Cienfuegos, reported to the American consul at that city that between November 1895 and February 1896, some of his properties “have been burnt or otherwise destroyed by insurgents.” Damages amounted to nearly $100,000 Spanish gold. By May of the same year, damages amounted to an additional $157,000, and by January 1897 Terry claimed he losses totaling nearly $700,000. José Lombard y Leon, Juan Echemendia, and Antonio M. Jimenez, all of who owned plantations near Cienfuegos submitted similar appeals to the American consulate. These and other reports of the destructive and violent campaigns of Cuban insurgents suggest that Cuban-born American citizens who

65 Francisco Torralbas to United States Consul at Cienfuegos, January 27, 1896, Papers of the United States Consul at Cienfuegos, Microfilm Reel #5, Walter Royal Davis Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Hereafter cited as WRD/UNC/USCC); Francisco Torralbas, “Statement of the actual injury done to the property of Francisco Javier Terry y Dorticós,” February 4, 1896, Microfilm Reel #5, WRD/UNC/USCC.

66 Francisco Torralbas to United States Consul at Cienfuegos, May 29, 1896, January 18, 1897, Microfilm Reel #6, WRD/UNC/USCC.

67 José Lombard Gómez, attorney in fact to United States Consul at Cienfuegos, February 7, 1896, Microfilm Reel #5, WRD/UNC/USCC; Juan Echemendia to United States Consul at Cienfuegos, February 20, 1896, Microfilm Reel #5, WRD/UNC/USCC; Antonio M. Jimenez to United States Consul at Cienfuegos, May 7, 1896, Microfilm Reel #5, WRD/UNC/USCC.
owed sugar estates in Cienfuegos during the war viewed the insurgents as a lawless and largely illegitimate force.

American planters in Cienfuegos were more vocal in their agreement with the racial components of Spanish propaganda. Osgood Welsh, the manager of Constancia estate, one of the largest sugar mills in the island, submitted to the Consul that insurgents had visited his estate and killed seven laborers. In his letter, he specified that the band of more than 150 insurgents who carried out this massacre of workmen included both black men and Chinese men. Welsh noted that he supplied this report so as to provide accurate information about “the method of warfare conducted by the insurgent Cubans.”

Edwin F. Atkins, a North American capitalist from Boston and the owner of the Cienfuegos-based Soledad estate, employed generalizations about the race of Cuban insurgents to condemn certain men. In describing the conditions of war, Atkins employed the same racialized discourse about the Cuban Army. He tended to distinguish between bad insurgents, mostly black, who were accused of committing wanton acts of destruction, and good insurgents, whites who were orderly, civilized and reasonable. He often accused black insurgents of committed the most violent and destructive atrocities during the war. In late 1895, Atkins claimed that black insurgents had destroyed his property. The destruction of “10,000 net tons, or about 10% of the crop” of cane “was done by a band of some 8 negroes, who said they were acting under the orders of one Rego, their chief. The insurgents were in force upon the neighboring hill and threatened

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68 Osgood Welsh to United States Consul at Cienfuegos, April 10, 1896, Microfilm Reel #5, WRD/UNC/USCC.
to kill any of our employees who attempted to put out the fires.” On many other occasions, Atkins attributed the greatest physical destruction and most egregious crimes to insurgents of color.

Like Spanish generals, Atkins based his ideas on prevailing beliefs that blacks possessed an innate criminal disposition popular during the late colonial period. Police preoccupation with Náñigos in the second half of the nineteenth century highlights the tendency to associate the poorest sectors of society with criminal behaviors common during periods of nation-building in Latin America. In Cuba, the obsession over black criminality coincided almost exactly with debates over the abolition of slavery, with advocates of slave emancipation arguing that black criminality stemmed less from innate racial traits, and more from the conditions of slavery. When Cubans faced another moment of liberation, anxieties about black criminality emerged once again, serving as a

69 Edwin F. Atkins to Honorable Edwin F. Uhl, December 9, 1895, Volume II.39, folio 39, Edwin F. Atkins Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society (Hereafter, MHS/EFAP)

70 Edwin F. Uhl, December 18, 1895, Volume II.39, folio 48, MHS/EFAP. “We have this morning received particulars by mail, of the burning of our warehouses, wharves etc at Soledad. This work was done by a band of negro insurgents, who sprinkled petroleum oil over the buildings and then set fire to them, having previously cut telephone wire to the factory, 2 ½ miles distant. It was the work of a few moments and they passed on, setting fire to various small houses belonging to tenants. There were at the time 300 soldiers in our factory yard, but before they could be moved the insurgents had left.” Edwin F. Atkins to Honorable Richard Olney, February 15, 1896, Vol.II.39, folio 74, MHS/EFAP. “On Feb 5th we advised you that we had received cable advice from our Soledad Estate at Cienfuegos that further cane had been burned on the 20th; in continuance of same advice to you, we now have to report that on Feb 3rd fire was set by one Candelario Borrel[1], a negro insurgent commander, accompanied by four other negroes. The estimated loss as reported by our manager being 2,900 net tons of cane.”

71 José Trujillo, Los criminales de Cuba y D. José Trujillo: Narración de los servicios prestados en el cuerpo de policía de La Habana, historia de los criminales impresos por él en las diferentes épocas de los distintos empleos que ha desempeñado hasta el 31 de diciembre de 1881 (Barcelona: Establecimiento Tipográfico de Fidel Giró, 1882), 362-9; Carlos Aguirre, The Criminals of Lima and their Worlds: The prison experience, 1850-1935 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 35.

powerful argument against the Cuban insurrection, and a justification for the brutal repression of alleged black criminals.

Although the black insurgents carried out the destruction of property and threatened the workers, carrying out the orders of their white commanders, the blacks were considered more evil and lawless than were their white leaders. Atkins blamed black insurgents for the destruction of his properties, although he knew that white chief had ordered the same. “Our reports say that the larger portion of the insurgents are negroes: On the night of the 1st inst, a band of insurgents appeared at one of our tenancies, under the command of a white leaders, who brought written order to destroy, which he showed to the man in charge, (Peter M. Beal) and American Citizen.”  

The written orders read as follows: “Destroy all sugar estates; burn their cane and defen[s]es at their factories, as well as destroy their railroad lines. Every laborer shall be treated as a traitor, who lends any assistance to these sugar factories. (signed) Maximo Gomez.”

Although Atkins asserted his general perception that most insurgents were black, the examples and evidence he gave suggest that the destruction was actually conceived and ordered by whites.

Even though whites gave the orders, the worst insurgents were still the blacks, according to Atkins. Atkins vowed revenge against the black insurgents, using racist language in describing them and threatening to kill them: “Names of insurgents setting fires cannot be ascertained. It was often done at night by single negroes sent for the

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73 Edwin F. Atkins to Honorable Edward F. Uhl, December 9, 1895, Volume II.39, folio 40, MHS/EFAP.

74 Edwin F. Atkins to Honorable Edward F. Uhl, December 9, 1895, Volume II.39, folio 40-41, MHS/EFAP.
purpose. Had we got near enough to recognize them there would be no nigger now.”

His vengeful attitude toward black insurgents suggests that Atkins believed blacks were more culpable for the destruction to his property than were whites.

Atkins even legitimated and rationalized the orders of the white insurgents. Although Gómez had ordered the general destruction of property in late 1895, this was a strategy to provoke American recognition of the Cuban cause. Moreover, Atkins learned that “the insurgents said they had knowledge that the American property owners were not in sympathy with them. That the destruction of American property would lead to claims upon the Spanish Government, and consequent complications between the United States and Spain, which would lead to their recognition by the United States as belligerents.” Atkins found a logical—if beneficial explanation for the change in the policy of the white insurgent commanders, Gómez and Rego: they were attempting to appeal to the United States for support, an end that Atkins judged beneficial to his goal of annexation.

Atkins judged that the white insurgents were more benevolent than the black ones. He considered Sixto Roque del Sol, a white insurgent leader operating in the zone of his Soledad estate, as a decent man. Despite his violent rampages and destruction of property at Soledad, Atkins described him as “most courteous in every way.” After the war, Atkins observed that “S[i]xto Roque is now one of my respected neighbors, and

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75 Edwin F. Atkins to Winslow S. Pierce,” September 14, 1901, Volume II.39, folio 169, MHS/EFAP

76 Edwin F. Atkins to Honorable Edward F. Uhl,” December 9, 1895, Volume II.39, folio 40, MHS/EFAP.

77 Edwin F. Atkins, “Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 79, MHS/EFAP. Quote refers to his band, referencing a threatening note sign by Roque.
holds a civil office.” His description of one white insurgent, known as El Mexicano, also reflected favorable views toward white insurgents. In December 1895, el Mexicano appeared at the Colonia Naranjito, part of the sugar lands of Soledad, and set fire to the cane and buildings. “When he reached the batey orders were given to burn the whole of it including the dwelling house, however, after a little parley we got the dwelling house exempt, next the Mayoral got his house exempt,” recalled Atkins of the encounter with el Mexicano. The insurgents had apparently discovered the intention of the manager to place and armed guard to protect the estate, but the manager, Posada denied it. “He then asked Posada what guarantee we could give him and Posada answered he would respond with his head, orders were immediately given to stop burning, then the Mexicano[‘s] son made the following remark: ‘Papa I told you so! If you had spoken to these people first you would not have burned a thing here.’”

While Atkins defended Roque, and praised el Mexicano, he despised Claudio Sarriá, a black insurgent leader operating in the same vicinity, as pure evil. Indeed, he was one of the main reasons Atkins mobilized a private guard force on Soledad. In late 1895, “a section under the command of black lieutenant Claudio Sarriá burned in one night the entire town of San Anton, and almost all the cane of Soledad, and at the same time because all those families were left homeless and in the most absolute destitution,

78 Atkins, Sixty Years in Cuba, p. 266.

79 Edwin F. Atkins to Edwin F. Uhl, enclosure: letter from P.M. Beal dated December 9th, 1895, December 17, 1895, Volume II.39, folio 50, MHS/EFAP.
they converted the friend who protected them into the enemy that pursued them.”

Atkins claimed that the insurgents began attacking his estate in November 1895.

After that attack, Atkins did make arrangements to arm a private guard force and to request Spanish guerrilla forces, irregular forces recruited to serve Spain in Cuba, be stationed on his estate. He wrote to Beal in February 1896, “The road is not safe any more [sic]: small rebel bands are becoming more and more lawless. When such imps as Claudio & Company can hang people up to the branches by the roadside at their will and pleasure, then it is time to get an anchor out ahead…Three flying squadrons of guerrillas are forming here. I understand after the troops clear our zone of the larger bodies of rebel forces, these guerrillas will operate against the smaller roving bands.”

Atkins did arm a force of 120-125 men after this encounter with Claudio Sarría, and placed as its leader a man with deep personal interest in revenge: “Our mounted force is really a fine body of men, mostly old hands here who have an interest in the place, for to them it is home and a living which they can’t find elsewhere now. They are fine riders, have good uniforms and are well mounted. Their captain, Vilariño, was our time-keeper formerly. He lived with his family in a little house on the place where he gained a little money in hauling cane, besides his salary. Claudio Sarría destroyed everything Vilariño had before our force was formed. Then Vilariño took command. You

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80 “Principio del Final” (Newspaper Clipping from Telégrafo of Trinidad), August 3, 1899, Volume II.60, folio 79-80, MHS/EFAP.

81 Edwin F. Atkins, Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission, December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 101, MHS/EFAP.

82 Atkins, Sixty Years in Cuba, 202.

83 Edwin F. Atkins, Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission, December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 3, MHS/EFAP.
should see these fellows make a dash at a hill.” So strong was the hatred of Sarría that Atkins continued to pursue him after the war.

Nor was Atkins the only one who blamed blacks for the wartime destruction of property. The testimony of Manuel Caldazo Castillo, a train conductor at the central Hormiguero during the war shows the general outrage over violence toward whites, especially when perpetrated by people of color. During the invasion of Máximo Gómez, a “large number” of insurgents swept through Hormiguero, a sugar estate to the northeast of Cienfuegos bordering the town of Camarones. They approach the train conducted by Caldazo at the colonia La Luisa, and ordered all the men to disembark, gather wood, and set fire to the engine. “…when the engine and the men in it were arrested, the men [insurgents] went into the house which was there, and said – ‘Let all the men in here, go out, leave, at once,’ and as I went through the door, there was a negro outside who grabbed my hat, and, raising his machete struck at me. I lowered my body, thinking that I would be struck with the edge, but I was struck with the flat of it.” He struck each man who crossed his path. “The negro, who was a tremendous fellow, was on horseback, and as I passed he grabbed my hat, and raised his machete. I lowered my body at the instant, and the blow struck me across the shoulder.” Caldazo made it clear that only the black man struck at him, no one else.

When interviewed, the white leader of that force, Higinio Piñeiro, a native of Camarones who joined the force of Alfredo Rego, testified that he never issued any orders to beat non-combatants, and did not permit such abuses. He also claimed not to

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84 Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba*, 229.

85 “Testimony of Manuel Caldazo Castillo,” February 27, 1904, Case 293, Box 142, Part 4, Folder 1, folio 12, USNA/STCC/RG 76/E 352.
have seen any such abuses committed by his men, though he admitted that “I had to command the force in general, and was not in a position to see it.”\textsuperscript{86} Black insurgents also burned cane on Hormiguero. Witnesses to a cane fire on one of the colonias at Central Hormiguero, Antonio Betancourt Díaz attributed the crime to a black man: “It appears to me that that cane was burnt by a darky who was a small leader by the name of Rufino Cuelles [Cuellar?] I think he was also from Ciego Montero, and it was burnt by the people he brought with him also.”\textsuperscript{87} The incident as related by Caldazo, and the accusations of blacks burning cane suggest that in the minds of propertied whites that the black insurgents were the dangerous and irrational criminals, while the whites were justified in fighting for their political rights.

The general perception of the Cuban Army was that blacks predominated, reflecting Spanish propaganda.\textsuperscript{88} Many people believed that all people of African descent sympathized with the insurgents. So suggested Enrique García, a white “cow-boy” in Horquita, a country village near the Constancia plantation.\textsuperscript{89} Even insurgents tended to agree with the generalization that blacks naturally sympathizes with the insurrection. One black insurgent, Carlos Betancourt, appealed to this belief when requesting the favor of Máximo Gómez in replacing his lost service papers, pleading, “I am Cuban, and as such fulfilling my obligation, my ideas and for the tradition of my race,” so that he could join

\textsuperscript{86} “Testimony of Higinio Piñeiro,” March 19, 1904, Case 293, Box 142, Part 4, Folder 1, folio 45, USNA/STCC/RG 76/E 352.

\textsuperscript{87} “Testimony of Antonio Betancourt Díaz,” March 25, 1904, Case 293, B142, Part 4, Folder 3, folio 17, USNA/STCC/RG 76/E 352.

\textsuperscript{88} “Edwin F. Atkins to L O’Brien Esq.,” January 16, 1899, Volume II.19, folio 23, MHS/EFAP.

\textsuperscript{89} “Testimony of Enrique Garcia,” November 5, 1907, Case 196, B87, Part 5, folio 7, USNA/STCC/RG 76/E 352.
the Círculo de Veteranos de la Independencia. “It is my opinion that the union gives [us] strength, since divided we will not do anything today nor tomorrow.”

Atkins noted in November of 1895 that “by far the greatest portion of [insurgents] are negroes—I should say at least 80 per cent.” The observations of Atkins may have been slightly exaggerated. Certainly, black were among the first groups to rise up in favor of the revolution in Cienfuegos. The first insurgent groups were composed mainly of rural sectors included many men of color, many of whom initially commanded insurgent forces. These men can be divided into two main groups. The first group was composed of small land owners an shop keepers like the black storekeeper from Las Moscas, Benigno Najarro, who had reach the rank of lieutenant in the Ten Years’ War and José González Planas, a distinguished black veteran from Lajas. The other group was recently freed slaves from local Centrals, including black leaders like Valentín Sosa and Víctor Acea, who headed working-class men from Cruces and Palmira, Sarría who led former enslaved men from the Soledad Estate. Another group led by Tata Montes, represented local outlaws. Most of the insurgents joined in late 1895 and early 1896, with numbers again piquing with the entrance of the invasion force under Gómez and Maceo. There were, however, more white chiefs than black chiefs, a pattern that became more pronounced over the course of the war.

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90 Carlos Betancourt to Máximo Gómez, November 17, 1899, Box 35, File 4434 (new 4997), f. 37, ANC/FPMG.


93 Ibid., 166-169.

94 Ibid., 183; Tone, War and Genocide, p. 95.
Atkins was not the only American to link the insurrection to blackness. For example, when investigators of the Spanish Claims Committee interrogated Bibián Fernández, a black country laborer from Yaguaramas, they inquired about the racial composition of the insurgent army, specifically if it was composed mainly by people of color. He replied that he did not know. Then the interrogator asked him in as many words why he had betrayed his people by fighting for the Spanish: “How did you come to be opposed to your fellow countrymen, the colored people?” He answered: “Because I came into the use of right and reason, I knew my father with the Spanish arms in his hands.”

Pressing the point, the interrogator asked him if he had known Quintín Bandera, invoking a common belief among Americans that Bandera controlled all Cuban blacks. Fernández replied that he did not know Bandera.

By linking the insurrection to blackness, Spaniards, property owners and American investigators neglected to account for the substantial black population that remained neutral or that fought in favor of Spain. Many people of African descent remained neutral in the conflict. For example, numerous black colonos on Soledad continued to cultivate cane and did not take up arms during the war. For example, Juan P. Sarría, P. Sarría, J.P. Sarría, Felix Sarría, José M. Sarría, Antonio Sarría, and G. Sarría “all negroes and former slaves of either Rosario or Soledad estates,” all continue their contracts to Soledad in 1896.


96 Ibid.

97 Edwin F. Atkins, “Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 92, 144, MHS/EFAP.
Race was no clear indicator of political affiliation during the wars. So argued one priest in Cuba, José Plá, in the 1880s. He attempted to use black military service for Spain to reconcile this perception of black support for the insurrection with his claim that they were loyal to Spain.  

Blacks actively fought on behalf of Spain in a number of black military regiments, including the Volunteer Corps of Engineers in all three wars.  

One such example was Máximo Cuesta, who policed the streets of Cienfuegos during the war. The majority of people of African descent who defended Spain did so in the capacity of local guerrilla forces. The Spanish military commanders recruited formerly enslaved people, and people of African descent residing in the country districts around Cienfuegos to work as guerrillas, receiving orders from the Spanish generals. The mulatto corporal Francisco Álvarez Oliva initially joined a Spanish volunteer force before defecting to the Cuban Army in 1895.  

Luis Abreu, an African-born soldier who fought in the guerrilla of Caibarien, and Mateo Sarría, a black man and probable former slave of Soledad plantation, enlisted in the San Fernando guerrilla, illustrating the heterogeneity of the groups remaining loyal to Spain during the war.

Another example of a black country laborer who supported Spain was the mulatto Aurelio Garriga, a guerrillero in San Antón, district of Arimao. Garriga formerly

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98 José Plá, *La raza de color: Necesidad de instruir y moralizar a los individuos de color y fomentar el matrimonio entre los patrocinados* (Matanzas: Imprenta Ferro-Carril, 1881), 14.


102 “Interrogatory of the mulatto Aurelio Garriga,” November 28, 1897, Volume II.39, folio 136, MHS/EFAP.
fought with the insurgents under the command of Alfredo Rego and José Camacho, operating in the zone of Sitio San Blas in Cienfuegos jurisdiction for two years and two months. He was a lieutenant of Cavalry under Camacho.\footnote{Ibid.} He defected and joined the Spanish on September 26, 1897.\footnote{Ibid.} There were numerous others like Aurelio. “Their soldiers served a while with the insurgents and then with the Spanish Guerrilla forces and then went home to rest, rotating in this way, and filling up the numbers on the payrolls.”\footnote{Edwin F. Atkins to Lawrence Greer, Esq., October 29, 1904, Volume II.39, folio 229, MHS/EFAP.} More likely than just acting on a whim, these soldiers switched loyalties for practical reasons, and were sometimes even forced to do so by the circumstances of war.

Wealthy planters and Americans more generally rejected the guerrilla forces, sharply criticizing the low social status of the men who composed that force. The American Vice Consul at Cienfuegos remarked that the “discipline and morals” of the guerrillas “are far below the class of the regular troops, and in fact made up of the worst elements.” They are “generally officered by reckless and careless men of their same class…”\footnote{Juan Casanova, Vice United States Consul at Cienfuegos to Department of State, United States, “Report on the Insurrection,” October 12, 1896, Microfilm Reel #5, WRD/UNC/USCC.} Atkins disparaged the guerrilla forces for their lowly racial and social composition. The guerrilla forces were “recruited from all classes—many negroes, mulattoes, and even Chinamen. The corporals in charge were many of them men of bad reputation and had been known as criminals.”\footnote{Edwin F. Atkins, “Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 137, MHS/EFAP.} The guerrillas were “composed of as
villainous a mob of jail sweepings as could be gathered anywhere in the world."\textsuperscript{108} They “gave us more trouble than the insurgents.”\textsuperscript{109} “These forces were recruited from the lower classes of the population, and among them were many insurgents who had left the insurrectionary forces for a time and frequently returned to them. They respected nothing in the way of property, and we had no right to drive them away nor did we have any authority over them.”\textsuperscript{110} Atkins disliked the guerrilla forces in part because he could not wield complete control over them.

Property owners on prominent sugar estates near Cienfuegos sought to create a force over which they could exert complete control. The owners of Hormiguero plantation, like other large sugar plantations in the area, employed a private largely white force with the sole task of protecting the estate. The “mobilized forces,” as they were called, armed whites to stand guard against insurgent raids to facilitate the continuation of harvest and grinding activities. On Hormiguero, only one of the men employed in the mobilized forces had possessed two of the major last names—Acea and Terry—associated with slavery.\textsuperscript{111} The rest either had two last names indicating legitimacy and suggesting European ancestry, or one racially-ambiguous last name.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{108} Flint, 	extit{Marching with Gómez}, 80.

\textsuperscript{109} Edwin F. Atkins, “Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 121, MHS/EFAP.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{111} “Fuerza Movilizada del Central Hormiguero,” March-September 1896, Case 293, Box 141, Part 3, Folder 1, USNA/STCC/RG 76/E 352.

Regardless of evident black participation on both sides of the conflict as well as black neutrality, Spanish racial propaganda transcended the battlefields of Cuba to influence American perceptions on the revolution. Racial anxieties fueled debates between advocates of American expansionism and anti-imperialists in the United States in the late nineteenth century. As Americans followed with great interest the developments in Cuba, Spanish racial propaganda seemed to corroborate the reservations of anti-imperialists, who argued that annexation of Cuba would prove undesirable due to the large black population. In early 1896, one New York newspaper claimed that “during the Cuban rebellion the fighting has been done mostly by the blacks. [General Arsenio Martínez] Campos said that the negros from the eastern provinces, who are largely of San Domingan origin, were by all odds the best material in the insurgent army. Gomez says that he depends upon his black troops” The emphasis on links to Haiti served to undermine the legitimacy of the insurrection in the eyes of many Americans.

While many blacks served the revolution few men of the “respectable classes” pledged their allegiance. There were “few notable whites” involved in the conflict, claimed another American paper: “There are some Cubans of education and recognized position who are leaders in the insurgent army. These are men like Zayas, Bermúdez, the Núñez brothers, and Rego, who have shown themselves to be brave men, possessed of the courage of their political convictions and who sacrificed their all for love of country. But there are very few of this class in the field in proportion to the mass of blacks and mixed bloods.” In contrast to wealthy men during the American revolution, “the better


114 “Newspaper Clipping,” [n.d.], Volume II.57, folio 30, MHS/EFAP.
classes” of Cubans have “very little of that patriotic feeling,” and “there is little or no desire to have the rebellion succeed.” Reproducing the discourse in Spanish propaganda, the author pointed to white fear of black authority: “Educated people know that in that event they would have to face the ambitions of Antonio Maceo…” whose “untiring mind has dwelt for a long time on the scheme of amalgamation of the West Indian negroes into what is known as the Antilles League.”

American media often drew upon Spanish propaganda labeling the insurgents as black to deter expansionist projects. Although the main goal of the propaganda was to reinforce Cuban loyalty to Spain, one of the consequences of Spanish propaganda racializing the insurrection was that the Cuban cause initially found little legitimacy in the United States early on.

Other articles denied the cruelty of Spanish policies, one of the core accusations of insurgents lobbying for American support in New York. One newspaper article written by an anonymous American woman claimed that her informants informed her that “there is absolutely no truth at all in the reports [of Spanish cruelty]. If there is any cruelty it is on the side of the insurgents—not the white ones, of whom there are comparatively few, but the negroes and mulattoes. The stories of Spanish cruelty are made up out of whole cloth by the insurgents to enlist the sympathy of the American people.” According to this woman, American support for the insurgents was unwarranted.

Americans may have initially shied away from supporting the insurgent cause, in part because the Spanish propaganda emphasized the racially unbecoming character of the Cuban Army. However, tides began to turn with the arrival of Valeriano Weyler to

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115 Ibid.

116 “A Woman’s Reply to ‘American,’” newspaper clipping, November 6, 1896, Volume II.57, folio 59, MHS/EFAP.
Cuba. Silvestre Scovel, an American reporter from the newspaper *The World*, for example arrived to the insurgent camp of Fermín Valdés-Domínguez in January 1897. “To demonstrate the importance that the Cuban question has for the North American republic,” Valdés-Domínguez recalled, the reporter “indicated that his newspaper spends 3,000 pesos weekly on the steamer that brings the news.” Scovel indicated that he wanted the news to “influence of make an impact on the opinion of the political men who deal with our issues” in the United States.118

When Weyler replaced Arsenio Martínez Campos with as governor general of Cuba, his brutal policy of reconcentration provided the necessary ammunition for Cubans to combat Spanish propaganda with their own war of words. Recognizing they lacked the leverage necessary to criticize Spain in racial terms, Cubans employed a language of gender to criticize and delegitimize their enemies. Grover Flint, and America war correspondent in Cuba noted that the “atrocities committed by the Spanish guerrillas about Cienfuegos have been of such medieval ghastliness that no one every believed them and reports of them are handled gingerly by news editors.”119 This condemning description as well as the ardent rejection of this sympathetic propaganda in the American press by this anonymous American woman (above) shows that the war in Cuba had indeed captivated American audiences by 1896.

The policy of Reconcentration and the frequent reports of Spanish abuses of noncombatant fueled increasing solidarity among Americans for their Cuban compatriots,

117 Fermín Valdés-Domínguez, *Diario de un Soldado*, 4 volumes, transcribed by Hiram Dupotey Fideaux (Havana: Centro de Información Científica y Técnica de la Universidad de la Habana, 1973), III, 83.

118 Ibid., 94.

who they likened to their forefathers of the American Revolution. Thus the arrival of Weyler in Cuba marked a watershed because it provided Cuban insurgents with an opportunity to criticize Spain and gain international sympathy for their cause.

Cowardly and Effeminate Spaniards

In response to Spanish propaganda racializing the insurrection, Cubans launched their own campaign with two inter-connected objectives, each revolving about politically-charged conceptions of masculinity and femininity. First, just as Spaniards used racial epithets, like ñáñigo, to insult and delegitimize the Cuban cause, insurgents depicted Spaniards as unmanly cowards by exposing their abuse of women, children and noncombatants. Insurgents labeled pro-Spanish women as prostitutes, equating sexual transgressions to political infidelity. Second, they depicted themselves as virtuous, honorable and chivalrous men, by emphasizing their protection of defenseless women and merciful conduct with the enemy. Women loyal to the Cuban cause, were by default, honorable and virtuous, although these positive characteristics were reserved mainly for white middle- and upper-class women.

Under Weyler, the policy of reconcentration provided the perfect ammunition for a campaign to challenge Spanish virtue and honor. Cuban chiefs described with disgust the Spanish cruelty and violence toward noncombatants under Weyler. One newspaper article in Las Villas, claimed that “the war is now assassination and robbery.” The article highlighted the injustice of Spanish treatment of rural dwellers, forcing them to pay property taxes, and subsequently destroying their property: “The pacífico is authorized to live in the countryside, but this is only to disguise the right to charge the high tax
imposed for the miserable estate.” After paying taxes and confronting additional fees to be able to maintain his small farm, the pacific then faced the Spanish army: “when the [Spanish] columns pass through his ranches, they burn them, forcing women to flee to the mountains, and the men and children either die [by being] burned alive in their homes or they leave them hanging from a tree, placing on them a sign on which they express that a Cuban chief of a known name—the first that comes to their minds—has given them death, as a perverse attempt to defame us.”

The newspaper article included a commentary about Spanish cowardice: “The infamy [is] everywhere, [and] the cowardice [is] with the principal attribute of the armed defenders of the domination.” This link between defending Spanish rule and cowardice would continue to define insurgent discourse during the war.

The American Vice Consul at Cienfuegos similarly depicted Spanish abuses, focusing particularly on the irregular “guerrilla” forces. The guerrillas are found “ranging the country and venting their passions and personal grudges on the inoffensive inhabitants. There as constant deeds of violence committed by them that shock every human sentiment.” For example, they imprison men without trial, “innocent peaceful men are charged from their homes and families are shot down at their own doors.” “It is evident,” he wrote, “that the war is becoming more ruthless and cruel,” and will soon lead

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120 “No Title,” Las Villas, April 10, 1897, Box 290, File 11, ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “La guerra es ahora el asesinato y el robo…Se autoriza al pacífico vivir en los campos pero eso es solo para cohonestar el derecho al cobro de la contribución alzada por la miserable finca se le impone. Y luego cuando ya ha pagado—y para proveerse de una cédula española ha tenido que afrontar nueva suma—al pasar las columnas por sus ranchos por sus ranchos los quema, obligando a las mujeres a huir al monte, y los hombres y los niños o mueren quemados vivos en sus casas o los dejan colgados de un árbol, fijándoles un cartel en donde con la perversa intención de infamarnos, expresan que les ha dado muerte de aquella manera un Jefe cubano de nombre conocido; el primero que les viene a las mentes.”

121 Ibid. Original text reads: “La infamia por todas partes la cobardía con los atributos principales de los defensores armados de la dominación.”
to a “reign of terror to the inhabitants of the town and country…” The Vice Consul expressed concern that these “outrages” drove many country people to join the insurrection to avoid further Spanish abuses.122

Cuban separatists were periodically outraged when they received news of Spanish mistreated defenseless noncombatants. On one occasion, Spanish forces removed from their homes numerous noncombatants and hacked them to death by machete. Among these was 80-year-old José Capote, and an 11-year-old boy, Emilio Rodríguez. The same Spanish column killed 16 pacíficos near Cienfuegos, and abandoned another 4 near Cruces. As a result of the violent acts perpetrated by pacíficos, Alemán called for the augmentation of forces in Cienfuegos: “As such, I participate to you that the zones of Palmira, Camarones, Rodas, Abreus, and Lajas lack our forces,” being thoroughly occupied by guerrillas.123

Cubans were appalled by the policy of Reconcentration devised by Weyler on Cuban families. Francisco Carrillo, a commander in Las Villas, described the forced relocation of rural families into concentration camps at the peak of Reconcentration. The Spaniards “return to the towns with families and children and make them prisoners and then they abandon them in the towns without giving them resources, said families remaining in the most horrible misery and in the sad condition of starving to death or escaping to our camp.”124 On one occasion, Carrillo demanded that the Spaniards release the families from the town of Arroyo Blanco, which he was planning to attack if they did

122 Juan Casanova, Vice United States Consul at Cienfuegos to Department of State, United States, “Report on the Insurrection,” October 12, 1896, Microfilm Reel #5, WRD/UNC/USCC.
123 José B. Alemán to Máximo Gómez, September 21, 1896, Box 6, File 912, ANC/FPMG.
124 Francisco Carrillo to Máximo Gómez, June 23, 1897, Box 7, File 1020, ANC/FPMG.
not surrender. Despite the tears of the group of women held in the town, the municipal mayor denied his request. Carrillo characterized him as barbarous and fearful.¹²⁵ The emphasis on defenseless families and children suggests that the role of father and chivalric protection of the family played a prominent role in insurgent conceptions of manliness and honor.

According to insurgent leaders, the strategies of Spanish commanders revolved around attacking and killing pacific rural dwellers. J.W. Aguirre wrote of Spanish atrocities near Jiquiabo, just west of Sagua la Grande, in late 1896: “The enemy, like usual set fire to several houses of pacific residents.”¹²⁶ Nor were his reports unique. Across the central provinces, insurgent leaders consistently reported that Spanish forces targeted rural dwellers by burning their homes, attacking families, and drawing the “blood of citizens.”¹²⁷ Cubans pointed to Spanish mistreatment of noncombatants as a sign of cowardice.

Whereas Spaniards were alleged to have willingly slaughter pacific rural dwellers, they were not as courageous in facing armed Cubans on the battlefield, according to reports during and after the war. Although Spanish forces outnumbered Cuban troops by the thousands in Cienfuegos, Spaniards were useless as warriors because they fled at the first sight of battle: “The enemy with much cavalry, but cowardly and fleeing terrified at

¹²⁵ Valdés-Domínguez, *Diario de un soldado*, III, 89.

¹²⁶ J. W. Aguirre to Máximo Gómez, September 21, 1896, Box 6, File 920, ANC/FPMG.

¹²⁷ Miguel J. Monteavaro on behalf of Cándido Álvarez to Máximo Gómez, January 16, 1897, Box 7, File 943, ANC.FPMG; José J. Monteagudo to Máximo Gómez, January 17, 1897, Box 7, File 944, ANC/FPMG.
the first shots.” When Spaniards did confront Cubans, they did so only the most advantageous terms. Press coverage of the war both at home and abroad depicted Spanish soldiers as “more devious than courageous,” providing proof of their lack of masculine honor. They often defeated Cubans “through trickery,” rather than by direct military confrontation on fair terms.129

Cuban narratives of battle tended to emphasize the size of Spanish columns and their advantageous access to arms and provisions. In contrast, the poorly armed informal Cuban forces faced endless disadvantages. Cubans pointed to the inequity in numbers and provisions in battle as one more aspect of Spanish cowardice. For Cubans, Spanish forces showed their cowardice when they killed individual or small groups of Cubans by using large columns of well-armed professional soldiers. For example, the insurgent press reported in June 1897 that “a thick column” of Spanish forces murdered two Cuban sergeants: “the braves of the miserable Ruiz realized many deeds that demonstrate their cowardice and the vile proceedings the soldiers of Weyler employ in this war of extermination” read one newspaper article.130

In another instance, Spanish forces under Spanish Lieutenant Colonel Nicasio Mirabal stumbled upon two Cuban sergeants and killed them. “But they were not content with this,” continued the article. Perhaps more insulting than using a full column of Spanish forces to murder two Cubans was the deceitful way the Spanish chief presented

128 Enrique Villuendas to Máximo Gómez, January 3, 1897, Box 7, File 937, ANC/FPMG.
130 “Una hazaña española,” *Las Villas*, June 10, 1897, Box 290, File 5, ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “El 24 del presente en tierras de Santa Teresa realizaron los bravos del miserable Ruiz una de las muchas hazañas que demuestran la cobardía y los viles procedimientos que emplean los soldados de Weyler en esta guerra de exterminio.”
their death: “They gave them sepulture and left a paper where they made known that these insurgents had died in battle. These are the victories the soldiers of Ruiz achieve; they assassinated Carlos Aguirre and here they repeat the pacifying feat and like Quixote [quijotescamente] they say that they killed them in combat.  

The cowardice during combat, for many who supporters of *Cuba Libre*, reflected the dishonest objectives of the Spanish in Cuba. 

The article juxtaposed the cowardice and deceit of the Spanish with the honor and sacrifice of the Cubans. One [of the victims] was Manuel Rojas y Barroto, and the other a young man of eighteen years Octavio Pérez, who the insurgent press labeled a “humble hero.” He was the son of Ángel Pérez, lieutenant colonel Chief of the guerrilla of the column of Molina.” At the beginning of the movement, the Asturian guerrilla chief promised to make all three of his sons into chiefs if they went with him to the war. “The mother, a very dignified Cuban, overheard with shame the proposition of her husband and with tears in her eyes told her sons that she would prefer to see them dead before dressed in the guerrilla uniform.”

This woman exemplified the highest purpose of Cuban motherhood, “to instill in children love for the patria.”

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131 “Una hazaña española,” *Las Villas*, June 10, 1897, Box 290, File 5, ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “Desarmados encontraron a dos sargentos e la fuerza del Teniente Coronel Nicasio Mirabal—como siempre—los cargaron bravamente y envueltos en los flancos de la gruesa columna les dieron muerte. Pero no se contentaron con esto; quizás para engañarse así mismos puesto que al mundo no pueden hacer entender otra cosa que la que claramente explican los hechos, les dieron sepultura y dejaron un papel en donde hacían constar que estos insurrectos habían muerto en combate. Estas son las victorias que alcanzan los soldados de Ruiz, asesinaron a Carlos Aguirre y aquí repitan el procedimiento pacificador y quijotescamente dicen que los mataron en combate.”


133 “Una hazaña española,” *Las Villas*, June 10, 1897, Box 290, File 5, ANC/FDR.

Octavo, convinced his brothers to join the insurrection, in the name of dignity and honor. The willingness to die for the Patria demonstrated the manliness of young Octavio, according to hegemonic ideals of Cuban masculinity, therefore making his death as tragic as it was heroic. “Over his tomb lies something more than the memory of his virtues; the ratification of this firm resolution to fight without truce nor tibiezas [tibiezas] until achieving our freedom.”\textsuperscript{135} The celebration of martyrdom indicates that the insurgents placed a high value on loyalty and patriotism in definitions of honorable masculinity.

While insurgent chiefs disdained Spanish treatment of pacíficos and considered Spaniards as cheaters for killing Cubans with unfair advantages, they found the Spanish treatment of women as especially heinous. Indeed, numerous instances of Spanish cruelty toward women. One local insurgent chief Sixto Roque del Sol, for example noted that his men washed their own clothing because “if you sent any of your clothes to be washed by some female friend, the [Spanish] soldiers would take vengeance on that friend.”\textsuperscript{136} Spaniards even targeted mothers filled the Cuban and foreign press between 1896 and 1897. In one bloody encounter with poor rural families, Spanish forces stormed the town after a devastating encounter with the Cuban forces under Quintín Bandera. Spanish troops set fire to ingenio Olayita, burning alive dozens of local residents, including at

\textsuperscript{135} “Una hazaña española,” \textit{Las Villas}, June 10, 1897, Box 290, File 5, ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “Era el uno Manuel Rojas y Barroto y el otro el joven de 18 años Octavio Pérez. La historia de este último es ejemplo de patriotismo. Era hijo de Ángel Pérez, teniente coronel Jefe de guerrilla de la columna española de Molina. Al principiar el movimiento se pasatista el padre asturiano intransigente dijo a sus tres hijos que los haría oficiales para que lo acompañaran en la guerrilla. La madre, dignísima cubana, escuchó con pena la proposición de su esposo y con lágrimas dijo a sus hijos que prefería verlos muertos antes que vistiendo el uniforme del guerrillero. Octavio era el menor de sus hijos y fue el que reunió a sus hermanos y les habló en nombre de la Patria, y a aquel conjuro de la dignidad, respondieron todo y vinieron a ocupar pues lo honroso en la guerra. Es esta la historia del héroe humilde que acaban de asesinar los españoles. Sobre su tumba queda algo más que el recuerdo de sus virtudes; la ratificación de esta firme resolución de luchar sin tregua y sin tibiezas hasta alcanzar nuestra libertad.”

\textsuperscript{136} “Testimony of Sixto Roque del Sol,” February 16, 1904, Case 293, Box 142, Part 4, Folder 2, USNA/STCC/RG 76/E 352.
least two girls, two women, and a woman clasping her child. Many of the bodies found were black and Chinese, and may have composed part of the plantation work force.\textsuperscript{137}

This tragedy, which became known as the Olayita Masacre, occurred at a plantation 15 miles southwest of Sagua la Grande.

Press coverage of the war often depicted Spanish soldiers as sexual predators in a war waged primarily against defenseless women and children.\textsuperscript{138} They would attack, rape and kill young women, while humiliating others by forcing them to dance naked in front of groups of soldiers. In one American newspaper, a reporter claimed that Spanish officers shoot down noncombatants, hand over women and girls to the tender mercies of soldiers, and murder mother, wives and daughters.\textsuperscript{139} In United States Congressional debates, senators likened Spanish treatment of Cuban women to slavery, “selling them into lives of shame.”\textsuperscript{140} They also violated nursing mothers, slaughtering suckling babies and small children brutally.\textsuperscript{141}

\textbf{Image 1: Artist rendering of Cubans burned alive by Spanish in Olayita Massacre}\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{137} Flint, \textit{Marching with Gómez}, 101-108.

\textsuperscript{138} Hoganson, \textit{Fighting for American Manhood}, 49.

\textsuperscript{139} “A Woman’s Reply to ‘American,’” newspaper clipping, November 6, 1896, Volume II.57, folio 59, MHS/EFAP.

\textsuperscript{140} Quoted in Hoganson, \textit{Fighting for American Manhood}, 50.

\textsuperscript{141} Quoted in Ibid., 49-50.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 107.
In addition to direct physical violence against families and especially women, insurgent leaders condemned their enemies for disrupting family life and flouting gender roles more generally. One of the main examples of this was the Spanish policy of imprisoning women. Fermín Valdés-Domínguez protested: “more than the deportations and shootings of men, now the rigor has reached an extreme, by jailing women. In Cienfuegos, there are already many women in the jails.” He recounted another incident in which the Spaniards had cut the hair of one young woman, a deed that seemed to be prevalent in other areas of the island as well. “This is the culmination of their cowardice, he wrote.143

In other cases, Spanish officers targeted the families of insurgents leaders. “Lieutenant Carballosa arrives today and tells me that the enemy took his family, leaving

143 Valdés-Domínguez, Diario de un soldado, III, 95.
him a paper so that he can present himself,” wrote José Braulio Alemán, a prominent insurgent leader in Las Villas, in his diary in June 1897. “Despicable ones wasting their time in hunting families!” As the policy of reconcentration hit the Cuban countryside with full force in early 1897, the families of numerous insurgent leaders came up missing, at the same time as pacific rural dwellers, mainly women, children and the elderly, faced disease and starvation in concentration camps. Insurgent leaders pointed to Spanish brutality toward the Cuban population as evidence of cowardice. In the eyes of many Cubans, real men would never treat defenseless women and families in this manner. In early 1897, Spanish forces detained the wife of Alejandro Rodríguez, a prominent insurgent general. In the impassioned line he later wrote to General Máximo Gómez, Rodríguez captured the sentiment of many Cuban soldiers and officers: “How vile and cowardly are our enemies!” Insurgent chiefs pointed to Spanish persecution of Cuban women as the ultimate symbol of cowardice.

Pointing out the cowardice of Spanish forces was one way insurgents crafted a moral strategy amidst military challenges. Insurgents used masculinity as the plane of judgment for honor, as opposed to race, which the Spanish had successfully employed to delegitimize the insurrection. Insurgent chiefs based their own conceptions of manliness on three main values: patriotism, sacrifice, and chivalry. Spaniards failed on all three fronts, perhaps their most offensive deed was the abuse of Cuban women. Not only did this constitute a violation of the chivalric duty of a man to protect women, but it also allowed an opportunity to contrast the valor and morality of Cuban women with the

144 “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” June 14, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR.

145 Alejandro Rodríguez to Máximo Gómez, March 5, 1897, Box 7, File 964, ANC/FPMG.
effeminacy and malice of Spanish men. Although both figures represented a form of the “feminine,” the inborn femininity of the Cuban woman showed a “natural” morality, while the artificial “feminization” of the Spanish male presented his behavior as pathological and degenerate.  

Dueling in Defense of Women: Chivalry and Insurgent Honor

While much of insurgent discourse harnessed examples of Spanish cowardice to undermine Spanish honor, in extreme cases, the actions of Spaniards threatened the honor of Cubans. The protection of women was a central pillar of insurgent masculine honor, which ironically privileged a value that so many men had forsaken by leaving their families behind to join the revolution. The personal sacrifices of many insurgents in their decisions to join the war effort perhaps made Spanish persecution of non-combatant women even more egregious. Amidst shifting definitions of masculinity in the late nineteenth century, military men sometimes felt compelled to defend violently their honor. Duel provided men an honorable outlet for a violent defense of masculine honor, while still upholding values of self-control central to military codes of conduct. Despite the insurgent conception of self-control as a core tenant of masculine honor, Spanish abuses of women constituted such a flagrant violation of honorable warfare. This

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147 Lorien Foote has elaborated the divergence between men who wanted to fight, and those who defended their honor through duels among Union soldiers in the American Civil War, showing some parallels with dynamics in Cuba. Lorien Foote, The gentlemen and the Roughs: Manhood, Honor, and Violence in the Union Army (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 115.
violation threatened Cuban manhood to a degree that compelled some insurgents to submit to their “passions” and challenge their adversaries to a duel.

The writings of insurgent chief José B. Alemán cast light on the role chivalry, understood as the obligation to protect Cuban women, played in crafting a hierarchy of masculinity during the war. In his diary in April 1897, he wrote an unflattering description of Valeriano Weyler, the architect of reconcentration: “That man [has] to be crazy, as that is the only way to explain why he wastes time killing cockroaches letting the mice live.”¹⁴⁸ In May 1897, he wrote of particularly offensive crime that occurred a month earlier. Spanish troops in Villa Clara under “the miserable Spanish chief José García Aldare” had chased a defenseless Cuban woman and her child, laying siege to them as she cloistered herself and her small child in the mountains. “This woman’s only crime: being Cuban and dealing, (as families welcome the Revolution [must] deal) without protection nor refuge.”¹⁴⁹ More offensive than attacking a non-combatant, was attacking a non-combatant woman and mother.

Upon learning of the crime, Alemán wrote the most odious letter, which he later copied into his diary. In the letter, Alemán employed abusive epithets and enraging insults to induce the Spanish chief to accept a duel. The insults challenged the manliness of the Spanish general in three ways. First, he claimed that using an entire army of armed men to hunt a defenseless mother and her child was cowardly. Second, he targeted the

¹⁴⁸ “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” April 17, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR.

¹⁴⁹ “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” May 12, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “Cúmplase hoy un mes, o sea el plazo que concedí al miserable Jefe español José García Aldare para aceptar un duelo por ofensas que ha inferido villanamente persiguiendo una señora y su hija en el ‘Quino’ (Villa Clara), amenazando le daría la muerte. Único crimen de esa mujer: ser cubana y contar, (como cuentan las familia que a la Revolución se acojan), sin protección y amparo. Escribí a ese vil la siguiente carta, que prueba cuan indigno es al no darse por aludido con el cumulo de injurias que le lanzó para reducirlo a aceptar...”
virility and sexuality of the general by calling him a homosexual. Third, Alemán called
the mother and wife of his enemy prostitutes, forcing the General to either accept the
shame implied in the insult or the responsibility of proving his masculine honor by
defending his mother and wife. The continuous affronts to the manliness of the Spanish
chief elucidate the ways in which insurgent leaders harnessed prevailing conceptions of
masculinity and honor to delegitimize the Spanish forces.

Alemán used these series of affronts to the manliness of the Spanish General in
order to induce him to accept a duel. one of the only ways to redeem his honor, in the
eyes of Alemán. “For once, be a man,” he wrote haughtily. “Show me that the Spanish
know how to be men of honor. Show the nobility that Spanish chiefs praise. For once, be
honorable.” As part of the challenge Alemán even revealed his location, the same
“theatre of your crimes and robberies.” In so doing, Alemán preemptively undermined
any Spanish victory by providing yet another advantage to his enemy. Asserting his own
manly virility, Alemán threatened to publish his letter in American newspapers if García
Aldare did not accept the duel, “like a glove hurled in your face, that with intention, I slap
you and spit [on you.]”

150 “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” May 12, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR. Original text
reads: “Sed, siquiera por un día, caballero. Demostradme que los españoles saben ser hombres de honor.
Probad la hidalguía que decantáis los Jefes españoles. Sed una vez honrado.”

151 “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” May 12, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR. Original text
reads: “Demostradme que los españoles saben ser hombres de honor. Probad la hidalguía que decantáis los
Jefes españoles. Sed una vez honrado. = Siempre estoy cerca de Jicotea y Ciego de Ávila – teatro de
vuestras crímenes y vuestras robos.”

152 Ibid. Original text reads: “Aceptad mi reto = Os concedo un mes = Si dentro de ese tiempo no lo hiciése,
publicaré en hojas sueltas y en la prensa americana copia de esta carta que como guantelete os arrojo en el
rostro, que en intención, os abofetee y escupo.”
Alemán charged that the Spanish General had failed to fulfill the standards of honorable masculinity by cheating, conniving, and cowardice on the battlefield. “If you were a man of honor you will propose a duel, leaving to your choice the weapons and conditions, even though it is you who has offended me,” wrote Alemán in the opening of his letter. “…but you are the author of a vile assassination realized on the persons of Captain Agramonte and his men near Ciego de Ávila, and it would be a dishonor for me to beat a coward.”

He undermined the military achievements of the Spanish general by labeling them as murder (rather than battle). By juxtaposing two visions of death—the duel as honorable and the murder as cowardly—Alemán asserted that the only way for the Spanish general to prove his manliness was by accepting the duel.

Alemán emphasized the inequalities between the Cuban forces and the Spanish Army as a way to valorize the Cuban efforts and to undermine the legitimacy and fairness of any Spanish victory. “Your columns always rejected in ‘El Quino’ with my escort [escolta], reinforced with 20 or 30 men, even though you were two or three thousand strong, you waited, coward, until I left there to occupy the place with six thousand men that [made] you blush with shame; as if it were the demonstration of your impotence.”

Alemán drew parallels between military honor and male virility. That the Spanish general would not engage in direct confrontation with the Cuban forces was tantamount to admitting his own frailty as a man.

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153 Ibid. Original text reads: “Si fuerais un hombre de honor os propondrá un duelo dejando a vuestra elección, a pesar de que me habéis ofendido, las armas y condiciones; pero sois el autor del vil asesinato realizado en las personas el Capitán Agramonte y sus compañeros cerca de Ciego de Ávila y sería deshonor para mi batirme con un cobarde.”

154 Ibid.
References to Spanish cowardice in combat with Cuban soldiers served as a backdrop against which to compare Spanish treatment of women. Worse than avoiding direct battle with the Cubans, García Aldare actually targeted defenseless women.

Alemán argued that Spanish treatment of women made them worse than murders and less than cowards: “…it is a deed of a bitch [mujerzuela] to bring six thousand men [to occupy ‘El Quino’], what name deserves [the deed of] using so many armed [soldiers] to kill, as you said, a defenseless woman, full of cholera, who is more dignified, has greater patriotic heart and more civic value than you. Die of shame!” Attacking an honorable woman, rather than protecting her, was a patent violation of codes of chivalry, upon which masculine honor was in part based. Ironically, by describing the Cuban woman in terms of citizenship (civic value), Alemán both presented a progressive notion of inclusive Cuban identity while implying that the war had forced the disintegration of proper femininity. Although the maternal behavior of the woman in protecting her child proved her nobility and honor according to prevailing standards of proper gender roles, her bravery and cunning were decidedly masculine characteristics. Alemán used contradictory descriptions of the femininity and masculinity of this women to highlight her defenselessness before Spanish forces, while also being able to compare her worth to that the of the Spanish. Alemán insulted the manliness of the Spanish chief by comparing him to a woman, up to whom he could not even measure.

155 Ibid. Original text reads: “Rechazados vuestras columnas siempre en ‘El Quino’ con mi Escolta o reforzada con 20 o 30 hombre, a pesar de ser vosotros dos o tres mil esperasteis, cobarde, que yo saliera de allí para ocupar el lugar con 6000 hombres que os enrojecía de vergüenza; como que era la demostración de vuestra impotencia. = Pero si es [h]azaña de mujerzuela llevar 6000 hombres, ¿Qué nombre merece emplear tantos hombres armados para matar—según dijisteis, llena de cólera a una indefensa señora que es más digna que vos y que tiene más que voz corazón patriótico y valer cívico. = Moríos de vergüenza!”
By comparing the bravery of the Cuban woman to the cowardice and trickery of the Spanish chief, Alemán attacked Spanish manliness. “You situated her for four days, hundreds of your drunken soldiers surrounded the small mountain, and that woman, ready to take her own life before falling prisoner to your rabble, knew with her daughter (who barely started to talk) survive four days without shelter nor nourishment, and finally out maneuver [you] at the place.” Alemán again highlighted the disparity in power between the Spanish perpetrator and the Cuban victim. This time, however, the comparison was even more exaggerated. Six thousand armed Spanish soldiers were not as honorable as one defenseless Cuban woman. References to the preference for suicide over succumbing to suffering sexual dishonor by Spanish soldiers showed that this woman with the “ideal of Cuban womanhood bearing sacrifice and suffering heroically.” Because of her patriotism and sacrifice, she was far braver and more honorable than Spanish soldiers. It also “Miserable ones, for a woman who has no other shame than being Cuban, you use six thousand bayonets and when you hear our bullets, you cower and flee, even when you only have 200 Cubans in front of you.” Alemán implied that Spaniards attacked women because they were too cowardly to confront Cuban men.

Spanish cowardice in confronting Cuban men symbolized Spanish impotence.

156 Ibid. Original text reads: “La sitiasteis 4 días, centenares de vuestros borrachos saldados rodeaban la pequeña montaña, y aquella señora, dispuesta a arrancarse la vida antes que ser prisionera de vuestra chusma, supo con su hija (que apenas comienza a hablar) pasar 4 días sin amparo ni alimentos, y al fin burlar el sitio.”

157 Pérez, To Die in Cuba, p. 100.

158 “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” May 12, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “Miserables, para una mujer que no tiene más pena que ser cubana, empleáis 6000 bayonetas y cuando sentís nuestras balas, os acobardáis y hasta huis, si siquiera tenéis delante 200 cubanos!”
Alemán challenged the sexuality and virility of the Spanish chief by calling him a homosexual: “You shall see, fagot, how Cubans know how to punish the valiant Spaniards who burn the homes of Cuban families and chase women and children to slay them; the work of the noble children of the Spanish excrement. I am at your orders, miserable gachupín.” Alemán may have been aware of the mass arrests of homosexuals in the Cuban capital during the war as part of a crackdown on groups in which black supposedly predominated. Like Spanish generals, Alemán sought to neutralize his enemy by labeling his sexuality as pathological, thereby undermining his manhood. Other insurgent leaders targeted Spanish sexuality by describing them as effeminate. For example, Fermín Valdés Domínguez recalled a conversation with Serafín Sánchez during the war in which they discussed “the needs of men of Government, Loynaz’s lovers and other things, without forgetting General Rosas who with his cowardice and effeminate manners gave us material to laugh a bit at his expense.” As the polarization between heterosexual normalcy and homosexual deviance began to take greater shape in the nineteenth century, sexuality became a powerful tool to condemn an enemy.

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159 “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” May 12, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “Veréis, marica, como los cubanos saben castigar a los valientes españoles que queman las casas de familias cubanas y persiguen para asesinarlas a señora y niñas; labor propia de los hidalgos hijos de la espurra España = Estoy a vuestras ordenes, miserable gachupín.”

160 Helg, Our Rightful Share, 83.

161 Fermín Valdés-Domínguez, Diario de un Soldado, 4 volumes, transcribed by Hiram Dupotey Fideaux (Havana: Centro de Información Científica y Técnica de la Universidad de la Habana, 1973), I, p. 388.

By linking the cowardly act of hunting women to sexual deviance, Alemán depicted the Cubans as the defenders of moral righteousness and proper gender norms. Furthermore, labeling his enemy as homosexual worked to highlight the effeminacy of Spanish leaders,\(^{163}\) thus uncovering an interesting paradox in his reasoning: Alemán sought to defend his honor as a Cuban man by protecting honorable Cuban women. At the same time as he valorized the Cuban woman for her bravery, Alemán used effeminacy as a weapon against his enemy. He therefore harness two opposing conceptions of femininity to celebrate Cuban women and chastise Spanish men.

**Masculine Honor and Female Sexual Virtue**

In one of the most potent passages in this letter, Alemán attacked the manliness of the Spanish chief by defaming the sexual propriety of his mother and wife. “If you still have not decided, I infer you on the honor of your mother, on that of your wife the offense of calling them prostitutes, being yourself beyond cowardly, ruffian, poor gentlemen and swine!”\(^{164}\) Not only did the characterization of these women as prostitutes imply physical corruption and moral perversion of these women, it also indicated the effeminacy of the man whose charge it was to care for them: the Spanish General. If his women were prostitutes, the Spanish General had failed to fulfill his duty as a man to protect and defend female honor. By labeling the two most important women to the


\(^{164}\) “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” May 12, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR.
Spanish general as prostitutes, Alemán compared their dishonor and moral licentiousness with the honorability and virtue of Cuban women.

Alemán was not alone in labeling the female supporters of Spain as prostitutes. Indeed, Máximo Gómez himself used similar language when dealing with two female traitors near Minas in Puerto Príncipe. Cuban soldiers detained two women leaving the town late at night. Summoned by General Gómez, these two women explained that they did not know that entering town was prohibited, and that one of them had a sick child there. Apparently, Gómez did not believe her, and proceeded to interrogate the alleged mother. “How can a woman, weak as she is, go at night, knowing she is violating an order talking or dealing with the enemy? Is this the deed of an honorable Cuban woman or is it the proceeding of a prostitute?”

Gómez drew on prevailing gender ideals specifying the natural place of the woman was the home to question the behavior of the female suspect. Because she was outside the home at night, and in violation of an insurgent military order, she transgressed gender norms, sexual codes, and showed little respect for the Cuban cause. Similar to the wife and mother of García Aldare, this woman

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165 Valdés-Domínguez, *Diario de un Soldado*, II, p. 207. Original text reads: “…una guardia había sorprendido a dos mujeres que venían de un pueblo, no sé cuál, pero en los que están cerca, creo que es Minas. Cuando el General se disponía a remitir estas mujeres, en calidad de detenidas, al Ministerio de la Guerra llegó este con Mazorra y algunos números de la escolta del Gobierno y su hermano el ingeniero que anda de acompañante suyo o empleado de su secretaria. […] Las mujeres detenidas fueron llamadas por el General y, a pesar de que la que hacía de jefe tenía bastante serenidad para decir que había ideo al pueblo porque no sabía que estuviera prohibido y porque tenía una hija enferma a la que asistía el Dr. Luaces, que salió por ir a verla, porque no la había podido traer por el mal estado de salud y que si volvía a las 10 de la noche, hora en que la sorprendió la guardia, fue porque pensó que a esa hora de noche, podría traer a su enferma y por eso fue al pueblo de tarde. –No le gustó mucho al General la explicación de la mujer; el nombre de Luaces le hizo sospechar que aquella mujer fuera un espía del Gobierno español y por eso la mandó para que se la juzgara. La mujer hablaba con entereza, pero no podía dejar de temblar cada vez que oía un cañonazo o los disparos de máuser o rémington que silbaban por encima de nuestras cabezas. Gómez le dijo: ¿Cómo una mujer que es siempre débil va de noche y sabiendo que se falta a una orden a tratar con el enemigo y a hablar con él? ¿Es este proceder de una mujer cubana honrada o es procedimiento de una prostituta? De acuerdo con Portuondo mandó a una casa e familia buena y honrada a la detenida y nadie se volvió a ocupar de la mujer; pero al despachar el general al oficial que había conducido hasta el a las señoras le dio orden para que le mandaran como preso a un sargento, que después de haberlas detenido, las había mandado a poner en libertad.”
failed to uphold the norms of proper Cuban womanhood, defined as self-sacrifice in favor of the Patria.\textsuperscript{166}

Although the epithet of prostitution implied more moral defamation and delegitimization of the enemy, it also suggested figurative infidelity and transgression of the prevailing norms of femininity and sexual honor. Because insurgents defined both masculinity and femininity in terms of contribution to the nation, all those who did not actively commit to the cause failed in as men and as women. For men, failing to contribute meant being an effeminate coward, while for a woman, refusal to support \textit{Cuba Libre} was equated with the worst moral transgression possible: prostitution. By labeling enemy women as prostitutes, Cuban insurgents linked supporting the enemy to criminality.

While Spanish men and women failed to uphold proper gender roles, Cubans presented themselves in terms of the highest virtues of their respective gender. For their part, Cuban men displayed valiance and honor on the battlefield and their self-abnegation and sacrifice. These values enmeshed masculine honor in the patriotic cult of death, in which Cuban men were required to submit their lives to the cause of independence. Women expressed honor mainly through their roles as wives and mothers, namely “resignation to the death of men in the service of patria and acceptance of the attending emotional loss and material impoverishment.”\textsuperscript{167} According to one Cuban patriot, the historian can never be sure who to judge as more patriotic: “…the man, who for political ideal abandons his estate and family to run the risks of battle; or the woman who remains

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\item[166] Pérez, \textit{To Die in Cuba}, p. 103.
\item[167] Ibid., 99.
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resigned, prisoner of the fever of the nostalgia, in the abandoned and insecure home, where everything speaks to her of the object of her illusions.”

Fittingly, the manifestation of these gender roles encouraged male display of virility through military bravery and exploits, and female chastity and abnegation. These sexual values situated Cuban honor in decidedly white, middle-class culture, providing a stark contrast to Spanish dishonor—effeminacy in men and sexual licentiousness in women.

Male honor hinged on fearless confrontation of unfavorable odds and probable death on the battlefield. Cuban insurgents showcased their manliness by comparing their valiant acts with Spanish cowardice: “And so long as they pretend to fulfill their sad mission, the sacred ideal of Liberty united us who do not know how to run away from dangers and following the order of the Chief of War, realize valiant acts that oblige Weyler’s battalions to retreat to the towns, leaving behind the damnations of their victims and bringing as a trophy hundreds of wounded, without counting those who at the foot of the burned and violated home have found deserved sepulture.”

Despite the considerable military disadvantages informal Cuban forces faced in their confrontation with the professional Spanish army, they still upset their enemies.

Cuban insurgents at times emphasized the uneven circumstances of battle by claiming that the defeated rifle-toting Spaniards with simple machetes. The battle of Mal Tiempo, a small settlement neighboring the town of Cruces, in December 1895, was a

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168 José Miró, *Crónicas de la Guerra: La Campaña de Invasión* (Santiago de Cuba: Imprenta El Cubano Libre, 1899), 55.

169 “No Title,” in *Las Villas*, April 10, 1897, Box 290, File 11, ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “Y en tanto que ellos pretenden así cumplir su misión triste, une entre nosotros la santa idea de Libertad a los que no saben rehuir peligros y cumpliendo las órdenes del jefe de la Guerra, realizan actos de valor que obligan a los batallones de Weyler a retirarse a las poblaciones, dejando atrás las maldiciones de sus víctimas y llevando como trofeo centenares de heridos, sin contar, los que al pie de la casa quemada y del hogar violado han encontrado merecida sepultura.”
prime example of the prowess of the machete-wielding Cuban man. Often recognized as a decisive turning point in the war, when Cuban forces resoundingly defeated their enemy, Mal Tiempo became a symbol of Cuban honor and bravery because historians have upheld the myth that Cubans gained victory using the machete rather than firearms. For this and other battles, “the machete came to serve as a shibboleth for Cuban bravery and Spanish incompetence.”\(^{170}\) Claiming victory by machete seemed much more honorable than the actual guerrilla tactics Spanish soldiers observed of their Cuban opponents, who preferred to shoot into lines of Spanish troops from afar and hidden rather than face direct battle.\(^{171}\) Victory over the enemy even when confronted with substantial obstacles was proof of their superior masculine honor.

When faced with defeat, the only honorable option for a Cuban soldier was suicide. Suicide before surrender was celebrated a core component of Cuban manliness because it represented to ultimate sacrifice. “Exemplary death served to deepen the intransigence central to the purpose of liberation, to situate each generation between ancestry, to whom a debt was owed, and posterity, to whom an obligation was due.”\(^{172}\) Insurgent leaders, for example, celebrated the suicide of Juan B. Zayas, considering him valiant for killing himself before falling in the hands of the enemy.\(^{173}\)


\(^{171}\) Tone, \textit{War and Genocide}, p. 128.

\(^{172}\) Pérez, \textit{To Die in Cuba}, p. 84.

\(^{173}\) José B. Alemán to Máximo Gómez, August 25, 1896, Box 6, File 903, ANC/FPMG.
In addition to demonstrating manliness through military victory and willingness to die for the cause, Cubans emphasized their mercy in dealing with the enemy, and their protection and friendly relations with the country people, especially women. For example, Alfredo Rego, an insurgent chief in the zone of Cienfuegos, boasted about his military victories during a campaign around Ojo de Agua, a small country town on the outskirts of Cienfuegos. Rego led his men into battle against 64 soldiers of the Batallón Canarias at the Ingenio Cantabria, subsequently turning to take the fort of Ojo de Agua. Taking 16 prisoners at Cantabria and another 14 at Ojo de Agua and losing only two of his own men, Rego proudly detailed his exploits.

He wrote to Máximo Gómez that when he turned in the prisoners in Ojo de Agua, the entire town fell to its knees: “The town, I don’t know how to compare it. The women, the children, the elderly, everyone gave me repeated vivas.” Even the enemy combatants celebrated the actions of Rego: “Once inside of this [town], this was to be seen. The

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174 “Mal Tiempo,” in *Cuba y América, Revista Quincenal*, November 5, 1899, 3:70, p. 3. In USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3. File 6462
teniente coronel del Valle embracing me; the officers of the line troops and marines did the same.” The prisoners were filled with gratitude and love for Rego: “The prisoners, all hanging from my neck, soaked me with their tears, to the point that their lips covered my face, kissing me.”

Remembering the spectacle, Rego wrote that he had to compose himself “to be able to send them to their cuarteles, pronouncing among other words, the ones that follow: ‘Now you have had the chance to meet the nobility of the Cuban people. This act that I have just realized I do it without other end than to comply with my conscience. This is what it demands of me and my good decision will not carry any act in this life that is not great, noble and decorous.’” The townspeople greeted this speech with warmth: “A viva did escape from the those Spaniards, a viva that was answered by all and then discovering myself I exclaimed ¡Viva Cuba! viva that was also answered by a great number of the spectators.” “In that town, we were received, offering me a banquet that I did not want to accept.”

Rego asserted his masculine honor by highlighting his military victories, his liberation and protection of women and children, and his charity and gentility toward the enemy.

Insurgents even upheld their respect and protection of women in encounters with the enemy. The story of one female prisoner of the force of Enrique Loynaz del Castillo exemplifies the ways in which Cubans represented their treatment of women to bolster their masculine honor. A pair of vanguard soldiers presented Loynaz with a “young and well-dressed” woman and two men, claiming to be her brother and brother-in-law. “I

175 “Alfredo Rego to Máximo Gómez,” December 3, 1896, Box 6, File 850, ANC/FPMG.

176 “Alfredo Rego to Máximo Gómez,” December 3, 1896, Box 6, File 850, ANC/FPMG.
interrogated them as they walked alongside my horse. She insisted that she had a child, gravely ill, and that she had gone out in search of tubers or plantains so as not to die of starvation.” Loynaz was skeptical: “I objected to the woman that the makeup on her cheeks contrasted with her supposed affliction that the illness of her child should have caused her.” By calling attention to the makeup the woman wore, and implying that she lied, Loynaz enmeshed her in images of prostitution and immorality.

Despite the incorrectness of the woman, Loynaz remained gentlemanly: “Not asking to disrobe the lady, for the sake of respect, the saddle of the horse was taken off in search of possible indications of guilt. I did not delay in finding, inside it, a Spanish pass [salvaconducto], in which those individuals were recommended to the transit authorities ‘for their valuable service’” Loynaz immediately ordered the men hung, but he vacillated on how to deal with the female enemy. “The woman well deserved the same punishment; but it was so hard to order it.”

He called one of his officers, Lieutenant Colonel [José Caridad] López. “Without waiting for my word, he told me: ‘Lieutenant Colonel, don’t put me in the position of hanging a woman.’” Loynaz conceded, ordering López to keep her prisoner with his force until they saw a place to leave the spy. “The woman, prisoner of her panic, fell to her knees by my side, asking for mercy and swearing that the pass was to save her from the Spanish.” Although the woman pleaded for mercy, “a soldier pushed her back in line

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177 “Aclaración Histórica del Mayor General Loynaz del Castillo en defensa de la gloriosa memoria del Mayor General José María Rodriguez,” [n.d.], Box 524, File 1, p. 59, ANC/FDR.

178 Ibid.
to continue the march."\textsuperscript{179} Loynaz proved his commitment to the revolution by remaining firm in punishing the spies, while proving his chivalry by not sentencing the woman to death.

Cubans were forced to present themselves as the morally righteous and upright ones in stark contrast to the corrupt and immoral oppressors. While Máximo Gómez officially encouraged merciful treatment of enemy captives, his officers did not always comply. Quintín Bandera for example, was known for his harsh treatment of the enemy, and other insurgents chiefs were known to force captives to dig their own graves and hack them to death with machetes.\textsuperscript{180} Despite the brutal realities of war, however, Cuban insurgents emphasized their honorable conduct and downplayed instances of transgression to uphold the moral righteousness of their cause. They did this by exemplary punishments to offenders, thereby proving their intolerance of brutality and dishonor.

Upholding insurgent morality required strict military discipline. When insurgents failed to respect women, they faced severe punishment. In one case, Cuban officer Mane

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\textsuperscript{179} Ibid. Original text reads: “A poco de andar una pareja de vanguardia trajo una señora y dos hombres: ella joven y bien vestida, a caballo con un aparejo por montura. Los hombres, a pie, dijeron ser hermano y cuñado de ella. Les interrogué mientras iban al lado de mi caballo. Insistía ella en que tenía un hijo gravemente enfermo, y en que había salido en busca de b[oj]naitos o plátanos para no morirse de hambre. Objeté a la señora la pintura en sus mejillas que contrastaba con la supuesta aflicción, que debía causarle la gravedad del hijo. Registrados los hombres, nada se les encontró. No pidiéndose desvestir la dama, por propio respeto, se quitó el aparejo de caballo en busca de posibles índices de culpabilidad. No tardé en encontrarse, dentro de él, un salvoconductos [sic] español, en el que eran recomendados aquellos individuos a las autoridades del tránsito ‘por sus valiosos servicios.’ Inmediatamente, mandé hacer alto y ahorrar los dos hombres. La señora bien merecía igual castigo; pero era tan duro ordenarlo, que llamé al teniente coronel López…Sin esperar palabra mía, dijome: ‘Teniente coronel, no me ponga en el trance de ahorrar una mujer.’ ‘Bien, López, llévala presa en tu fuerza, hasta ver donde podamos dejarla: se trata de una espía.’ En una de las ocasiones en que me situaba al margen del camino para observar el desfile, la mujer, presa de pánico, se arrodilló a mi aso, pidiendo piedad y jurando que el salvoconducto era solo para salvarse de los españoles…Un soldad la empujó a la fila a continuar la marcha…”

\textsuperscript{180} Tone, \textit{War and Genocide}, p. 147.
Dominguez faced military tribunals for grave insults to the Lieutenant of Sanitation, and for insults and threats to burn down the house of “a poor old woman.” In another instance, an insurgent soldier accused of raping one woman, was sentenced to be hung. Celebrating masculine honor by protecting country people, showing mercy toward female enemies, and maintaining strict standards of morality, Cuban insurgents presented themselves as defenders of morality.

Conclusions

As Spaniards and Cubans clashed violently on the battlefield, they also engaged in an impassioned discursive war. While Spanish propaganda labeled the insurgents as black criminals and ñáñigos, the Cubans fought back by depicting the Spaniards as cowards. Cubans found in Spain a clear enemy under the rule of Weyler, and attempted to undermine the Spanish cause by depicting the men as effeminate and the women as prostitutes. Insurgents harnessed the policy of reconcentration, a powerful example of Spanish abuses of noncombatants, as proof of the cowardice of their enemies. Even more egregious from the perspective of the Cubans was the Spanish abuse and murder of women and children further evidence of the faltering masculinity—even effeminacy—of Spaniards.

The early successes of the insurrection and the westward expansion of the Invasion force of Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo bolstered the cohesion of the

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181 José B. Alemán to Máximo Gómez, September 14, 1896, Box 6, File 905, ANC/FPMG.

182 Bernabé Boza, Mi diario de la guerra: desde Baire hasta la intervención americana, 2 Volumes (Havana: Imprenta Propagandista 1900), p. 84.
insurgents against a common enemy. The Battle of Mal Tiempo, when eastern forces penetrated the zone of Spanish fortification to achieve a resounding military victory in December 1895, became a symbol of all the virtues of insurgent masculinity. Between the outbreak of war and the first months of the rule of Weyler, insurgents of all colors and nationalities put forth a united front against the Spanish, under the banner of racial brotherhood. Indeed, Cuban propaganda labeling the Spanish as effeminate was forged against an implicit backdrop of honorable Cuban masculinity. Mambises were everything that Spaniards were not: patriotic, valiant, scrupulous, and most importantly, chivalrous. The polarizing propaganda effectively homogenized Cuban soldiers, officers and chiefs under the umbrella of a glorious Cuban manliness, downplaying the divisions of race and class.

Although much of Cuban discourse and propaganda portrayed an image of unity, fragmentation festered just below the surface of the supposed raceless Cuban masculinity. When the tides of the war began to shift in favor of Weyler, unity gave way to competition and dissent. Diverging visions of Cuba Libre came into direct conflict as separatists competed for military ascendency amidst a series of defeats. Conflict over the role of social hierarchy within the insurrection revealed dissent against the implicitly white and middle-class manliness that white insurgent leaders like Máximo Gómez and José B. Alemán had applied to the diverse group of men in the Cuban Army. The next chapter examines the diverging visions of Cuban masculinity and the subsequent reconfiguration of masculine honor in the second half of the war.
CHAPTER 2
Insurgent Masculinities:
The Invasion, Black Officers, and Regionalism

During the first half of the war, insurgent chiefs fomented unity among Cubans of diverse backgrounds with a discourse of racial brotherhood. They expressed this cross-racial alliance in a language of masculinity, by depicting the Spanish as effeminate cowards in contrast to the altruistic, self-sacrificing, chivalrous Cuban man. The consensus on white, middle-class masculinity celebrated by insurgent chiefs of central Cuba prevailed especially during reconcentration. This policy targeting noncombatants seemed to corroborate insurgent depictions of the extreme immorality and cowardice of their Spanish foes. At the other extreme, Cuban patriots upheld a positive image themselves by deploying an equalizing and unifying notion of masculinity. Hierarchy and divisions played a relatively insignificant role in characterizing the diverse army, or so the homogenizing discourse made it seem.

The draconian policies and military campaigns of Valeriano Weyler quickly turned the string of insurgent victories associated with the Invasion in 1895 and early 1896 turned into a series of defeats between late 1896 and 1897. Although insurgents articulated a supposedly unified Cuban masculinity in anti-Spanish propaganda during the early war, setbacks on the battlefield exacerbated social frictions already existing within the Cuban army, and fomented tensions among different groups competing for power. Concerns over the inactivity and defeats of insurgents in the central provinces highlighted the failures of central chiefs to uphold military honor, patriotic values, and
chivalry, all key indicators of the unified insurgent masculinity. Racial and regional frictions converged in the floundering military campaigns of the central provinces with the realization that not all insurgents upheld the righteous manliness purportedly characterizing all Cuban patriots. The label of *majá* served to denigrate the manliness and prestige of insurgent chiefs who faltered on the battlefield. The highest leaders of the insurrection including Máximo Gómez employed this label liberally to describe the insurgents of the central provinces, who experienced a series of military defeats in late 1896 and early 1897.

Amidst this affront their honor, white insurgent chiefs sought to re-assert their own manliness by denying their culpability in the military defeats and contesting racial implications of the Invasion. While the invasion had imported the radical social agenda which carried many eastern blacks into positions of authority, white insurgent chiefs sought to reinforce the racial hierarchy that had continued to prevail to a much larger degree in the central provinces during the war. White insurgent chiefs in the central provinces blamed the stagnation of their military campaigns on groups who seemingly threatened the white monopoly on power and military prestige, the whiteness of hegemonic masculinity—such as the allegedly hypermasculine black officers. These central insurgent chiefs sought to reinforce racial hierarchy through a language of masculinity, bolstering their own and undercutting that of black officers.

One way in which Cuban insurgents justified claims to positions of power within the army was by depicting certain groups of soldiers as either inadequately masculine due to their military failures, or pathologically masculine pointing not to their aggressive sexual behavior. In a series of court-martial trials, central insurgent chiefs deposed
officers who challenged the vision of white middle-class respectable masculinity. They usually targeted two main groups: blacks and orientales, men, often black, who had arrived in the central provinces with the Invasion Force and had taken command of local regiments.

The series of court-martial trials revealed profound fragmentation within the Cuban army, that had was supposedly unified under a discourse of patriotic masculinity. On top of the already existing racial tensions within the regiments of the central provinces, the Invasion catalyzed regional antagonism. Regionalism, especially the profoundly different historical experience of the economically stagnant and rebellious eastern zone and the prosperous and largely Royalist central provinces, embodied diverging understandings of the role of blacks in the insurrection. The court-martials in late 1896 and 1897 suggest that white insurgent chiefs of the central provinces rejected the eastern vision of patriotism that celebrated black leadership. What before had been a universalizing feature of Cuban military service, became a basis for hierarchy and castigation of men who strayed from the socially-conservative vision of Cuba Libre that had begun to emerge in the civil branch of the war effort and resonated in the central provinces.

**Masculinity and Majasería during the “Spiritual Crisis”**

Difficulties on the battlefield that characterized the experience of the Cuban Army between late 1896 and early 1897 began to expose racial tensions in the Cuban forces operating around Cienfuegos. In the central provinces, especially the area around Cienfuegos, Cuban forces were largely incapacitated in the face of the heavily reinforced
fortified zone protecting the zones of cultivation of three of the largest sugar factories in the island. (See Map 1). José Lacret Morlot reported practical stagnation amongst troops in Cienfuegos, a critical Spanish stronghold, which he judged required a more active force to ensure the success of the revolution. The Brigade of Cienfuegos “does not meet the conditions to penetrate the zone of ingenios, as in four months that will have passed since I am here, he has not done it at all and in appreciation it is that he cannot do so because of his scarce armed force and being in that zone protected by more than 1500 guerrillas who at the first [sign of] fire gather to protect themselves. In this zone of ingenios, perhaps the richest in the Island, there is need for a strong contingent that to invade by fire and flame…” José Lacret Morlot to Máximo Gómez, January 29, 1897, Box 7, File 947, ANC/FPMG. Name appears as José Lauret Morlot.

The need for a vigorous campaign in this area rife with wealthy plantations contrasted greatly with the realities of the insurrection in that area.

Image 3: Spanish Blockhouse, Cienfuegos

José Lacret Morlot to Máximo Gómez, January 29, 1897, Box 7, File 947, ANC/FPMG. Name appears as José Lauret Morlot.

According to numerous insurgent leaders, the abundance of *majases* in the zone of Cienfuegos highlighted a dismaying, and downright dangerous lack of morality among the soldiers. Cuban leaders employed the label of *majá* as an affront to the manliness of soldiers they perceived as unworthy of leadership positions. Forces in Cienfuegos during the early days of the war were often labeled as *majases*, or soldiers who do not fight. According to American war correspondent Grover Flint, “They get their name from a huge snake, called ‘Maja’ that kills chickens and destroys hen’s eggs. It is a big, dangerous-looking reptile, but perfectly harmless.”\(^{186}\) The image of the *majá*, or soldier

\(^{185}\) Grover Flint, *Marching with Gómez: A War Correspondent’s Field Note-Book Kept during Four Months with the Cuban Army* (Boston: Lamson, Wolffe and Company, 1898), 90.

\(^{186}\) Ibid., 93.
who does not fight, emerged as an affront to the military prowess of insurgent chiefs in the central provinces, thereby placing in question their manliness.

Cuban leaders entering Cienfuegos in late 1896 and early 1897 frequently commented on the inadequate zeal of their revolutionary compatriots operating in that zone. Coronel Rafael Cabrera, commissioned by the Inspector General for the organization of a force, classified the forces of Cienfuegos as lazy and incompetent. “With regard to the organization of the infantry,” he wrote in December 1896, “I should say to you that in the Brigade of Cienfuegos it will be pretty difficult because here where the majases abound.” When recruiting people in the surrounding mountains to join the Cuban army, Cabrera noted significant “immorality,” as “all of the lazy men, find protection with the military chiefs of Cienfuegos, who say that they belong to their forces.” Cabrera requested a roster of the men enlisted in the brigade to the he could “moralize this and punish the people who contribute to the immorality and try to flout superior orders.” He noted that central chiefs like Colonel Alejandro Rodríguez repeatedly had failed to cooperate with him in reforming the brigade.187

When José Lacret Morlot described the forces of Cienfuegos as if they were bandits: “it is incredible,” he wrote. The chiefs and officers of the Brigade of Cienfuegos “were marauding about of their own free will without regard to the responsibilities they had to their Patria…” He ordered that these men submit to a new chief, the Brigadier Pérez.188

187 Colonel Rafael Cabrera to José B. Alemán, quoted in José B. Alemán to Máximo Gómez, December 6, 1896, Box 8, File 1165, ANC/FPMG.

188 José Lacret Morlot to Máximo Gómez, January 29, 1897, Box 7, File 947, folio 4, ANC/FPMG.
Cándido Álvarez, who operated a regiment in Havana and Matanzas, claimed that in the province of Santa Clara “the war was not known until my arrival there with the Regiment.” He found blame in the incompetence of the chiefs: “No wonder, because the majority of the chiefs that have come to figure that using the instinct of conservation, we will never arrive to a happy end the redemption of our aggrieved Patria, until today with all types of calamities.” Only the leadership of one man seemed to redeem these men from their lack of commitment to the revolution: “Live with the belief, General, that if it were not for the Brigadier Alejandro Rodríguez of Cienfuegos, and for this subordinate of yours, whole months would pass without having a shot fired at the enemy, which in truth says very little in honor of the Liberating Army.”

By February 1897, many insurgents and even some officers went hungry and faced shortages of supplies incapacitating their military functions. Máximo Gómez and José B. Alemán called it the “spiritual crisis,” while Fermín Valdés-Domínguez referred to this period as the “dark month.” “We must conquer everything by blood and force. I believe, too, that those who survive this vindicating war will be few,” he wrote in late February.

Cienfuegos forces failed to fulfill their roles as Cuban men when they fled Spanish attacks instead of facing them head on. Captain Pino, “an ox-eyed, middle-sized man, with flowing dark moustachios [sic] and a sad agree-with-you-perfectly-sir-I-am-a-

189 Miguel J. Monteavaro on behalf of Cándido Álvarez to Máximo Gómez, January 16, 1897, Box 7, File 943, ANC/FPMG.

190 José B. Alemán, “Diario de Operaciones” in José Guerra Alemán, Juro pero no prometo (Biografía del general José Braulio Alemán y otros relatos de la Guerra y la paz) (Mexico City: Costa-Amic Editores, 1989), 244-245; Tone, War and Genocide, 187.

191 Valdés-Domínguez, Diario de un soldado, III, 184.
blackguard manner,” who commanded thirty men, was one such example.192 “Without a blush,” Pino told Flint the story of his near-capture by the Spanish the day before. He and his mulatto assistant Chicho, fleeing from the enemy, fell to the very back of the force as their horses gave out. Chicho sacrificed his life protecting Pino, urging him to hide in the swamp grass, just as the guerrillas approached hacking the valiant mulatto aid-de-camp to death. “In a moment, the guerrilleros were upon Chicho, and he fell from his saddle under blows without a word. Half a dozen guerrilleros urged their horses in pursuit past the arroyo. Others stopped to ‘calentar la sangre’ (warm their blood) with a hack at Chicho’s body, causing a blockade in the narrow trail behind.”193 “‘There must be another ñáñigo about here,’ shouted an officer, pushing past the files and galloping by. ‘No, my Captain,” said one of the guerrilleros, “it is the horse of one whom I shot myself from the saddle some distance back.’ Then one of them took Chicho’s belt and machete as souvenirs, and the guerrilla move on.”194 Although Flint ultimately judged both soldiers as cowards for fleeing Spanish attack, the mulatto was more valiant because he faced death without fear, while Pino hid in the underbrush shamefully.

Other reports of the immorality among Cienfuegos forces focused on the leisurely lifestyles of some insurgents, who preferred an easy life to sacrifice for the Patria: Pepe Aguiar “was a thickset, bullet-headed young man, of genial bearing, but not a very soldierly character, for he always seemed to be foraging on his own account, or making love to peasant girls near the town by night, and sleeping by day when his force courted

192 Flint, Marching with Gómez, 93.
193 Ibid., 94.
194 Ibid., 94.
ease in the woods. As a sample of his discipline, the prefect and I once rode into his camp
at midnight without being challenged.”\textsuperscript{195} Another case of demoralization was the black
Major Aniceto Hernández. “The prefect had found in the woods remains of cattle killed
without his knowledge, and I was with him when he tracked down and discovered the
perpetrators, and he found them to be members of Aniceto’s force, who maintained a
little prefecture of their own in the forests, where they lived in lawless ease and did no
fighting.”\textsuperscript{196}

So disheartening were the reports of the disorganization and incompetence of
Cienfuegos forces that General Máximo Gómez, himself, came to the camp of Major
Hernández, to scold the forces about their inactivity. “There the old General gave them a
lecture that made them wince more than the steel of the Spaniards. Every man of them
felt that the eye of the great war chief was on him personally. He had heard, he said, that
they had been machete, cut up, and made to run like sheep by a small Spanish guerrilla.
He had travelled the entire length of the Island, and had never heard of such a disgraceful
thing before. He would put them, he said, in the future where they would have to
fight.”\textsuperscript{197} According to Flint, Gómez gave instructions to divide this force and to put these
men in places of danger as often as possible. “As for Aniceto himself, he must have
overslept, for he was captured by Captain Pineira of the Lajas Guerrilla and shot in the
town of Las Lajas.”\textsuperscript{198}

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 91.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 91-92.

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 92.

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 92.
Part of the problem, according to insurgent chief Alejandro Rodríguez, was that the men in power were selfish, seeking advancement for themselves, rather than for the Patria. “The ambition and unmeasured pretensions of the large part of the chiefs, accustomed until today to do whatever they desire, because of the weakness of General Aguirre […] hiding the resources that exist that they esteem are private property and not of the Patria.” 199

Another problem was the regionalism among forces in the zone of Cienfuegos. With the invasion from the East, many oriental leaders remained to command local troops in the central provinces, especially Cienfuegos. Born in Sancti-Spíritus, Rodríguez briefly commanded the Cienfuegos Brigade, later transferring to the division of Havana and Matanzas. Local leaders rejected the leadership of the “invaders,” he claimed: “because they are so localist that they see as an intruder and usurper of their rights the person who comes from another locality, trying with calumnies and false information to lead the operation astray and to create difficulties so that it fails and thus making it seem that they are the only ones apt to fill the first place…” 200 Just as he had refused to cooperate with Cabrera in his investigation of the brigade, Rodríguez faced resentment from his men, which he understood to have originated from him hailing from a different part of the island.

Rodríguez felt firsthand the fierce regionalism of soldiers in the Brigade of Cienfuegos: “The acts of brigandage realized by the chiefs in the west of this division encouraged by the impunity, surely because you do not know of these facts, constituting

199 Alejandro Rodríguez to Máximo Gómez, March 5, 1897, Box 7, File 964, ANC/FPMG.

200 Ibid.
each one of them a separate group and practicing themselves to not obey anyone and being disposed to reject by force the chief [who] commands them, complaining those and the others that resources are not sent to them and orders and strange chiefs are, when here, there are so many, according to them, who could fill all the posts, is another difficulty.” Perhaps most disheartening to Rodríguez was the way his soldiers silently rejected his command, rather than confronting it openly: “All this is done in a deaf [sordo] way with a smile on the lips, observing the best ways [mejores formas] but trying to take advantage of a mistake [descuido] to stab in the back [herir en la espalda] No one dares do anything in my presence. You know that I have more than enough valor to punish whoever would do that; but it is the same deaf war [guerra sorda], lowly and evil swine of the other localities that wears at my patience, saddens me, and embarrasses me. Could it be possible that men who abandon their homes and are disposed to lose their lives cannot also sacrifice to the Patria their pretensions!”

Insurgent chiefs from Cienfuegos placed a high value on the patronage networks that connected to local populations. Alfredo Lewis, a native of Cienfuegos and insurgent chief claimed that his military success rested upon his relationship to rural farmers: “I am not worth anything,” he wrote to Máximo Gómez, “but in my town, in this Cienfuegos, I have great relations with the honorable class of farmers, the true patriots of Cuba.” His influence among the farmers allowed him to rally greater support for the revolution. “They listen to me and they go where I bring them, trusting, and I, convinced that they will go only where honor and duty take them,” he wrote of Cienfuegos farmers-turned-

201 Ibid.
patriots. At the same time as Lewis articulated the importance of connections to the local population for insurgent suggests, he also alluded to a distinct definition of patriotism. In contrast to the vision of patriotism prevailing among eastern insurgents, Lewis emphasized the centrality of the honorable (white) farmer to central definitions of patriotism.

Race and Regionalism in Visions of Patriotism

The consolidation of the rebel forces and the enforcement of morality in Cienfuegos in the wake of the invasion campaign transformed the social dynamics of the Brigade. The invasion campaign brought an influx of thousands of eastern soldiers and even catapulted eastern chiefs into the leadership and ranks of the local forces. Many of these chiefs and soldiers were blacks. For example, in February 1896, 200 soldiers of the Brigade of Cienfuegos transferred to the infantry commanded by black eastern chief Quintín Bandera, while José Camacho Yera, a black chief from Santiago occupied another leadership role in the Brigade of Cienfuegos. Moreover, local country residents from Cumanayagua, Palmira, Camarones, Cruces, Lajas, Cartagena, Yaguaramas, Abreus and Rodas joined the insurrection en masse, resulting in a predominance of black rural...
farmers in the army. Approximately 80 percent of blacks in the Brigade of Cienfuegos joined the army in the period between February 1895 and February 1896.

In contrast, the pattern of white leadership in the Brigade continued intact. Whites like Alejandro Rodríguez, Rafael María Cañizares and Joaquín Rodríguez commanded the insurgent forces in Cienfuegos and the surrounding countryside. Claudio Sarría was the only locally-born black man to reach a position of command in the Brigade of Cienfuegos by mid-1896. The socially-conservative tendencies persisting in the leadership of the Brigade of Cienfuegos conflicted with the ascension of black eastern chiefs resulting from the Invasion.

Between mid-1896 and mid-1897, the insurrection languished in the central provinces. Morale among the mambises reached new lows as prominent insurgent leaders met their deaths on the battlefield. The deaths of Serafín Sánchez in November 1896 and of Antonio Maceo and Panchito Gómez Toro in December 1896 marked a turning point in the war. The year 1897 showed the highest death rates, with nearly half of all wartime deaths in the Brigade of Cienfuegos and the Invasion force occurring during that year. The insurgent forces of Cienfuegos suffered the loss of General José María

205 García Martínez, “La Brigada de Cienfuegos,” 182.
208 Valdés-Domínguez, Diario de un soldado, III, 43-60.
209 Michael Zeuske, “‘Los negros hicimos la independencia’,” 203-204
Aguirre the chief of the brigade in January 1897. Desertions increased, reaching “alarming” proportions. Máximo Gómez noted a high number of deserters emanating from Santa Clara province between February and May 1897. Alejandro Rodríguez ordered the capture of several deserters from his brigade in June 1897.

Both black and white officers in late 1896 and early 1897 faced significant obstacles to fulfilling their orders to destroy sugar estates and prevent cane grinding due to lack of resources and heavy Spanish fortifications. For example, in September 1896, José B. Alemán complained of the “very active” enemy operations around Cienfuegos, the enemy “columns being very numerous.” Alejandro Rodríguez wrote to Máximo Gómez in December 1896 of the difficulties his forces faced in confronting the enemy. The enemy “continues his operations; because in this zone since my arrival and even in the rainy season they have not ceased to operate.” He assured Gómez that his forces were preparing to destroy the sugar mills in the vicinity “that is to say, trying to,” as the constant rains impeded the fires. By mid-1897, Colonel José Pérez informed General Francisco Carrillo that we would be unable to confront the private militias on the sugar estates because he lacked ammunition.

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210 Valdés-Domínguez, Diario de un soldado, III, 61-2.

211 Tone, War and Genocide, 96.


213 Alejandro Rodríguez to Máximo Gómez, June 5, 1897, Box 7, File 1018, ANC/FPMG.

214 José B. Alemán to Máximo Gómez, September 21, 1896, Box 6, File 903, ANC/FPMG.

215 Alejandro Rodríguez to Máximo Gómez, December 1, 1896, Box 6, File 297, ANC/FPMG.

216 Tone, War and Genocide, 186.
Insurgent chiefs like José B. Alemán, Francisco Carrillo, and Alfredo Rego pointed to the incompetence of certain black officer as the root of recent military failures. At the core of the accusations was the charge of immorality, a broad concept that encompassed a range of misbehaviors from laziness to sexual misconduct to banditry. The solution proposed by several insurgent chiefs was strict discipline and punishment of offenders. Cuban historian Orlando García Martínez noted that “in the very brigade of Cienfuegos, the Brigadier Alfredo Rego showed himself to be drastic with some chiefs of the black race who committed indiscipline.” Rego wrote to Máximo Gómez declaring that, “you will like my Infantry. They are well-disciplined, contentment and much union reigns among them. I have had to be at the beginning somewhat severe to the extreme of having to shoot Commandant Matos and his brother, and also Captain Ramon Sarduy and I demoted two officers.” Rego seemed to equate discipline with severe punishment of black officers.

In the same period, the black insurgent Captain Claudio Sarría faced court-martial for demanding money from Damián Machado, a Chinese contractor of Central Soledad. Sarría denied the charges, but the military tribunal convicted him and demoted him to the rank of private. Writing to Máximo Gómez, he underscored the injustice in his conviction. “I went to the revolutionary camp on the first day of August in 1895. I have been unjustly demoted […] being until today a captain, and having served the fatherland as a brave soldier.” Sarría saw himself as a true son of Cuba, having

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218 Ibid.

219 Ibid., 186.
devoted himself to the struggle for independence, only to be thanked by unjust accusation and unfair punishment: “I write this so you can see how I have always been serving the fatherland with the necessary honor of a son of Cuba, and that is it completely unjust what they have accused me of, as the call to do justice for all said, is historic.” It seems the insurgents leaders began to believe the reports of managers of Soledad estate depicting Sarría as a destructive and barbarous bandit, rather than a freedom fighter, as he saw himself.

Desiderio Matos, also known as “Tuerto” (one-eyed) Matos, faced death for accusations of banditry in 1897. Matos had made his living as a bandit roaming Santa Clara province in the 1880s and 1890s, but proclaimed his support for the revolution in 1895. Flint earlier described Matos as one of the good insurgents: “There are some good insurgent forces, however, one of them under the command of Desiderio Marto [sic], a tall one-eyed man who made the forests near Yaguaramas his headquarters, with something less than one hundred men, half infantry.” Yet his good reputation among that American war correspondent was insufficient to redeem him in the eyes of his white

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220 “El Ciudadano Claudio Sarría y Sarría to Máximo Gómez,” [n.d.], Box 22, File 3083, folio 18, ANC/FPMG. Original text reads: “Partí al campo de la revolución el día primero de agosto de mil ocho cien[s] noventa y cinco[s]. He sido injustamente degradado y fui soldado 8 y 3 de Cabo 6 meses de sargento 2º meses y de capitán hasta el día de hoy, habiendo servido a la Patria como un bravo soldado. Esto lo hago para que vean como he estado siempre sirviendo a la Patria con la debida honradez propia de un hijo de Cuba, y que es completamente injusto cuanto se me acusa, pues de historia es la llamada hacer justicia de todo cuanto dicho.”


223 Flint, Marching with Gómez, 80.
compatriots. Avelino Sanjenis shot Desiderio “Tuerto” Matos and a brother in 1897 for an act of vandalism.\textsuperscript{224}

In late 1896, José B. Alemán, as sub-inspector of the Liberating Army, initiated a campaign to end immorality among insurgents in the central provinces. This campaign culminated in a series of court-martials of black veterans after his election as the Inspector General of the Liberating Army under the provisional government of Bartolomé Masó. Born in 1864 in the central Cuban city of Santa Clara, Alemán was a pivotal figure in the separatist movement in the central provinces. Alemán joined the insurrection in 1895, after making his living as a young journalist in the 1880s. After the war he became one of the most vocal advocate for independence in Santa Clara Province.\textsuperscript{225}

In late 1896, he sought to punish a black officer, Juan Benítez Benítez for “very grave misdemeanors of military insubordination, negligence, abandonment of the service and falsifying public documentation.”\textsuperscript{226} In a letter to Gómez, Alemán wrote of the incompetence of the black colonel: “With the sincere [ingesta] frankness of the fulfillment of my obligation, I see myself required to indicate to you as I do the insufficiency of the Colonel Benítez, who does not know how to read or write, and is incapable of give rise to this Brigade.” Alemán claimed that the reputation of Benítez

\textsuperscript{224} “Testimony of Avelino Sanjenis,” February 11, 1908, Case 196, Box 90, Part 9, folio 4, USNA/STCC/RG 76/E 352.


\textsuperscript{226} José B. Alemán to Máximo Gómez, September 21, 1896, Box 6, File 903, ANC/FPMG.
highlighted his unsuitability for insurgent leadership. What is more, “and this fact influences strongly against him, Benítez was as a pacifico a kidnapper, and a life sentence [in jail] weighs over him, which takes away prestige to earn sympathy among the good elements who aide the Revolution in the villages.”²²⁷ Again making use of the language of masculinity, Alemán argued that the insubordination of Juan B. Benítez threatened his prestige as a military man: “It constitutes a pattern of ignominy for the said soldier who has stained his name with the perpetration of several very grave misdemeanors.”²²⁸

Alemán continued to clash with black officers. In April 1897, a dispute between José B. Alemán and black Colonel José González Calunga highlighted the tensions in claims for power and influence between black and white insurgents in the central provinces. The conflict emerged when González refused to comply with orders Alemán had given him. González responded that he respected no other orders than those coming from General Máximo Gómez. He sent Lieutenant Colonel Reyes, also black, to present the complaint to Alemán. Alemán rejected what he perceived as insubordination by González, writing to Gómez, “indignant,” to complain about “the rude, ignorant and incorrect man.”²²⁹ He lamented that many black officials did not know “their place”:

“Disgracefully, those brutish colonels, who are not decent people, nor do they know how to read or write, and [are] stupid, racist, and animals, abound in this revolution. How I have suffered having to see them—I do not speak to them—such simpleton[s] that [they

²²⁷ José B. Alemán to Máximo Gómez, August 24, 1896, Box 6, File 903, ANC/FPMG.

²²⁸ José B. Alemán to Máximo Gómez, September 15, 1896, Box 6, File 912, ANC/FPMG.

²²⁹ “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” April 30, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR. This diary was published in an abridged and edited form in José Guerra Alemán, ¡Juro, pero no prometo! (Biografía del general José Braulio Alemán y otros relatos de la Guerra y la paz) Mexico City: Costa-Amic Editores, 1989), 217-267.
do] not even know what Patria is, nor what is shame nor honor.” Alemán harnessed the colorblind discourse of José Martí to condemn the black generals as unpatriotic because of their attention to race.

For Alemán, the lack of respect for his authority by the black officials was offensive. He vowed to force these colonels to acknowledge his superior authority, or he would resign. In essence, Alemán gave Gómez an ultimatum between retaining men like him—educated, intelligent, and honorable, and defending men like González, who he claimed, represented black hunger for military power and leadership.

Gómez was sympathetic to the unfavorable descriptions of the black colonel, but he suggested that they did not know any better. Although González Calunga was “a courageous and honorable man,” Gómez rote, “he is not a man of clear intelligence and never owing to evil but rather to excess zeal would he commit inconvenience like what he has obliged you to present in your very just claim.” He encouraged Alemán to forgive González. Gómez reassured Alemán of his valuable service as Inspector General, and encouraged him to “forgive your comrade for his indiscretion.”

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230 “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” April 30, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR.

231 “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” April 30, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “Por la tarde llega de Morón el Int. Col. Reyes con breves noticias y me presenta queja por haberlo expulsado de la zona de Morón el Coronel González Calunga que dice no respetaba más firma que la del General en jefe. Escribo a este indignado por el proceder de Calunga. Le digo al Gral que necesito se me satisfaga de ese operación ya que no debo ni puedo pedir explicaciones a ese Corl que es un hombre mal educado, ignorante e incorrecto. Con este motivo pido mi relevo inmediato de este puesto en el que tendría que tener relaciones con un Jefe que no está a la altura del cargo que ejerce. Y en realidad es así. Desgraciadamente esos coroneles bruto[s], que no son personas decentes, ni saben leer ni escribir y estúpidos, ra[c]istas y animales, abundan en esta Revolución; [C]uanto he sufrido teniendo que verlos—yo no los hablo—a tanto gaznápiro que no sabe ni lo que es Patria, ni lo que es vergüenza ni honor. Estoy decidido a que si no se me satisface, y hacer ver a ese idiota que mi firma se respeta, a pedir mi baja del Ejército. Serviré aunque no estoy ya aquí. Confío en que el Gral me hará justicia. Felizmente él es justo y me quiere lealmente.”

232 “Diario de Operaciones de José B. Alemán,” May 3, 1897, Box 104, File 171, ANC/FDR.
Alemán that patriotism entailed collaborating across racial lines, as well as looking past the innate inferiorities of the black soldiers in support of the revolution.

In May 1897, Máximo Gómez reflected negatively upon the celebrated black Chief of the Brigade of Remedios, José González Planas. Referring to a report by Francisco Carrillo, Gómez wrote: “It seems that the Chief of the Brigade of Remedios is a valiant man, but not very energetic. And I believe it, as it justifies the surprise the Spanish have given him…” Gómez recognized the contrast in the report Carrillo gave and the previously untarnished record of service of the black chief: “it is to be lamented, as his name was pretty high for his anterior triumphs, but you know that the latest victories are the ones that have the most shine, and no good soldier should neglect [his duty] to avoid a[nother] Waterloo.”

Previous military achievements, according to Gómez, did not exempt González from intense scrutiny thereafter.

By March of the following year, Gómez again wrote of the complaints against González: “You do not know that complaints that arrive to me from those people about the Brigadier González. Complaints may have originated from agitation by a former aide-de-camp, José Nodarse, who defected to the Spanish in early 1898. The Spanish general Marcos García had encouraged him to use his considerable influence among the few white soldiers under González to undermine the authority of the black officer. He complied by sending defamatory letters to white soldiers under the command of González. When news reached Gómez, he lamented the “Vandalistic deeds, as they go around the ranches shooting pretending to be Spaniards, to rob the families; imagine what

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233 Quoted in Máximo Gómez to Francisco Carrillo, May 11, 1897 in Cartas a Francisco Carrillo, 160.

a horrendous crime. It is necessary to cut it out at its root.” According to one of these reports, the infantry of Remedios “is not as brave a lion as it is made out to be.”

Gómez wrote that “more are the torments they cause us than [they cause] the Spaniards.”

The series of complaints, trials and court-martial cases brought against black insurgents between late 1897 and 1898 highlight a struggle for power within the Cuban army. In the early days of the war, when the brigade of Cienfuegos was neither organized nor consolidated, the structures of power and military hierarchies were in flux. With the invasion of Gómez and Maceo from the east, they began to organize the forces of Cienfuegos, sometimes under eastern black leadership. This provoked rejection among white insurgent leaders, who sought to claim military power on par with their social status before the war. As Cubans contemplated victory, a substantial influx of the most privileged members of Cienfuegos society flooded the brigade, bringing with them their ideas of social hierarchy and claims to power. The complaints against black soldiers specifically highlight a re-negotiation of the social hierarchies within the revolution. Nowhere is this renegotiation of racial and regional power starker than in the case of Quintín Bandera.

Race, Masculinity and the Limits of Political Legitimacy: The Case of Quintín Bandera

235 Quoted in Máximo Gómez to Francisco Carrillo, March 8, 1898, in Cartas a Francisco Carrillo, 206.

236 Máximo Gómez to Francisco Carrillo, March 8, 1898 in Cartas a Francisco Carrillo, 206.
In May 1897, Juan Massó Parra, an insurgent leader who later defected along with an entire regiment to the Spanish forces, brought news to the General Command that Quintín Bandera was living with a concubine in the hills of Trinidad. Máximo Gómez wrote: “There are, among other sad news, that comes to me from Trinidad, [reports] that Quintín Bandera, not only is over there, executing his plans [designios][…] of majasería with a concubine,” but also that he has written to decent people “demanding sums of money with threats.” These accusations led to a court-martial of Bandera in which he was found guilty and stripped of his command and soldiers. The trial and punishment of Bandera was a key moment in which white and black expectations of their roles and their future in Cuba Libre clashed.

While black officers like Bandera tested the limits of their military authority, whites protested against expanding black leadership. Even though black military ascension was theoretically justified and validated in the discourse of racial brotherhood defining the Cuban cause, whites defined this so-called equality not as social and political parity between whites and blacks, but merely as the cooperation among black and whites within an already established racial hierarchy. Whites laid claim to military leadership by asserting their manliness, while pointing to the failures and transgressions of masculine honor of certain black leaders that threatened their privileged position in the military hierarchy.

The ability of a man like Quintín Bandera—uneducated and unpretentious—to reach a position of power and prestige within the Cuban Army scared many white

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237 Valdés-Domínguez, Diario de un soldado, IV, 193.

238 Máximo Gómez to Francisco Carrillo, May 20, 1897 in Gómez, Cartas a Francisco Carrillo, 163.
centrales, or insurgents from the central provinces. The Sugar Revolution in Cuba at the turn of the nineteenth century gave late rise to the plantation complex in that island. Substantial American capital investment and the highly fertile soils of the so-called *llanura roja* (red plain) fostered the continuing prosperity of the western and central provinces while the Eastern provinces languished with primitive technology and declining fertility of the soils. Declining productivity in the eastern provinces by the mid-nineteenth century had undermined the institution of slavery early on, while two anti-colonial wars had further chipped away at the colonial racial order. Not only was the East demographically blacker than the central provinces, it was also associated with black rebellion.

In contrast, Cienfuegos was at the very core of the prosperous Cuban western and central sugar economy. Americans including Edwin F. Atkins, Elias Ponvert, the owners of Constancia Sugar Company and many others had poured capital into this flourishing region, reinvigorating the institution of slavery in the nineteenth century. Cienfuegos became home to three of the largest, most technologically modern sugar mills in Cuba—Soledad, Hormiguero and Constancia—all of which relied heavily upon enslaved labor up until the abolition of the institution in 1886. The continuing prominence of slavery in

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Cuba up until the 1880s reinforced racial divisions, as central Cuba exhibited a stricter racial hierarchy than eastern zones like Bayamo and Santiago.

The demographic and developmental differences between the eastern and central provinces crystalized during the Invasion from the East. In this pivotal military campaign, eastern army headed by numerous black chiefs marched into Santa Clara, and some of the black officers established their arenas of operations in the central provinces. Bandera was one of these men who marched into the central provinces at the head of a contingent of *oriental* black soldiers. One American officer described his 200 “orientales” as “a ragged line of nearly naked blacks on foot,” who “wore hats of all shapes, with frayed brims, and without brims, while some were all brims and no crown.”

This unsightly image of the *orientales* diverged from the way some men envisioned the liberating army, and by implication the nation.

Some whites in Las Villas rejected black authority. Cosme de la Torriente commented on the leadership of Bandera in Las Villas: “Undoubtedly, given the conditions of Quintín, he will not be very convenient in Las Villas.” Serafín Sánchez took this insight into consideration when he overturned the order of Antonio Maceo, placing Bandera in charge of the Second Division: “The leadership of the 2nd Division was vacant, as even though Antonio Maceo named the blackman Quintín Bandera to fill it, Serafín Sánchez did not comply with the order, interpreting that way the desires of the white insurgents of Las Villas, who thought it ‘inconvenient for the cause of command

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243 Fernando Gómez, *La insurrección por dentro: Apuntes para la historia* (Havana: M Ruiz y Compañía, 1897), 130.
It was no coincidence that the black general Bandera was charged for his behavior in Trinidad, a city singled out by American military officials for its racist tendencies and continued segregation in 1899.245

While many Cubans perhaps subscribed to the ideal of racial brotherhood, many whites in the central provinces thought that allowing blacks to occupy positions of

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244 Gómez, La insurrección por dentro, 103. Emphasis in Original.


246 “Quintín Bandera and his mule,” in Dawley, Jr., “Campaigning with Gómez,” 541.

leadership took this concept too far. Insurgents chiefs of the central provinces were forced to balance the socially-conservative tendencies of certain chiefs and potential recruits with the necessity of black participation to securing victory. They may have been particularly sensitive to the Spanish propaganda condemning the Cuban cause based on the participation and leadership of blacks. Spaniards focused on Bandera as a particularly egregious example of the insurgents fomenting social anarchy by encouraging black leadership.

The case of one Spaniard who joined the insurrection under Quintín Bandera demonstrates the racial anxieties at the core of insurgent negotiations of military hierarchies after the invasion from the east. The Spaniard enlisted “for the best honor of the class, to lend services in the band of the black man Quintín Bandera, who quickly made the white VillaClaran feel the full weight of his great and natural rudeness, treating him like, after all, a person whose clumsy conduct proved his moral disregard deserved,” observed one Spaniard.  

This man had dishonored his country not only by defecting from Spain and joining the insurrection, but by joining a band of “bunch of shabby oriental negroes.” By supporting the insurrection, this Spaniard argued, his defected compatriot supported the social anarchy embodied in black military leadership.

The man deserved such punishment for his disloyalty, according to the Spanish observer. He “went not for a short time, trotting by foot and breaking guineas and maniguas in those lands, opening the way, stroked and comfortable, of the mule on which the black chief was mounted,” wrote the Spaniard, depicting the insurrection in terms of

248 Gómez, *La insurrección por dentro*, 94.

249 Ibid.
savagery. His poor compatriot obliged the orders of Bandera “until, his body [was] lacerated and his spirit thinned.” He entered the encampment of Máximo Gomez “and asked him, exposing his suffering and his condition as a career man, for another position of less fatigue, in harmony with his technical knowledge, for him to serve the revolutionary cause.” Gómez denied this request claiming that everyone was a majá! While Gómez was unsympathetic to the lowly position of the newly enlisted Spaniard, his compatriot observed that it represented an abuse of the social order.

Gómez may not have minded the abuse of a lowly Spaniard, the racialized propaganda bothered other white insurgent officers, who envisioned the cause of Cuba Libre as pure and honorable. Maintaining social hierarchy, as Alemán suggested in his letters complaining of black insubordination and immorality, was integral to upholding the honor of the insurrection. Some insurgent chiefs saw the lofty military aspirations of Bandera as a threat to the internal hierarchy, and thus a potential menace to the honor, stability and success of the Cuban cause. To debunk Spanish racial propaganda, insurgent leaders had to prove the moral purity of Cuba Libre. One way they sought to demonstrate moral purity was by configuring a leadership that exemplified the better classes, understood as educated, honorable, white men, and downplaying the participation and leadership of lower elements, who like Bandera, tended to be uneducated, rustic, and above all black.

Insurgent leaders worried that the leadership of a man so far outside the normative standard of masculine honor would undermine the image of purity of Cuba Libre. Cuban manliness hinged on a paradoxical understanding of morality that privileged virility in

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250 Ibid. Emphasis in original.
military exploits while simultaneously prescribing sexual abnegation. The fact that
Bandera maintained a concubine in war undermined his allegiance to the Cuban cause
and put into question ability to sacrifice his own personal pleasures for the benefit of the
war. “We should not permit,” wrote Gómez to Francisco Carrillo, “…that the purity of
the Revolution be stained anymore nor that its glorious flag be dragged through the
mud.” Gómez worried that the immorality of insurgent chiefs would discredit the
movement for independence: “All this,” he lamented, “that the Spanish know, they will
take advantage of it […] The morality of the war, as if to say the soul, its secret power,
grows ill and weak, a bad growth that I try to ward off, but that men without virtues, the
one[s] that one needs to possess in a job like this, cannot seem to understand; and
tomorrow they will dare to say: ‘I was a fighter for Cuban independence’ when they had
not been able to be constant and correct warriors.” The sexual behavior of the officers
determined military outcomes while reflecting the morality of the Cuban army more
generally, and more importantly of the cause of independence.

The spectacle of the extra-marital sex between Bandera and his concubine
differed from the semblance of legitimate marriage carried on by some black generals,
like José González Planas, for example. “The brigadier is a blackman of pure race, he
has recently married a young little mulatto girl [pardita jovencita]. I do not know if they
have married by law; but at least the keep up appearances and […]this is the most that we
can demand with respect to morality from certain elements.” Adherence to the sexual

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251 Máximo Gómez to Francisco Carrillo, May 20, 1897 in Gómez, Cartas a Francisco Carrillo, 163.
253 Gómez, La insurrección por dentro, 118. Emphasis in original.
values of middle-class white society was crucial to assuring legitimacy and acceptance in a white man’s world.

Although Gómez emphasized the centrality of sexual morality in upholding the purity of *Cuba Libre*, it appeared to be enforced more strictly for certain groups. Bandera admitted to keeping his concubine in battle, and this may have legitimated his conviction, but numerous Gómez and other high-ranking insurgent chiefs acknowledged identical sexual escapades among white officers and soldiers. Fermín Valdés-Domínguez, for example, highlighted the unwarranted leniency of Calixto García toward officers enjoying lives of luxury including sex with multiple different women. Reflecting on the transgressions of certain eastern officers such as Brigadier Bonne, Lorencito, Portuondo and one Andrés participated, Valdés-Domínguez related bitterly: “they all eat well and have women and go from retreat to retreat and from mountain to mountain within occupying themselves with going to whip the soldiers.” None of them faced punishment: “Calixto knows all this and he consents, lets the small ones do it, and claims that it can be changes and sold and other immoralities of the style.” These white officers lived the same “immoral life” as did Bandera, but suffered no consequences.

254 Valdés-Domínguez, *Diario de un soldado*, IV, 196.

255 Ibid., II, 301.

256 Ibid. “Hay comercio clandestino con el pueblo y van los ricos y los jefes entran mulos cargados de efectos que vienen porque de aquí van sacos de café y cacao y tiene comercia y tienda en el rancho de la querida de Lorencito y a la Negra le saca al Brigadier Bonne *facturas* y Andrés tiene comercio y venta de todo en Mon Desiree y oficiales como un tal Portuondo con el pretexto de ser el que trae lo que mandan los comisionados de Cuba está haciendo su negocio de lo lindo. Y todos comen bien y tienen mujeres y andan de retirada en retirada y de monte en monte sin ocuparse de ir a batir a los soldados. T no es esto decir que sean cobardes ni ruines los jefes que por allí están, sino que les falta tiempo para pensar en los *líos*, y conste que no ay uno que se conforme con una queridita, todos tienen varias y en cada casa es de rubrica que haya almacén y despacho y comercio. Pero Calixto sabe todo esto y lo consiente, deja hacer a los pequeños y pregona que se puede cambiar y vender y otras inmoralidades por el estilo.”
Máximo Gómez knew of at least two other white chiefs who at the same time as Bandera maintained concubines: “I feel sad in this summer or spring campaign,” wrote Gómez in his diary and “my sadness consists in the torment that some immoral and disorderly Chiefs have given me, like Quintín Bandera, even José María Rodríguez who has tucked himself away in the hill with women. Even Enrique Loynaz [del Castillo], giving with this a bad example and not seconding my efforts.”

Gómez communicated his disappointment to the chief of the fourth corps, Francisco Carrillo: “Mayía and Loynaz and even you figure into this problem…,” he wrote. “Mayía set up camp in ‘Quemado,’ I believe, with a concubine, Loynaz abducted a girl and is living with her; after it is added, that he abused a prefect because he did not send milk and he violently took the mother cow and brought it to his ranch.” Gómez did not hold a high opinion of Rodríguez, calling him “misguided,” and observing that “until now he has been given everything, without having being able to do anything serious to make the Spanish respect him.”

Gómez against linked sexual impropriety to military failures, while suggesting that earning the respect of Spaniards was a key concern in military strategy. Neither Loynaz nor Rodríguez faced charges, however, suggesting that white sexual transgression, it seems, did not result in the tarnishing of honor.

It appeared that challenging the sexual conduct of respected men was somewhat taboo. Valdés-Domínguez voiced his accusations gingerly, so as not to offend the dignity of men of his similar social and racial background: “and this is not to say that the chiefs who are around there are cowards or rotten, but that they lack time to think about the

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257 Gómez, *Diario de campaña*, 434. José María Rodríguez was known among his fellow insurgents as “Mayía.”

258 Máximo Gómez to Francisco Carrillo, May 20, 1897 in Gómez, *Cartas a Francisco Carrillo*, 163.
problems, and it should be noted that there is not one of them who is content with one lover, all of them have various [concubines] and in each house it is a rubric that they have stores and dispatch and commerce.”

Interestingly, Bandera was considered a coward, while Loynaz and Rodríguez, who transgressed in the same manner were not cowards.

At the same time as Rodríguez freely exercised his sexual freedom without sanction, he criticized Bandera for his sexual transgressions. In a rare direct articulation of racial tensions, Rodríguez linked sexual impropriety, blackness and poor patriotism, calling Bandera and his men “a bunch of Negroes and bandits taking care of Negresses” (negros y bandidos cuidadores de negras). With this description of Bandera, his behavior and his men, Mayía suggested that there was no place for privileged black women in Cuba Libre. At the same time, he implied that there was a sexual double standard for whites and blacks. While whites could flout sexual norms and values by maintaining concubines, blacks acting in similar ways were immoral and criminal. Although he may have used a strong condemnation of Bandera to cover his own shortcomings, he more likely expressed a value that prevailed among his peers: that whites should have more sexual privilege than blacks.

There seemed to have been a history of personal grievances between Rodríguez and Bandera. In one letter to Máximo Gómez, Bandera recounted one such incident. When Rodríguez came across “some women mounted on mules, he asked who they were and they told him they were with Bandera and his people had a squad protecting them.” In turn, “he ordered them to collect the squad and asked to borrow one of the mules for

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259 Valdés-Domínguez, Diario de un soldado, II, 301.

260 Ibid., IV, 47.
three days and this is that date that he has given it back, and he insulted the individuals of
the squad, sending some of them to the infantry saying that they were bandits and other
expressions…” Bandera used this example to request to be removed from the command
of Rodríguez: “it is impossible to continue under the orders of this chief, who orders me
[to do] nothing and so insults my prestige.”261

Some insurgent leaders disputed the racial caricature employed by Rodríguez.
Fermín Valdés-Domínguez defended eastern blacks against his accusations, claiming that
he condemned “oriental officers who have reached a high position among us for their
bravery and honor, just because they were poor and humble and because they were
black.”262 Valdés-Domínguez certainly made no apologies for Bandera, either, claiming
that his actions must be punished under “the holy principles of dignity and patriotism.”263
Yet there was no room for explicit racism.

Unsurprisingly, and despite the general knowledge that Mayía Rodríguez
maintained concubines during his campaigns, Loynaz wrote in defense of himself and his
white comrade-in-arms—but not in defense of Bandera—in the years after the war.
Describing the reflections of Gómez on his immoral behavior during the war, Loynaz
wrote that these words were “hurtful and erroneous.” In defense of Mayía, Loynaz wrote
that he “never had women in the war, not in Trinidad, or in any place.” Loynaz had to
admit his own faults: “In my case, I recognize my fault, if in one or another love-affair, I
can be accused my twenty-five years. But my fault would not be greater than that of other

261 Quintín Bandera to Máximo Gómez, May 4, 1897, Box 7, File 996, ANC/FPMG.

262 Valdés-Domínguez, Diario de un soldado, IV, 47.

263 Ibid., 129.
illustrious—not excepting the very Máximo Gómez—to whom in the somber vicissitudes of a war of pains and privations, were not missing the angelic hands that cured the wounds of the body and those of the spirit, and embalmed with generous devotion the rare hour[s] of fleeting rest.”

Loynaz admitted that Bandera had maintained women during the war: “he did have one in other days, only in the service of the kitchen and for laundry—that I know—he had two, when I found him in the camp of Veguita on June 25, [1897] the date and place where I substituted his command over his infantry by order of General Mayía Rodríguez.” If upholding the moral righteousness of the insurrection had provided the motive for the court-martial of Bandera, it was certainly ironic to send Loynaz, a man who admitted his own moral transgressions during war, to substitute Bandera.

Although Loynaz did not defend the sexual relationship, he did justify the decision of his compatriot to disobey orders: “The disobedience of Bandera only consisted of the argument not to sacrifice his troops ‘in the slaughterhouse of Matanzas.’” Upon the arrival of Loynaz at his camp to collect the troops, Bandera “demonstrated the greatest gentility and patriotism.” He explained to Loynaz: “I have not

264 “Aclaración Histórica del Mayor General Loynaz del Castillo en defensa de la gloriosa memoria del Mayor General José María Rodríguez,” [n.d.], B 524, File 1, folio 59. ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “Y en cuanto a mi reconozco mi culpa, si de algún que otro amorío pueden ser acusados mis veinticinco años. Pero mi culpa no sería mayor que la de generales ilustres,—sin exceptuar el mismo Máximo Gómez—a quienes en las sombrías vicisitudes de una guerra de abrumadoras y privaciones, no faltaron manos angelicas que curaran las heridas del cuerpo y las del espíritu, y embalsamaran con generosa devoción las escasas hora[s] del fugaz reposo…” This manuscript seems to be an earlier version of his published memoir, with some sections crossed out and not appearing in the later version.


266 Loynaz, Memorias, 492.

267 Ibid., 491.
wanted to disobey the Authority; I just wanted to reason; because that contingent that cost so much work to get together, is now going to the slaughterhouse.” “This force here could have fought, but there will die,” continued Bandera, a prediction that became reality in the disastrous battles of El Relámpago and El Plátano in late June and early July 1897. Loynaz observed that “the old freedom fighter seemed to me greater in his patriotic resignation.” After detailing a series of skirmished, he remarked bitterly: “And General Gómez represents us in the hills with women.”

The decision to persecute only Bandera indicated a divergence in the expectations of certain groups of men. The impunity afforded to Loynaz and Rodríguez suggested that transgressions of sexual honor did not threaten the prestige of white men. At the same time, the sexual conduct of black men, particularly those in positions of power, was severely policed and transgressions intensely punished.

At stake in policing black sexuality was demonstrating to skeptics that the Cuban insurrection did not seek to overturn the racial order. In order to win over those who feared the racially transformative aspects of the revolution, it was necessary to prove that black insurgents were “under control,” and still respected white authority and moral righteousness. Bandera did not comply. He was a “rustic man,” an uneducated country dweller who reflected more accurately the imperfections and weaknesses of the majority of the rank and file than he did keep up the illusion of white middle-class perfection with

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268 Ibid., 492, 494-5.
269 Ibid., 493.
270 Ibid., 491.
which many of the officers identified.\textsuperscript{271} Even the black officers like Antonio Maceo had prided themselves on their education, refinement and culture—that is, their distance from slavery and blackness. For example, portraits of Maceo emphasized his light skin, while Flor Crombet was celebrated for his knowledge of European languages and history. Black officers with little formal education like Bandera and Guillermo Moncada were often depicted as brutes, savages, and racists. Whites ridiculed Bandera, claiming that he and his men ran around with rings in their noses and wearing loin cloths.\textsuperscript{272} “The terror of the Spanish in Havana was Quintín Bandera, who they said brought a contingent of Haitian blacks with narigón and a thousand other insults.”\textsuperscript{273} The image of Bandera contrasted quite dramatically with that of more respectable officers of color, like the Maceo brothers, “in whom they [whites] had confidence as pure men.”\textsuperscript{274}

While the majority of the accusers at the court martial of Bandera were white men, in other instances black men from his same province of Oriente had also accused him of similar crimes. These men included Antonio and José Maceo, Guillermo Moncada, and Dimas Zamora.\textsuperscript{275} The fact that both blacks and whites complained about Bandera at first glance may seem to suggest that his court-martial did not reflect racial

\textsuperscript{271} Ada Ferrer, \textit{Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898} (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press), 177.


\textsuperscript{273} Alejo Pinilla and José Camejo P., \textit{Bocetos biográficos de los generales José Lacret Morlot y Quintín Bandera} (Havana: Imprenta El Crisol, 1910), 54, nt 2.

\textsuperscript{274} Valdés-Domínguez, \textit{Diario de un soldado}, IV, 196.

\textsuperscript{275} Ferrer, \textit{Insurgent Cuba}, 174-175.
conflict. Yet, upon closer examination, it seems that many of his black accusers abided by the same assumptions as did his white compatriots.

The open defiance of the norms of white hegemonic masculinity by Bandera threatened the claim of black military men, like the Zamora, to honor and respectability among the predominantly white officer class. In a world in which race implied poverty and low social status, successful blacks sought to distance themselves from less-educated “rustic” blacks, as a way to prove their culture and civilization—in a word, their whiteness. Bandera was, in many ways, the opposite of the ideal black insurgent, who was only acceptable because he was “inoffensive” and did not threaten the main assumption that whiteness was best.276 Undoubtedly, because men seeking the respect and acceptance of white officers like Gómez and García came from the same place and displayed similar racial traits as men of lower education and status like Bandera, they worried they might be lumped in the same category as the latter, and thereby lose their respectability and distinction. Men like Zamora, in contrast to regional and racial allegiances, had a vested interest in persecuting Bandera, who they judged, tarnished their own reputation as negros orientales.

Masculine honor became a prerequisite for political power. However, like social prestige, manliness was more readily available for certain groups than for others. The “political self-sacrifice” inscribed in joining an “insurgency offered a way for men to vindicate their claims to manliness and qualify themselves for leadership in an extremely public forum.”277 Black access to manliness depended on an explicit disavowal of

276 Ferrer, “Raza, región y género...,” 152.
stereotypes of the sexually insatiable black male who threatened the sexual honor of white women. The type of masculinity supported by the Revolution was “not too aggressive or sexualized but ascetic and austere—a self-sacrificing manhood that serve as example to others.” Part of this manhood rested on the ability of men to resist sexual temptation, a sacrifice that instilled in them more political and spiritual authority.278 A significant part of performing black respectability and upholding the norms of white masculinity involved respecting sexual taboos. Maintaining good morality was especially important considering the widespread Spanish propaganda depicting the insurgents as barbarous blacks, including unsubstantiated reports that black men raped white women during the war.279 To earn the respect of their white compatriots, black veterans had to forgo sexual contact with white women. In contrast to the confrontational demeanor of Bandera were the expectations many white Cubans had of their black compatriots. Black soldiers and officers were supposed to be modest, docile, and submissive—in a way, less masculine—while white officers could transgress social and racial boundaries with little or no consequence.

Sexual transgression provided a motive for persecuting Bandera for violating the implicit expectation that blacks would aspire to imitate white middle class customs while respecting the color-line. Although other black insurgent chiefs had also maintained concubines during the war, the women were invariable black. For example, José Maceo kept two or three “mulaticas,” and one of his concubines Agripina Barroso Lazo, known

278 Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba, 176.

279 Helg, Our Rightful Share, 82.
as “La Negra,” followed him long enough to have his child. In contrast, Bandera had already trespassed against racial etiquette by marrying a blond Spanish woman he had met in the Baleares during his exile after the Guerra Chiquita.

Bandera also had a history of flouting the racial line, causing considerable scandal, for example, in 1896 when he asked one white woman to dance. When she declined, he denounced her, claiming “you do not dance with me because I am black,” and emphasizing the importance of “patriotism, republican equality and valor.” The result was considerable “disgusto” among the people present. Perhaps the most threatening aspect of the nonconformist sexual behavior of Bandera was that it challenged the manliness and virility of white men. Bandera flouted prevailing standards of sexual honor, and challenged the virility of white men, by showcasing the sexual allure of military power and prestige. At the same time, Bandera offended prominent black officers, many of whom had come from relatively privileged backgrounds.

Bandera not only violated racial etiquette by flaunting his inter-racial desires, but he also publically rejected any hostility toward these advances through a language of racism. By employing a language of race to point out instances of racial discrimination, Bandera called attention to the fallacy of the discourse of racial equality, thereby undermining one of the main premises of the Revolution. In 1893, the celebrated Cuban patriot José Martí articulated this sentiment in an article published in the newspaper Patria: “What should the whites think of the black man who becomes vain from his

280 Ibid., 66.


color? To insist in the racial divisions, in the racial differences, of a people naturally divided, is to impede the public and individual venture, which can only be obtained by bringing people together.”

In essence, Martí demanded silence on issues of race, in favor of the illusion of national harmony. At the same time, however, he stripped one of the most effective tools for combating the racism that continued to plague Cuban society: the language of race. Within this framework, any effort by blacks to organize against racial discrimination or even to use the language of race was “vilified as a threat to national unity and could thus be repressed.”

Although the utopian discourse of racial brotherhood provided an appearance of harmony within the revolution, black insurgents, and particularly black officers found themselves in a delicate positions. One the one hand, black officers were living proof of the meritocracy upon which the revolution was based. On the other hand, however, the very discourse they justified with their military ascension incapacitated them to articulate instances of discrimination in a language of race—even if they plainly understood the discrimination they faced originated from racial prejudice.

Officers of color who appeased these double standards by adopting the norms and behaviors of hegemonic masculinity gained greater sympathy among their white comrades. For example, Lino D’Ou, black insurgent officer from Santiago, referred to fellow colored officer José González Planas, as “that great Cuban with a dark complexion but a white soul.” According to D’ou, “he was gentlemanly and good, modesty and fairness were the norms of his life, and that is why he quickly captured the esteem and

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284 Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 106.
affection of everyone who knew him.”

González was selected as the judge for the court martial of Bandera, despite his lower rank of lieutenant colonel. He confronted a similar situation as Bandera after the war. When at a dance, a white woman asked her male companion to introduce her to González, and hint that she would like to dance with him. González politely declined: “It will be the first time that I will not oblige a lady but it is impossible for me, señora; I have to decline such high honor: I do not know how to dance…,” he is reported to have answered. González declined despite being known to love dancing. “Even when a white woman took the initiative, González refused to transgress social boundaries, refused to use the prestige he had acquired in war to remake or manipulate social distinctions. As with his mistress during the war, González acted quietly, inconspicuously.”

In the case of Quintín Bandera, the reality that a black officer could attract a white woman had already been confirmed by his second marriage to a Spanish woman prior to the war.

As a black insurgent chief, Bandera was supposed to serve as an example of the justice and moral righteousness of Cuba Libre. Instead, he publically exposed instances of injustice through a language of race. Because the illusion of racial brotherhood was upheld by an almost violently enforced silencing of race language, the ways Bandera chose to articulate injustice seemed to undermine the credibility of racial brotherhood within the Revolution. Bandera did not face sanction for maintaining a woman in camp;

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286 Padrón, General de Tres Guerras, 286.


288 Pinilla and Camejo, Bocetos biográficos, 45.
too many other insurgent chiefs, both black and white did the same with no penalty. His sexual behavior may have provided an excuse and a way to persecute him for his militant racial ideas, and to deem credible once more the discourse of racial brotherhood.289

The trial of Bandera was also a powerful warning that racial collaboration did not mean the disappearance of racial hierarchies or racial boundaries in intimate relations. With the ascension of black men into positions of power, the white hegemony on male honor began to disintegrate. The presence of black chiefs in the Cuban army triggered fears among white men that white women would chose black men as their partners over less successful white men, due to financial and status considerations. Moreover, if military success was a qualifier for political power, black protagonism in the war would mean black political leadership, a radical social transformation for which many whites were not prepared. Rather than articulate these anxieties through a language of race, white insurgent leaders sought to uphold the discourse of racial brotherhood by again silencing race as Martí had suggested in 1893. Sexual honor became one of the main weapons in the arsenal of white separatists to defend a social order that privileged whiteness.

The double standard of masculine honor and dishonor enforced and legitimized racial exclusions without ever explicitly mentioning race, allowing the reality of racial discrimination to coexist with the discourse of racial equality. Manliness became a surrogate for race. White insurgents used sexual morality as a weapon to punish racial

289 Gail Bederman, Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3-4. A similar incident occurred in the United States in the 1910s with the first black heavy-weight boxing champion, Jack Johnson, who was accused of engaging in white slavery for crossing state lines with his white mistress after defeating his famous white opponent.
transgressions, employing stereotypes of black sexual immorality to justify their inadequacy for leadership positions. The court-martial of Bandera not only highlighted a battle over what kind of person was capable of leadership and decision-making, as historian Ada Ferrer adeptly notes.  

**Concubines, Mambisas, and the Allure of *Cuba Libre***

At the same time as insurgents policed black sexuality to make their cause palpable to socially-conservative elements, they also sought to project Cuban women as white and morally righteous to solicit international support. Instead of demonstrating manliness through sexuality, codes of insurgent masculinity emphasized the protection and salvation of women—chivalry. Kristen Hoganson has argued that the crisis of masculinity in the United States and the rise of the new woman in the late nineteenth century forced American men to intervene on behalf of Cuban women, “assuming the role of rescuer could win them [American] women’s esteem.” But before Americans could consider rescuing Cuban women, Cuban insurgents had to project a desirable image of the Cuban femininity to counteract Spanish associations of blackness. To compel Americans to support the Cuban cause, it was necessary to represent Cuban women as white, middle-class damsels in distress.

Cuban insurgents, black and white, seemed to claim that Bandera keeping a concubine in battle undermined Cuban manliness by boasting the military prowess of

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women. This “defiled the moral and male purity of the rebel cause.”\textsuperscript{292} Contesting prevailing ideals of chivalry, Bandera claimed that his concubine even fought with the soldiers. His compatriots viewed this proclamation with disgust. When Dimas Zamora read this letter he scoffed that “it seemed like a lie that a man to give prestige to a concubine would sink himself with such a clumsy and punishable declaration, that not only offends the General in Chief but also the old man worthy of more respect.”\textsuperscript{293} Máximo Gómez also disapproved of women in the field, “calling it an ‘escándalo’.”\textsuperscript{294}

The trial of Bandera was not a conflict over the presence of women in the insurgent camps. It was a struggle over what kind of women should represent Cuba, and over what kind of man could have access to those women. Cuban narratives of the war tended to corroborate the image in the American press, that American intervention in the war was necessary in order to help protect white Cuban women from the cruelties of the Spanish and the atrocities of war.

\textsuperscript{292} Ferrer, \textit{Insurgent Cuba}, 175.

\textsuperscript{293} Valdés-Domínguez, \textit{Diario de un soldado}, IV, 196-7.

\textsuperscript{294} Flint, \textit{Marching with Gómez}, 88, nt 1.
Image 6: “Sometime in the future”\textsuperscript{295}

Image 7: “The Cuban Melodrama”\textsuperscript{296}

At the same time as his compatriots disdained Bandera for keeping a woman in his camp, they accepted the presence of other women. The participation of women—mambisas—in battle alongside men was not altogether unheard of. Women such as Ana Betancourt weaved in and out of the manigua, while the patriotism of Mariana Grajales, mother of the Maceo brothers, is often lauded for her selfless contribution to the Patria. Numerous women’s groups also emerged in support of the Cuban cause, including the Club “Cubanita” of Cienfuegos and the Association of Women Protectors of the Revolution. Flint observed that “Interesting stories have been published about Amazons in the Cuban field, but Madame González was the only one it was my fortune


297 Louis Dalrymple, “The duty of the hour; - to save her not only from Spain, but from a worse fate,” Puck, May 11, 1898, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

298 For further examples of mambisas, see Teresa Prados-Torreiro, Mambisas: Rebel Women in Nineteenth-Century Cuba (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

299 Valdés-Domínguez, Diario de un soldado, III, 187.
to meet.” Flint recounted the story of this woman, known by her maiden name of Paulina Ruiz, who accompanied her husband, Captain Rafael González, in battle under the command of Manolo Menéndez. Ruiz, the symbol of white middle-class womanhood, was appointed the flag captain by Pancho Pérez, and killed two guerrillas with the swing of her machete in the front lines of one skirmish. 300 She had participated in at least ten battles before then, and had never been wounded. Máximo Gómez was scandalized when hearing the story of Ruiz, and ordered his soldiers to keep her and other women away from combat zones. 301 He preferred more domesticated roles for Cuban women.

Image 9: Sketch of Madame González, a Mambisa 302

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301 Tone, *War and Genocide*, 143.

302 Flint, *Marching with Gómez*, 86.
Understanding the danger in portraying white Cuban women as savage warriors, Flint explained away the transgressions of separate spheres ideology by claiming that the mambisas were mostly black women, “who have followed their husbands, sharing the hardship of the always moving camp and the chances of a stray bullet. They carry machetes, as tools rather than as weapons, wear bloomers, even trousers, and sleep in hammocks or on bits of rubber cloth on the hard ground, but they do not fight in the skirmish line with rifle or shotgun, like the men, for they form part of the impedimenta.” One example of this pattern was the freeborn black woman Faustina Heredia of Yaguajay, who followed her soon-to-be-husband into the war. In contrast to the story of Paulina Ruíz, Flint argued black women rather than white women transgressed of proper gender roles by becoming amazons.

The role of the white woman, though equally patriotic, was more domestic, consequently, ore respectable. Insurgents used the image of the honorable white woman to highlight the virtues of the Cuban cause. Celebrated mambisas such as Marta Abreu represented Cuba to a foreign audience as white, affluent, and respectable. In Cienfuegos, the distinguished Cuban patriot was Rita Suárez del Villar, also emerging from an affluent white elite family.

These women, considered dignified representatives of the Cuban cause for their sacrifice and efforts to ameliorate the conditions of the Cuban troops, not to mention their implied chastity, contrasted starkly to the dark, dishonorable, and unrefined figure of the concubine. By maintaining a concubine in battle, Bandera undermined the respectable

303 Ibid., 88, nt 1.

image of Cuban womanhood, unapologetically accepting and promoting sexual licentiousness and dishonor. This posed a serious problem for insurgent discourse vilifying the Spanish woman as a prostitute, and glorifying the Cuban woman as a chaste mother or wife. By sanctioning Bandera and upholding the white mambisa as a symbol of Cuban womanhood, insurgent leaders attempted to expand the appeal of Cuba Libre to international allies and more socially-conservative sectors of the Cuban populace.

Demographics and Divisions within the Cuban Army

Between late 1897 and the end of the war, the Cuban army transformed its image from one of murderous hordes of black bandits to one of heroic patriots and chivalrous men. In the process they secured greater legitimacy both at home and abroad. Insurgent successes in late 1897 turned the tide of the war. With the substitution of Valeriano Weyler with Ramón Blanco as Governor General and the announcement of political Autonomy, Cubans could taste victory. The Spanish declaration of Cuban autonomy catalyzed a shift in the rank and file of both the Spanish and the Cuban Armies. Some men, especially those favoring Autonomy on the Cuban side defected to the Spanish side. Máximo Gómez noted in early February that “with the implantation of the new regime, some men have deserted the Separatist Camp, betraying their Fatherland and their flag.” These defectors, he judged, were not even men, but rather “bastards and cowards; who cannot resist the tests of abnegation…”305 A prominent example of a defection from the

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305 Gómez, Diario de campaña, 449.
Cuban ranks is Juan Massó Parra, who along with the men under his command, deserted the Cuban army in January 1898. 306

At the same time, autonomy signaled to many Spanish troops an imminent defeat. The morale of the Spanish troops waned and soldiers deserted in large numbers and even refused to continue fighting by early 1898. 307 Walter B. Barker, the United States Consul at the central Cuban city of Sagua la Grande noted that the Spanish troops exhibited an “extreme indifference” regarding the outcome of the war. 308 So could former noncombatants and even Spaniards, many of who flocked to the army to ensure a part of the spoils of war. The intervention of the United States on behalf of the Cubans transformed the nature of the Cuban Army, creating “two armies in the Brigade” of Cienfuegos. 309 In the period before the American intervention the Brigade of Cienfuegos had been composed in large part of rural sectors among which people of color had predominated. However, inscriptions in 1898 show a predominance of wealthy white urbanites. 310 As historian Ada Ferrer put it, the new recruits, though a diverse group, “reached more consistently into the upper echelons of Cuban society than had earlier waves of recruitment.” This was reflected in the high proportion of urban professionals

306 Juan Masó Parra, Primera parte de un libro para la historia Cuba (Curaçao: Betancourt e Hijos, 1904), 63-65.

307 Pérez, Cuba Between Empires, 80-81.

308 Walter B. Barker to William R. Day, June 17, 1897, Papers of the United States Consul at Sagua la Grande, Microfilm Reel #6, Walter Royal Davis Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Hereafter cited as WRD/UNC/USCC);

309 García Martínez, “La Brigada de Cienfuegos, 186.

310 Ibid., 188.
including doctors, pharmacists, students, and even planters who joined the insurrection in 1898 in Cienfuegos.\textsuperscript{311}

The leaders of the Cienfuegos Brigade were, for the most part, all white. This became even more pervasive with news of the United States declaration of war against Spain in April 1898, as white educated urbanites joined the insurrection en masse, anticipating a prompt victory. The civil branch of \textit{Cuba Libre} also favored educated white elites as officer by offering higher ranks based on education level.\textsuperscript{312} The advantage of education in ascending the military hierarchy mostly favored whites.\textsuperscript{313} After the United States declared war on Spain, the composition of the Brigade of Cienfuegos did change substantially, favoring white educated urbanites, especially in the high-ranking positions, despite their late inscription.

The sudden influx of men from sectors typically associated with socially-conservative beliefs exacerbated existing tensions within the Army. In 1898, 174 men enlisted in the Brigade of Cienfuegos.\textsuperscript{314} New recruits included advocates of autonomy, who were notoriously weary of black social mobility, and some men who had actively fought for the Spanish in years or months past. For example, Francisco Veitia, a 22-year-old barber from Santa Clara was a Spanish volunteer before joining the insurrection in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ferrer, \textit{Insurgent Cuba}, 186.
\item Tone, \textit{War and Genocide}, p. 95.
\item Miguel Barnet, \textit{Biografía de un Cimarrón}, Reprint, 1966 (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1986), p. 195. There were exceptions to the rule that educational requirements favored whites. For example, Martín Moruá Delgado, a prominent black activist “became a lieutenant without having held a machete,” joining the revolution after the American intervention.
\item Carlos Roloff, \textit{Indice alfabético y defunciones del Ejército Libertador de Cuba, guerra de independencia, iniciada el 24 de febrero de 1895 y terminada oficialmente} (Havana: Imprenta de Rambla y Bouza, 1901).
\end{enumerate}
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May 1898. Florencio Cuellar, a shoemaker from Esperanza also served as a Spanish volunteer before joining Higinio Esquerra in July. Jacinto Pérez formed part of the Guerrilla of Manacas before enlisting in the Cuban army in August.\textsuperscript{315} Men who joined the Cuban army after April tended to represent the more privileged sectors of local society in stark contrast to the more humble composition of the recruits before 1898.\textsuperscript{316} Among the men who enlisted in the Brigade of Cienfuegos, Higinio Esquerra noted 6 merchants, 5 students, and other educated and skilled men including physicians, professors, pharmacists, planters, mechanics, artisans, sugar masters, students, among others.\textsuperscript{317} Enlistment for the privileged “new” patriots marked a moment of equalization with men of lower social status.

The transformation of the Cuban army produced competition over military leadership, perceived to be the key to political power in the emerging republic. “New” patriots struggled to distinguish themselves from the masses in the Cuban army. The values of self-abnegation and restraint formerly at the center of insurgent visions of masculinity fell to the background as the race for military promotion commenced. “The illustrious enlistees of the Cienfuegos elite marched to the manigua, then, more to legitimize a participation that would ensure secular interests and positions in the future nation, than for the genuine patriotism” of earlier fallen heroes, wrote Cienfuegos

\textsuperscript{315} Higinio Esquerra, \textit{Diario de Operaciones, 1896-1898}, Museo Histórico Provincial de Cienfuegos (Hereafter cited as MPHC).


\textsuperscript{317} Higinio Esquerra, \textit{Diario de Operaciones, 1896-1898}, MPHC.
historian Orlando García Martínez. Despite their recent arrival into the Brigade, the privileged “new” patriots experienced rapid ascension into officer positions, ranks which poor, rural, multi-racial enlistees had not been able to reach in three years of battle. For example, Juan Pedro Avilés Simón, son of the wealthy merchant and owner of the Avilés and Leblanc Company, enlisted in the Cavalry of Yaguaramas in late February 1898. By March, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant, and he subsequently served as an assistant to General José Rogelio Castillo. In the Brigade of Cienfuegos, one man enlisted in late May 1898 and reached the rank of lieutenant by the end of the war. There were at least 5 men who joined the insurrection in 1898 who reached the rank of first or second sergeant, and one who reached the rank of sub-lieutenant. The criteria for military promotion included formal education and literacy, two qualities implicitly linked to whiteness.

Although the insurgent leadership eventually responded by issuing an order mandating that all men who enlisted after April 1898 should retain the rank of soldier, the rapid ascension of “new” patriots had begun to accentuate already-existing divisions within the army. At the same time as many of these infidelities were forgiven and seemingly forgotten, white insurgent leaders severely punished black officers for being traitors. Among those who paid with their lives, were the Lieutenant Colonels Cándido

318 García Martínez, “La Brigada de Cienfuegos, 188.

319 Ibid.

320 Roloff, Indice alfabético y defunciones del Ejército Libertador de Cuba.

321 “Inspección General del Ejército del Departamento occidental,” September 2, 1898, Box 71, File 4246, National Archives of Cuba, Fondo de Adquisiciones (Hereafter, ANC/FA). Thank you to Orlando García Martínez for facilitating access to this document.
Álvarez, “Cayito,” Vicente Núñez and the Commandants Joaquín González and Antonio Espinosa. These apparently contradictory patterns of treatment for “old” and “new” patriots seemed to have produced tensions within the Army.

Proponents of racial equality and advocates of racial hierarchy debated who would wield political leadership in the emerging republic. Although the majority of the Cuban Army—the poor, rural, and multi-racial masses—stood behind the ideals of the March 1895 Manifiesto de Montecristi, many of the new enlistees had more personal objectives in joining the war: they joined to defend their interests as urban property holders and men of influence, and consolidate their role in the leadership of Cuba Libre. Some insurgent chiefs questioned the loyalty of the new recruits. Máximo Gómez, for example, wrote to Francisco Carrillo on February 28, 1898 less than two weeks after the explosion of the battleship Maine, voicing his skepticism about the new sectors incorporating into the Army: “It is like I have always said. ‘The better part of these well-read men, as we mountain people say, have come to the war, but do not carry the Revolution inside…’” These private interests, they would find out, conflicted in many ways with the egalitarian discourse that had defined—though imperfectly—the rebel cause up until then.

At the same time as privileged white urbanites incorporated in record numbers into the insurrection, celebrated Cuban patriot Rita Suárez del Villar began to consolidate a patriotic woman’s club in Cienfuegos, the Club “Cubanita.” This club headed by women of some of the most prestigious families of the city, worked to provide relief,

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322 García Martínez, “La Brigada de Cienfuegos, 189.

323 Máximo Gómez to Francisco Carrillo, February 28, 1898 in Gómez, Cartas a Francisco Carrillo, 204.
supplies, medicines, clothing, shoes and other provisions to the Cuban forces. Although the efforts of Suárez del Villar have often been recognized as playing a pivotal role in boosting moral among the Cuban troops, this club tended to distribute supplies to immediate family and friends, favoring the same privileged white Cubans. Among those who wrote to the Club for supplies were men who after the war occupied the top governing positions in the province: José Miguel Gómez, civil governor of Santa Clara province after the war and later president, Jacinto Portela, mayor of Palmira, Alfredo Lewis, who served on the Cienfuegos city council, Arturo Aulet, Cienfuegos police chief in 1907, Eligio A. Brunet, who worked for the Captain of the Port, and Enrique Loynaz del Castillo, who became a diplomat.

Few people of African descent maintained correspondence with Rita. In January 1898, Carlos Trujillo wrote to Suárez of a “young man of color called Joaquín, of your same last name.” Joaquín had grown up with Suárez and her family, indicating that he had been a slave or servant of that family. “This comrade,” wrote Trujillo, “finds himself in a very bad state of clothing and other useful things and he let me know of the desire he had that you would send him a change of clothes to fight against the weather.” He suggested the Suárez send the clothes to him, with a note “for Joaquín.” Trujillo mentioned that Joaquín had been injured during the war and “still suffers somewhat from the wound.”

By April, it seems that no clothing had arrived for Joaquín. Trujillo again wrote requesting the favor of Suárez: “If you could send a pair of shoes, number 42 and a change of clothes and anything you like to Joaquín, I will thank you, as he has lost

324 Carlos Trujillo to Rita Suárez del Villar, January, 27 1898, Rita Suárez del Villar Papers, Box 1, file 33. Provincial Historical Archive of Cienfuegos (Hereafter cited as APHC/RSV).
everything and I want him to see that we do not have privileges.” Even if white insurgent leaders wanted to provide their black troops with provisions, the Club “Cubanita” seemed to foment divisions and inequalities by provisioning the wealthy whites preferentially. By providing supplies to only the most elite members of Cienfuegos society, the Club reinforced colonial hierarchies within the insurrection.

Many of the recent enlistees, and those supported by the Club “Cubanita,” would go on to obtain positions of power and leadership in local government after the war, being viewed by the Americans as the more reasonable and trustworthy class of Cubans. Placing these men in power largely disenfranchised the majority of the Cuban Army who had fought for not only independence, but also for social justice, for three and a half long years. The split in *Cuba Libre* led to the consolidation of the power and authority of these wealthy white urbanites during the first years of the republic at the expense of the ideal of equality.

**Conclusions**

While Cubans consolidated cross-racial unity against a common enemy early on, the turning tides of the war, especially the series of decisive defeats and subsequent demoralization of the forces in early 1897 fostered tensions among the insurgent forces. With the invasion from the East, Gómez and Maceo brought thousands of eastern troops, many of whom were black, into the zone. The invasion reconfigured the military organization of the central provinces, introducing eastern chiefs, like Bandera, to lead

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325 Carlos Trujillo to Rita Suárez del Villar, April 12, 1898, Box 1, file 33, APHC/RSV.
central regiments. Whereas prior to the invasion, Cienfuegos forces were often considered inept and labeled as *majases*, undermining the masculine and military honor of white elites in charge, the invasion helped consolidate the Brigade of Cienfuegos, and enforce a stricter code of morality among the men.

The construction of a patriotic East as opposed to an immoral and inept central zone threatened the prestige of white central insurgent chiefs. In Cienfuegos, where the consolidation of the Brigade had introduced *oriental* and black insurgent chiefs to a predominantly white-led zone, white insurgents rejected demographic change and shifts in the power structure of local forces. Between 1896 and 1897, whites brought numerous accusations, trials and court-martials cases against black officers, many of whom faced demotion, and even death. These cases demonstrated a re-organization of power within the Brigade of Cienfuegos, as white central chiefs targeted black leaders to as a way to perform a stricter code of discipline and morality to contest the characterization of central forces as *majases*. At the same time, white central insurgent leaders advocated a different vision of the social order than the one they saw in the invasion force. Instead of accepting black leadership that had come with the invasion, they reinforced racial hierarchy through distinctions in manliness, pointing to blacks as immoral and lacking military honor.

At the same time as whites claimed to embody the highest level of masculinity—manliness—black insurgent chiefs such as Quintín Bandera articulated alternate masculinities. Bandera threatened the white monopoly on manliness by publically maintaining a sexual relationship with his concubine during the war. By showing that black military prowess opened the possibility for black access to women, Bandera threatened white sexual privilege and virility. In his trial, white insurgents equated access
to women and sex as tantamount to access to political power. Seeking to reinforce the racial hierarchy within the insurrection to cement their preferential access to political power after the war, they persecuted Bandera as an example to other black insurgent leaders that they had to respect white privilege and racial equality despite a discourse disavowing these inequalities. While the ideology of raceless nationality may have some men provided an opportunity to contest inequality, the case of Bandera shows that it also placed severe restrictions on the ways men—especially black men—could protest prejudice.

After major military setbacks in late 1896 and early 1897, the tides of the war again turned in favor of the insurgents by late 1897. The Spanish concession of Autonomy confirmed Cuban suspicions of a weakening imperial hold on the Pearl of the Antilles. The announcement of American intervention in 1898 catalyzed the massive enlistment of educated white urbanites, who gave impetus to already existing racial tensions within the military hierarchy. Although Cuban forces managed to retain sufficient unity during the war, the shifting power dynamics and demographics of the Cuban Army in the wake of the American military intervention in foreshadowed the intense struggle for political power in the emerging republic.

Indeed, the demographic and socio-economic shift in the rank and file of the Cuban Army resulted in two significant consequences that would define Cuban politics after the war. First, it exacerbated the division between the military branch of *Cuba Libre* and the civil branch, represented by the Cuban Revolutionary Party in New York. Second, the shift gave rise to new voices within the Cuban Army, melding socially-

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conservative ideas of the recently enlisted Autonomists and pacíficos with the revolutionary political and social agenda of the insurrection. According to Cuban historian Orlando García Martínez, this shift “gave greater space for the rise of clienteles within the very liberating Army, erected on top of the familiar relations and the coexistence in the redeeming trench.” The next two chapters examine the ways competing groups of men residing in and around Cienfuegos struggled to turn their particular visions of Cuba Libre into reality under by defining and re-defining who would have access to political power. These political battles hinged on diverging conceptions of the relationship between independence and racial equality.

CHAPTER 3
From War Heroes to Bandits:
Criminalization and Emasculation of Veterans in Post-war Cuba

During the first months after the cessation of hostilities, Cuban soldiers remained under arms in the countryside of Cienfuegos. The Americans had prohibited the victorious army from marching into the cities, fearing revenge attacks upon the Spanish, who still occupied the cities. Although the formal combat had subsided with the surrender of the Spanish army on August 12, 1898, complaints of rural crime emanated from the countryside. Violence and disorder allegedly continued to pervade the Cuban countryside, threatening the lives of rural residents and endangering economic recovery. The chaos of the post-war countryside, to some rural residents, was reminiscent of a pattern of crime that was all too familiar to Cubans during the colonial period: banditry.

In post-war Cuba, banditry became a politically-charged word that encompassed a wide range of crime, violence, and rural protest, from the theft of a loose chicken by a starving family to alleged conspiracies to overthrow the government. Wealthy property owners were at the forefront of complaints about rural crime. This was a group that American military officials claimed consisted of two main populations: “intelligent planters” and “many Spaniards.” These property owners identified two main strains of banditry: crime against property and personal violence. On the one hand, the prevalence of theft, robbery, and other petty crime suggested that some veterans and country

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dwellers resorted to extralegal methods to ensure the subsistence for themselves and their families. On the other hand, violent crime including murder, beating, mutilation and intimidation, suggested that the political rivalry between separatists and supporters of Spain that defined Cuban society during the war persisted after the cessation of hostilities.

Banditry became intimately tied to fears of separatist rule after the war. Some opponents of the separatist movement claimed that insurgents were the key perpetrators of rural crime, an assertion aimed at delegitimizing separatist claims to political power. Because the Spanish had famously characterized the Cuban insurgents as bandits, the claim that veterans were the perpetrators of rural crime resonated with the long standing beliefs and served the future aspirations of wealthy property owners, particularly those who opposed the separatist movement. Nevertheless, opponents of Cuban rule had to convince more than their fellow wealthy property owners of the evils of the insurgents; they had to persuade Americans, who had intervened on behalf of the separatists, supposedly because they believed that the separatist cause and its proponents were noble.

Wealthy property owners employed reports of crime to modify American perceptions of insurgents so as to influence the definition of political eligibility during the first months of the military occupation. Although some crime certainly existed in the countryside after the war, these reports often featured hysterical, often-sensationalized claims of widespread social unrest, large-scale organized crime, and race wars, with little empirical foundation. They pointed to the alleged racial composition of the army, which some claimed was 80% black, to corroborate their claims, amidst prevailing racial ideologies linking blackness to innate criminality. By depicting the Cuban war heroes as
perilous bandits, opponents of Cuban rule exploited American anxieties regarding the racial composition of the Cuban army and the deleterious effects of the war on the racial order. As a result, they undermined Cuban claims to military honor by emphasizing the pathological and threatening aspects of insurgent masculinity. They converted veteran status into a symptom of a dishonorable lifestyle based on pillage and plunder.

Undermining the claims to citizenship of Cuban veterans bolstered the political clout of opponents of Cuban rule. By linking blackness and crime to Cuban veterans, wealthy property owners articulated a version of masculinity founded on the exclusion of men of African descent. Wealthy property owners effectively mobilized the specter of racial crime to secure concessions from the military government, including American troops to protect rural properties, permission to hire private armed guards, and the disbandment of the Cuban army. What is more, certain property owners, namely those with an interest in the annexation of Cuba to the United States cited rampant rural crime as evidence of the need for a deeper and more sustained American presence in Cuba. According to James H. Wilson, this group included a broad spectrum of the “better classes” in Cuba: “All of the Spanish planters and all of their foreing [sic] residents of the island desire immediate annexation to the United States. It is also safe to say that the many of the leading natives desire the same,” he wrote in early 1899. Although Wilson certainly may have overestimated the desire for annexation, his statement suggests that the political posturing toward the United States depended in large part on wealth, with the wealthiest people favoring annexation.

329 James H. Wilson to Professor Goldwin Smith, January 19, 1899, Box 43, Volume 2, LOC/MD/JHW.
The diverging perceptions of crime in post-war Cuba reflected disparate political agendas among men contending for power and influence over the future of the island. Cuban separatists demanded immediate and absolute independence. Wealthy property owners and Autonomists, men who had supported home rule and opposed absolute independence, feared that independence would lead to financial ruin at the hand of supposedly reckless and irresponsible Cuban separatists. These differences over the political future reflected competing understandings of the role of people of African descent in Cuba. The social implications of independence were grave, according to opponents of Cuban rule: They feared the breakdown of the colonial social order—that is the caste-like system that virtually equated race and wealth with status, upon which their wealth and status relied. They imagined that the social anarchy embodied in the separatist cause would lead to black rule.

Foreign property owners and wealthy Cuban planters, many of who had been naturalized as American citizens, were at the forefront of the movement to preserve the social order after the war. They sought to keep blacks laboring in countryside. On the other hand, competent white men—representatives of the propertied classes, and usually not separatists—would administer the government and ensure order and prosperity. Foreign property owners and wealthy Cuban planters attempted to enforce this vision of Cuban society by immobilizing the Cuban army—a groups of radical men they perceived as the main threat to the social order. By criminalizing and racializing the Cuban army, opponents of Cuban rule sought to delegitimize separatist access to political power after the war.
Rural Destitution and the Roots of Crime in the Countryside

After the war, rural families and veterans of the war struggled to make ends meet in the devastated Cuban countryside. General James H. Wilson, the Commanding General of Matanzas and Santa Clara Province, described the countryside of Santa Clara province between his tours in April and May: “The towns were found defended by trenches, obstructions and blockhouses, as in the Province of Matanzas. The country outside of the towns has been devastated—not one farm-house or hut, as far as my observation goes, has escaped destruction. Horses, cattle, pigs and fowls were driven off or killed, and the people herded into the towns.” According to the data collected by Wilson, livestock was reduced from 304,000 to less than 66,000, about one-third of which had been imported since January 1899.

Reconcentration, emigration, and war casualties had reduced the population substantially, and those who remained, faced destitution. Death rates in the city of Cienfuegos even increased after the war, reaching 473 in November 1898, up from around 300 per month during the war. Wilson estimated that about one-seventh of the population had perished during reconcentration. In Santa Clara Province alone, there were 22,000 widows, 33,000 orphans, 2,600 sick, 4,500 helpless, and 44,000 destitute.


331 Wilson, Annual Report, 1899, p. 72.


333 Wilson, Annual Report, 1899, 66.
people requiring temporary or partial support. Some of these destitute people were collected into public charitable institutions. Other impoverished and ill people gathered at the public dispensaries and free clinics established by local philanthropists and doctors, like José María Landa. Yet, these were insufficient to provide for the thousands of people afflicted by the war: “Words fail to describe the utter misery of the wretched, starving inmates,” wrote Frank J. Ives, Major and Chief Surgeon of the U.S. Volunteers of the destitute overcrowded into the charitable institutions of the Department of Matanzas and Santa Clara.

Initially, the United States military provided aid to the indigent country people in the form of food rations, medicines and even shelter. The Americans established free dispensaries for medicines and supplies in Cienfuegos, Lajas and Cruces. Because of the efforts of the American military, “the hollow-cheeked, hungry and forlorn faces of children [were] no longer seen…,” reported Major Ives. (See Table 2).

| Table 2: Rations Issued to Destitute in Cienfuegos, January-June 1899 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                 | January         | February        | March           | April           | May             | June            |
| Abreus           |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 | 4,000           | 4,000           |
|                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |

334 Ibid., 72.

335 José María Landa, “States they have decided to establish a public dispensary,” May 6, 1899, Box 7, File 3587, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

336 Wilson, Annual Report, 1899, 164.

337 Ibid., 167.

338 Ibid., 167.

339 Ibid., 156; James H. Wilson, Annual Report of Brigadier General James H. Wilson, U.S.V., Commanding the Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara (Matanzas, 1900), 118.
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<td>200</td>
<td>5,200</td>
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<td>5,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cienfuegos</td>
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<td>130,800</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,400</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cruces</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parque Alto</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodas</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>4,500</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santo Domingo</td>
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<td>1,000</td>
<td>6,300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soledad</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>78,700</td>
<td>32,100</td>
<td>30,900</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20,800</td>
<td>203,500</td>
<td>23,200</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Although some Americans initially celebrated the benevolent and humanitarian efforts of their government in “saving” the Cubans, but the distaste for dollying out charity soon became apparent in the reports of military officials and the negative press coverage of charity projects. In the 1899 census, 57% of the population of Cienfuegos district was “without gainful occupation,” and the numbers were even higher in the city of Cienfuegos, were nearly two-thirds of the populations remained unemployed.\(^{342}\) Despite the considerable hardships veterans and rural families faced after the war, American authorities asserted that charity would promote dependency and laziness among poor Cubans. For example, Wilson wrote that “while we are fostering a habit of dependence upon paternal government by actual charity or by employment in public works, we are at the same time weaning the laborer from his habits of toil in the fields; taking from him

\(^{340}\) Appears as 3900

\(^{341}\) Appears as 148001

the independence whose benefits we are constantly preaching.” American press echoed this sentiment. “The distribution of Government rations to the poor rather tends to demoralize them and to prevent them from seeking employment,” read one article on the conditions at Cienfuegos. The emphasis on work implied a negative view of indigent Cubans as lazy and dependent, rather than industrious and competent.

Cuban authorities, too, lamented the pitiful state of the lower classes. They turned to employment as a solution to poverty and a path to rebuilding the country. The survival strategies of indigent veterans in post-war Cuba had deep political implications. On the one hand, charity was a disgraceful vice, an affront to insurgent masculinity. On the other hand, veterans who had previously resorted to raiding and pillaging to maintain their forces seemed to confirm the common association of banditry with veterans after the war. Insurgent chiefs turned to formal employment as a solution to dispel perceptions of Cuban dependency and to redefine Cuban manliness from warriors to respectable breadwinners and heads of household.

In glorifying formal employment, Cubans seemed to echo the paternalist tone of the American military authorities. “In these moments, we are poor receiving charity from the American nation,” one reporter wrote in the newspaper, La Nación. “But this state of things,” continued the article, “if it is permitted and tolerated in these moments in which we have just finished a devastating struggle, will surely not be dignified when we

343 Wilson, Annual Report, 1899, 74.


345 “Al Trabajo,” in La Nación, September 1, 1898, Box 291, File 41, Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones (Hereafter, ANC/FDR).
can usufruct the goods of our very fertile soil."\textsuperscript{346} The article closed with an emphatic call to return to work, voiced in terms of patriotic duty. “To work! It is our obligation to think of the lives of our children, of the dignity of the Cuban name. To work! Since with it nations grow rich and great and rise higher in international life.”\textsuperscript{347} Cuban authorities and the press simultaneously responded to negative American visions of their population and attempted to solve the post-war problem of poverty by promoting work as a source of dignity and independence.

The call to return to work was especially aimed at people of African descent, who had long comprised the principal source of labor fueling the Cuban sugar industry. Cuban planters relied on black labor to produce their wealth and maintain their social and economic privilege. Autonomists, annexationists and even members of the civil branch of \textit{Cuba Libre} called for men to return to work, placing special emphasis on the reinforcing the colonial distinctions relegating blacks to inferior social positions. For example, Bartolomé Masó, who had been elected President of the Provisional government of Cuba in 1897 declared that “our negroes will work as before [the war] in the cane-fields, and I see no reason to anticipate trouble from them.”\textsuperscript{348} Masó, who opposed American rule, reassured property owners and Americans both that Cuban rule would not threaten the existing social order.

American officials tended to agree with the call to return the masses to work, but sometimes recognized the need for assistance. Although American military officials

\textsuperscript{346} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{347} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{348} George Clarke Musgrave, \textit{Under three flags in Cuba: a personal account of the Cuban insurrection and Spanish-American War} (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1899), 163.
criticized charity, Captain William Wright reported that “a large class of inhabitants are too weak to work and should be rationed.” He also recommended that the tax on beef be removed to lower the prices and make to more affordable to the “needy classes,” advice that military officials did not heed leading to further crime. Additionally, Wilson advocated for the establishment of an agricultural bank to assist farmers in re-establishing their livelihoods in the countryside. He reported that “after more than three years of war, persecution and starvation, the mass of the people are tired of fighting. They are anxious to go back to work, become self-supporting and enjoy the tranquility of an independent domestic life.” Eager to convince his superiors of the necessity of an agricultural bank, Wilson asserted, “I am so convinced of the futility of approaching the problem of reconstruction from any other direction that, although the Division Commander has deemed it impracticable at the present time, I must again urge the necessity of some action to relieve the wants of the agricultural population, and to put agriculture on a sound basis with the least possible delay.” Although Wilson continued to urge American military support for the relief of Cuban farmers, no such agricultural bank was established.

Without assistance to reestablish their farms, one of the only options for veterans and rural dwellers after the war was to return to the sugar estates. Edwin F. Atkins, an American and owner of one of the largest sugar estates in Cuba, and perhaps the epitome


350 Ibid.; José de Jesús Monteagudo to General James H. Wilson, May 27, 1900, Box 36, File 2918, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

351 Wilson, Annual Report, 1899, p. 74.
of what Wilson meant by an “intelligent planter,” wrote to Wilson that all of the small
country towns are “almost entirely dependent upon our property for the employment of
inhabitants and support of the population.” Some veterans, as poor as they were,
refused to return to work on the estates, perhaps because of the dangers that had defined
that work during the war. Both insurgents and Spaniards had brutally punished laborers
for alleged collaboration with the enemy.

The call to return to work after the war also neglected certain aspirations for
social mobility among veterans. Laboring for the large sugar estates doomed most
workers to a life of poverty and dependency. Wilson acknowledged that day labor
eliminated all possibilities for social mobility: the “natural disposition [of large ingenio
owners] will be to resort to a scale of wages which will give the ordinary laborer not
more than sufficient to supply his daily needs.” Veterans in search of work knew this
and resented the expectation that they would work for pennies after emerging from the
war as heroes. Wages for unskilled labor were usually around 40 cents per day. Black

352 Edwin F. Atkins to General James H Wilson, October 5, 1899, Box 2, File Atkins, LOC/MD/JHW.

353 Insurgents brutalized and murdered laborers on the large estates around Cienfuegos, after Máximo
Gómez prohibited the sugar harvest. On March 21, 1896, Atkins reported that “At one place they found
some men working and cut off their hands and feet; at another place two days ago they killed seventeen
laborers—this by people who are appealing to the United States to stop the barbarous warfare of the
Spanish troops.” In other instances, workers were captured and taken by the insurgents, as was the case of
F. Atkins to Honorable Edward F. Uhl,” December 9, 1895, f. 40-41. Edwin Farnsworth Atkins, Sixty Years
in Cuba, Reminiscences of Edwin F. Atkins (Cambridge: Private print at the Riverside Press, 1926), p. 228,
191. The Spaniards also harassed laborers after General Pedro Pin, Spanish Commander in Cienfuegos,
received orders from Valeriano Weyler, Captain General of Cuba, to suspend the harvest until the 15th or
20th of January. Spanish generals made the harvest difficult or nearly impossible by harassing, arresting,
and requiring that the laborers obtain passes in town every day before commencing work, refusing to issue
passes, and arresting workers without passes. “Edwin F. Atkins to Consulate of the United States,
Cienfuegos,” January 20, 1897, Volume II.39, folio 121, MHS/EFA; “Edwin F. Atkins, Petition before the
Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 10, MHS/EFA; Edwin F. Atkins
to Richard Olney,” January 22, 1897, Volume II.39, folio 102, MHS/EFA.

354 James H. Wilson to Adjutant General, February 8, 1900, Box 31, File 665, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
Cubans usually occupied the lowest-paid unskilled jobs, such as field labor, while Spaniards dominated the higher-paying semi-skilled jobs, and Chinese usually held jobs “requiring close attention rather than mechanical skills.”\textsuperscript{355} Surely veterans could not return with their heads bowed to the cane fields where they had toiled like slaves, even \textit{as} slaves, before the war.

The expectation that blacks would return to the fields, and resume pre-war labor patterns, would serve to signal the restoration of the pre-war social order and race-labor hierarchy. When blacks refused to return to the fields, they were labeled them as vagrants, bandits and, threats to Cuban society. Wealthy property owners and American onlookers assumed that disenfranchised veterans would wither resort to charity or make their living was by preying on the countryside. One newspaper article published in the United States claimed that many Cubans want work, “but to loot is their delight.”\textsuperscript{356} Another newspaper described the state of the Cuban countryside: country people were “terrorized by bandits.”\textsuperscript{357}

The call to go to work to preserve Cuban dignity and greatness voiced in Cuban newspapers in early 1899 may have resonated among some country people hoping to regain a sense of normalcy and routine, but it did not account for the difficulties in realizing this feat. The forms of employment American and Cuban officials indicated for relieving the poor may have aimed to promote the economic recovery, but they certainly

\textsuperscript{355} Wilson, \textit{Annual Report}, 1899, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{356} “News is Suppressed,” newspaper clipping, May 11, 1899, Volume II.60, folio 16, MHS/EFA. American from Cuba says we miss the truth. Upland country is held by brigands and outlaws. Gómez, not Brooke, the real governor of the island. Soldiers do not protect the plantation owners. Cubans want to work, but to loot is their delight”

\textsuperscript{357} “Terrorized by Cuban Bandits,” newspaper clipping, June 7, 1899, Volume II.60, folio 49, MHS/EFA.
did not provide independence and self-sustainability for workers. The diverging visions of recovery between Cuban and American authorities and the indigent themselves arose out of different understandings of poverty and freedom. In rural Cuba, recently formerly enslaved men and women often purchased small plots of land and livestock as a way to provide for their subsistence independent of working on sugar estates.\textsuperscript{358} By prioritizing the economic privilege of the wealthy by reinforcing the social hierarchy through occupational stratification, American and Cuban authorities reduced the possibility for a reconfiguration of social hierarchy by forcing poor rural residents to work for the large estates. As a result, poor rural residents faced fewer options for social mobility as the colonial sugar economy and its accompanying social stratification became re-entrenched in post-war Cuba.

The failure to develop a comprehensive response to the needs of the rural poor contributed to crime in the countryside. Wilson had originally based his argument for the establishment of an agricultural bank on the idea that it would put thousands of uneducated country people to work, implying that they would no longer pose a threat to the order of the countryside: “only in this way can employment be afforded to a large class of laborers which has never been educated to anything but plantation work, and has not at present the means with which to work small farms independently.”\textsuperscript{359} The destitution of the countryside and the refusal of Cuban and American authorities to provide assistance to farmers exacerbated the condition of many farmers and veterans


\textsuperscript{359} Wilson, \textit{Annual Report}, 1899, p. 74.
after the war. These conditions may have helped foster the rural crime against which planters protested.

In June 1899, Wilson observed that “Whatever disorders may hereafter occur, I am sure may be ascribed mainly to the lack of sufficient and profitable occupation for the people.” 360 Widespread rural poverty certainly correlated with certain types of post-war crime, especially stealing. As one prisoner in the Cienfuegos jail noted, “being poor is the worst crime of which a Cuban could be guilty.” 361 In the words of historian Louis A. Pérez, Jr., “The continued presence of 50,000 Cuban officers and soldiers, under arms, with lines stretched out across the interior countryside, in various states of destitution, had chilling implications.” 362 Indeed, crime statistics collected in May 1899 showed that robbery was by far the most common form of crime in Cienfuegos. 363 (See Table 3.)

Table 3: Crimes of Prisoners in Cienfuegos Jail, May 1899 364

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alleged Crimes</th>
<th>In Cienfuegos Jail</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Robbery</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>Arson</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

360 Wilson, Annual Report, 1899, p. 86.

361 Manuel Romero Ortega to General Leonard Wood, July 6, 1900, Box 100, File 3673, USNA/MGC/RG 140/ E 3.


364 Ibid.
To a certain extent, Wilson was right in pointing to widespread destitution as the root of crime. In May 1899, an article appeared in a local Cienfuegos newspaper claiming that the war had produced anarchy in the countryside. This disorder subjected “the rural inhabitant of Cuba to the same outrages as those originating in the horrible state of Mexico, at the end of the war of independence, as a natural sequel to the popular commotions of the desolating struggle that did away with the public wealthy of the country and created hordes of bandits and desperate hungry [people].”

This and other “alarming reports” of crime that appeared in Cienfuegos newspapers suggested an abundance of poverty-related, often-petty crimes.

The pattern of poverty-related crime also emerged in law enforcement reports. Rural Guardsmen in Cienfuegos and the vicinity frequently pursued so-called bandits, accused of petty theft and robbery. For example in May 1899, rural guardsmen captured two thieves, who had previously been involved in a series of robberies, including that of a horse and 29 pesos at Horquita near Rodas. In August 1899, rural guardsmen capture the mulatto Agripino Sardiñas y Moreno, and the negroes Cayetano Yznaga and

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366 José de Jesús Monteagudo to General James H. Wilson, May 18, 1899, Box 8, File 4010, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

367 José de Jesús Monteagudo, “News from the Chief of the Rural Guard, District of Cienfuegos,” May 12, 1899, Box 7, File 3419, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
Francisco Arruebarrena, who stole some animals by force at Abreus.\textsuperscript{368} The type of crimes most frequently reported by plantation owners and rural guardsmen alike suggested that much of rural crime stemmed from the problem of post-war economic destitution, exacerbated by the failure to develop an adequate system of relief for the poor.

\textbf{Beyond Banditry: Violent Crime and Political Rivalry}

However plausible poverty may seem in explaining rural crime, the simultaneous prevalence of violent crime suggests that rural destitution was not the only cause of crime. The politicized nature of violent crime suggests that severe tensions between separatists and supporters of Spain continued to define Cuban society after the war. Stories of physical violence, threats, and murders peppered local, national and international newspapers during American military occupation, especially in the first year.

As the mutilated corpses of Spaniards emerged in country ditches, these stories of political violence assumed a new life in the various local periodicals and in the letters of opponents of Cuban rule. Anxieties about violent retaliation for war-time offenses catalyzed widespread hysteria about the possible implications of Cuban rule for those who had remained neutral or supported Spain during the war. The physical results of this persisting political fragmentation emerged not in actual crime statistics, but rather in reports of the condition of the countryside.

\textsuperscript{368} José Miguel Gómez to General James H. Wilson, “States that the Chief of Police informed him…,” August 5, 1899, Box 15, File 7238, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
Spanish soldiers, volunteers, guerrillas, and Cubans who remained “neutral,” did face a certain degree of violence after the war. In January 1899, General A. Castellanos, commander of the Spanish forces at Cienfuegos informed American military officials that “acts of violence have been committed in various localities n S.C. province against individuals who lately served in the Spanish irregular forces.” Later that same month, Spanish merchants in Cruces wrote to General John C. Bates, the Commander of Cienfuegos, requesting that “American soldiers preserve better order,” and to “guarantee the lives and interests of the Spaniards.”

By March, George P. Barker commanding the 6th Ohio Volunteers reported numerous cases of Cubans killing ex-guerrillas in Santa Clara province. One of the assassinations he related involved a Cuban shooting a guerrilla who, during the war, had killed a Cuban and attempted to sell his flesh as meat. Another was hacked to death, others shot, and one killed in a drunken brawl. In early May 1899, the New York Times reported the mutilation and murder of a prestigious Spaniard: “According to a dispatch from Cienfuegos, Jicotea Pérez, a Spaniard of high character and standing disappeared on Sunday, and to-day his body was found near the city, terribly mutilated with machetes.” This story emphasized the political nature of the killing: insurgents had slayed a Spaniard, suggesting that no Spaniard was safe.

369 A. Castellanos, “States that acts of violence have been committed,” January 16, 1899, Box 1, File 130, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1466.


The perpetrators, authorities alleged, were responsible for a number of other crimes in the same vicinity: “The crime is attributed by the authorities to the same band of outlaws that burned the cane on Constancia Plantation. Bandits in the same district attacked the Plantation Unidad, owned by Mr. Cullerach, and the Plantation Ángeles, owned by Francisco García, but were finally repulsed by the rural guards. These killed two members of the band who have not been identified, and a third who was recognized as Alfredo Rodriguez, a well-known brigand, largely responsible for disturbances in Santa Clara.” Like this one, most reports of rural crime emanated from the large sugar estates: Constancia, Hormiguero, and Soledad.

Civil authorities in Cienfuegos acknowledged that significant animosity between separatists and former supporters of Spain persisted after the war. Spanish guerrilleros were irregular pro-Spanish troops gathered from among the Cuban population. They were generally “persons who could be counted upon to accomplish any sort of ‘dirty’ work not relished by regular troops.” The negative feelings Cuban separatists held against guerrilleros were reflected in certain violent acts against men who had supported Spain during the war, and correlated especially with violence on the large sugar estates, which had maintained their own private guards to combat the insurgents. For example, a store clerk was murdered at Soledad in August 1899. The same month, one of the estate

373 Juan McCulloch, the Cuban-born son of an American immigrant to Cuba, was the general manager of the Central Unidad after the war.


376 “Principio del Final,” newspaper clipping, August 3, 1899, Volume II.60, folio 79, MHS/EFA.
superintendents had his horse shot out from under him, narrowly escaping death, while several other assassinations had occurred in that period as well.\textsuperscript{377}

If they did not become victims of outright violence, some supporters of Spain faced threats of violence and even banishment. In the town of Aguada de Pasajeros, in the jurisdiction of Cienfuegos, one ex-guerrillero, Alfredo López Miró, complained of outrages committed against. In July 1899, municipal police officers, José Marrero and Ramón Barrios, asked López to leave town.\textsuperscript{378} The mayor of Aguada, José Vidal, explained that López was asked to leave because he “boasted of all kinds of infamies committed by him, proud of his manliness by often saying everywhere that ‘he himself and alone was able to kill twenty Cubans who had fought for the revolution.’”\textsuperscript{379} The police arrested his two brothers and insulted them, calling them “criminal assassins that they ought to kill, because they had said that in case of war with the United States they would be on the side of the US in order to kill Cubans.”\textsuperscript{380}

López claimed that Cuban authorities targeted him because of his political allegiance during the war. “All these outrages have been brought about by the fact of my having belonged to the Spanish Army during the war…” After earning “8 crosses of honor in recompense for my faithful services,” he took “command of the local Guerrilla force of Colon as Lieutenant Commander, which I held until the end of the war, without

\textsuperscript{377} Edwin F. Atkins to James H. Wilson, October 5, 1899, Box 2, LOC/MD/JHW.

\textsuperscript{378} Alfredo López Miró to General Leonard Wood, August 14, 1899, Box 28, File 5799, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\textsuperscript{379} José Vidal, Mayor of Aguada de Pasajeros to José Antonio Frías, Mayor of Cienfuegos, September 5, 1899, Box 28, File 5799, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\textsuperscript{380} Alfredo López Miró to General Leonard Wood, August 14, 1899, Box 28, File 5799, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
having during the whole time, assassinated anyone, as I was accused of doing…” López denied the accusations that he was an “assassin,” though he admitted that he had killed some Cubans during the war: “The only part of ‘assassin’ that I played was in compliance with the duty that my position demanded, to fight them incessantly, and having my conscience clear and there being no reason why I should be persecuted…” López claimed that “persecutions in the said town of Aguada are of frequent occurrence, it being a pity that said District should lose its tranquility as it is one of the most rich and prosperous of the Island.” The violence toward Spaniards and former supporters of Spain after the war pushed some Spaniards to seek protection with Americans, against Cuban separatists, who they portrayed as bloodthirsty and violent.

While the majority of the victims of post-war political violence appeared, from the intelligence provided by plantation owners and press reports, to be white, Cuban veterans also sought revenge against blacks who had supported Spain. Based on the prevailing assumption that the insurrection enjoyed widespread support among black Cubans, the decision of any individual of color to remain neutral or to support Spain constituted a particularly egregious offence to Cuban separatists. One man, Máximo Suárez experienced this double standard of patriotism first hand when a group of Cuban insurgents attacked him in April 1899. Whether black or white, men who had supported Spain during the war had come under attack during the first months of the military occupation.

381 Ibid.
382 Ibid.
Although a certain level of political violence persisted after the war, the number and intensity of the reports seemed to place a higher degree of political significance on these crimes than they warranted. Amidst a torrent of hysterical reports of crime, some local civil authorities and even American military officials began to doubt the veracity of certain alarming claims. By mid-May, Civil Governor José Miguel Gómez wrote to Wilson requesting that details of banditry and rural crime be suppressed and not provided to the local newspapers.\textsuperscript{384} The Chief of the Rural Guard of the Province of Santa Clara also accused the newspapers of publishing false reports of disorder.\textsuperscript{385}

Wilson reported that while there were incidents of disorder before American troops arrived to Santa Clara, they ceased immediately upon his orders: “At first they shows a disposition to wreak vengeance on Spanish subjects resident in the island, and especially those who had been active as Spanish volunteers; but this was immediately repressed by my orders.”\textsuperscript{386} He claimed to have cured Cuba of racial tensions with his announcement that “so far as the United States was concerned, the past must be regarded as a sealed book” and that “the rights of all, without respect to race or allegiance, to pursue their occupations without interference from any quarter, must be considered as the supreme law of the land.”\textsuperscript{387} He reported that “perfect peace and tranquility prevail between all classes, colors and races…”\textsuperscript{388} “The principal cities and towns of Santa Clara

\textsuperscript{384} José Miguel Gómez to General James H. Wilson, “Telegram,” May 11, 1899, Box 7, File 3428, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{385} José de Jesús Monteagudo to General James H. Wilson, May 18, 1899, Box 8, File 4010, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{386} Wilson, \textit{Annual Report}, 1899, 225.

\textsuperscript{387} Ibid., 224-225.

\textsuperscript{388} Ibid., 225.
Province—are today absolutely clear of epidemic disease, orderly, and free from violence, rowdyism and licentiousness,” he reported in July 1899.  

The level of crime in Santa Clara province was “no greater than might occur in any well-governed country,” reported Wilson in June 1899. Some reports of banditry turned out to be fictitious upon investigation. For example, in August 1899, Guillermo Hernández, a resident of the countryside surrounding Ranchuelo reported that “a party of 25 men, negroes armed with short [shot] guns and machetes and mounted,” marauded through the Bonachea estate. They claimed “not to abuse anybody, but wander in such a manner because they find no work.” Orestes Ferrara, the acting Civil Governor of Santa Clara Province ordered Emigdio González Solo, the inspector of the government police, to the Bonachea estate to investigate the alarming charges. Of the dozen people interviewed, none had any idea of a group of armed black bandits passing through the estate. Moreover, when military officials interviewed the author of the letter, they found that he was illiterate, and “he assures not to have authorized anybody to write said letter, adding that the facts denounced in it are absolutely false.” Like this one, numerous alarming reports of rural crime turned out to be false after investigation, suggesting that the specter of crime served purposes other than desire for law and order.

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389 Ibid., 231.
390 Ibid., 86.
391 Guillermo Hernández to General James H. Wilson, “States that a party of 25 men, negroes, armed with short guns and machetes were yesterday on the estate ‘Bonachea,’” August 14, 1899, Box 33, File 5997, USNA/MGC/RG 140/ E 3.
392 Ibid.
According to some country dwellers, rural crime after the war paralleled the levels of banditry that had typically characterized the countryside under Spanish rule. Rural crime had pervaded the Cuban countryside in the nineteenth century. As one Cienfuegos residents noted, “In a certain period prior to the breaking out of the war, highway robbery took certain proportions in the provinces of Havana and Santa Clara, which became alarming, but due to the efficacious measures taken by General Señor Polavieja, was finally reduced to almost insignificant conditions, although it did not totally disappear.”

Clearly, rural crime was not unique to the post-war period.

Some American investigators also seemed to downplay the significance of the crimes. In November 1899, the mayor of Paradero, a small town near Lajas, intercepted a group of thieves attempting to steal six oxen from a “lonely potrero,” called Los Corrales. “The men were rejected by us and fired to us while running away,” reported the ward mayor, Manuel Gómez. The mayor of Camarones, Jorge Rodríguez went out to investigate, and stated that the incident reflected only “cattle thieves of the lowest kind,” and not banditry. By avoiding the label of banditry, Rodríguez depoliticized the incident of robbery. This curious reaction on the part of the civil and military authorities to reports of crime highlights a divergence in the ways in which Cuban civil authorities and local property owners viewed crime, and harnessed discourses of order and disorder to further their political objectives.

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393 Ramón Sánchez Varona, “Testimony in the Case of Constancia Sugar Co.,” Box 85, Part 1, folio 6, USNA/SCC/RG 76/ E 352.

394 Mayor of Camarones, Jorge Rodríguez to José Miguel Gómez, November 6, 1899, Box 23, File 9860, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
Clearly, the specter of rural crime had assumed new importance with the American military occupation in 1899. Early on, Cuban civil authorities recognized the political implications of crime: it became a symbol of their unfitness to self-govern, and therefore an impediment to the goal of independence. Reports of violence against Spaniards and marauding armed blacks tended to undermine the image of stability and order the Cuban civil authorities needed to cultivate in order to gain independence.

Crime in Rural Cienfuegos through American Eyes

Planters in and around Cienfuegos suffered severe financial losses and even ruin as a result of the war. Citizens of the United States, whether American-born or naturalized, documented millions of dollars of damages to their estates, hoping that these records would help them secure indemnification. Andrés L. Terry and estate administrator Francis Egerton Webb claimed over $611,000 in damages to their properties of the deceased Antonio E. Terry in Cruces and Cienfuegos.\(^{395}\) Constancia Sugar Company of New York claimed nearly $4,178,000 in damages.\(^{396}\) Hormiguero Central Company assessed their damages at nearly $769,000.\(^{397}\) Others property owners claimed smaller but still substantial losses. These included Luis Mayoline, Manuel Antón


As a result of their extreme financial losses during the war, wealthy American planters and some Cuban planters with American citizenship in Cienfuegos sought to prevent further losses after the war. Preventing further financial losses meant securing a stable and submissive labor force and securing effective protection from rural crime. The Cuban army, they concluded, presented the biggest threat to both of these goals. The continued mobilization of the Cuban army in the hinterland of Cienfuegos after the war


represented a most militant rejection of dependency on the sugar plantations by men who had formerly constituted the laboring classes. It also represented, to some planters, the persistence of the lawlessness and destruction that had prevailed during the war, and by implication, a threat to their economic interests.

Edwin F. Atkins, perhaps the most vocal advocate for wealthy foreign property owners, harnessed the specter of rural crime to influence politics, with the ultimate goal of ensuring his economic interests in Cuba. Born in 1850 in Boston, Massachusetts, Atkins traveled to Cuba for the first time at the age of 16 in 1866, to accompany his father, Elisha Atkins, on a business trip in connection with his sugar-importing firm. Within two years, Atkins began working for his father, reaching partnership in the firm by 1874. Although the business began as simple importation of sugars, conditions arising from the Ten Years’ War (1868-1878) proved favorable for Atkins to begin acquiring property in the 1880s. With a series of debts and foreclosures enshrining the sugar industry in Cienfuegos after the war, Atkins took possession of the Soledad estate, formerly owned by the Sarría family, as payment for the debt by the local Cienfuegos merchant and business partners, the Torriente brothers. By taking advantage of other foreclosures between the 1880s and 1890s, Atkins gained ownership of an expansive swathe of territory in the central south coast of Cuba around Cienfuegos, lands which contributed cane to one of the largest sugar mills in the country, the Central Soledad.

The insurrection (1895-1898) cost Atkins millions of dollars in profits in his sugar business. He claimed over $82,000 of damages to his personal property in Cienfuegos, and nearly $248,000 of losses on the properties owned by his business, Edwin F. Atkins
Insurgents destroyed his buildings, sabotaged his infrastructure, burned his cane fields and even killed the workers. They prohibited him from operating his mill. In order to continue operations at Soledad, Atkins mobilized a private guard force to watch over the workers, another added expense. By the end of the war, Atkins had developed a strong aversion to most Cuban separatists, a feeling that persisted after the war.

After the war, Atkins sought to neutralize the Cuban army, which had done so much damage to his properties during the war, and which he feared would continue to threaten his wealth during peacetime. He used his status and connections to high-ranking politicians to influence American military authorities and the American press articulating concern over rampant rural crime. He maintained constant communication with civil and military authorities regarding the banditry around his Central Soledad.

Wealthy planters, both American and Spanish, demanded that American forces take action to protect property against bandits. As early as September 1898, Atkins, Hugh Kelly, members of the Hormiguero Sugar Company and others wrote to President William McKinley, requesting American troops be furnished to protect American properties in Cuba. By January 1899, an anonymous Spanish merchant begged Bates, on behalf of the “Spanish element” of the town of Cruces, to send American forces to

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401 Edwin F. Atkins to William McKinley, “American property owners in Cuba request detachments of American troops to protect their property,” September 24, 1898, Box 1, File 4703, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
maintain “better order.” Instead of meeting these demands, Bates ordered planters to disband private guard forces on their estates, shortly after he took control of Cienfuegos jurisdiction on January 1, 1899. Bates ordered the disbandment because Cubans complained about the private guard forces: “the Cubans were much irritated at my maintaining a private guard composed of Spaniards.” This meant that land owners had no legal forms of armed protection against rural criminals.

Atkins quickly responded to the lack of armed protection of his properties by renewing his request for military protection. Atkins attempted to convince Bates that the countryside was too unsafe to disband private guard forces because “they were needed for the protection of our property, particularly our cattle, without which we could not continue work.” Atkins legitimized his concern over rural crime by juxtaposing the order of the cities under American rule with the disorder of the countryside, under Cuban rule. In March, he noted that “…the back country towns are entirely under the control of armed insurgents, principally blacks, who are collecting taxes and managing affairs quite independent of other authority. These are less disposed to disarm as time goes on and less disposed to return to work.” Insurgent rule in the countryside begot social anarchy, in contrast to the order that prevailed in the cities under American military control: “All is quiet in the cities, but in back country towns, many outrages are committed, which in

402 Merchants, “Ask for American soldiers to preserve better order,” January 24, 1899, Box 3, File 323, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1466.

403 “Edwin F. Atkins, Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 83, MHS/EFA.

404 Ibid.

405 Ibid.

406 Atkins, Sixty Years in Cuba, 306.
most cases do not come to the knowledge of the officers."  

Country towns near his estate were “full of insurgents and idlers who go about every night followed by a mob crying ‘down’ with everything that doesn’t please them,” he recorded in his diary.  

Atkins presented the armed insurgents as both a threat to order and to the economic prosperity of the province. “We can’t get enough men to run the estates,” he wrote. “It is a queer condition of affairs when people go hungry or beg rather than work. The officers here are learning something about these people every day, and there are few who disagree with me.”  

The murders and other crimes committed by insurgents reduced the countryside to a state of chaos, almost as severe as that which prevailed during the war: “The insurgents are killing the guerrillas who in turn are taking to the woods in small bands for safety. In my opinion there will be bad times and we shall have to arm again if forces are withdrawn and I trust this will not be the case.”  

For Atkins, the presence of American troops was necessary to maintain order in Cuba.  

According to Atkins, the blame for rampant rural crime fell squarely upon the insurgents, many of who had terrorized his estate during the war: “The insurgents were roaming about the country; they were in great measure destitute of food supplies and clothing, and we were exposed to pillage had we not continued to maintain our own private forces.”  

Atkins claimed that if relief efforts waned, destitute Cuban soldiers

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408 Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba*, 302.

409 Ibid., 302.

410 Edwin F. Atkins To L. Darlyshrie, March 3, 1899, Volume II.19, folio 209-10, MHS/EFA.

411 “Edwin F. Atkins, Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 81, MHS/EFA.
would subsist on the backs of wealthy planters: “If friends of the insurgents now in camp at Santa Rosa exhaust their means of supplying food for the camp before our government provides for them, we may have to contribute in order to save our oxen.”

Atkins drew upon the reputation of insurgents as thieves and bandits to bolster his case that military authorities had to take action to prevent crime, while undermining the separatist claims to political power.

When the specter of destitute soldiers failed to convince the Bates of the necessity of private guards, Atkins turned to race as a tool for enhancing the danger the insurgents posed. He pointed to a supposed problematic demographic transition resulting from the war: “The native born white population is reduced to a small minority, and for this the Sp[anish] Am[ericana]n War is largely accountable. The blacks suffered much less being the stronger race, and the Spaniards still less, as they got most of what was available in the way of food.”

The black population of the province of Santa Clara did increase substantially after the war, but whites still accounted for over two-thirds of the population (See Table 4). This was one of the few provinces whose total population increased between 1887 and 1899, and the increase in the black population likely resulted when insurgents from other parts of the island and even from abroad settling in the area after the war. Still the proportion of blacks to whites in Santa Clara was lower than the island-wide average.

The alleged demographic problem posed a threat to order and prosperity in the countryside. Atkins emphasized the criminal potential of black veterans, an attempt to

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412 Ibid.

413 Edwin F. Atkins to L O’Brien Esq., January 16, 1899, Volume II.19, folio 23-4, MHS/EFA.
appeal to American fears of a black uprising. The situation “is not all one could wish here and the insurgents, particularly the negroes do not show a disposition to give up their arms or go to work; labor is scarce and uncertain.”\textsuperscript{414} At the same time as Atkins complained that veterans refused to work, he employed hundreds of men on his estate and exported large quantities of sugar.\textsuperscript{415} His complaint of a labor shortage may have been due to his particular vision of who he wanted to employ in which positions, judging that “competent men” were lacking among the “native population.”\textsuperscript{416} Although his claims were inaccurate or exaggerated, Atkins successfully provoked anxieties among American military forces by suggesting that a substantial black population would jeopardize order in the province.

Table 4: Proportion of Blacks and Whites before and after the War\textsuperscript{417}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Island of Cuba</th>
<th>Province of Santa Clara</th>
<th>Cienfuegos District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1887</strong></td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1899</strong></td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difference</strong></td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>+0.3</td>
<td>+9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{414} Edwin F. Atkins to Geo Lawton Childs Esq, March 8, 1899, Volume II.19, folio 224, MHS/EFA.

\textsuperscript{415} Edwin F. Atkins, Correspondence, February-April 1899, Volume II.19, MHS/EFA.

\textsuperscript{416} Edwin F. Atkins to G.D. MacKlejohn Esq, March 3, 1899, Volume II.19, folio 206, MHS/EFA.

\textsuperscript{417} Instituto de Geográfico y Estadístico, \textit{Censo de población de España según el empadronamiento hecho el 31 de diciembre de 1887} (Madrid: 1891); United States War Department, Cuban Census Office, \textit{Report on the census of Cuba, 1899} (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900)
A hearty presence of American troops in Cienfuegos, Atkins claimed, could help control the dangers of armed veterans. “Here everything is quiet, the Am[eric]a[n] troops being in control in the town and insurgents (still armed) in the country. The insurgents, comparatively few in numbers, and frequently, if not generally officered by blacks, are behaving as well and better than might be expected.” Atkins suggested that insurgents would refrain from unruly behavior due to their fear of American troops. In one American newspaper appeared an article claiming that violence prevailed where American troops were lacking: “Brigandism is on the increase in the country, and a reign of terror prevails in town where no United States soldiers are quartered.” Further, the author stated that “the so-called bandits are mostly negroes who came from the East with the Cuban army of invasion. They have taken full possession of the towns outside of the railroads, and are living there during the day and robbing at night.” Some American newspapers propagated the idea that order in the countryside depended upon the presence of American troops, often explicitly citing Atkins as a key informant.

Atkins began to criticize the insufficiency of the military government in fulfilling their peacekeeping mission. Atkins was convinced that if the Americans saw the condition of the countryside with their own eyes, they would support his request for troops to defend his estate: “I requested the General before he issued any order to send

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418 Edwin F. Atkins to L O’Brien Esq., January 16, 1899, Volume II.19, folio 23, MHS/EFA.

419 “Towns held by Cuban Brigands,” *New York Herald*, June 6, 1899, Volume II.60, folio 47, MHS/EFA.

420 Edwin F. Atkins to Robert P Porter, January 29, 1899, Volume II.19, f. 89, MHS/EFA.
one of his staff officers to the estate to investigate the conditions of the neighborhood."  

Bates sent Captain William Wright, who Atkins guided through his estate and the surrounding country.

After his journey through Soledad and the adjoining towns, Captain Wright wrote a lengthy report revealing the destitution of the countryside and the diverse survival strategies employed by the insurgents. Some of his observations alarmed him. He noted, for example, that “a Cuban negro lieutenant, with 15 men of similar color is stationed” in the town of Guaos. He received orders from Lieutenant Colonel Machado of the command of Higinio Esquerra. There were about 400 insurgents cultivating vacant fields on the outskirts of that city. Other insurgent chiefs turned to taxing the local population to sustain their men, as did “a one-eyed Cuban lieutenant of villainous countenance.” He and other chiefs levied the tax to sustain the men in policing the town, which Wright noted was almost completely neglected. Wright suggested that insurgents find work at Soledad, but note that some insurgents refused such a path because they were waiting for a payout by the United States. The standing army of Cuban insurgents with military experience and armed with Mausers and Remingtons posed a threat to rural property, and potentially challenged the omnipotence of the military occupation.

421 “Edwin F. Atkins, Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 83, MHS/EFA.

422 Ibid.

Wright focused mainly on the problem of the armed insurgents camped near Soledad, but he did not discuss any specific instances of crime in the vicinity in his report. Cattle stealing and sheep killing continued in the zone of Hormiguero estate, though he did not note any around Soledad. He noted that it was most likely due to the exorbitant price of meat. Nevertheless, he recommended “that a detachment of 10-15 men be stationed on or near this estate as evidence that the U.S. troops have assumed control of Cuba and that depredations such as cane burning and cattle stealing will not be

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424 “General Higinio Esquerra al concluirse la guerra de independencia,” Archivo Provincial Histórico de Cienfuegos, Fondo Higinio Esquerra (Hereafter cited as APHC/FHE).

425 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, Cienfuegos, January 26, 1898, April 13, 1899, APHC/AC; Isidro Tomás Suárez, “Testimony before Spanish Claims Committee, Case 293,” February 26, 1904, Box 142, Part 3, Folder 2, USNA/SCC/RG 76/E 352.
Atkins and Wright resolved to request a contingent of American troops be stationed on the estate to replace the private forces, and Bates complied.

Other property owners around Cienfuegos also requested American troops to protect their estate. One such petitioner was José de la O. García, the owner of a sugar plantation called Don Pelayo. He wrote to Bates in March 1899, requesting a permit to carry arms and hire two armed guards to escort him through the countryside, a feat that he claimed was impossible without such protection. He gave the names of several prominent property owners in Cienfuegos as “guarantors” of his “respectability,” including Edwin F. Atkins, Esteban Cacicedo, and Elias Ponvert. Oliver Agramonte, the manager of the American-owned Juraguá estate. Agramonte complained of a “small detachment of Cuban troops” stationed near his estate, who were “more detrimental than useful.” He claimed that “we are compelled against our will to furnish them quarters, clothing and food, not daring to refuse their demands for fear of their deviltry.” Agramonte requested that Bates send troops to protect his estate. American troops were dispatched to sugar mills across Santa Clara in early 1899.

When the withdrawal of the U.S. Volunteers was announced in April 1899, Atkins feared that American military protection of private estates would end, again exposing white property owners to the whims of black veterans. Atkins and other wealthy

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427 José de la O. García to John C. Bates, “Requests the authority to carry firearms,” March 17, 1899, Box 6, File 1958, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1466.


429 “Edwin F. Atkins, Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 83, MHS/EFA
property owners like Agramonte in the countryside of Cienfuegos pushed for permission to maintain private armed guards, as they had during the war. The objectives of both planters and military officials seemed to converge in a new policy regulating firearms. Wilson argued that there had “been too much of that sort of business – of people carrying arms and running around and shooting promiscuously.”

Although Wilson agreed that weapons for hunting purposes should be allowed, he stated that these should be kept at home, “and not worn at all times and places.” Although he sought to disarm the general population, Wilson allowed estate owners to arm private guards beginning on June 13, 1899. He noted that the men hired as guards must be “of the character satisfactory to the civil authorities,” and that arms could only be held with special permit.

The concession of arms permits to private guards resulted in a wave of militarization of the countryside, as estate owners hired armed guards to protect their properties. By June 1900, the number and placement of private guards had expanded to include posts throughout the countryside in every municipal district in Cienfuegos jurisdiction (See Tables 5 & 6). The rapid expansion of private guards once again placed the responsibility for protecting rural property on wealthy white property owners, relying on their own discretion about what constituted a threat and how they would respond.

### Table 5: Private Armed Guards in Cienfuegos, June 1899

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431 Mayor José Antonio Frías to Dorst, June 13, 1899, Box 11, File 5354, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.


433 Mayor José Antonio Frías to Dorst, June 13, 1899, Box 11, File 5354, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331; Antonio R. Mora to General James H. Wilson,” June 14, 1899, File 5584, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331; José del Castillo (Abreus) to General James H. Wilson, June 17, 1899, File 5418; USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E
Table 6: Armed Private Guards in Cienfuegos, June, 1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Término Municipal</th>
<th>Finca</th>
<th>Owner/Administrator</th>
<th># of Guards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abreus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hormiguero</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lajas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>172</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1731; Antonio Gallart (Rodas) to General James H. Wilson, June 17, 1899, File 5478, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331; R. Pérez (Cruces) to General James H. Wilson, June 15, 1899, File 5420, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

434 “Statement of the Estates that have been granted authority to maintain private guards, under Decree 83,” June 2, 1900, Box 36, File 3238, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Estate Name</th>
<th>Owner Name</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonia “La Victoria”</td>
<td>Juan Bautista Capote</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lajas</td>
<td>Ingenio Central “San Agustín”</td>
<td>Agustín Llorente Díaz</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ingenio Central “Santísima Trinidad”</td>
<td>Idem.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colonia “Covadonga” y “La Luna”</td>
<td>Idem.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central “Caracas”</td>
<td>Idem.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finca “San Joaquin”</td>
<td>Joaquín Martínez Alonso</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finca “Santo Tomás”</td>
<td>Tomás Velasco</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Fernando</td>
<td>Colonia “La Legua”</td>
<td>Cándido Blanco</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ingenio Central “Portugalete”</td>
<td>Idem.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ingenio Central “Hormiguero”</td>
<td>Idem.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colonia “Carmita”</td>
<td>Manuelito Lurarraga</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abreus</td>
<td>Central “Constancia”</td>
<td>Idem.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruces</td>
<td>Pueblo de Cruces</td>
<td>Vecinos del Pueblo de Cruces</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colonias “Mercedes,” “Josefita,”</td>
<td>José R. Quirós</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Manuelita”</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Ingenio “Dos Hermanos”</td>
<td>Sres. Fowler y Compañía</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ingenio “San Francisco”</td>
<td>Idem.</td>
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<td>Central “Andreíta”</td>
<td>Idem.</td>
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<td>Cartagena</td>
<td>Colonia “Conucos de las Castas”</td>
<td>Florencio Alemany</td>
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<td>Finca “Artemisa”</td>
<td>Saturnino Martínez</td>
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<td>Colonia “Santo Tomás”</td>
<td>Manuel González Dieg[u]ez</td>
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<td>Colonia “San Antonio”</td>
<td>José María Capote</td>
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<td>Finca “Santa Rosa”</td>
<td>Alberto Gou</td>
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**Esmaculation and Disbandment of the Cuban Army**

As wealthy property owners attempted to regain the monopoly on violence after the war by arming private guards, the specter of armed blacks still presented a menace to the consolidation of this control. The guns the insurgents continued to wield in the months after the war, the symbols of their military honor and evidence of their legitimate citizenship, came to represent the most visible threat to rural order from the perspective of some wealthy property owners. Stripping Cuban veterans of their Remingtons and
Mausers would not only eliminate the immediate threat of insurgent crime and challenge to American military rule, but it would also strip veterans of the most material claim to military honor. Disarming the Cuban Army effectively emasculated veterans by destroying the relics of their claims to citizenship.

Among the most eager to disband the insurgents was Atkins. He pushed to disarm the Cuban veterans to further secure his properties, claiming that public law enforcement was insufficient. “The General in command has not a dollar at his disposal to establish a rural guard which in my opinion (and I think in his) is the only way to get insurgents to give up their arms if this is not accomplished soon, here will be trouble,” Atkins complained. “What is needed is some unarmed civilian to act with General Brooke in such matters, and power to decide without reference to Washington, except as far as regards a general policy.”435 He demanded the immediate disbandment of the Cuban Army, arguing that the insurgents were at the bottom of rural crime. In April 1899, Atkins claimed that violence by armed veterans was imminent: “The insurgents are still armed and prepared for a row and I cannot see that any progress is being made in disarming, for this reason I am undecided yet about leaving.”436 In May, Atkins again voiced his unease that the insurgents had still not laid down their arms: “Insurgents are still under arms and it looks as if they intended to remain so. If troops are withdrawn there is sure to be trouble.”437 American troops, Atkins argued, were the only thing keeping Cuban soldiers under control.

435 Edwin F. Atkins to Robert P Porter, January 29, 1899, Volume II.19, f. 89, MHS/EFA.
436 Edwin F. Atkins to Brooks, April 4, 1899, Volume, II.19, folio 304, MHS/EFA.
437 Edwin F. Atkins to L. Darlyshrie, March 3, 1899, Volume II.19, folio 209, MHS/EFA.
Atkins compared the situation of political tensions in Cuba with the one that had prevailed in the newly emancipated 13 colonies after the American Revolution: “The hatreds aroused by the late conflict are also operating upon a class of whites who are likely to return to Spain if they find themselves left to the tender mercies of those native insurgents with who they have been in conflict. It is remembered what was the fate of the Tories in the period of our own revolution at the hands of a far more enlightened and less revengeful people than is that which is now striving to take to itself the government of Cuba.” Atkins argued that the political revenge killings proved that Cubans were unfit for self-rule, because they did not protect whites from crime.

As the military government sponsored a census of the Cuban Army to be conducted by the Polish-born Cuban General Carlos Roloff, Atkins demanded that American military officials and policy makers in Washington act more quickly to disband the Cuban army. By March, Roloff estimated that 4,769 Cuban soldiers remained in arms in the countryside of Santa Clara province. The infamous $3 million deal negotiated by General Máximo Gómez furnished the funds with which Cuban soldiers each would receive $75 for their services during the war in exchange for turning in their weapons.

Certainly, the continued presence of the United States after the defeat of Spain, and their attempt to disband the Cuban army, was unnerving for many veterans. “Whatever feeling of political unrest there may be in this province at present,” reported Wilson, “is due solely to the suspicion fostered by agitators and by the newspapers, that we do not intend to live up to the voluntary pledge contained in section 4 of the Joint

438 “Resuscitating Cuba,” Boston Herald, May 13, 1899, Volume II.60, folio 18, MHS/EFA.

439 Major General John C. Bates to Adjutant, Division of Cuba, March 18, 1899, Box 7 File 2020, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
Resolution of Intervention…” 440 Many American officials, perhaps unlike Wilson, did not intend to live up to this promise, viewing it as yet another impediment to Manifest Destiny. 441

In the weeks leading up to the disbandment, fears emerged over the possible disorder that would result from the terms of the payment of the Cuban soldiers. The concurrence of a wave of public disturbance in Cienfuegos city and the entrance of Cuban soldiers from the country seemed to corroborate the presumed connection between insurgents and crime, and fed fears of black discontent and imminent racial violence. Some towns took precautions by segregating celebrations and festivities. 442 For example, the labor disturbance of May 15 involved a definite racial component as black laborers challenged white American military authorities. Just days before the San Juan Day riot, Major Bowman reported that about 200 destitute Cuban soldiers had entered the city to collect their money. 443 Bowman ordered that 500 rations be distributed among the veterans, hoping to appease them.

Rumors circulated that certain individuals were encouraging the soldiers not to accept the $75 offered as payment in exchange for turning in their weapons. Local newspapers propagated this fear in several articles, citing discontent among veterans


442 In Quemado de Güines, a ball celebrating the entry of the Cuban forces into the city had one ballroom for whites, and a separate hall for blacks. In Rancho Veloz, the Club Maceo put on a celebration for black soldiers. Avelino Sanjenis, *Mis cartas: memorias de la revolución de 1895 por la independencia de Cuba* (Sagua la Grande: El Comercio, 1900), 414, 406.

443 “Bowman, Maj. 2nd Infty, telegram states that about two hundred ex Cuban soldiers arrived in city…,” June 20, 1899, Box 12, File 5367, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
regarding the terms of disbandment. Manifestos encouraging soldiers not to accept the payout circulated in the province of Santa Clara in May and June 1899. For example, one manifesto issued to the “Valiant Army of Las Villas” arrived to the office of the military governor in May 1899. It began: “Our destiny may force us once more to leave the blessed hearth for the sad but glorious path of war, which makes one great in life and imperishable in death.” The manifesto ordered Cuban soldiers to be ready for battle under “our redeeming flag,” suggesting that the objective waging war anew would be to gain full independence for Cuba, instead of military rule. Wilson also received news that there were reports of signs posted throughout Cienfuegos aimed at discouraging the soldiers from accepting the money, though he later denied this vehemently to General Brooke.

Some American military officials feared that violence would ensure if troops were allowed to congregate in the cities. The military order giving instructions for the payment of Cuban soldiers specified that “large bodies of men are not to be assembled at one time. As a rule the number should not exceed one Cuban regiment.”

Ebenezer Fenton, an American officer in Cienfuegos, feared disorder the following day with the payment of the Cuban soldiers: “Tomorrow when the Cuban Army get[s] their money there may be trouble if some movement is put on foot to prevent these men from carrying arms.”

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444 “Refuse to Disband: Cubans May Attempt an Armed Demonstration,” newspaper clipping, May 15, 1899, Volume II.60, folio 21, MHS/EFA.

445 Adna R. Chaffee to General James H. Wilson, “Translation of manifesto ‘To the Valiant Army of Las Villas,’” June 12, 1899, Box 11, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

446 James H. Wilson to General John Rutter Brooke, June 19, 1899, Box 44, folio 327, LOC/MD/JHW.

447 “Military Order No. 53,” May 9, 1899, Box 14, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

448 Captain Fenton to Adjutant General, June 24, 1899, Box 12, File 5347, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
According to Fenton, these Cubans were thirsty for American blood: “They are swearing vengeance on all Americans. The situation is serious.” Fenton requested a private guard: “Have a guard at my place at night for protection of self and Government property.”

While disbandment angered some insurgents, others reluctantly accepted this fate, as a necessary concession to secure eventual independence. Many of the insurgent chiefs encouraged the disbandment as a step toward peace. Local insurgent leaders including Francisco Carrillo and José de Jesús Monteagudo carried out the orders to pay the troops. Supporting the American project for disbanding the Cuban Army also legitimate certain insurgent leaders for their collaboration with the occupying government. Máximo Gómez was known, and despised among some circles, for his conciliatory attitude, urging Cubans to eliminate the “causes” for the American occupation. In the judgment of Gómez, and other high profile Cuban politicians like Gonzalo de Quesada and Tomás Estrada Palma, Cubans would have to cooperate with the American occupation in order to secure their goal of independence.

Wilson viewed the cooperation of insurgent chiefs as a sign of positive disposition toward Americans. Insurgents in Cienfuegos were “well behaved,” he reported in June 1899. Wilson was so confident in the good behavior of the Cuban veterans that he initially judged that there was hardly a reason to have a strong rural guard force after the war, because peace reigned: “This guard formerly patrolled the countryside constantly, but now it is not necessary.”

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449 Ibid.

450 “Military Order No. 53,” May 9, 1899, Box 14, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.


452 Major Dempsey to General Wilson, June 20, 1899, Box 12, Folio 5742, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
but such patrolling hardly seems necessary now, the country being at peace and no
bandits to cope with." 453 American military authorities condoned the rural guard largely
to humor the country people, who “would feel more secure in their work if they knew
there was a rural police constantly on the lookout for law-breakers.” 454 Military officials
in Cienfuegos rightly identified a pervasive anxiety among wealthy property owners in
and around that city.

Although he endorsed the policy of disarming Cuban soldiers in his official
reports, Wilson tended to empathize with the Cuban soldiers, many of whom were not
content with such a meager sum of money and disgruntled that they were required to turn
in their weapons—the symbols of their victory. Wilson expressed his outrage in many of
his personal letters. 455 For “the life of me, I cannot see why the Cubans should not be
permitted to take their old Remingtons and Mausers home, and use them for the defense,
or the ornamentation of their palm-thatched, and hand them down undisturbed to their
descendants as a loved and honored memento of their service in behalf of Cuban
freedom,” Wilson wrote to his a military colleague in late May. 456 “I do not know how
this strikes you, but I do not believe that if you had fought for four or five years, as these
people have fought for the independence of their country as against the brutal domination
of Spain, you would be willing to give up your gun to anybody, no matter what might be

453 Capt. C.J. Stevens, “Report relative to the rural police of the Province of Santa Clara,” June 9, 1899,
Box 11, File 5062, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

454 Ibid.

455 Wilson, Annual Report, 1899, p. 47.

456 James H. Wilson to Colonel Frank J. Hecker, May 25, 1899, Box 44, Volume III, folio 156,
LOC/MD/JHW.
the argument or the inducement offered,” he continued. Wilson articulated with startling clarity the dilemma many Cuban veterans faced: they either had to surrender the symbols of their military honor, or submit to the possible consequences of defying American authority. Either option required Cuban veterans to undergo a discursive emasculature, as insurgent visions of manliness based on military honor became subordinated to narrow visions of what it meant to be a good man articulated by wealthy property owners and supported by American military authorities.

Despite the immense challenges of poverty and pride, many Cuban soldiers came to the city to collect their meager sum. Many of soldiers entitled to the $75 payment were unemployed and in desperate conditions. Wilson was correct that many would not come to collect their money—but this was not because they were employed. Many did not have the means to travel from their homes to the city to collect their money. Some did not even have enough money for purchase train fare to come to the city. Other soldiers never made it to the city to collect their money due to illness or disability. Florencio Valdés, for example wrote to the Governor General of Cuba on September 20, 1899 explaining that he could not collect his money because he was in the country sick. General Carlos Roloff wrote on behalf of one disabled Cuban officer, Joaquín Castillo, requesting he be furnished transportation to return to his home in Santa Clara province. The wounds he

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457 James H. Wilson to Colonel Frank J. Hecker, May 25, 1899, Box 44, Volume III, folio 156, LOC/MD/JHW.

458 “Sundry Cuban Soldiers to General Brooke,” June 10, 1899, Box 14, File 3190, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

459 Florencio Valdés to the Honorable Governor General of Cuba, September 20, 1899, Box 14, No File, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
sustained during the war inhibited him from earning a living.\textsuperscript{460} Others came to the city on foot or horseback. By the end of June, the majority of the Cuban army had been disbanded, and white property owners had achieved their goal.

**Conclusions: Crime as an Argument for Political Exclusion**

The cessation of hostilities between Spain and the Cuban separatists did not bring peace to the Cuban countryside. Although formal combat subsided, crime persisted after the war, just as it had in previous periods. Yet, it assumed new meaning in American-occupied Cuba, as Cubans, Spaniards, Autonomists, property owners, and American military officials struggled to convert their political agendas into reality. In an epoch in whiteness was a precondition for citizenship and self-government, Cuban separatists struggled to reconcile the perceived racial composition of their force and the racially heterogeneous Cuban population with their goals of independent government. Wealthy property owners, however, were quick to undermine Cuban pretensions to power, pointing to the specter of anarchy and social disorder that would follow Cuban rule.

Allusions to pervasive rural crime and banditry became one way property owners sought to foster deeper American involvement in local affairs while promoting greater support for propertied interests among the local ruling elite. The specter of rampant rural crime drew on racial anxieties and gendered conceptions of honor to undermine insurgent claims to citizenship by portraying them black criminals and vagrants. Black criminality

\textsuperscript{460} “General Carlos Roloff, late Inspector General of the Cuban Army states that General Joaquin Castillo is in the city without funds and unable to return to his home in the Province of Santa Clara...,” September 2, 1901, Box 201, File 3772, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
became conflated with insurgent criminal tendencies, and Cubans, in turn, were portrayed as dishonorable and unmanly, undermining insurgent claims to political rights based on military honor. By attacking insurgent manliness, wealthy property owners attempted to make veterans ineligible for political power, a measure they believed necessary for the protection of propertied interests.

Labeling veterans as blacks, furthermore, contributed to growing sentiment among American authorities that insurgents were children rather than men, and consequently yet unprepared to enjoy the benefits of citizenship. By writing to military authorities with sensational and often fictitious tales of black crime, opponents of Cuban rule, like Atkins, played into American racial anxieties stemming from their own experience in Reconstruction. These men build upon the foundation that the Spanish had laid during the war, depicting the insurgents as blood-thirsty black hordes. Connecting the Cuban Army to blackness and crime helped wealthy property owners obtain concessions from the military government including detachments of American troops to guard large estates, permits for armed guards, and eventually, the disbandment of the Cuban Army.

With the disbandment of the Cuban Army, wealthy property owners had elaborated their vision of Cuban society, one they shared with American military officials. Stripping them of the very symbols of their military victory, American military officials enacted a ritualized emasculation of Cuban veterans by forcibly submitting them to American military authority. The virtual erasure of Cuban military honor also implied a narrowing vision of political eligibility. Cuban veterans were unfit to hold political power because they were mostly black and innately disposed to criminality, and if they
were white, they supported black rule, Atkins and his allies claimed. Because the Cuban Army from their perspective represented the possible inversion of the racial order, Cuban veterans could not be entrusted with the reins of government.

At the same time as disbandment of the Cuban Army eliminated an alleged source of crime in the countryside, it opened the possibility for veterans to access the city. The mass movement of Cuban veterans from the countryside to the city to receive their payment and turn in their weapons may have served the ultimate goal of disbanding the army, but it had the unintended consequence of catalyzing a flood of destitute veterans into urban spaces, disturbing the social order. Numerous black veterans remained in the city after collecting their money, and many settled in the historically black neighborhoods in the southwest corner and the port-side district of Marsillán. The influx of these veterans fueled the rise of black claims to authority in urban spaces that had previously been defined by the colonial social order.

The paradoxical consequences of the disbandment of the Cuban army American rule seemed to intensify the direct conflict between two visions of the future of Cuba. On the one hand, many veterans demanded the fulfillment of the goal that they had fought thirty years to achieve and that Americans promised to help attain in the Teller Amendment: absolute and immediate independence. On the other hand, wealthy property owners, Spaniards and Autonomists argued that Cuban rule would transform the island into another Haiti. The only way to ensure the protection of the wealthy and to preserve the social order was to perpetuate American rule. The next chapter examines how this conflict shaped the political landscape of Cienfuegos during American rule.
Emerging from the war, the relationships among the major players—Cubans, Spaniards, and Americans, took a dramatic turn. The opinions of American soldiers and officers regarding the Cuban separatists had rapidly shifted from one of respect for a noble cause to disdain for a racially-heterogeneous rabble they called an army after the military intervention in April 1898. The specter of rural crime allegedly perpetrated by these patriot-bandits seemed to corroborate the increasing American disdain for their accidental allies and fostered a growing alliance between Americans and opponents of Cuban rule. American contempt for Cuban separatists translated into a reluctance to grant them the full rights of citizenship, including suffrage and especially political leadership, after the war. Americans, thus, initially left intact the war-time political appointments of Autonomists and Spaniards.

Americans soon realized, however, that denying political power to Cuban veterans would threaten the military government. The Teller Amendment declaring American commitment to Cuban independence as well as adamant demands by Cuban separatist for access to political power forced Americans to support separatist political pretensions. Cuban veterans argued that their military service was the ultimate demonstration of their manliness. Because the separatist discourse of racial brotherhood
extended citizenship to all men, military service thus entitled Cuban veterans to citizenship and the political participation that it implied.

American military authorities responded to these criticisms by beginning to place respectable white veterans in a wider array of local positions of power. Still, they sought to preserve the social order that the insurrection allegedly jeopardized. They proposed to accomplish this goal by limiting political rights to the so-called “better classes,” a group to which the allegedly criminal masses of the insurgent army could not pretend to belong. Based on their experiences of the American Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Indian Wars, American military officials reasoned that supporting the political pretensions of whites would help restore the racial order disrupted during the war. White Cuban veterans collaborated to a certain degree in preserving the arena of political leadership as a white space. They often justified black exclusion by pointing not to racial inequality, but to shortcomings in the patriotic masculinity of blacks, including lack of education and perceived class allegiances.

White veterans, however, held diverse and often conflicting views about the future of Cuba Libre and about the presence of the Americans. Race, as it turned out, was not an accurate indicator of political allegiance. Cuban veterans shared the desire for political power, but they disagreed on the type of society they would create once in office, a difference most pronounced in the extent of social change they supported, and in the way they articulated their demands for independence. Two key groups emerged, both vying for political power. One group developed a more radical social and political agenda that actively relied on the support of blacks and advocated immediate independence. Another group, including socially-conservative white veterans and especially separatists
of the civil branch of Cuba Libre in the New York-based Partido Revolucionario Cubano (PRC), judged that collaboration with the Americans would be the most expedient way to gain independence. This group tended to be more socially-conservative, supporting the preservation of the colonial racial hierarchy and approaching the military occupation with collaboration rather than antagonism.

This latter group became the new ally of the occupying power. These men more closely approximated the category of the “better classes,” which came to mean men who celebrated the American presence and actively sought to preserve the social hierarchy. This platform became the standard for eligibility to political power—a judgment Americans tended to view in terms of race. Whereas advocates for immediate independence were labeled as pro-black, collaboration with Americans became associated with the maintenance of the racial order and the protection of white privilege. Men who did not support collaboration with the occupying officials were depicted as radicals who favored black rule. This, regardless of the degree of accuracy in the claim, made advocates of immediate and absolute independence, even if they were white, ineligible for political power from the point of view of Americans. Cubans turned to the concept of masculinity to explain this increasing exclusivity of political leadership.

Under American rule, the masculine ideal upon which eligibility for citizenship was measured began to change. Whereas during the war, patriotic masculinity subsumed racial and class hierarchies, the negotiation between Cuban separatists and American military officials gave way to a highly politicized conception of what it meant to have access to citizenship, and hence, what it meant to be a real Cuban man—un verdadero cubano. The ideal man became someone who could effectively navigate the contentious
political situation of the military occupation while still defending the goals of *Cuba Libre*. This was a tall order, one that proved to be unfeasible. Gradually, access to political power increasingly rested upon appeasing American military authorities, who often controlled elections. Consequently, some Cuban political hopefuls began to distance themselves from the more radical elements of the revolutions. Eventually, collaborating with Americans became a strategy through which certain Cuban political elites sought to consolidate their political power. They sought to address both American military officials and radical separatists by claiming that collaboration with the Americans was the most expedient route to independence.

**Antagonism among Allies**

The United States entered Cuba as an ally of the separatists. This posture was initially reflected in the press with sympathetic accounts of Spanish cruelties and Cuban suffering, images that also bolstered the idea that Americans had “saved” Cuba from Spain. “They found in one of the rooms a blood-stained rope. The walls and floor were discolored with dark splotch, which apparently were caused by blood,” read one American newspaper article in early January 1899. The gory description depicted the office of the Spanish military courts and the rooms “where political prisoners were tortured to extort confessions from them” in Cienfuegos.461 The overwhelming tone of sympathy in this article might seem insignificant, especially considering that the Americans were allies of the Cubans. Yet American military forces quickly abandoned  

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their alliance with the Cubans in the months after the war, presenting a paradoxical and exceedingly tense relationship between the Americans and the Cubans in Cienfuegos.

Cuban separatists had to fight for access to political power after the war. American military officials seemed to have befriended their enemies in the months after the war. When the American military authorities under Major W. P. Duzenberry, of the second Illinois Volunteer Infantry, entered the city of Cienfuegos in early January 1899, they allied themselves with Spaniards and opposed Cuban political power. For example, Captain Amando Paggi of the Cuban Army requested permission “to parade 500 Cuban soldiers at the ceremonies of raising the stars and stripes.” Duzenberry denied this request because he was “convinced that the relations were too strained between Cubans and Spaniards to render such a course either desirable or safe.” At the same time, the Spanish Commander, General Ernesto Aguirre de Bengoa offered the services of his Civil Guards to perform police duty in the city. Duzenberry accepted, an indication of his developing relationships and collaboration with local Spaniards. He “made many friends among the leading citizens of Cienfuegos, one of whom afterward sent him the gift of a handsome Spanish flag as a memento of this interesting and memorable occasion.” The collaboration with the Spanish and distrust of the Cubans was common among military officials in Cienfuegos during the early occupation.

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464 Bolton, History of the Second Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry, 127
The rapport American military officials developed with their Spanish counterparts in Cienfuegos contributed toward a prolongation of Spanish rule in that city. During the last year of the war, the Spanish government had granted Cuban autonomy. With that, Autonomists and urban non-combatants, who called themselves pacíficos took possession of local government on January 1, 1898. John C. Bates, who would become the military commander of the city in January 1899, left intact the final appointments made under Spanish rule, favoring Spaniards and autonomists over separatists. As early as mid-January, the official policy required that Bates take “fitness intro consideration first,” before giving preference to Cubans. One of the only developments that pushed Bates to change the political status quo was the resignation in early January of nearly all the city council members. Military officials had to make “the necessary appointments, pro tempore,” to replace those who had resigned. Thus the city council was one of the first institutions of local government to replace Autonomists with Cuban veterans, or at least men who had sympathized with the Cuban cause. José Antonio Frías, who had been active in the Partido Revolucionario Cubano in New York during the war and was a close political ally of future president Tomás Estrada Palma, was appointed mayor on

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465 Philip S. Foner, The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895-1902, 2 volumes, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), II, 226. James H. Wilson, Annual Report of Brigadier General James H. Wilson, U.S.V., Commanding the Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara (Matanzas, 1899), 225. “After the protocol of the cessation of hostilities, and shortly before the arrival of the United States forces in this part of the Island, most of the Spanish judicial, municipal and provincial authorities resigned, and their places were filled by temporary appointments, selected by the Spanish commanders principally from the Autonomistic party, or from the ‘pacíficos’ who had taken no part in the revolution.”


January 31, 1899. He filled the rest of the vacancies with other prestigious white separatists.

Cuban veterans in the city council helped accelerate the transition from pro-Spanish to Cuban authority. By February 7, the city council named Lieutenant Colonel Joaquín Oropesa as Chief of Municipal Police. The city council noted that this appointment would be beneficial because Oropesa had been the Chief of Cavalry of Cienfuegos “from which the forces from with which said Police Corps is being organized.” The leadership of Oropesa in the Police force would be “highly advantageous because of the familiarity Oropesa has of this personnel and because of their habit of rendering services under the orders of the said Chief.”

Oropesa built his force from other Cuban veterans.

With the departure of Spanish troops from Cienfuegos in late February, some of Cubans replaced autonomists in some of the most pressing sectors of government and administration. American military officials explained in the annual report of 1899 that “the Cuban army became an active factor in the control of civil affairs” after the evacuation of the Spanish from Cienfuegos in February 1899. On February 28, the city council appointed numerous other Cuban veterans to occupy a wide range of positions in government and public administration. Among those appointed were Lieutenant Abelardo

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471 Wilson, Annual Report, 1899, 225.
Hernández as Administrator of the Cemetery, Colonel Doctor José Núñez y Rodríguez to the Agricultural Bank project, Lieutenant Colonel Rafael B. Jiménez and Captain Abelardo Rodríguez as special police officers, Francisco Borges as Head of the Infectious Diseases Hospital, Feliciano Villar as Master of the city council House, among others. Other appointments included Rafael Casals as Chief of the Section of Urban Police, Pablo Hernández as Jail Inspector, and Gonzalo García Vieta as General Director of Sanitation, who later became mayor.

During this time, the military authorities also began to consolidate the Rural Guard under the leadership of prominent white veterans. Cuban veterans had been performing rural police duty in the countryside of Cienfuegos after the war without pay or rations. While Bates was content to allow veterans to continue without compensation for their rural guard duty, José de Jesús Monteagudo, a prominent white veteran of Santa Clara was instrumental in pushing for the formalization of the Rural Guard, helping secure pay and equipment for numerous Cuban veterans.

Most of the men who found employment in the rural guard were white. Higinio Esquerra, who had commanded the General Cuartel of the Brigade of Cienfuegos during the war, commanded the District of Cienfuegos. Although Esquerra was not part of the

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472 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, February 28, 1899, Volume 43, folio 18-25, APHC/AC.


474 Major General Bates to Adjutant General, March 11, 1899, Box 6, File 1911: USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Major General Bates to Adjutant General, April 24, 1899, Box 11, File 2601, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

475 José de Jesús Monteagudo to Gonzalo de Quesada, February 17, 1899 in Academia de la Historia de Cuba, Archivo de Gonzalo de Quesada, Epistolario, 2 volumes, II (Havana: Imprenta El Siglo XX, 1948), 91-92.
educated urban elite, he was a celebrated war hero, and most importantly, commanded the confidence of wealthy Cienfuegos residents. He hired his subordinate officers and patrolmen from the ranks of his Brigade. Andres Dorticós, who was the Secretary for the Cienfuegos Rural Guard, for example, enlisted in March 1896, and finished the war as a lieutenant in the Brigade of Cienfuegos. Ramon Cordovés Cabrera, who was in charge of the zone of Cienfuegos, Caunao, and Los Guaos, enlisted in June 1895 and served as a commandant in the Headquarters of the Second Corps. The other officers placed in charge of the major zones of the jurisdiction of Cienfuegos were also white veterans.476

The rural guard was predominantly white, but initially was composed of about 20% people of color in the Province of Santa Clara.477 American military officials judged that the black rural guardsmen were better suited physically for the job, but were mentally inferior to the whites478 Whites were also better suited, they thought, for the ultimate goal of preserving racial order, a preference reflected in a subsequent plan to improve the quality of the men employed in the rural guard.479 Of course, there were

476 Capt. C.J. Stevens, “Submits report relative to the rural police of the Province of Santa Clara,” June 9, 1899, Box 11, File 5062, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331. Chief: Higinio Esquerra; Secretary: Andres Dorticós; Zone Leaders for Cienfuegos: Juan Florencio Cabrera. Lines: Cienfuegos, Caunao, Los Guaos, Arimao; Ramon Cordoves; Palmira, Limones, Ciego Montero: Manuel Almeida; Rodas, Abreus: Ygnacio Delgado; Cartagena: Mariano Pino; Yaguaramas, Aguada de Pasajeros, Real Campina, Jaguey Chico: Felix Marcaida; Zone Leader for Cruces: Rodolfo Casales; Lines: Cruces, Potrerillo, Lajas: Eduardo Guzman; Camarones, Cumanayagua: Florestan de Torre


some exceptions to the general practice of hiring white leaders. One such exception was the black General José Gonzalez Planas who became Chief of the neighboring districts of Remedios and Sancti-Spíritus.480

Born in the city of Santa Clara in 1850 to a Cuban mother and an African-born father, González began his service to Cuba Libre in 1869 with his enlistment under insurgents Generals Ignacio Agramonte and Máximo Gómez during the Ten Years’ War (1868-1878). After finishing the war at the rank of Commandant, González began developing his social network in Cienfuegos and its vicinity as a farmer, founding in Lajas the society of Color La Fraternidad. With the outbreak of hostilities in 1895, González incorporated into the Cuban Army again in July in Cienfuegos, and later served under Serafín Sánchez. By April 1896 he was promoted to the rank of General of the Brigade of Remedios, finishing the war as General of Division.

The appointment of González as Chief of the Fourth District, paved the way for the employment of a few other black veterans in positions of power, but largely preserved the pattern of white leadership. González did hire his son, Eloy González Pérez as the Commander of the Vueltas post.481 He also hired prestigious white men, including Julio Cepeda Echemendía, a lieutenant coronel in the Narciso López Cavalry during the war.482

The irony was perhaps not lost on American military officials when González Pérez

480 “Capt. C.J. Stevens submits report relative to the rural police of the Province of Santa Clara,” June 9, 1899, Box 11, File 5062, United States National Archives, Washington, D.C. Records of United States Army Overseas Operations and Commands, 1898-1942, Record Group 395, Entry 1331 (Hereafter cited as: RUSA/RG 395/E 1331); José de Jesús Monteagudo “Distribution of [Rural Guard in] the Province” 30 April 1899, Box 31, no file, MGC/RG 140/E 3.

481 José de Jesús Monteagudo, “Distribution of [Rural Guard in] the Province” 30 April 1899, Box 31, File 5062, RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

482 Ibid.
emerged as one of the leaders of the *Partido Independiente de Color* just a few short years after serving in a force charged with warding off black uprising.

Despite his distinguished service during the wars of independence, there was great opposition to his appointment to a position of authority within the Rural Guard. According the American military officials, González “appears to be a shrewd man and has a good record as a leader in the war.” They also noted his “considerable influence among the colored people.” Perhaps due to his perceived preference for black veterans reflected in the employment of his son Americans reported that “there appears to be some prejudice against him because of his color.”

The prejudice this American official cited highlights a broader preference for white men in positions of power in the months after the war.

**Americans defend Spanish Authority**

Although the city council, police, rural guard, and some subordinate administrative positions had fallen into the hands of Cuban veterans, Spaniards and Autonomists continued to occupy numerous important government posts. Americans sought to retain civil servants who wished to continue serving, except in “cases of great emergency.” Bates reasoned that these men would probably be most capable of maintaining order:

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484 Louis V. Caziarc to Major George P. Barker, January 16, 1899, Box 1, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1466.
“These officials as a class were generally worthy and capable men, sincerely interested in the maintenance of order, in the reconstruction of civil government and in the re-establishment of industry and commerce. In every instance that came under my observation they performed their duties loyally and faithfully, maintaining perfect order, as far as was within their power, relieving suffering and want in their respective jurisdictions.”

These observations led Bates to retain the men in their positions during the first months of the military occupation.

Spaniards and men who had supported Spanish rule continued in their positions, a development the Americans actively supported. For example, in March 1899, Cienfuegos residents protested the appointment of a foreign citizen, Trinidad Martínez, to an unnamed city office, classifying him as “an enemy of Cuban as well as the Americans.”

Another example was Juan Venancio Schwiep, a native of Cienfuegos, served in multiple judicial posts during the war, including the Judge of Remedios and the High Court of Santa Clara. Americans promoted Schwiep in October 1898 to the position of Deputy Attorney of the High Court of Santa Clara, based on his record of protecting American citizens from “the most bloodthirsty extremists of this country,” who were “inciting the mob to commit outrages.” In January, Schwiep wrote to General Bates requesting to be maintained in his position. Bates granted this request

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486 José Antonio Frías, “States that citizens have protested against appointment of Mr. Trinidad Martínez,” March 16, 1899, File 2917, Box 6, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

487 Born in the city of Cienfuegos to a Dutch father, Schwiep married a Spanish woman and settled in Cienfuegos before studying and practicing law in Havana, the Philippines and other parts of Cuba.

488 Santiago Dod, “letter in which he certified that Juan Venancio Schweiss [sic], during the blockade of the Island of Cuba, by his courageous and determined attitude allayed public excitement,” August 14, 1898, Box 7, File 2096, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
despite reports that Schweip was “not held in high repute here,” that “his ability and integrity are both questioned,” and he was reported as a Spanish sympathizer.  

Schwiep remained in office until mid-August 1899, when General John R. Brooke, the military Governor of Cuba, removed him. Schweip wrote American military officials protesting his removal in compliance with Military Order 149. Schweip petitioned for reinstatement, pointing to the promise military authorities made “that all public officers, natives of Cuba would be kept in their offices, provided they maintained their allegiance to the United States under oath, and promised to fill out everything she ordered or commanded.” Schwiep commented that the promise had been kept for some sectors of government, such as the Finance Department in which all the employees had been maintained. “Many Cubans who have occupied offices for years past have been left in oblivion, and other who obtained their after a hard contest in Havana eight years ago have seen their efforts abolished and their futures destroyed, and more sadly yet to see theirs chairs occupied by without experience of the world and judicial affairs.” Most disconcerting of all, was the fact that Schweip had been removed after demonstrating his loyalty to the United States, while others who had not protected American remained in office.


490 Juan Venancio Schweip to William MacKinley, “Complains that he has been removed by General Brooke,” August 28, 1899, Box 7, File 2096, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

491 Ibid.

492 Ibid.
Some military officials recognized the continued presence of Spaniards in positions of power undermined the purported goal of the occupation to deliver the Cubans from Spanish tyranny. “With some honorable exceptions the selection of the Judges has been most disgraceful; the country was expected new men of better history and has felt a great deal disappointed in seeing so many of the judges of the old gang of ‘Weyler and Blanco’ reappointed to the high places for which they have been designated,” wrote James H. Wilson, military governor of the Department of Matanzas and Santa Clara.493 “If the fountain of justice is polluted to start with, the result cannot but be unfortunate for the country,” he noted.494 Wilson also recognized that political change had to encompass all branches of the government. Still, “the old gang,” as Wilson called Spaniards and supporters of Spain, continued to wield influence in the administration of local affairs. Certainly, this was the case for Schwiep. After “due consideration,” military officials appointed him to the Fiscal Department, continuing a pattern of supporting pro-Spanish men in positions of power.495

American complacency toward the post-war political order irritated—even insulted—some Cuban veterans. José de Jesús Monteagudo was particularly vocal about his disdain for the favoritism of General Bates. Born in 1861 in the city of Santa Clara, Monteagudo was an ardent defender of Cuban independence. Beginning the war as a


494 James H. Wilson to J.B. Foraker, 12 August 1899, Box 44, LOC/MD/JHW.

495 General John R. Brooke to Juan Venancio Schwiep, “4th Endorsement,” September 14, 1899, Box 7, File 2096, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3. A year later, Captain Walter B. Barker recommended him to replace Juan P. Carbó as Municipal Judge of Cienfuegos, although this recommendation was not heeded. Walter B. Barker to Major Hoyt, “States does not know that anyone has been recommended to take the place of the Municipal Judge,” November 23, 1900, Box 118, File 6088, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
Captain with his enlistment in October 1895, he steadily climbed the ranks until obtaining the high command of General of Division in the Second Division of the Fourth Corps, which operated in the zones of Villa Clara, Sagua la Grande and Cienfuegos. Such a high-ranking official would certainly have expectations that his power during the war would translate to real political power in *Cuba Libre*.

Like many Cuban veterans, Monteagudo disliked that those named by Bates to occupy the important government posts were Spaniards and guerrillas, “whose hands not at all clean of Cuban blood, are put to represent the Government of the United States.” That Bates would keep these men—enemies of the Cuban cause—in office demonstrated his enmity toward Cubans. As evidence for the “blatant hostility toward us Cubans,” Monteagudo cited the absence of Cubans from the men Bates appointed to public office: “until now, that we are already in February there are not any individuals of the Cuban forces placed in public posts by General Bates: the majority of the employees of the Spanish Government continue working.”

A disappointed Monteagudo wrote to his compatriot and member of the PRC, Gonzalo de Quesada in February 1899 that “in Las Villas, in essence, the politics of caste and the jealous domination that the Spanish governors practiced has not changed; the only thing that has changed is the person who practices it.” Monteagudo judged that the situation was “unsustainable, because it is irrational and dangerous.” Monteagudo offered his services and those of his men to perform rural guard duty, a service many

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496 José de Jesús Monteagudo to Gonzalo de Quesada, February 17, 1899 in Academia de la Historia de Cuba, *Archivo de Gonzalo de Quesada, II*, 92.

Ibid., 91.

498 Ibid., 91.
veterans had already been performing without pay since the cessation of hostilities. Bates refused. Monteagudo expressed his disappointment with the reaction he received:

“…disgracefully, I did not find in General Bates the resolved, intelligent, and thoughtful man who should represent the Government of Washington.” He continued, describing the unflattering attitude against Cubans which he noted in Bates: “I only found the orderly military man, the irresolute and untrusting politician, the man dominated by prejudices and preventions against everything Cuban.”

While many of the “old gang” remained in power, numerous new appointees during the first months of military rule were “recent patriots.” Recent patriots were men who had either remained neutral or had fought for the Spanish for the majority of the war, but joined the insurrection during the last months, usually after April 1898 with the declaration of war on Spain by the Americans. Many of these men supported Cuban Autonomy during Spanish rule, and had rejected the revolution for its radical social agenda. The late inscription with the insurrection was probably as a strategy to gain access to the spoils of victory. With a combination of the political beliefs and socially-conservative agenda, these men tended to favor the American presence as a guarantor of social order and political stability, values that made them prized allies of the occupation government.

Cuban veterans, who had devoted the last three years—often their entire lives—to the war effort viewed the appointment of recent patriots to positions of power as a betrayal of their cause. “No one could deny to us that in the reign of terror, in that

499 Ibid., 91.

500 Ibid., 91.
memorable period in which we dignified Cubans would not even dare salute each other, for fear of prison, disenfranchisement or assassination,” read one newspaper article published in February 1899, “many Cubans joined our ferocious enemies, and making common cause with them, were the most implacable [enemies] we had, even though many hid it hypocritically.” The men who once fought for Spain “are today the first real patriots, the ones who try to make us believe that they were always good and never traitors. But now it is time to take off the masks…” This article reflected tensions dividing “new” and “old” veterans based on the perceived longevity of their loyalty to the cause of independence.

The story of one man, Francisco Paradela y Gestal, exemplifies the potent struggles for political power based on diverging conceptions of loyalty and patriotism. Paradela had supported the Spanish during the war, and in 1899 was the Administrator of the Railroad Company. In his position of power, Paradela favored Spanish workers over Cuban workers, paying the former more, and even firing many of them “who were an infinite number of years with [the Company], lending very good services and without a

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501 “¡Fuera Carretas! Apuntes Históricos,” in La Bandera Cubana, February 24, 1899., Box 224, File 65, ANC/FDR. Original text reads: “Nadie podrá negarnos que en la época del terror, en aquella memorable época en que los cubanos dignos no nos atrevíamos ni a saludarnos, por temor a la prisión destierro o asesinato, muchos cubanos se unieron a nuestros feroces enemigos, y haciéndolo causa común con ellos, eran los más implacables que teníamos, aunque muchos lo ocultaban hipócritamente y como vulgarmente se dice, ‘mascaban a dos carrillos.’ ¿Quién había de decírnos que aquellos furibundos españoles de nuevo cuño se convertirían más tarde en separatistas ardientes, aunque de última hora? Aquellos cubanos, que durante el luctuoso periodo de mando del carnicero Weyler, pronunciaban patrióticos discursos, aquellos que en público y que en medio de los aplausos y vítores de los mayores intransigentes demostraban a sus hermanos en armas, ¡ah!”

502 Ibid. Original text reads: “Aquellos son hoy los primeros verdaderos patriotas, los que tratan de hacernos creer que siempre fueron buenos y nunca traidores. Pero como ha llegado la hora de quitar caretas, y la Bandera Cubana, en su programa así lo hace constar, carga el que caiga, he aquí el discurso pronunciado por el Sr. D. Francisco Paradela y Gestal, Administrador de la Empresa del Ferrocarril de esta ciudad en el Casino Español, la noche del 8 de marzo, con motivo de la declaración de la Beligerancia de los cubanos por los Estaos Unidos, y que valió la protesta de este comercio.”
That is the story in broad strokes,” of Paradela, “and today trying to forget all of this [history], wants to figure as a virtuous patriot, to whom we say ‘you are a fraud, and we don’t believe you.’”\textsuperscript{504} Patriotism became a necessary credential for legitimate access to power, though veterans contested the legitimacy of the claims to loyalty to \textit{Cuba Libre} articulated by recent patriots.

As Spaniards, Autonomists and recent patriots ascended to positions of power, American military officials themselves also assumed some positions of civil authority, further displacing Cuban veterans. The prime example in Cienfuegos is Captain Walter B. Barker, who filled the post of Captain of the Port.\textsuperscript{505} In another instance, American General Simon Snyder ordered Colonel George Leroy Brown of the 4\textsuperscript{th} Tennessee, who had headed American forces Cienfuegos in late 1898, to act as governor of the district of Trinidad, a position the caused tension with local residents.\textsuperscript{506} One local official told General Wilson that “the Cubans were indeed grateful to the Americans, and that the latter would need only to understand the Cuban, but that they would find them much easier to lead than to drive.”\textsuperscript{507} This position, common to many Cuban veterans, reflected a delicate balancing act between gratitude and contempt for Americans. Among more

\textsuperscript{503} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{504} Ibid. Original text reads: “Esta es la historia a grandes rasgos, del Dr. D. Francisco Paradela y Gestal actual Administradora de la Empresa del Ferrocarril de esta ciudad, y que hoy tratando de olvidarse de aquella, quiera figurar como patriota eximio y a quien decimos ‘Eres turco, y no te creo.’”

\textsuperscript{505} Chief Quartermaster, “Telegram requesting information as by what authority Captain Barker holds position of captain of the port at Cienfuegos,” June 7, 1899, Box 17, File 3680, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\textsuperscript{506} “Daily Journal of Brigadier General James H. Wilson,” May 12, 1899, Box 53, LOC/MD/JHW.

\textsuperscript{507} Ibid.
radical veterans, American usurpation of political power was the source of direct confrontation between Cubans and Americans.

With the post-war political transition incomplete, some veterans began to recognize parallels between American military policies and the attitudes of wealthy planters. Monteagudo resented that Bates—a supposed ally of *Cuba Libre*—came under such strong influence of the enemies, the Spaniards and the wealthy American businessmen and merchants, Edwin F. Atkins, the Ponvert family and Mac Kullogh (McCulloch). Some of these men, especially Atkins, were annexationist, advocates of annexing Cuba to the United States, often justified as a way of fostering economic prosperity. Bates acted “as if everything that our enemies tell him were axiomatic truth,” Monteagudo wrote to Quesada.  

Monteagudo rightly pointed to a very different vision of who should be in power, held among wealthy property owners, many of them backed with American capital, and most of whose wealth relied on access to the American consumer market. At the same time as Monteagudo petitioned for expanded authority for Cuban veterans, wealthy property owners begged Americans to appoint men who would defend their interests. They feared that Cuban rule would signify a descent into total social anarchy and consequently economic losses for them, certainly made their opinions known to military officials in Cienfuegos.

“Bricks Without Straw”: The Menace of a Cuba for Cubans

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508 José de Jesús Monteagudo to Gonzalo de Quesada, February 17, 1899 in Academia de la Historia de Cuba, *Archivo de Gonzalo de Quesada, II*, 91.
Edwin F. Atkins was one of the most vocal opponents of Cuban rule. An American businessman and owner of Soledad estate, Atkins had long been in communication with the American military officials in Cienfuegos attempting to ensure that propertied interests would receive priority after the war. He feared that the official policy of favoring veterans for government positions would lead to continued rural crime and destruction of property as had prevailed during the war. Writing to General James H. Wilson, the commander of the Provinces of Santa Clara and Matanzas, Atkins wrote in dismay that he did not agree with the policy of hiring Cubans in local government: “It is a most difficult thing to find suitable men for such positions as long as you are confined in your selection to certain classes of the population as I understand to be the case.”

For Atkins, the problem was that the best men for public employment would not accept the jobs because they feared the foreseeable end of American rule would also bring the end to their employment: “The best people here will not accept office, knowing well that as soon as American authority is withdrawn, they will be turned out if not driven from the country by the irresponsible elements.”

According to his vision, the demise of Spanish rule had threatened social order and economic prosperity by allowing for the rise of an insurrection based on destruction and social radicalism.

Cuban separatists did not represent propertied interests, Atkins was certain. He contended that Spaniards and Autonomists concurred in his assessment that the insurrection would spell the demise of the social order, upon which his sugar business

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509 Edwin F. Atkins to James H. Wilson, June 7, 1899, Box 11, File 5052, United States National Archives, Records of United States Army Overseas Operations and Commands, Record Group 395, Entry 1331 (Hereafter, USNA/RUSA/E 1331).

depended. “The insurgent independent party (wishing to be rid of American control) represents no property interest as a class, and their control of affairs is equally feared by the Cuban property-holders, Spaniards, and foreigners,” Atkins wrote in early 1899.\textsuperscript{511} He feared that Cuban veterans would not be sufficiently vigilant in defending his interests as a wealthy property holder: “I do not wish to criticize any individuals but upon general principles, the selection of Officials from a class of people who do not represent property interests and are not in accord with the views of property owners, could hardly be expected to lead to a permanent good government.” It was critical, thought Atkins, to choose the \textit{right} people to fill the positions to ensure stable government: “The skeleton form of Government can be made, but is it likely to stand? It seems to me to be the old question of ‘Bricks without Straw.’”\textsuperscript{512} By appointing the “wrong” people to power, Americans risked the disintegration of the entire government.

Beginning during the first months of the military occupation, a coalition of men including foreign property owners, Autonomists, ex-Spanish soldiers and supporters, and American military officials collaborated to undermine insurgent claims to political power. General Wilson acknowledged that Spaniards in the Department of Matanzas and Santa Clara actively sought annexation: “So far as they have made their opinions known, they favor either a direct annexation, or an active protectorate, which shall ensure a stable and peaceful condition of affairs.”\textsuperscript{513} Wilson claimed that a large number of other merchants and planters held similar views. These the preference for annexation among

\textsuperscript{511} Atkins, \textit{Sixty Years in Cuba}, 306.

\textsuperscript{512} Edwin F. Atkins to James H. Wilson, June 7, 1899, Box 11, File 5052, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{513} Wilson, \textit{Annual Report}, 1899, 241.
the wealthiest members of Cuban society highlights their reluctance to accept Cuban rule. One of the principle reasons propertied elites opposed Cuban rule was that they tended to conflate Cuban independence with the specter of black rule. With the example of the Haitian Revolution a century earlier, planters feared that the radical social agenda of Cuba Libre would propel men of African descent to positions of political leadership. At very least, Cuban independence disrupt the social order enough to emancipate blacks from their historic fate as a cheap, pliable labor source and thus was a potent threat to their prosperity.

The disdain of separatist political pretensions resonated with the ways military authorities approached the transfer of political power. The racial composition of the population of Santa Clara certainly alarmed some American military officials. Even the slightly more moderate-minded General Wilson commented that “…one-third of the population is African…” and they are caught “in a partially developed stage of political and moral evolution...”\textsuperscript{514} Wilson believed that American rule could help improve the Cuban population, but ultimately disdained Cuban desires for independence. “The common people have been made to believe that there is some magic or some solid substance in the idea of ‘Cuba Libre y Independiente,’” wrote a skeptical General Wilson in May 1899.\textsuperscript{515} Like Wilson, many American military officials conflated low social standing with demands for Cuban independence, consequently delegitimizing this political platform.

\textsuperscript{514} James H. Wilson to William Potter, February 22, 1899, Box 43, Volume 2, James H. Wilson Papers, JHW/MD/LOC.

\textsuperscript{515} James H. Wilson to J.B. Foraker, May 12, 1899, Box 44, LOC/MD/JHW.
At the same time as they dismissed Cuban demands for independence, Americans could not reject wholesale the idea of a Cuba for Cubans. Although American military authorities also doubted the competence of the Cubans, they also recognized that the legitimacy of the military occupation rested on one key promise: the Teller Amendment, which presented the American military intervention as a commitment to Cuban independence. This forced military officials to support separatist political power, at least in theory. As a result of the fierce struggles over political power during the first several months of the occupation, American military officials recognize that the success of the military occupation depended on a delicate balance of support from three main sectors: Cuban separatists, wealthy property owners, and the old political elite. In an attempt to reconcile these opposing political factions, American military officials began to distinguish among the different political demands among separatists. While some veterans demanded absolute and immediate independence and often relied on support from the black masses, others were willing to collaborate with the Americans and explicitly upheld the interests of wealthy property owners.

Race emerged early on as one of the key characteristics upon which Americans judged eligibility for political power. Men like Martín Morúa Delgado tried to place some men of African descent in government posts, such as porters, cart drivers, and watchmen, according to former runaway slave and veteran Esteban Montejo. However, “when the army was dissolved, the black liberators could not remain in the city. They returned to the countryside, to the sugar, to the tobacco, to whatever, except the [government] offices.” Traitors and guerrillas, he claimed even had a better chance of securing these Jobs. “The very General Maceo would have had to hang many people in the hills to have been able
It is evident that military officials appointed almost exclusively white men to positions of political power in the first months of the occupation. Indeed, this pattern prevailed across the island, with few exceptions. However, racial anxieties and perceptions of American racial attitudes also shaped the decisions of white veterans, and eventually came to define their political trajectories.

It is no mistake that the white veterans of the Cienfuegos city council were the same men who denied employment to their black compatriots. When explaining exclusion, however, white veterans avoided explicitly racial arguments. This would have gone against the patriotic ideal of racial brotherhood. Instead, city council members pointed to shortcomings in the manliness of the individual, as measured against the standard of white, middle-class norms. Formal education was one of the key qualities of this hegemonic masculinity. For example, one American officer claimed that Cubans assessed citizenship, at least in part, upon education. “An uneducated man is unfit to be free,” he repeated a supposedly popular refrain. Although education seemingly had little to do with race, both literacy and formal education were substantially lower among men and women of African descent than they were among Cuban-born whites. About 72 percent of people of African descent could not read, while only 49 percent of whites found themselves in a similar condition. Even enforcement of the education standard tended to be more stringent for men of African descent.

516 Miguel Barnet, *Biografía de un Cimarrón* (Havana: Ediciones Ariel, 1966), 188.


The case of Martín Reinoso, shows with unequivocal clarity that racial considerations factored heavily in who was named to important posts. At the same time, it shows that racial differences seldom provided the rationale for this exclusion. Reinoso, a black veteran of the Cuban Army petitioned to the city Council in April 1899 for a position as meat inspector. He argued that he should fulfill this vacancy because of his service as veterinarian of the Brigade of Cienfuegos under Higinio Esquerra. Síndico José Fernández Álvarez opposed his petition, claiming that “not possessing Mr. Reinoso the corresponding professional title, it is understood that however meritorious the services he rendered to the Patria were, as they undoubtedly are according to the recommendations he presents from various Generals, it is not possible to legally accede to his desires.”

519 The city council voted to deny the request brought by Reinoso.

Reinoso was a distinguished personality in the black elite of Cienfuegos. He was later a member of the Liberal Party, president of the elite black social club Minerva, and a member of Center of Veterans of Cienfuegos. 520 Yet, this prestige and his long tradition of service to the patria were insufficient to qualify him the position he coveted after the war. While it is difficult to determine the precise reasons the city council denied him the position, the city councilmen claimed to have rejected Reinoso because he lacked formal educational credentials. Yet, this explanation becomes less credible when the educational backgrounds of certain white veterans named to other important posts are considered. For example, Higinio Esquerra lacked formal education, yet he was still deemed capable of

519 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, April 28, 1899, Volume 43, folio 68, AHPC/AC.

exercising the supreme authority over the Rural Guard of Cienfuegos.\footnote{Capt. C.J. Stevens, “Report relative to the rural police of the Province of Santa Clara,” June 9, 1899, Box 11, File 5062, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.} City council members determined that his dedicated service to Cuba Libre and his elite status in the black community of Cienfuegos did not give Reinoso sufficient status to inspect meat.

With the continued exclusion of blacks from political power and government employment, black veterans began to mobilize. Atkins noted in February 1900 that “there is a growing feeling among the negroes against the white Cubans, who, they say have robbed them of all the spoils of war.” According to Atkins, black Cubans focused their criticism on white veterans, many of who enjoyed gainful employment or political power after the war and perpetuated the racial exclusion in those positions. “This feeling does not prevail against either the Americans or Spaniards as far as I can find; against the Cubans the negroes are very outspoken.” He claimed that the black veterans were “beginning to organize,” and “were it not for the restraining influence of the presence of troops, there might be trouble.”\footnote{Atkins, Sixty Years in Cuba, 314.} As black veterans began to criticize post-war racial exclusions, opponents of Cuban rule cited their protests as potential threats to order, thus further justifying their political exclusion.

**Not All White Veterans are Equal: Searching for “the better class of men”**

White veterans who ascended to positions of authority in local government after the war perpetuated a racially exclusive vision of civil authority, by appointing men of
their same or similar socio-racial backgrounds. Yet, white veterans pursued widely diverging approaches to governance and disparate attitudes toward the American military officials. American military officials quickly learned—through trial and error—that the color line was insufficient to determine the political positions of Cuban veterans. Americans also concluded that the political exclusion of black veterans from the most important posts in local government was insufficient to ensure the preservation of the racial order. Americans and opponents of Cuban rule viewed even political patronage networks linking white politicians to black veterans as a threat to the racial order.

Shortly after assuming command of Cienfuegos, Bates appointed José Antonio Frías to replace Autonomist mayor Pedro Modesto Hernández. Frías seemed to meet all the preferred criteria to hold office: he was wealthy, white, had supported the insurrection and wielded substantial influence over a broad spectrum of the urban population. It soon became apparent, however, that Frías allied himself too closely with the masses, leading to repeated conflicts with military officials, including heated confrontations after two riots in May and June 1899. After failing to subdue a labor strike in February 1900, Military Governor Leonard Wood forced Frías to resign. His successor was the deputy mayor, Leopoldo Figueroa, a Cuban veteran of similar social standing as Frías. Born in 1858, Figueroa was educated in Spain, where his father had been exiled. He was trained as a pharmacist and joined the insurrection in 1896, fought as lieutenant colonel under the command of José Miguel Gómez, and finished the war as a commandant in the Sanitary

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Corps. Yet, Figueroa was somehow different. He built his political reputation upon an explicit alliance with propertied interests, cooperation with military authorities and suppression of the urban masses. After all, he was the favorite of annexationists such as Atkins in the 1900 elections. Figueroa delighted military officials to such an extent that they supported his candidacy.

American military officials sought. One strategy the Americans employed to ensure the political victories of candidates who pro-American, socially-conservative candidates, like Figueroa in the elections of 1900 was to restrict suffrage based on property, literacy and wealth requirements. Many American military officials based their perceptions of the Cuban political situation upon the experience of Reconstruction in the American South. General Wilson reflected on his service as Commander of the department of Georgia during the first year of Reconstruction:

“An important departure from these in the matter of the franchise may perhaps be deemed advisable, for while it has long been the belief of many thoughtful Americans that there is less danger to the state in investing the ignorant man with suffrage than in depriving him of all influence in government, in the light of our own experience of the last thirty-five years, a contrary view may well be maintained. It certainly will be easier to gradually extend a franchise based on an educational test, as it is found desirable and safe to do so, than to attempt, later, to impose restrictions upon a suffrage, which may prove to have been granted without due consideration.”

Wilson compared the situation military government officials in Cuba faced with the conditions confronted by military governments in the United States South during Reconstruction, calling on his experience as Commander of the Department of Georgia


525 Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba*, 322.

during the first year of the Reconstruction.\textsuperscript{527} In this case, Wilson reasoned that simply being a man, in the most minimum physical sense, was insufficient to acquire the right of suffrage. A man needed the racialized and classed attributes of manliness, the most honorable and noble way of being a man.

Apparently, Wilson articulated the beliefs of a great many of his peers. Military officials imposed suffrage requirements including literacy and property ownership. The requirement of manliness as opposed to raw masculinity conflicted with the insurgent discourse of racial brotherhood, which supposedly deemed all patriots as manly. Despite the recommendations of General Wilson, Cubans veterans rejected the notion of restricted suffrage. City councils throughout Santa Clara province, including many small towns near Cienfuegos like Lajas and Abreus, petitioned to General Diego Tamayo, the Secretary of State and Government, to allow universal suffrage in the 1900 local elections.\textsuperscript{528}

One of the main points of contention surrounding the suffrage debate was the link between military service and citizenship. Cuban veterans, black and white, at least in the months leading up to the 1900 elections, seemed to conceive of military service as a sufficient indicator of manliness. Esteban Montejo, a former runaway slave who fought in the Cuban army recalled that the discussion of “whether or not the blacks had fought” after the war. “I know that 95% of the black race participated in the war,” he remembers. “Then they began to say that it was 75%. Well, no one criticized those words. The result was that the blacks remained in the cold. Brave and fierce alike on the streets. It was not

\textsuperscript{527} Ibid., 89.

\textsuperscript{528} “Documents relative to the resolutions adopted by the Ayuntamientos […] requesting that suffrage be granted in the coming elections,” March 6, 1900, Box 72, File 1305, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
right, but it that is what happened.” While the numbers Montejo cite can be disputed, his message is abundantly clear: military service was the premise for access to citizenship, but it seemed to be insufficient for blacks.

Black veterans, who were disproportionately affected by limited suffrage, also voiced their protest. They argued that their military service made the eligible for suffrage. In February 1900, a group of black veterans issued a manifesto directed to the “colored liberators in Santa Clara Province,” in which they discussed the issue of restricted suffrage. Black activists resented the restriction of suffrage on the basis of “talent, titles, ability, [and] smartness,” because during the war, these qualifications did not exist: “when good hands were needed to manage the Cuban machete, then there were no classes or difference—nor was anyone required to know how to read or write.” The authors of this manifesto argued that restricting suffrage would contradict the socially-equalizing principles of the revolution.

Although the manifesto was directed specifically at black veterans, the argument encompassed a broader expanse of the population. The authors attempted to construct alliances with other excluded groups, most notably working men: “The suffrage seems to have been restricted for the purpose of depriving the large majority of colored and working people of their electoral vote. It is therefore unfair to attempt this restriction.” The authors of the manifesto argued that the contributions to the Patria made by both black and working men qualified them for access to political rights. “The working man,

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529 Barnet, Biografía de un Cimarrón, 188.

530 “Hand Bill advising the negroes and laborers to assert themselves for suffrage without restriction,” February 15, 1900, Box 72, File 1036, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

531 Ibid.
just the same as the colored man, was an important factor of a triumph whose benefits neither are enjoying.” They argued that workers were eligible for suffrage because they had contributed indirectly to the revolution:

If the Cuban workman did not give his blood, he gave his money to aid in the purchase of war material; if he did not depart from his wife and children, he did leave them without any food in order that he might provide medicine for his sick and wounded brethren; if the Cuban workman did not face the fire of an army, he was, in turn imprisoned, banished to unhealthy foreign climates or machete in the darkness of the night!”

Black veterans attempted to establish a common cause with workers, regardless of race, by highlighting the parallel experiences of contribution to the revolution and exclusion from suffrage. By including the working man within the same manifesto as black veterans, the authors avoided an argument for inclusion based solely and exclusively on the grounds of race, thereby reducing the chances the protest would be considered threatening or offensive by whites. Significant protest prompted Americans to waive the property and literacy requirements for veterans of the war of independence to make them eligible for the vote, though the restrictions still significantly curtailed black suffrage among non-veterans.

Suffrage restrictions imposed by the occupation government for the 1900 elections did not quell fears that blacks would assert the right to vote and obtain political influence. One merchant and annexationist from Guanabacoa, a town near Havana, begged General Wood to rescind the order allowing veterans to vote, claiming that it would result in “vagrants, thieves, ñañigos, bootblacks, newspaper vendors, pimps, and

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532 “¡Más verdad y patriotismo!” February 7, 1900, Box 72, File 1036, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

other men of bad character,” who “less civilized than the Tagalogs,” into office.\textsuperscript{534} Some wealthy property owners rejected black access to political power. For example, in April 1900, one anonymous resident of the country town of Palmira, near Cienfuegos, alerted military officials of a black landslide in the upcoming elections, then just one month away. A self-described “foreigner addicted to the American Government, who looks to its greatness, power and justice, and who would wish the Intervention would last for many years for the peace,” the anonymous resident warned that Morúa was plotting a black takeover of the island. “I advise you that the black man Martín Morúa Delgado, secretary of the Ayuntamiento, is an enemy of the Americans of the Intervening Government,” he wrote, reinforcing his earlier affirmation of loyalty to the Americans. “A furious racist, he has alarmed the white people. It is said that as soon as the Intervening Government ceases, they, the Negros will govern,” the writer proclaimed of Morúa.\textsuperscript{535} Here the anonymous writer attempted to show the necessity of prolonged American rule, and the desirability of annexation as a preventative measure for black rule in Cuba.

With Morúa in power, the anonymous writer claimed, the whole town of Palmira was under siege by people of African descent. It was dangerous, he explained, to have blacks in government because they would soon take over: “Here, the negro Morúa governs because the mayor [Jacinto Portela] does what he says.”\textsuperscript{536} Even if they did not occupy the top position, blacks would take control of government, by appointing other

\textsuperscript{534} Enrique Parrdi, “Protest against order of General Wood,” January 8, 1900, Box 67, File 1327, USNA/MGC/RG140/E3.

\textsuperscript{535} Anonymous to General Leonard Wood, “Complains of the negro Martín Morúa Delgado,” April 27, 1900, Box 92, File 2547, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\textsuperscript{536} Ibid.
blacks to important positions. Many important positions were occupied by blacks, threatening the stability and order of the town: “all the police are blacks, and the school teachers do not know anything, black regidores.”\textsuperscript{537} The anonymous writer assumed that American military officials—many of whom had experienced similar social changes under Reconstruction—would sympathize with his anxieties over black rule.

The anonymous writer claimed that the veterans worked in collaboration with the blacks. According to him, the mayor Portela had nominated his brother, Manuel Portela as inspector of the elections, placing the office in the house of his brother, and this would ensure that everyone voted for them, the veterans, and the blacks.\textsuperscript{538} He begged for the establishment of a contingent of American troops in Palmira to keep order and allow for free voting, because if not, then the veterans and the Negros would continue to control the elections.\textsuperscript{539} “There is a division in this town, that Morúa has fomented that will have grave consequences, and the Intervening Government know it and will not put remedy, so the whole town awaits your [General Wood] wisdom and power.”\textsuperscript{540}

Although suffrage restrictions severely limited the number of Cubans eligible to vote, it did not result in the desired end of electing annexationists. “I predicted that the elections would result in the selection of the same men then in office, or of men of similar character. This prediction has been fully verified, and it is to be noted that in every instance the Mayor and Councilman elected are Revolutionists who either actually served

\textsuperscript{537} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{538} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{539} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{540} Ibid.
in the field, or actively aided the Insurgents with their money and influence.” In addition, one black senator, Martín Morúa Delgado was elected in Santa Clara Province. The successes of the revolutionary party in the 1900 elections sent a clear message to the military government: it would soon have to fulfill the conditions of the Teller Amendment.

The National Party secured success in many instances, but the Americans had not left control over such an important city as Cienfuegos up to chance. Wealthy property owners and military officials had already endeavored in a bit of creative political engineering as a precaution against the victory of radical veterans in municipal posts. General Wood harnessed his personal friendships with Atkins in Cienfuegos to secure Figueroa as mayor in the elections, just as he had “labored diligently behind the scenes in behalf of conservative pro-American candidate” across the island in the months before the election.

Atkins happily cooperated with Wood. He used his “influence in support of a very respectable man whom he wished to elect as alcalde of Cienfuegos,” as Wood requested. “I sent for one of the alcaldes de barrio, and told him my wishes,” Atkins wrote in his memoirs. “He told me to have no anxiety; the man I suggested would be elected.” When asked how the man proposed to secure the mayoral victory for the desired candidate, he

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541 James H. Wilson, Annual Report of Brigadier General James H. Wilson, U.S.V., Commanding the Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara (Matanzas, 1900), 19.


544 Pérez, Cuba Between Empires, 312; Mario Averhoff Purón, Los Primeros Partidos Políticos (Havana: Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1971), 51-52.
replied that “they would take possession of the ballot boxes and destroy the ballots of the opposition candidates.” Atkins proclaimed thought that this was a “magnificent idea and worthy of Tammany Hall,” the political society that controlled elections in New York at the turn of the century. Figueroa, representing the Unión Democrática Party was elected, marking the success of the plan.

While electoral fraud secured the victory of socially-conservative pro-American Figueroa, candidates perceived as having a radical social agenda faced defeat. This was certainly the case for José B. Alemán, a prestigious insurgent chief nominated by the National Party in the September elections convened to select Constitutional Convention delegates. Although Alemán belonged to the white urban elite, his radical political beliefs attracted the support of many black veterans, resulting in his fall from grace with military authorities. In one speech he gave in August 1900, Alemán was reported to have said, “To war, Cubans to war for our independence. When that has arrived, there will be no longer any but Cubans in post offices and customs houses.” In the same speech, he declared equality between blacks and whites. One American military officer reported that he “informed the negroes that they were as good as the whites.” This kind of radical talk was alarming to American officials, especially Wood, who wished “to avoid making Cuba into a second Haiti” in the September elections for the constitutional conventions. Alemán would later corroborate the worst of American fears when he became one of only eleven delegates to oppose the Platt Amendment in 1901.

545 Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba*, 322.

546 Fred Van S. Chamberlain to Adjutant General, Department of Occidente, “Submits report of offensive speeches made by General Alleman [sic],” August 25, 1900.

With vigorous political maneuvering, Wood assured that the “better class of men” had emerged victorious in Cienfuegos.\textsuperscript{548} He could not prevent all radicals from attending the Convention, however. With an electoral victory, Alemán represented Santa Clara at the convention. The preoccupations expressed by Wood show the conflation of political radicalism, especially separatist demands for immediate independence and opposition to American rule, with social radicalism, namely their connection to and patronage with blacks. Indeed, the electoral victory of so few radical separatists like Alemán, showed how white veterans lost political favor by relating themselves to blacks. For Wood, like many American military officials, the political privileges of citizenship were for white men who supported American rule and could preserve social order. This led to an increasingly narrow vision of male eligibility, which encompassed only politically and socially-conservative white men of wealth.

The Specter of Black Rule and the Limits of Cuba Libre

Despite the successful (though fraudulent) election of Figueroa, the pattern of National Party victories in the 1900 elections compounded existing anxieties and discontents among populations that had not supported the insurrection. Autonomists detested the outcome of the 1900 elections, because it brought to power radical veterans and even people of African descent despite the precautionary measures of restricted suffrage. One Autonomist wrote to anonymously to the military authorities criticizing the outcomes of the 1900 local elections. “What delirium!” he exclaimed. “How is it possible

\textsuperscript{548} Ibid.
to think that [immediate independence] is the real patriotism, when even the most obtuse
[person] knows that given out deficient education, our bad habits [resabios] and our
formidable racial antagonism that dominates us, that we would go straight and quickly to
the abyss!" This anonymous author revealed a sentiment that was widespread among
Autonomists and Spaniards with the first round of elections: the authority of Cuban
separatists, and the legitimacy of their claims to public office were far from universal.

Image 12: “Good Government vs. Revolution”

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549 Un matancero, “Complains against the proceeding of the party who were successful in the elections, and

550 Udo J. Keppler, “Good government vs. revolution; - an easy choice,” Puck, April 17, 1901, Library of
Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.
Many Autonomists similarly rejected the few black political gains in the 1900 elections. Many of these men, after all, had avoided joining the insurrection because of its radical social agenda. For example, Antonio Govín, a prominent autonomist of Matanzas was reported to have audibly disparaged the support afforded to black General Quintín Bandera in a political rally in August 1900. When the crowd gave Bandera a “viva,” Govín said “in a depreciative tone,” that “we weren’t missing anything but this” (No nos faltaba nada más que esto). “It’s natural. Bandera is black,” the newspaper reporter explained. Rafael Montoro, another autonomist claimed, “I frequently hear in all public places the colored race saying---‘Wait until the Americans leave then they will see who

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552 “Govín y los negros,” *El Cubano*, August 28, 1900, Box 110, File 4592, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
are the people with the most rights to govern the country.” The specter of black uprising demonstrated the necessity of continued American rule to maintain order.

Some Spaniards residing in Cienfuegos also protested black participation in national government. One ex-Spanish Volunteer, Javier Medina Escalona, wrote to the American military officials in late 1900, targeting another prominent black political figure who supported Cuban independence, Juan Gualberto Gómez. “The colored race is working hard under the direction of its Chief Juan Gualberto Gómez,” he declared. This writer identified Gómez, a mulatto politician and patriot, as a threatening figure, agitating the black masses to revolution. By November, he again wrote imploring the military authorities not to “lose sight of Juan Gualberto Gómez, leaders of the colored race of the Island.”

“He has given instructions,” he wrote ominously. By connecting Gómez to a potential black uprising, this former Spanish Volunteer highlighted the danger of allowing people of African descent in positions of political authority.

Reports of revolutionary activities of Gómez and other black separatists, aimed to undermine the legitimacy of black political participation by linking black political power to the inversion of the racial hierarchy and to Negro rule. For this reason, the accusations brought against Gómez are at once ironic and illustrative. At the national level, the black politicians Martín Morúa Delgado and Juan Gualberto Gómez at once had to uphold white bourgeois values by downplaying any racial agendas and rejecting blackness and to

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553 “El Meeting de Tacón. Montoro. AH. Lo que Dijo,” Suplemento de la Tarde. August 18, 1900, Box 110, File 4592, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.


555 Javier Medina Escalona to General Wood, October 10, 1900, Box 114, File 5583, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
reinforce their authority among the black masses by claiming to speak for them and uphold their interests.\textsuperscript{556} This predicament set the stage for their inability—or unwillingness, considering it might result in rejection by their white political patrons—to address directly issues of racial inequality on the national stage.

The socially-conservative positions some black politicians took on race issues in the early republic highlights the paradox of their position in national government. For example, during the first months after the war, Martín Morúa Delgado declared that the revolution had solved the race problem: “The social question […] is a question perfectly resolved by the Revolution. This has conquered the liberty of Cuba. From the beginning, it has been the freedom of Cuba that has been pursued, not the liberty of any particular social class.”\textsuperscript{557} Morúa envisioned the extension of the ideology of racial brotherhood into Cuban society after the war: “Justice, as such, in the future proceedings will be consummated in the work of the Revolution. Those soldiers who entered the cities from the [battle]fields, brought […] the democratic spirit that they had witnessed in the war encampments, and nothing and no one would be capable of countering that spirit of equality and justice that informed the Program of Montecristi and confirmed the fundamental prospect of the Revolution.”\textsuperscript{558} Morúa praised the equalizing power of the revolution to such an extent that in 1910 he ushered in the Morúa Law, prohibiting race-

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{557} Avelino Sanjenis, \textit{Mis cartas: memorias de la revolución de 1895 por la independencia de Cuba} (Sagua la Grande: Imprenta “El Comercio,” 1900), 433-434.

\textsuperscript{558} Ibid., 433-434.
\end{footnotesize}
based organization. In other words, if there was anything that Morúa was not, it was the conspirator for black rule that Medina claimed.

Indeed, Medina was one of the most vocal advocates for annexation. In a series of anonymous letters\textsuperscript{559} to the Military Governor of Cuba, he warned military officials of an impending black uprising between October 1900 and April 1901. Like the Autonomists Govín and Montoro, Medina disparaged the idea of black political participation. Medina used fears of a black uprising during the tense period between the 1900 elections and the upcoming Cuban Constitutional Convention to foster an expanded American presence in Cuban political affairs. His series of letters reflected a prevailing assumption about the meaning of the American occupation of Cuba: annexation, or at least the prolonged American presence in Cuba, he reckoned, would help keep blacks out of the political arena, and ensure the social order.

Seeking to appeal to the racial fears of American military officials, Medina depicted the perils of the recent nationalist electoral wins as the precursor to racial uprising. Medina used two key racial symbols to greater involvement by the United States in Cuban political affairs. First, he alluded to the unsavory image of decorated black veteran Quintín Bandera, as a way to foment racial division among independence-minded Cuban veterans. Second, Medina used the image of Haiti to rally white support for the pre-war racial order and to undermine the Cuban claim to sovereignty.

**Image 14: Quintín Bandera\textsuperscript{560}**

\textsuperscript{559} Medina revealed his identity in his final two letters.

\textsuperscript{560} Courtesy of Orlando García Martínez.
Medina drew on the decidedly negative views among white veterans in Cienfuegos of one of the most controversial and fear-inducing black veterans, Quintín Bandera. Although Bandera was originally from the east, he had become a recognized figure in Cienfuegos because of his leadership of a column in the invasion of the West, a military campaign led by Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo in early 1896, often identified as a critical turning point in the war leading to insurgent victory. Bandera was
indeed unemployed as Medina wrote his letters, though not for wont of searching for work. Initially he was granted a nominal post as forest inspector, but soon his position was terminated and he was removed from payroll without his prior knowledge.\textsuperscript{561} Despite persistent requests for work and assistance, Bandera could not secure work. Instead he traversed the country collecting donations for his subsistence, apparently by selling ads for newspapers.\textsuperscript{562} His state of unemployment consolidated already negative views of Bandera among high-ranking white veterans, acquired during the war. Medina claimed that his travels through the Cuban interior were revolutionary activities, rather than a search for subsistence: “Quintín Bandera goes from village to village […] preparing the terrain for rebellion,” wrote Medina to General Wood in early October 1900.\textsuperscript{563} Medina effectively harnessed ongoing debates about vagrancy characterizing the discussions of wealthy planters and military officials during the occupation to condemn the unemployed black man as a criminal. Indeed, the very mobility Bandera attained from his unemployment further served to condemn him.

Medina emphasized the militaristic character of the alleged uprising. Medina wrote of the weapons available to the black revolutionaries. They had acquired artillery, 60,000 Remingtons, 10,000 bayonets, boxes of grenades, pots of shrapnel and other weapons and munitions used by the mobilized forced and volunteers and auctioned by the Spanish government at the end of the war. Moreover, “in all the country towns there are

\textsuperscript{561} Quintín Bandera to Máximo Gómez, October 13, 1904, Box 25, File 3265 (new 3526), Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo Personal Máximo Gómez (Hereafter, ANC/FPMG).

\textsuperscript{562} “Quintín Bandera,” June 7, 1903, Box 26, File 3308 (new 3589), ANC/FPMG.

\textsuperscript{563} Javier Medina Escalona to General Leonard Wood, October 10, 1900, Box 114, File 5583, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
arms deposits under the care of determined insurgent chiefs,” he claimed. Bandera and the black rebels reportedly relied on an extensive network of black collaborators throughout the countryside.

The military organization of the men of African descent was also alarming to Medina. “The element of color, whose tendencies are racist, and are very united, work with much activity in plain daylight,” he alleged. 564 “It is an undeniable fact that the revolutionary movement will have a racist character,” he wrote to General Wood. 565 Medina pointed to the “black belt” of Cuba, which he defined as the provinces of Santiago, Santa Clara and Matanzas, “where the colored race is most numerous and is already organized” as the source of the rebellion. 566 “There are a type of Chief of Zones, with the majority of the personnel disposed to be called being of the colored race,” he reported to General Wood. 567 He labeled Bandera, as “the Chief of the colored forces of [Las] Villas,” who would lead over 1,000 men to rise up immediately against American rule. 568 Within 3 days, Medina claimed, Bandera could gather 7,000 men “who will meet in the town of La Sierra or in Cumanayagua at the foot of the hills.” 569 These country

564 Javier Medina Escalona to General Wood, December 2, 1900, Box 120, File 6489, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3. Letter reads: “El elemento de color, que sus tendencias son racista y está muy unido, trabaja con mucha actividad a la luz del día.”

565 Ibid.

566 Javier Medina Escalona to General Wood, February 18, 1901, Box 156, File 1186, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

567 Javier Medina Escalona to General Leonard Wood, October 28, 1900, Box 114, File 5583, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

568 Javier Medina Escalona to General Leonard Wood, November 7, 1900, Box 117, File 5980, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

569 Javier Medina Escalona to General Leonard Wood, October 10, 1900, Box 114, File 5583, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
towns had been revolutionary strongholds during the war, and would again serve as the headquarters of the impending armed black uprising.

While Medina relied heavily on the racial anxieties surrounding the figure of Bandera, he also argued that the alleged uprising would constitute a direct threat to American rule in Cuba. In his visits to Cienfuegos, Bandera had observed the infrastructure of the American military installations and was actively plotting an attack, Medina claimed. “He [knows] all the details: number of the force, vigilance and the rest. He knows also that 500 men can be defeated in the encampment, or restrained on the docks, after verifying the disembarkation to save the population. In Cienfuegos there are many interests to safeguard and defend.” Medina recommended that Americans dispatch a war ship to the bay of Cienfuegos: “We must be preventative, General. The forces are few.”

Medina emphasized the overt planning of the black insurgents to overthrow American rule, thereby connecting black veterans again to anti-American sentiment.

Medina linked the supposed black uprising to the political fate of Cuba by claiming that the revolutionaries would respond to the Constitutional—the mechanism through which Cubans would determine their relationship with the United States and their political future. “The radical elements are awaiting with special interest the result of the convention, and await definite instructions from General [José B.] Alemán before taking positive action.” Medina harnessed prevailing perceptions of Alemán as politically radical and an ally of blacks to link desires for immediate independence to black rule. By

570 Javier Medina Escalona to General Leonard Wood, November 7, 1900, Box 117, File 5980, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

571 “Supervisor of Police, Report in matter of unrest and hard times in the province of Santa Clara,” December 4, 1900, Box 119, File 6390, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
emphasizing the involvement of white Cuban veterans in the black rebellion, he appealed to Americans to retain military presence in Cuba to protect against black rule. The revolution, Medina claimed, would likely take place in February or March 1901, a period that would coincide with the initial discussions surrounding the Platt Amendment.  

**Image 15: “Here you are”—Caricature of American views of Cuban Independence**

Medina certainly caught the attention of military authorities, who called for an investigation of the “conditions” in Santa Clara province. The supervisor of police noted

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572 Javier Medina Escalona to General Wood, December 2, 1900, Box 120, File 6489, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

573 “Here you are,” newspaper clipping, [n.d.], Volume II.61, folio 72, MHS/EFA.
particularly tense race relations in late November and early December 1900: “In Cienfuegos considerable hard feeling exists between he blacks and whites, without distinction as to the politics or individual revolutionary records.”  

He confirmed that Bandera was indeed in Cienfuegos “collecting contributions” to fund “a war against the Americans.”  

He claimed that a “complete state of agitation exists in the province of Santa Clara, hard times are being felt and there is a general feeling of inquietude.”  

Armed gangs abounded throughout the province, numerous kidnappings had occurred for ransom, and at least one murder was reported in the second half of November 1900.  

In the neighboring town of Caibarien, “considerable discontent among the ‘niggers.’”  

Like Medina, the supervisor of police emphasized the connection between the black uprising and the events of the constitutional convention.  

The police report seemed to have insufficient effect, however, and Medina bolstered his campaign to consolidate American influence. By February 1901, Medina began to identify a trans-national consolidated black movement in the Caribbean. “It is said in Jamaica, the Caiman Islands, and other English islands close to the[se] coasts that several thousand Negros will come to take part in the war. They will also come from


575 Ibid.

576 Ibid.

577 Ibid.

578 Ibid.

579 Ibid. “Many people are anxious to take to the woods, and would do so were it not for the advice of the accredited leaders of the province, who persuade them to await the annual message to be delivered this month by the President to the Congress of the United States, and the outcome of the Constitutional Convention.”
Haiti, and from what I have found out, they are collaborating with this last Republic.”

The claim that Jamaicans and Haitians, generally labeled as black, would join in the revolt threatened to transform Cuba from a white island into another black republic. This was a menacing thought for white foreign property owners who feared that black rule would lead to the mass persecution of whites and their dispossession from wealth and property as happened during the Haitian Revolution a century earlier. The United States government would have to stay to preserve order. Medina recommended that they conserve the fortifications and trenches constructed during the late war, and even prevent the entry of livestock, except the exact amount necessary for consumption. By harnessing the same language as Wood has previously employed, Medina appealed to the greatest fears of American military officials, that Cuba would become another Haiti.

Some American military officials viewed the seemingly sensationalized claims of Medina with skepticism. Wilson recognized the political interests motivating his please and those of other property owners, including Atkins. Wilson noted that property owners reported crime to delay the withdrawal of American troops. “There are a few, principally the owners of large estates, who are urging delay and would delay indefinitely so long as the measures proposed do not lead positively to the realization of their wishes,” reported Wilson in 1900. Certainly, the annexationist agenda seemed to inform the arguments men like Medina and Atkins made in favor of American rule.

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580 Javier Medina Escalona to General Wood, February 18, 1901, Box 156, File 1186, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3. Letter reads: “Se dice que en Jamaica, Caimán Grandes y de otras islas inglesas próximas a las costas vendrán unos cuantos miles de negros para tomar parte en la guerra. También vendrán de Haití, y según me han enterado, están en inteligencia con el gobierno de esta última Republica.”

581 Wilson, Annual Report, 1900, 18.
At the same time, other Americans noted a broader resonance of the racial anxieties and political desires articulated by Medina. “The Spanish Element and the Cubans of good judgment are of the opinion that the withdrawal of the American Army from this country will bring its entire ruin,” wrote one American investigator in February 1901.582 Certainly, this included wealthy property owners like Atkins. “The man who has any property is deadly afraid of the colored patriot with his box of matches. […] under certain conditions there may be grave danger of burning. This, I find, is what is threatened,” Atkins wrote in April 1901.583 Apparently, only the “radical element” was in favor of immediate withdrawal. Medina claimed that the “reasonable classes” shared his views, and the investigator apparently agreed. Reasonable classes, then, became defined in terms of the annexationist political position.

Other opponents of separatist political power identified Bandera alongside other black separatists as prominent threats to order in Cuba as well. One Cuban-born annexationist proposed to expel Quintín Bandera, Isidro Acea, and Juan Gualberto Gómez “and other agitators [perturbadores] and pernicious men from the Country.” Urging Wood to crush prominent black veterans, he exalted that “there is a need in Cuba for an American Weyler.”584 Like Medina, this annexationist sought a stronger American presence in Cuba. However, the fact that he was a native of Cuba allowed him to employ the discourse of patriotism to defend his position.

582 Supervisor of Police to Chief of Detective Bureau, “Report of a trip made through Santa Clara province, y a special agent,” February 19, 1901, Box 156, File 1209, USNAMGC/G 140/E 3.

583 Edwin F. Atkins to Robert P. Porter, Esq., April 22, 1901, Volume II.23, folio 169, MHS/EFA.

584 Alejo García to Leonard Wood, August 29, 1901, Box 193, File 2229, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
The rejection of Bandera and all that he symbolized also appeared among an unlikely population. The implications of the link between the alleged black uprising planned by Bandera and the transformation of Cuba into another Haiti were certainly clear to some black men in Cuba. William George Emmanuel, the self-proclaimed “Representative of the Africans of the Island,” wrote to General Wood in June 1901 seeking to dispel the presumed role of Bandera as the leader of blacks. He charged that Bandera and Vicente Watisola, another black man, who he alleged was from Cienfuegos, were trying to recruit Africans into their uprising. They are “going from town to town inciting the Africans not to repatriate to their native land, but to turn out on the fourth of July to proclaim the independence of the island,” he wrote. Emmanuel begged Wood to issue an order deterring Africans from joining Bandera, affirming African loyalty to the occupation government rather than to the men like Bandera, who Medina claimed exerted total control over the black population. Emmanuel seemed aware of the prevailing assumption—touted so loudly by Medina—linking blacks to political and social radicalism.

By depicting black veterans as anti-white, and anti-American, Medina sought to demonstrate the necessity of American rule for ensuring the safety of property interests.

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585 Emmanuel most likely referred to Vicente Goytizolo, “el Rey Congo” who had been born in Africa and lived in Cienfuegos since the early years of the settlement. He would have been about 90 years of age in 1900. He settled in the neighborhood of Pueblo Nuevo in the northeast of the city of Cienfuegos, where he lived during the 1907 electoral register. Pablo L. Rousseau and Pablo Díaz de Villegas, Memoria descriptiva, historia y biográfica de Cienfuegos y las fiestas del primer centenario de la fundación de esta ciudad (Havana, Establecimiento tipográfico “El siglo XX,” 1920), 269-270; Marial Iglesias, Metáforas del cambio en la vida cotidiana Cuba, 1898-1902 (Havana: Ediciones Unión, 2003), 45, nt 45. Thank you to Anabel García García for the biographical information.

586 William George Emmanuel to General Leonard Wood, “Reports that Quintín Bandera, Vicente Watisola and two others are trying to incite the Africans on the island to rise up,” June 29, 1901, Box 195, File 3103, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
Fears of Cuban radicalism and hysteria over the possibility of racial equality de-
legitimized the concept of racial democracy and made impossible the participation in
*Cuba Libre* of people of African descent on equal terms as whites. These fears became
even more salient as the 1901 elections, in which suffrage would be universal,
approached. The specter of a black uprising had consequences beyond inspiring fear over
black political participation. By implicating white veterans in the black uprising, Medina
confirmed the worst fears of military officials. Radical white veterans were just as
dangerous as black veterans. Military officials approached the 1901 elections with even
greater determination to secure the victories of conservative candidates.

Unrestricted Manhood Suffrage in the Elections of June 1901

In Cienfuegos, the quest of military officials to support conservative political
candidates translated into renewed support for Figueroa against several National Party
candidates. This was no easy feat, especially considering that universal suffrage
enfranchised the urban populations that had been most negatively impacted by the
political projects Figueroa had developed over the last year. One of his key achievements
was a campaign to make the city center more “respectable,” by relocating certain
populations to different parts of the city. Plagued by rumors of corruption and accusations
of embezzlement, Figueroa could not secure re-election in June 1901. While numerous
urban residents favored the mayoral campaign to “cleanse” the city center, the policies
had negatively impacted hundreds of poor and working-class residents, among who were
many blacks. Moreover, accusations of embezzlement, corruption and fraud marred the
Figueroa administration. The shift from restricted to universal suffrage contributed to the defeat of Figueroa in the municipal elections of June 1901.

The elections were marred by “a great number of personal incidents,” marking the onset of the politics of “caudillaje” in Cienfuegos. The new mayor was Gonzalo García Vieta, a doctor and veteran of the Cuban army entered office. Military officials lamented the victory of such a radical candidate, who had direct political ties to blacks. “The situation here is extremely unfortunate,” lamented Captain Barker days after the election. “With Figueroa as alcalde good order would have been maintained,” he wrote. Vieta, one the other hand, despite his good qualities, had one major flaw: he relied on the support of the masses. “As I have repeatedly stated to you Dr. Vieta is a very popular and conscientious man,” wrote Barker. “I believe he is comparatively if not strictly honest, but his principle support is from the rabble; for instance, on his ticket are four negroes for councilmen. This fact alone creates serious fear among the property holders, who are almost unanimously supporters either openly or tacitly of Figueroa.”

587 Rousseau and Díaz de Villegas, Memoria descriptiva, 278.

588 Antonio Tomás, “Statement that several men belonging to the Republican party have threatened to kill Leopoldo Figueroa, and that on behalf of his family he request protection for him,” June 6, 1901, Box 169, File 1846, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Leopoldo Figueroa, “States the Board of Scrutiny refuses to count the ballot there one by one, they resolving to make the scrutiny of the certificates of the electoral boards,” June 10, 1901, Box 169, File 1846, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Captain F. S. Foltz, “Report on progress of the Junta in making the count, as well as on the general situation,” June 22, 1901, Box 169, File 1846, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Esquerra, Hernández, Trujillo, and other residents of Cienfuegos to General Leonard Wood, “Complaining of the anarchical condition prevalent in said city in consequence of frictions arising from the elections between the rival candidates,” June 5, 1901, Box 169, File 1846, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Juan Suárez, “Letter referring to the incidents that have taken place at Cienfuegos on occasion of the elections,” June 7, 1901, Box 169, File 1846, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Joaquín de la Peña, “Protests against the legality of the recent elections in the Municipality of Cienfuegos,” June 14, 1901, Box 169, File 1846, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3, Walter B. Barker, “Wires in regard to the situation in Cienfuegos in connection with the election frauds at that place,” June 12, 1901, Box 169, File 1846, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

from blacks condemned Vieta in the eyes of Barker. Certainly, his alliance with ex-mayor José Antonio Frías, the radical separatist known for his antagonism against Barker, did not help his reputation with Americans and other men skeptical of Cuban rule.

Opponents of Cuban rule condemned proponents of absolute and immediate independence in large part because of its perceived racial composition of that group. The National Party, known for continuing to oppose the Platt Amendment, condemning Máximo Gómez for alleged “annexation talk,” and favoring Bartolomé Masó for president, was perhaps the most worrisome. 590 Alejo García, a Cuban-born annexationist who wrote to General Wood in August 1901, claimed that the National Party was “composed of blacks and mulattos in the majority and vicious corrupted whites who desire absolute Independence to live by stealing from honorable men.” 591 Even though Vieta was not a member of the most radical Cuban National Party, but rather of the more moderate Republican Party, his political alliances with men of African descent seemed equally problematic for Americans.

The controversy caused by the electoral victory of Vieta over Figueroa erupted into accusations of fraud and voter intimidation. Barker also accused Vieta supporters of terrorizing local residents to ensure they voted as they were told. Frías informed him that “one Sixto Roque, a ‘war hero’ and known as Lieut. Colonel in the revolution” had received concessions from the Figueroa administration, which funded a road built to his house in exchange for political support during the elections. Roque denied that he supported Figueroa and assured Frías that “if he said nothing that on the day preceding

590 “Statement of the platforms of various political parties in the Island of Cuba,” August 2, [1901], Box 198, File 3500, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

591 Alejo García to Leonard Wood, August 29, 1901, Box 193, File 2229, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
the election he would turn out and control his district for Vieta, which he did.” Barker reported that a Spanish merchant had informed him that Roque had been “terrorizing the country,” influencing the elections.\textsuperscript{592}

The defeat of Figueroa proved worrisome to wealthy property owners and American military authorities alike. “I did not realize until it became a fact,” lamented Barker, “how deeply the better classes of people irrespective of nationality regretted Figueroa’s defeat.” Military authorities pressed the local board of scrutiny to review the election results concerning the fraud and placed Colonel Hugh L. Scott in charge. When it was clear that Figueroa could not be upheld as the winner, Barker urged his superiors to offer him “some State position,” this “being so much in the interest of decency and manliness.” Vindicating Figueroa would serve as “a justification of him in the eyes of the people, which would be much appreciate by himself and friends.”\textsuperscript{593} Military officials forced Vieta resign by late July 1901. Replacing Vieta was Higinio Esquerra, the celebrated insurgent chief and former Chief of the Cienfuegos rural guard, who the Department Commander, General Wilson had long held in high esteem. Esquerra held the office of mayor until 1902, as the struggles over influence over the city council, political appointments, and hiring of important municipal positions including the police force continued to define the municipal government for the remainder of the occupation.

The struggle against men like Frías and Vieta and the support of men like Figueroa shows that the Americans sought to promote men who favored a collaborative


\textsuperscript{593} Walter B. Barker, “Enclosing letter recommending that Dr. Fugueredo [sic], late Mayor of Cienfuegos be offered some State position,” June 30, 1901, Box 195, File 3161, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
relationship between the civil and military authorities, and proved themselves adamant defenders of the propertied classes. In making this assessment, the networks of political patronage mattered. Whereas Americans condemned Frías and Vieta for their connections to blacks, they celebrated Figueroa, whose administration had defended the interests of the wealthiest residents while suppressing poor and working-class blacks.

The infighting emerging out of the 1901 elections highlighted the intense struggle for political power as Cubans drew closer to the inauguration of the republic. American support for the candidacy of conservative-leaning politicians like Figueroa helped foment divisions among separatists vying for municipal offices. The fierce struggle between political candidates in 1901 and afterwards, moreover, suggested to some opponents of Cuban rule that separatists were not at all fit to wield political power: “The craze of the Cubans is to be employees of the Government or City Councils,” wrote one Cuban-born annexationist criticizing what he perceived as a desire among the separatists to live off the state rather than rebuilding the country.594

Conclusions: Cuban Independence as Black Rule

During the first months of American rule, Cuban veterans sought to consolidate political control over local affairs as the spoils of war. Although many Cuban veterans expected an immediate transfer of authority in 1899, many faced disappointment as Americans retained Spaniards and Autonomists in positions of power. Prominent veterans rejected the apparent alliance between their enemies and their allies. Americans

594 Alejo García to Leonard Wood, August 29, 1901, Box 193, File 2229, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
soon recognized that distributing political power to Cuban veterans would be a necessary cornerstone of occupation policy.

Yet, not all veterans were made equal, despite the discourse of racial brotherhood that had prevailed during the war. The majority of political appointees were prominent white veterans, often from the wealthy, propertied and educated classes. By appointing wealthy whites to office, Americans sought to ensure propertied interests, assuming that whites would favor racial order and hierarchy. It became apparent, however, that not all white veterans favored American rule. In the first round of elections, Americans sought to favor pro-American and annexationist candidates by restricting suffrage through property, wealth, and literacy requirements. Although the first elections excluded the vast majority of Cuban men, especially those belonging to the poor and working classes, the revolutionary party had unexpected successes, electing independence-minded candidates and even some black candidates to national, provincial and local offices.

Property owners sought to challenge the electoral victories of radical candidates by linking political radicalism to social radicalism. During the build-up to the Constitutional Convention and the June 1901 elections, annexationists, Autonomists, Spaniards, and American property owners fabricated hysterical accounts of black uprisings, implicating prominent black veterans and even black politicians. Ultimately, these pro-American men forged between black rule and Cuban independence forced a conservative swing in local politics in Cienfuegos that undermined radical separatists in favor of socially-conservative veterans. Essentially, manliness, which equated to access to political power, became increasingly defined as the willingness and ability to defend propertied interests by any means necessary. The rise to power of socially-conservative
veterans in municipal government in Cienfuegos would have real consequences for poor and working-class black men and women, which the subsequent chapters will explore in detail.
CHAPTER 5
The Color of Disorder:
Black Veterans, Law Enforcement, and the Ordered City

In the summer of 1899 American quartermaster employees clashed with local residents in the areas of densest black settlement in Cienfuegos: the portside neighborhood of Marsillán and the red light district in the southwest corner of the city. In each instance, Americans engaged in disputes with local residents. When police arrived to restore order, the conflicts only grew worse, escalating into full-scale riots. Riots like these were not unusual during the first months of the American military occupation, as Cubans and Americans tested the limits of each other’s authority.

One of the most significant sources of conflict was the enforcement of order in the city. Americans sought to enforce their authority over civil affairs by providing impunity for drunken and disorderly Americans and subduing the unruly Cuban protesters. Cuban civil authorities, in contrast, continued their quest to legitimize their own authority and competence for self-government through nationalist posturing and defiance against American control. Americans and Cuban civil authorities competed for authority over local affairs, each advocating a different concept of what order meant and how it should be enforced.

Diverging understandings of race were at the center of the competing visions of order. Americans reluctantly accepted white Cuban veterans as the new authorities after the war, but they were unwilling to submit to black authority. For the most part, this was not a problem in the administration of civil affairs, as white separatists, and to a lesser
extent, white Autonomists filled the vast majority of public employment and government positions. The police force, however, provided one critical exception to the general pattern of employment of white veterans and disenfranchisement of black veterans. According to the Americans, the racially-heterogeneous police force impeded the enforcement of Cuban civil authority during the occupation.

Americans charged that the racially-heterogeneous police force was incompetent and liable to ally itself with the masses based on racial and class similarities. This tendency had already manifested with disruptive consequences in the support of certain local authorities for the claims to property, horses and livestock of many black veterans in the country towns surrounding Cienfuegos. In the city itself, the willingness of the police to defend militant black workers, veterans, local residents and even prostitutes against the self-proclaimed representatives of civilization—the Americans—seemed to corroborate these suspicions. This alleged alliance exacerbated the existing tensions between Cuban and American authorities. In the numerous instances in which drunken and rowdy American soldiers and civilians created public disturbances, police perceived as black—or at very least as insufficiently white—faced disdain, disrespect and resistance not only from the drunken and rowdy Americans, but also from the military authorities. Indeed, the police were just another part of the problem, and provided yet another justification for the American occupation.

This chapter examines two conflicts that resulted from American abuses of poor and working-class Cubans. In each instance, the conflict escalated when the police intervened to arrest the Americans, but were promptly disarmed and detained by

American authorities. Civil authorities representing the most “respectable” classes in the city came to the defense of the police and the masses against the Americans, causing disagreement and reproach between the two groups. These conflicts demonstrate a strong sense of unity across racial and class differences among Cubans against Americans in the first months of the military occupation.

Agents of Order or Disorder?: Black veterans and the Defense of the Pueblo

On the afternoon of Monday, May 16, 1899 municipal police and American soldiers engaged in armed confrontation in the predominantly black port-side neighborhood of Marsillán. Police approached the Office of the Captain of the Port as American civilian employees in the Quartermaster’s Department aimed guns at a crowd of angry laborers. Municipal police sought to detain the armed men, but instead, the Americans disarmed and arrested the police, and forcibly dispersed the crowd by brandishing their weapons and firing several rounds. This violent confrontation between municipal police officers and American Quartermaster employees reveals the peculiar set of tensions defining relations between Americans and Cuban veterans in the aftermath of the war: whereas Cuban veterans employed in the municipal police department perceived their role as agents of order, Americans saw them as sympathizers—even agitators—of the masses.

The conflict began when American Quartermaster employees refused to pay the stevedores their daily wages, due to lack of available funds.\textsuperscript{596} Dozens of dock laborers,

\textsuperscript{596}Walter B. Barker to J. H. Dorst, Adjutant General, “Deposition of Eligio A. Brunet,” June 19, 1899, Box 12, File 5573, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
many black, some veterans, gathered outside the office of Captain of the Port, demanding their wages. Employees of the Quartermaster Department, including the Cuban-born naturalized American citizen Eligio A. Brunet who had defected from the insurrection in 1897, emerged from within the office instructing the workers to disperse. They assured the worker that they would be paid the following day. The laborers were dissatisfied, however. The promise of future payment of money that was due to them now was unacceptable. Most workers in post-war Cuba had heard this all before: there is no money now, but maybe later there will be. Teachers, police officers and wardens, municipal and provincial government employees all complained not receiving salary for months, even years due to the war and the transfer in sovereignty.

Image 16: Captain of the Port (where stevedores protested) circa 1899.

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598 Vice United States Consul at Cienfuegos to Assistant Secretary of State, July 3, 1897, Microfilm Reel #5, Walter Royal Davis Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Hereafter cited as WRD/UNC/USCC).

599 Dr. Vieta to Superintendent Correctional and Charitable Institutions of Matanzas, June 6, 1900, Box 36, File 3118, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

600 Courtesy of Orlando García Martínez.
For the stevedores, the memory was more recent than the war-time shortages, and the need for cash more pressing. Just a few months earlier, in February, these men had faced a similar situation, in which the Quartermaster did not have sufficient funds to pay them. “A mob of several hundred have besieged my office for days and nights justly clamoring for their pay,” Walter B. Barker, the Captain of the Port of Cienfuegos wrote in February. Barker was sympathetic to the laborers that time, writing urgently to his superiors asking for funds and defending the workers. “I can no longer face a starving people who have done work for the government and I need not say to you should be paid,” he fumed indignantly to his boss.\footnote{Walter B. Barker to Chief Quartermaster, “Reports having no funds to pay laborers,” February 3, 1899, Box 5, File1562, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1466.} Men of the working class, perhaps more than any other urban population, relied heavily upon their low wages to subsist in a war-torn
economy in which the high prices of food, medicines and other necessities made maintaining a family exceedingly difficult.

Barker was less sympathetic in May than he had been in February, even though conditions for the working class had not improved much. Instead of defending their right to be paid for their labor, Barker and his employees blamed the conflict on the laborers for their militancy and aggressiveness. The laborers did not move from the Office of the Captain of the Port, even though several quartermaster employees instructed them to leave. “They refused to go off, saying that they wanted their money.”\textsuperscript{602} According to another witness, “they became angry, and they said they must have their money; that they needed it and that they were being cheated.”\textsuperscript{603} P. Alduncin and Luis Lewis,\textsuperscript{604} both employees in the Office of the Captain of the Port, failed to communicate with the laborers, Captain F. N. Thevenet, the chief clerk, tried in Spanish.\textsuperscript{605} “Some of these men demanded their pay, threatening violence if not paid at once.”\textsuperscript{606} One of the laborers even drew his dagger. Thevenet responded by grabbing “a stick or piece of iron of some

\textsuperscript{602} Walter B. Barker to J. H. Dorst, Adjutant General, “Deposition of Eligio A. Brunet,” June 19, 1899, Box 12, File 5573, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{603} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{604} Luis Lewis was a close friend of the famous Cienfuegos patriot, Rita Suárez del Villar. Rita Suárez del Villar,\textit{Mis Memorias} (Cienfuegos, No Publisher, 1955), 19. Luis Lewis helped Rita established communication, via Damaso Pasalodos, with Spanish Commandant at the headquarters of the port of Cienfuegos, following a Spanish raid on an insurgent training camp on her father’s property at Cayo Ocampo. She requested that the Commandant return to her the quinine and other supplies seized by the guerrilla lieutenant Alberme. According to the commandant, Alberme never turned in anything to him, so Rita never received the seized supplies.

\textsuperscript{605} Walter B. Barker to J. H. Dorst, Adjutant General, “Deposition of Eligio A. Brunet,” June 19, 1899, Box 12, File 5573, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{606} Walter B. Barker to C.E. Dempsey, May 18, 1899, Box 7, File 3868,USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
description and went out and brandished it about telling them to leave." The crowd retired to the next block between D’Clouet and Dorticós.

The aggressive behavior on the part of the laborers was particularly disconcerting to Americans, many of who viewed the lack of deference and obedience by the laborers as a violation of racial etiquette. Certain black laborers confronted the Quartermaster employees directly, a menacing act from the perspective of a white U.S. Southerner accustomed to Jim Crow. One laborer in the crowd, the black man José Brunet, had been identified as one of the leaders of the mob. Brunet, “who was most violent,” “returned with his gun to enforce his demand for pay.” He attempted to approach the door of Barker’s office. Brunet had enlisted in the Cuban army early on, in September 1895, and had risen to the rank of Sergeant 2nd class in the Infantry Regiment “Gómez.” As he approached the door, an armed watchman, Ben Bane, “an American citizen, who was dressed with a blue shirt and yellow breeches and wears a light mustache,” fired three shots at Brunet. Bane claimed that he was protecting an unarmed employee against the armed labor leader.

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611 Francisco de Ostolazo, “Transmits depositions in the shooting affair at the office of Capt. W.B. Barker,” May 17, 1899, Box 7, File 3915, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331, see Medical Report, May 15, 1899.
Whereas the Americans claimed that Brunet had approached the office, threatening them, the nineteen-year-old laborer swore that he left as ordered. Testifying about his involvement in the affair from his hospital bed, Brunet reported that he was shot as he was leaving the crowd, and that he did not approach the office: “…having the witness retired, on arriving at the street D’Clouet between Dorticós and Santa Clara the warden of the wharf with a club that had hit him on the head and afterwards with the back of the revolver…” He recounted a scuffle between himself and Bane: “the speaker took out the machete which he carried, hitting him on the arm with the intention of diverting the weapon with which the warden was aiming at him.” The warden fired twice. Brunet barely escaped with his life, one bullet striking him in the left leg. Brunet also sustained severe wounds on the top of his head and over his right eye due to the blows from the gun, requiring him to seek medical assistance.612 Brunet ran as far as San Fernando Street, where he encountered a police officer who helped him to the Hospital.613

Americans directed their investigation toward white witnesses. José recalled the presence of his colleague, the black man Antonio Sarría, who could corroborate his story. Having enlisted in December 1895, Sarría had served in the same regiment and obtained the same rank as Brunet: Sergeant 2nd class in the “Gómez” Regiment. Military authorities never pursued this lead. Andrés Herrera Fernández, a Spaniard from Santander, confirmed the brutal flogging of Brunet.614

612 Ibid.

613 Ibid.

614 Ibid.
After the scuffle between Brunet and Bane, Barker appeared before the crowd, using threatening language to disperse the laborers. Barker recalled that the crowd was stubborn and it was difficult to disperse them.\textsuperscript{615} When the “mob,” as the American officers called it, was about a block away from the office, they came across three police officers who attempted to mediate the dispute. When the police arrived on the scene, “a general street fight followed, in which one laborer was killed and seven persons were wounded, including three members of the police force,” as one American newspaper reported.\textsuperscript{616}

From the perspective of the Americans, the police acted as agitators who flouted their duty to restore order by collaborating with rather than suppressing the laborers. Various Quartermaster employees testified that Acosta and the other two armed men described as “wearing the Cuban uniform” were at the head of the crowd, and that the crowd was assaulting Americans. Under police protection, the mob grew violent. Lewis, who had been a revolutionary sympathizer during the war, testified that, “he saw that several [members] of the mob were assaulting Meza, who is employed in Captain Barker’s Department.” He told them to go home, but “several of them attacked him with knives and machetes.”\textsuperscript{617} By failing to suppress the mob completely, the police had contributed to the violence, according to Americans.

While the Americans called upon the police to suppress the laborers, the police instead endeavored to arrest the Americans. With Barker and his employees brutally

\textsuperscript{615} Walter B. Barker to C.E. Dempsey, May 18, 1899, Box 7, File 3868, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{616} “Street Rioting in Cienfuegos,” newspaper clipping, May 15, 1899, Volume II.60, folio 26, MHS/EFAP.

\textsuperscript{617} Walter B. Barker to J. H. Dorst, Adjutant General, “Deposition of Luis Lewis,” June 19, 1899, Box 12, File 5573, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
beating the laborers, brandishing weapons and firing as laborers, police quickly
determined that the Americans were the disorderly elements. One of these policemen,
Gonzalo Acosta, recalled that after hearing shots fired, he saw a large crowd gathered at
the corner from blocks away, as he made his round on D’Clouet Street between San
Carlos and Santa Cruz Streets. Acosta had served in the Liberating Army, having enlisted
in December 1895 and finished the war at the rank of soldier. Arriving on the scene, two
“American civilians with drawn revolvers [were] aiming at the crowd” Officer Acosta
“drew his machete and walked up to the two Americans who withdrew their revolvers.”
Acosta attempted to tell the Americans to sheath their weapons, but the language barrier
proved too strong. He remembered the ill-fated attempt at communication: “one of them
said in bad Spanish that they belonged to the Captain of the Port’s office.” Officer Acosta
detained the Americans, sheathed his machete, and turned to lead them to the office of
the Captain of the Port.

In view of the arrest of two quartermaster employees, employees of Barker
quickly identified in the police the enemy rather than agents of order. Numerous
Americans including chief clerk C. I. Walsh and E. S. Harrison rushed to the scene to
help suppress the Cubans. Seeking to free his compatriots, Lewis attacked officer
Acosta as he was leading the arrested Americans to the Office of the Port. Lewis grabbed
him by the arms, as the other two Americans took his machete and revolver away from
him. The Americans “hoisted him up and carried him through the street with great

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618 Francisco de Ostolazo, “Submits papers bearing on the ‘inquest carried on for assault to agents of the
authority’ believing that he has no jurisdiction in the case,” May 17, 1899, Box 7, File 4243,
USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

619 Walter B. Barker, “Reply yours 15th requesting to be informed of the facts about the trouble between
Q.M. employees and Cienfuegos police,” June 19, 1899, Box 12, File 5573, USNA/ RUSA/RG 395E 1331.
hollering to the Capt of the Port…” Along the way, the Officer Acosta experience brutal violence: “before arriving to said place the Americans with their revolvers and Mausers and the Capt[ain] of the Port with the handle of his revolver struck him on the head and on his body.” Seeing Acosta under duress, Federico Martí and Pablo Castellón, the other two Cuban policemen dressed in their Cuban uniforms, drew their machetes, came to assist him.

Assorted American quartermaster employees promptly disarmed and arrested Martí and Castellón, after they failed to accede to their demands. Barker ordered these two police to control the crowd. They “paid no attention but proceeded to move forward,” Barker claimed. Barker turned to stop the policeman by force, and was greeted with equal hostility: “When I attempted to stop him,” Barker reported, “he drew his pistol on me…” E. H. Harrison remembered: “I saw a Cuban soldier rush at Captain Barker with a machete, and I said to Capt. Barker ‘We will take care of him.’” With the help of Sergeant Franklin of the Signal Corps, they disarmed that officer. According to Charles H. Evans, “one of these armed Cubans drew his revolver on Captain Barker when I

620 Francisco de Ostolazo, “Submits papers bearing on the ‘inquest carried on for assault to agents of the authority’ believing that he has no jurisdiction in the case,” May 17, 1899, Box 7, File 4243, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

621 It is uncertain why two of the police officers were described as wearing their Cuban uniforms, but Gonzalo Acosta, who served in the Gómez Infantry Battalion beginning in December 1895, was described as recognized clearly as a police officer.

622 Walter B. Barker to C.E. Dempsey, May 18, 1899, Box 7, File 3868, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

623 Ibid.

immediately jumped behind him and threw both arms around him when Captain Barker seized this Cuban’s machete,” and Harrison confiscated the machete.625

Barker and his employees used violence to quell the crowd and arrest the police. Both Martí and Castellón recounted the brutal treatment they received from them Americans. The Americans beat them with the butts of their guns, as they witnessed Barker carrying off their partner, Acosta.626 In addition to violently disarming and detaining the police, Barker and his employees brutalized the crowd. Domingo Simpson, an onlooker, recalled that Barker came out of his office after a commotion, and proceeded to beat with the butt of his revolver everyone in sight: “the captain of the Port came out of the office with revolver in hand beating everyone he found in his way to disperse the mob.”627 When the police failed to respond to the American demands, Barker and his employees used violence to assert their authority. By the end of the riot, Americans had disarmed and detained all the police who responded to the incident, and had used violence to disperse the crowd of unpaid, largely unarmed laborers.

Who’s Disorderly Now?: Debating Responsibility for the Riot

Although the riot had officially ended with the disbandment of the laborers and detention of the police, conflict continued to escalate. Civil authorities and American


626 Francisco de Ostolazo, “Submits papers bearing on the ‘inquest carried on for assault to agents of the authority’ believing that he has no jurisdiction in the case,” May 17, 1899, Box 7, File 4243, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

627 Ibid.
military officials disagreed over who was at fault in the riot. Americans blamed the
dispute on the failures of an incompetent and corrupt police force, while Cuban civil
authorities admonished the Americans for overstepping their authority and abusing the
police. The beating, disarming and detention of the police resulted in a tense encounter
between Captain Barker and his employees on the one hand, and the Cienfuegos mayor,
Pedro Modesto Hernández, and the Chief of Police on the other.

American testimony describing the meeting between Barker, Oropesa and the
mayor reveal diverging perceptions of who should wield authority over civil affairs.
Barker clearly communicated that he thought the behavior of both men was inappropriate
and unprofessional—symptoms of what Barker and other Americans saw as the natural
incompetence and excitability of the Latin race, the very premise of the American
military occupation. Americans exposed their perception of their own superiority in
commentary about the disrespectful behavior and insufficient deference to Americans by
Cubans. After “some little time after talking to him, he was very loud and insulting to
Captain Barker,” recalled Eligio A. Brunet, an employee in the office of the Port, who
interpreted during the conversation between Barker and Oropesa. He told Oropesa “that
he must stop the rough manner of talking and listen to Captain Barker who was
talking.” Another of Barker’s employees, P. Alduncin, noted that “During Captain
Barker’s interview with the Alcalde and the Chief of police, the latter was extremely
defiant.” He also testified that as the police chief left the meeting, he made some kind of

628 In the testimonies, the name of the mayor appears as “Pedro Hernández, but the acting mayor during that
time was Pablo Modesto Hernández, the fifth deputy mayor under the last city council appointed under
Spanish rule in 1898.

629 Walter B. Barker to J. H. Dorst, Adjutant General, “Deposition of Eligio A. Brunet,” June 19, 1899, Box
12, File 5573, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
speech to the crowd: “as the [laborers] left with the chief of police he made a talk to them, which I could not hear, but I did hear the mob cheer him.”

The disrespect for American authority and righteousness and the perceived alliance between civil authorities and the supposed lawless rabble underscored for Americans the dangers of entrusting self-government to the Cubans.

Barker pointed squarely to the police as the culprits of the riot. He recognized the police as a problem when they seemed to intervene on behalf of the laborers. From his point of view, the purpose of the police was to repress the masses. He complained that the police officers were not helping to maintain order, but rather instigating conflict. The police, especially Acosta, were agitators, charged Barker. “There can be no mistake as to the character of this supposed conservator of the peace,” snarled Barker of Acosta in his report on the riot.

Barker argued that the men employed in the police force did not meet the standards of “good character” outlined in the guidelines for hiring.

The poor character of the police, Americans reasoned, required the military authorities to play a more expansive role in the administration of local affairs, especially the preservation of order. Instead of relying on police, Americans called in troops to patrol the town, warning of possible disorder and acts of retaliation. The Chief Surgeon urged the American forces to be vigilant against the “anti-American meeting,” led by José B. Alemán that would take place the evening of May 17. As a preventative measure, Barker ordered the police detained and ordered American troops to patrol the

630 Ibid.
631 Walter B. Barker to C.E. Dempsey, May 18, 1899, Box 7, File 3868, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
632 Chief Surgeon Major Hysell, “States there will be an Anti-American meeting at the opera house there tonight,” May 17, 1899, Box 7, File 3668, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
town the night of the original disturbance to avoid further disorder, “as the Cubans threatened revenge.” Barker also ordered police Chief Joaquín Oropesa, to retain Acosta on duty in the station the following day to avoid further conflict. Oropesa defied him, however, when he returned the pistol to Acosta, and told him to remain inside the station, but that he could go out for lunch.

Retaliation followed as predicted, seemingly supporting the low opinion Americans held of the character of the police. American precautions and authority proved just as ineffective in suppressing revenge attacks as Barker supposed municipal police were. Acosta left the station for lunch, and sought revenge against Luis Lewis, shooting several rounds at him. According to Barker, Acosta “was on the streets and did shoot and attempt to kill one of my head stevedores who was unarmed.” When going out of the office of the Port to pay the carpenters, Lewis encountered police officer Acosta, who “it seems had been informed that I assisted in disarming him.” Recalling the frightful encounter, Lewis testified that Acosta “walked straight up to me, drew his pistol, and fired at me three times.” Lewis avoided the shots and fled from his assailant: “After he fired the first shot I ran across the street to a tailor shop, he pursuing me and firing at me.” By attempting to avenge the abuses of the Americans against the police, Acosta corroborated a popular opinion that condemned him as “a leader in every demonstration

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633 “Street Rioting in Cienfuegos,” newspaper clipping, May 15, 1899, Volume II.60, folio 26, MHS/EFAP.

634 Walter B. Barker to C.E. Dempsey, May 18, 1899, Box 7, File 3868, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

of whatever nature that takes place in Cienfuegos.” The violent retaliation, Americans reasoned, showed the true character of the police, while substantiating the need for continued military rule.

While Cuban civil authorities did not explicitly defend the revenge attack, it did highlight the anger many local residents, across class and race, felt toward the representatives of military rule. At the same time as Barker thought the police should be deferential to him, many Cubans saw the violent interference in civil matters by the Americans as an insult to and abuse of local authorities. The Cuban civil authorities expressed outrage that the Americans would use force on an unarmed population, and perhaps worst of all, that they would attack and disarm the police. The Chief of Police, Joaquín Oropesa, charged angrily that these events “constitute a true abuse of the police whose prestige is under the safeguard of this Chief…” Mayor Hernández, in his letter to the provincial governor, used the exact same phrase to describe the events: “un verdadero atropello” (a true insult/abuse) to the police. Hernández also complained that Barker would not return the weapons he had confiscated from the police officers, suggesting continued antagonism after the contentious post-riot meeting.


637 Francisco de Ostolazo, “Submits papers bearing on the ‘inquest carried on for assault to agents of the authority’ believing that he has no jurisdiction in the case,” May 17, 1899, Box 7, File 4243, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

638 In the testimonies, the name of the mayor appears as “Pedro Hernández, but the acting mayor during that time was Pablo Modesto Hernández, the fifth deputy mayor under the last city council appointed under Spanish rule in 1898.

639 Orestes Ferrara, “Forwards copy of report of Mayor of Cienfuegos on the disorder occurring at that place,” May 16, 1899, Box 7, File 3869, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
Frustrated in their attempts to convince the Americans of their wrong-doing, civil authorities in Cienfuegos brought the matter to the attention of Orestes Ferrara, the Civil Governor of the Province of Santa Clara. Ferrara reported to Wilson that: “This government hopes you will pay particular attention to the matter, said city [Cienfuegos] being the only one where such scandals daily take place.”⁶⁴⁰ Indeed, there had been a history of violent encounters between Americans and Cubans in Cienfuegos. For example, on March 25, 1899, Edwin F. Atkins heard news “of a row at Caunao between some soldiers and the Cubans. The feeling between them is quite strong, and the soldiers are hoping for a chance to get at them before they go home. A spark would start a blaze now that might be hard to put out.”⁶⁴¹ Indeed, tensions between Americans and poor and working-class Cubans had reached a boiling point by May.

By arguing that Cienfuegos was the only place in which conflicts between Americans and Cubans occurred with such frequency, Ferrara was able to point to the behavior of Barker and his employees as both unacceptable and anomalous. That Ferrara identified the extraordinary level of violence and conflict in Cienfuegos suggests unusually tense relations between the Americans stationed there and the local Cubans with whom they rubbed elbows. Ferrara highlighted the culpability of these particular Americans while avoiding implicating the entire occupying project in the dispute.

Days after the conflict, and after communicating with civil and provincial authorities, General Wilson came to the defense of civil authorities. After receiving complaints about the character and quality of municipal officials including the mayor,

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba*, 303.
Wilson replied that “so far as I am able to judge, the municipal authorities […] are well chosen and are fairly representative of not only the intelligence but the property of the country.” He continued by citing the example of the conservative leaning mayor of Cienfuegos: “Surely, Doctor Frías […] is a man of ability and culture. I have no doubt that his family have [sic] been large property holders.” By emphasizing the wealth and social standing of civil authorities, Wilson sought to dispel assumptions that they acted as agents of disorder.

Moreover, Wilson seemed to agree that the behavior of Barker and his employees was inappropriate. Additionally, he lamented the behavior of many of the military men under his command. Under the rule of Bates, American military officials had grown accustomed to wielding unbridled power and authority over government. “The people have been drifting about without direction or guidance, captains and lieutenants have been figuring as governors of districts and custodians of the municipal funds.” Wilson remarked unfavorably at the behavior of military officials in Cienfuegos: “each little jackass seemed to feel he was called upon to command the people, manage their public business and supervise their daily duties.”

His description offers a convincing explanation of the attitudes and actions of Barker, who viewed himself as the supreme authority with responsibility and control over civil affairs rather than just the port, as his position suggested. Examining American views toward Cuban civil authorities, especially the police can help explain why Barker assumed an expanded role for himself in Cienfuegos.

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643 James H. Wilson to Captain Arthur Murray, May 25, 1899, Box 44, LOC/MD/JHW.
Agents of Order or Criminal Conspirators?: American views of the Police

In the days after the riot, La Tribuna published an article celebrating the solidarity between civil authorities, police and local residents. The article encouraged civil authorities to be an example for the masses, imploring Cuban compatriots to “show the popular masses that it is not tolerating injustices, but protesting against them that will be able to become free men.” The article emphasized unity across class and racial lines, reminding his compatriots to not allow themselves to be divided because “power is in the union.”644 This union celebrated by La Tribuna proved problematic for Americans in Cienfuegos.

Riots involving Americans and Cuban veterans occurred throughout the island,645 but relations between these groups in Cienfuegos seemed especially tense. The tensions perhaps arose from the personal grievances many veterans had against Bates and Barker, who were said to be against Cubans. Moreover, numerous American soldiers would be court-martialed for unbecoming conduct, drunkenness, violence and brawls throughout the province of Santa Clara, and the numbers continued to grow over the first two years of the occupation (See Table 7). In Cienfuegos, the employees of the quartermaster department, who were under the supervision of Barker, were particularly egregious in

644 “Venga la protesta, para los débiles camisones,” May 23, 1899, Box 1, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1352.

645 The records of the military government in Cuba contain numerous reports of riots involving disorderly and drunken American soldiers across the Island, from Pinar del Rio to Santiago, with many occurring in the central provinces, including the cities of Sagua la Grande and Santa Clara.
their treatment of Cubans, perhaps because they, as civilians, were not subject to military court-martial.

As quartermaster employees clashed with Cuban civilians and police in Cienfuegos, Walter B. Barker, the boss of many of these disorderly civilians, emerged as a prominent defender of American defiance of Cuban authority. A native of Mississippi, Barker was the son of a distinguished Southern family. A second cousin of former President William Henry Harrison, Barker developed a prestigious military career, beginning with his service to the Confederate Army in the eleventh regiment of the Mississippi Infantry. In 1893, he was appointed United States Consul to Cuba in the north-central port city of Sagua la Grande. Subsequently he served in the regular army in Cuba, and later Japan.646 Perhaps no other aspect of his long history of military service shaped his views of Cubans greater than his armed struggle for the Confederacy.

Table 7: Selected Crimes Committed by American Officers and Soldiers: 1899-1900, Department of Matanzas & Santa Clara 647

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Until July 31, 1899</th>
<th>July 1, 1899-June 30, 1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Court Martial</td>
<td>Summary Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling or losing Uniform</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent without Leave</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

646 Dunbar Rowland, ed., Mississippi: Contemporary Biography, 3 volumes, III (Atlanta: Southern Historical Publication Association, 1907), 166.

Barker became known for his anti-Cuban sentiment and unfair, even abusive treatment, of Cubans, and defense of disorderly Americans. Certainly, he held unfavorable views of the Cubans upon arrival, which only grew steadily more virulent over the course of his service in Cienfuegos. He lamented that “the colored element is largely in excess of the whites,” because “the sole survivors” of Reconcentration “proved to be negros.” He likened the Cubans to children and Indians. “The Cubans remind me of our Indians, as you no doubt know the Indian was ever crying for a new Agent and more beef. The Cubans are ever clamoring for a new Governor-General, less work and more ‘dinero’.” Moreover, Barker thought that the Cubans were “stupid and densely ignorant,” “woefully deluded” and “lacking in executive ability” to an extent that “the present generation can never prove capable of self-government.”

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>20</th>
<th>534</th>
<th>554</th>
<th>66</th>
<th>886</th>
<th>952</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failure to Report to Duty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drunk on Duty</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desertion</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drunk &amp; Disorderly</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct to the Prejudice of good order and military discipline</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disobeying Orders</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Disturbance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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648 Walter B. Barker to Orville H. Platt, January 4, 1900, Folder 5, Mississippi State University, Mitchell Memorial Library, Special Collections, Frank Archibald Critz Family Papers, Family and Business Papers, 1880-1915 (Hereafter cited as MSU/MML/FACF).

649 Walter B. Barker to General John C. Bates, January 15, 1900, Folder 5, MSU/MML/FACF.

650 Walter B. Barker to Orville H. Platt, January 4, 1900, Folder 5, MSU/MML/FACF.
Barker particularly despised the Cubans for their failure to cooperate with the Americans. Shortly after the May riot, he wrote that the Cubans “must be given to understand that we are supreme in power and superior in management…” He lamented that “they persistently refuse to cooperate” with the Americans. In December 1899, Barker voiced his doubts over the competence of Cuban separatists to General Adna Chaffee. “Under the present Alcalde and Chief of Police serious trouble may be hatched in Cienfuegos any day. Neither of these officials possess [sic] a single attribute to qualify them for the position.” Barker wished to replace the civil authorities with other men in the city “who, if not thoroughly competent, would certainly administer municipal affairs with less friction and more progress.”

The experiences of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Indian Wars had a direct impact not only on policy, as scholars have suggested, but upon the attitudes and behaviors of individual military men, like Barker.

Cienfuegos exhibited some unique traits that may have been particularly distasteful to Americans, especially ex-Confederates like Barker. In contrast to cities like Havana, people of African descent found employment in the municipal police force of Cienfuegos, at least in the immediate aftermath of the war. The municipal police force was composed of Cuban veterans of different racial backgrounds, differing from the

651 Walter B. Barker to Senator Redfield Proctor, May 24, 1899, Folder 5, MSU/MML/FACF.

652 Walter B. Barker to Orville H. Platt, January 4, 1900, Folder 5, MSU/MML/FACF.

653 Walter B. Barker to Adna R. Chaffee, December 2, 1899, Folder 5, MSU/MML/FACF.

predominantly white rural guard. In March 1899, 63 members of the Brigade of Cienfuegos were employed in the municipal police force of that city. At least four of these men were recognized as mulatto or black. In May 1899, the inspector of police described the personnel of the Cienfuegos municipal police as “fair,” and noted “quite a number of negroes.” Although some black veterans found employment in the municipal police force, the positions of leadership were filled by whites, reflecting the predominantly white officer-ship of the brigade of Cienfuegos. Nevertheless, the Cienfuegos police force, more so than government and the rural guard, reflected demographics of Cuba Libre.

Blacks may have been able to secure employment in the municipal police force because of the pressure for a speedy organization and the lack of regular payment of the already low salaries. Whereas the payment of the predominantly white Rural Guard was normalized by mid-1899, and other white veterans came to occupy high-paying government posts, the multi-racial police force continued to face irregular payment in addition to growing tensions with the American presence of Cienfuegos.

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655 Although exact statistics are not available for Cienfuegos, data submitted for the Matanzas municipal police force, which, like Cienfuegos, fell under the jurisdiction of General James H. Wilson, showed a predominance of single white men. Only 72 out of 473 Matanzas police officers were reported black or mestizo. 378 of the policemen were not married, ten of which were widowers. 318 of them were veterans of Cuba Libre. “Summary of Relevant Facts of the Matanzas Municipal Police,” September 30, 1899, Box 19, no file, RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

656 Juan B. Cabrera, “Reports officers and men of Cuban army employed by the US,” March 26, 1899, Box 2, File 2337, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1466.

657 To determine the racial backgrounds of the police, I cross-referenced the March 1899 list of veterans from the Brigade of Cienfuegos with military pensions records, notarial records, military diaries and journals, and a database of Cienfuegos veterans created by Orlando García Martínez.

658 C.J. Stevens to Adjutant General, May 6, 1899, Box 7, No File, RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

659 “No estamos conformes,” El Siglo, seminario de Cienfuegos, September 13, 1899, Box 575, File 1, Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones (Hereafter cited as: ANC/FDR).
veterans of color accepted work in the police, where they could at least continue to exercise some of the authority they had during the war, if not receiving regular pay.

Even if the police had received their due pay, their salaries were widely recognized to be insufficient (See Table 8). The Cienfuegos newspaper El Siglo reported on the matter in 1899, requesting that salaries of Municipal Police be increased. By September of that same year, these requests had remained unanswered, prompting another article on the police force: “In previous numbers we lightly dealt with the excess [burdens] of service that the police had and how poorly paid they were, asking that the force that we esteem so important and necessary be augmented, and yet still nothing has been done in favor of this Corporation.”

The neglect by local authorities of the municipal police force reflected the political corruption and nepotism characterizing access to public employment in Cienfuegos. While the police faced irregular and insufficient pay, pointed out one local journalist, “in the Municipality it seems that a different job is created daily for those recommended, who request it. […] We are not content with these proceedings and we ask aloud that this force, which is still deficient, be attended.”

That the press advocated for an increase and regularization of police

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660 Ibid.; Nicolás Valverde, Ecos Populares, Cienfuegos: Tipografía de B Valero, 1900,” August 4, 1900, Box 90, File 4425, Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo de Adquisiciones (Hereafter cited as: ANC/FA) Original text reads: “En números anteriores nos ocupamos ligeramente de exceso de servicio que tenía la policía y de lo mal retribuido que estaban pidiendo que se aumentara este cuerpo, que lo estimamos tan importante y necesario y vemos que sin embargo nada se ha hecho en obsequio de esa Corporación, y a pesar de eso en el Municipio parece que se crea diariamente un puesto diferente para los recomendados, que los solicitan.”

661 “No estamos conformes,” El Siglo, seminario de Cienfuegos, September 13, 1899, Box 575, File 1, ANC/FDR. Haciéndose notar que muchas veces se les demora esa mezquina paga, que no les alcanza para cubrir sus necesidades. No estamos conformes con esos procedimientos y pedimos a voces, que se atienda más ese cuerpo que aún se encuentra deficiente.”
salaries suggests a broader concern for the well-being of the police, and anxiety over the priorities privileged by the civil authorities.

Table 8: Pay Schedules for Municipal Police of Santa Clara Province, Cienfuegos Jurisdiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Pay (annual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cienfuegos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>1x1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celador</td>
<td>3x900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>4x452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigadiers</td>
<td>4x514.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guards (Infantry)</td>
<td>70x408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guards (Cavalry)</td>
<td>20x500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The low salary tended was accompanied by equally low impression of the quality of the police officers among Americans. General Wilson wrote in his 1899 annual report that “it is to be observed that the Cubans, as a rule, have not sufficient size, strength and self-reliance to make first class policemen...” The observation that the men employed in the police force were not “first class,” prompted military officials to mandate specific physical and educational requirements for employment. These included being “physically sound,” over 5’6” tall, between 25 and 35 years old, literate, “temperate,” and “of good

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663 Cienfuegos Municipal Police received the highest rate of pay in the province of Santa Clara, followed by the city of Sagua la Grande, and Santa Clara.

character,” which was to be determined by “citizens of good standing.” The moral judgments to be made by worthy, probably white men, about the fitness and adequacy of men for employment in the police force seemed to provide ample leeway for the exclusion of people deemed undesirable because of their race or political tendencies. Despite the suggestion to “improve” the population employed by the police force, the roster seems to have change little as of May, all of the police involved in the May riot having been employed in January. As well, the police involved in the next large riot had also been employed since the beginning of the year.

“El cuento del foky, foky”: Black veterans confront American sexual privilege

At around 4:30 in the afternoon on June 24, 1899, three American civilian employees strolled through the streets of Cienfuegos. It was a holiday, San Juan Day, and the town streets were bustling, as people of diverse racial and national backgrounds watched the parade, sipped beverages at the saloons, and enjoyed a variety of other adult entertainment. Three American quartermaster employees Campbell McDowell, the night watchman at the government lumber yard, and his two buddies, Andrew E. Fuller and Julian C. Baker, Campbell McDowell, joined the celebration after eating in a local café. As they strolled through the red light district in the southwestern portion of the city.

where festivities centered, they were captivated by the ladies in the window of one of the many brothels on Santa Clara Street. They decided to enter the house.  

The prostitute denied the Americans entry into her house, as she was then occupied with another client. This enraged the three Americans, who likely expected unbridled access to Cuban woman, a presumption that deeply offended the residents of the neighborhood. They began banging on the door and forming a commotion outside of the brothel. McDowell insisted on entering the house: “The door was pushed onto us, and we did not enter. Then we saw they did not intend to let us in. We pushed the door and had just decided to go in when these Cuban police started across from the corner.”

Later in his testimony, McDowell admitted that they had kicked the door a few times and pushed it, in addition to knocking at the window and telling the prostitute to let them in.

The Americans became rowdy, attracting the attention of the crowd as they beat on the door of the brothel and started to harass one of the brothel clients, a Chinese man. One of the men accompanying McDowell, one Andrew E. Fuller, spared investigators a few extra details: “A couple of friends and myself were coming down Santa Clara street; we were not drunk, but we were feeling pretty good, and we were making quite a lot of noise, and we stopped at a house of prostitution and were jolling up the Chinaman.”

Baker depicted the encounter with the Chinaman in a more graphic manner: “We struck a

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666 Judge Advocate’s Office to Adjutant General, Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara, July 3, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331, 35

667 Ibid., 32.

668 Ibid., 33.

669 Ibid., 32.
The encounter with the Chinese man at the brothel caught the attention of the police.

Witnessing the upheaval, three Cuban police officers, who were later described as “mostly negroes,” approached the Americans in an attempt to restore order. Fuller attempted to mediate between the police and his drunken compatriots, testifying that he “was talking to them, telling them we would get off the street.” The Americans were unable to convince the police, who placed the Americans under arrest. The crowd encircled the perceived troublemakers. Fuller recalled that “one little man came up; he was exciting and was shaking his fist. [...] I took him by the arm and told him if he could go away I would explain to the police.” Just as Fuller laid his hands on that man, the crowd fell upon him. “Just then, someone grabbed me,” Fuller testified, and “That started a fight.” According to Fuller, the whole crowd turned against the three Americans: “Everyone was hammering on us for a few minutes,” Baker observed that “there seemed to be a lot of civilians interfering and I was hit.” Confrontation mutated into a full-blown riot, as Cuban civilians intervened to punish the offenders.

In the crowd were two black veterans of the Brigade of Cienfuegos, Esteban Montejo, a former runaway slave-turned-soldier, and the insurgent chief and terror of Soledad estate, Claudio Sarría. The disrespect and violence with which the Americans treated the public woman beckoned back to the days of the war when Spaniards were said to rape Cuban women indiscriminately. Now the Cubans faced a new occupier, the Americans. In Cuba, the American soldiers “arrived to the houses and saw a beautiful

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670 Ibid., 103.
671 Ibid.
woman in the window or in the door and they got close and they said: ‘Foky, foky, Margarita,’ and in [they went]. I lived that in Cienfuegos,” remembered Montejo of the days under American rule.  

Montejo, Sarría and other veterans had noticed the typical abuses of the Americans with Cuban women, and were determined to end their rampage. San Juan Day provided that opportunity. Cuban veterans in the crowd assumed the role of defenders of the neighborhood and the women against the new enemy, the Americans, just as they had done against the Spaniards during the war. The drunken deeds of the Americans incensed Montejo to such a degree that he and other veterans decided to punish the offenders. “In Cienfuegos, around the year eighteen ninety nine a group of mambises had to take up the machete to a few American soldiers who, rotten as they were, wanted to take all the creole women as if they were meat at the market.” Insulted by the assumed sexual privilege of the Americans, Montejo was determined to protect the local women against the new invader.

Having noted the history of offenses of Americans against Cuban women,

Montejo and a group of Cuban veterans vigilantly monitored the neighborhood on San

672 “Foky, Foky,” or “Fuck-y, Fuck-y” seemed to be a phrase widely used in communication between Americans and prostitutes, pimps, or people perceived as having to do with the sex industry. Seemingly a perversion of the American expression and vulgar euphemism for sex “fuck.” Several Americans used this term in their court-martial trials to describe interactions with Cuban women and prostitutes. For example, “Court-Martial of James B. Hughes,” August 31, September 5, 1899, Case number 13738, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.

673 Miguel Barnet, Biografía de un Cimarrón (Havana: Ediciones Ariel, 1966), 190-1. “Llegaban a las casas y veían a una mujer linda en la ventana o en la puerta y se le acercaban y le decían: "Foky, foky, Margarita", y para dentro. Eso lo viví yo en Cienfuegos.”

674 Cogerse=Take in a sexual sense

675 Barnet, Biografía de un Cimarrón, 190. “En Cienfuegos, allá por el año mil ochocientos noventa y nueve un grupo de mambises tuvo que cargarle al machete a unos cuantos soldados americanos que, de pillos que eran, querían cogerse a todas las criollas como si fueran carne de mercado.”
Juan Day. “With the story of the foky, foky, they screwed themselves. We found out about that business and we went to watch them. They dressed in yellow, well ironed, but [were] almost always drunk. Claudio Sarría, who had been a sergeant, gave the order to charge with machetes. And we went over there like fierce [warriors].”

Montejo remembered the interaction that compelled him and his compatriots to act: “We watched and, sure enough, a small group began to mess around on one street near the wharf. They got into it with the women, they touched their butts and they laughed. I believe that [even] during the war I did not feel such a fire inside [me] as [I did] that day.”

These black veterans extended their wartime authority to assume the role of informal policing against the new invaders after the war. The honor of local men depended on their effective protection of the women from threats and outsiders.

McDowell told a harrowing tale of being beaten by the police and being abused by the crowd that had formed to observe the scandal: the police “pulled machetes and they hit us with the sides of the machetes. They beat all three of us with the flat of the machetes.” He claimed that the police gave no explanation, and a crowd had formed, and explained that in the next moment, “I was on the ground, I was sort of dazed.”

McDowell was drunk at the time of the affair, and it is quite plausible that in his state of inebriation he passed out with all the excitement, and “came to,” as he states, “on the

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676 Ibid., 191. “Con el cuento del foky, foky, se dieron una jodida vigueta. Nosotros nos enteramos del asunto y fuimos para allá a vigilarlos. Ellos vestían de amarillo, planchaditos, pero borrachos casi siempre. Claudio Sarria, que había sido sargento, dio la orden de cargar al machete. Y fuimos como fieras para allá.”

677 Ibid., 191. “Vigilamos y, efectivamente, un grupito se puso a fastidiar en una calle cerca del muelle. Se metían con las mujeres, les tocaban las nalgas y se reían. Yo creo que en la guerra no sentí tanto fuego por dentro como aquel día.”

678 Judge Advocate’s Office to Adjutant General, Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara, July 3, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331, 32.
edge of the crowd.” He testified that he went straight to bed after escaping the crowd.\textsuperscript{679} This incident shows similar defiance of Cuban authorities as during the May riot.

As the police attempted to arrest the drunken Americans, wrestling them away from the mob, a carriage in which rode Captain Ebenezer B. Fenton, the Commissary of Volunteers, with a clerk of the Quartermasters Department drove past the crowd. Fenton ordered the carriage to halt, got out, and interfered with the arrest. Fenton told them to get into the carriage, so that he could “rescue them,” as he put it.\textsuperscript{680}

The Americans resisted arrest, fighting and struggling to break free of the police. Thevenet, an American employee who accompanied Fenton in his carriage, and who spoke a little Spanish, recalled the way the crowd was “very much against” McDowell, Fuller, and Baker: “The only thing I could hear the mob say was that these men should go [to the police station] on foot […]The [American] men said they were ‘caibrones’ [sic] and swearing at them.” When asked what “caibrones” (cabrones) meant, Thevenet explained: “I understand it is the fix a man is in when somebody else is with his wife.”\textsuperscript{681} They broke free of the police officers, and two entered the carriage, and “they whipped up the horses, and that they started on a full run through the crowd,”\textsuperscript{682} “knocking down some of the people, as they tried to stop it.”\textsuperscript{683} The third American, McDowell ran off by himself. As the carriage took off through the crowd, gunfire began.

\textsuperscript{679} Ibid., 33.  
\textsuperscript{680} Ibid., 7.  
\textsuperscript{681} Ibid., 19.  
\textsuperscript{682} Ibid., 64.  
\textsuperscript{683} Ibid., 47.
In a futile attempt to halt the carriage and detain the fleeing suspects, several men sustained gunshot wounds, including one police officer. The police claimed that several shots came from the carriage, one of them wounding the policeman Epifanio Ordóñez: “the shot entered by the back and came out the front then a cigarette packet was in the pocket of my jacket and the ball went through that in coming out, Ordóñez testified.”\textsuperscript{684} In response, Officer Garrido shot twice in the air in a futile attempt to deter the carriage. Ordóñez, who had been “on duty in the public woman’s ward,”\textsuperscript{685} testified that no shot had been fired before the shots that wounded him.

Fenton requested backup to “restore order,” calling in American troops stationed at the nearby railroad station. Fenton was convinced that the Cubans wanted to kill him. “I do not exaggerate when I say more than fifty shots were fired and twenty of them at me,” Fenton wrote, referring to the moments after the carriage sped away with the Americans inside.\textsuperscript{686} “That the police tried to kill me is beyond a doubt,” Fenton continued.\textsuperscript{687} Moreover, one quartermaster employee from Mississippi, George L. Donald, confirmed that he had seen a colored man shoot at Fenton.\textsuperscript{688} Stopping the carriage a few blocks away from the mob, Fenton met Lieutenant George De G. Caitlin. Fenton requested that Caitlin mobilize the soldiers at the train station, who had been ordered to guard the money train containing the cash to pay the Cuban soldiers to

\textsuperscript{684} Ibid., 123.

\textsuperscript{685} J.M. Rodriguez, “Certificate,” July 18, 1899,” Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{686} Major Bowman, “Makes report on the disturbance at Cienfuegos,” June 24, 1899, Box 12, File 4389, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{687} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{688} Judge Advocate’s Office to Adjutant General, Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara, July 3, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331, p. 29.
These soldiers formed a picket behind the wall of the railroad station, firing upon the crowd.

One of the bullets exchanged entered a passing carriage, killing one man, Pablo Santa María. According to the driver of the carriage, Miguel Goicochea, his passenger Santa Maria, and his three children were on Arango Street. “We left the baseball game and drove down toward the railroad station. We drove through Santa Clara to Arango, then down Arango to near San Fernando; near San Fernando Street we heard shots and turned.” Miguel turned the carriage around, back toward Santa Clara, but it was too late: “between San Fernando and Arguelles Streets, he (Santa María) said to me, ‘I am dying.’” Miguel reported traumatically, that “the children were crying, I told them there was no danger.” As Miguel reassured, the immediate threat was over. But as blood drained from the limp body of Santa María, local residents recognized in this brutal display of American force a more omnipresence and persisting menace to the Cuban authority for which separatists had fought for thirty years.

Public Disorder and the American Civilizing Mission

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689 As part of a deal negotiated by Calixto García with the American military government, the United States loaned $3 million to pay the Cuban troops, most of who had gone the entirety of the war without salary. $3 million entitled each soldier to receive $75, receiving that sum only upon turning in their firearm. This was only a fraction of the amount to which soldiers were entitled, and served largely as a strategy to disarm the post-war population. Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba Between Empires, 1878-1902* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh press, 1983), 256. Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895-1902* 2vol. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

690 Judge Advocate’s Office to Adjutant General, Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara, July 3, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331, 11.

691 Ibid., 113.
Civil authorities and military officials disagreed over who was to blame for the public disturbance, just as they had after the May Riot. A common feature of much of the testimony, especially that of Cuban government and law enforcement officials was the discourse of civilization and barbarism that permeated American judgments of Cuba. Americans argued that the riots had arisen because of the natural inferiority of the Cubans and their incapacity to manage their own affairs. Blaming the riots on the Cuban police exonerated the Americans, shifting attention away from the immoral activities of the quartermaster employees and upholding American claims to racial and moral superiority. At the same time, faulting the Cubans for the violence pointed to the continuing need for the American civilizing mission.

One of the most immediate disputes between American and Cuban authorities was in assessing the blame for the death of the Spaniard Santa María, which for many local residents represented the death of the infant Cuban independence. *La Tribuna* labeled his death as an “assassination” by Americans. The American soldiers and officers denied the possibility that they were responsible for wounding Santa Maria, and the official narrative of events, produced by the Judge Advocate, H.C. Carbaugh, reflects this belief. Nevertheless, members of the crowd and police swore that the bullet entered the carriage from the direction of the American picket at the train station.

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693 Judge Advocate’s Office to Adjutant General, Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara, July 3, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331, 4. “The direction of their [the men of the picket] fire, as testified to, makes it impossible for them to have hit Santa Maria and besides in order to hit him they must have fired into and through a stretch of ground covered with trees and shrubbery about 12 feet wide.”
Regardless of whose bullet actually wounded Santa María, the Cubans were convinced that the Americans had killed one of their citizens.

Similarly, American officials charged that Cuban incompetence had endangered the lives of American citizens. Major Bowman, of the 2nd U.S. Infantry, attempted to justify Fenton in impeding the arrest of the three quartermaster employees. These men “were not convicts escaping from the law, and there can be no justification for the conduct of the police firing in the streets under the circumstances,” snapped Bowman. He implied that American lives were worth more than those of Cubans: “Endangering the lives of citizens, especially an officer of the United States Government, such men [the policemen] are unfit to discharge the responsible duties of their office.”

He went further to demand that the Cuban police officers involved in the incident be fired: “And for the good name of your city, and Cuba, I urge upon you attention the necessity of relieving, discharging, the policemen who began this firing,” as if he, as an American, knew what was the best and necessary course of action for the mayor to take.

Americans also pointed to the Cubans as the first to fire their weapons, further implicating them in causing the right and supporting the case to disarm the incompetent men. “After careful investigation […] all evidence points unmistakably to one conclusion, that the firing was begun by the municipal police,” affirmed an American investigator. It is important to note that the official investigation, which was conducted in English by the military authorities, did not take place until several days after the date of the letter. Still, the American officer, assured of the veracity of his claims, demanded,

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694 Major 2nd Infantry to Mayor, June 24, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

695 Ibid.
“Your police should not be allowed to fire in the streets of the city, they are too nervous and excitable to be entrusted with such power…” Major Bowman, like many American witnesses to the riot, judged the police as incompetent for having used weapons to contain the disturbance.

American disdain for the Cuban police also emerged in their responses to the testimony given by police. The lengthy interrogation of Félix Rumbao, one of the first police on the scene of the disturbance, involved combative dialogue and repeated questioning on very specific details of his involvement in the riot. Below the transcription of the interrogation, appeared a note that completely dismantled his observations and undermined his credibility, labeling his testimony “almost absolutely worthless, or at least unreliable.” This man was “either stupid, frightened or did not know what he was doing; probably did not understand the value of an oath,” the note continued. Investigators seemed to dismiss the testimony of one of the key eye witnesses to the riot.

Many Americans in Cienfuegos had already concluded that the municipal police were unfit prior to the riot, and this shaped the way they approached police intervention in the affair. Like in the May Riot, Americans actually disarmed the police who were attempting to arrest the suspects of the disorder. This enraged authorities, who considered the detention of the police as an abuse of local authority. First Lieutenant John L. Hines recalled the encounter between the mayor and Lieutenant Caitlin: “The Mayor was very much excited, shaking his finger in the face of Catlin, telling him it was a matter for the municipal authorities, and that he had no right to take any part in it. It was his place to let

696 Ibid.
697 Judge Advocate’s Office to Adjutant General, Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara, July 3, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331, 70.
the officer fire this shot and investigate after.”698 Clearly, Cuban civil authorities resented the abuse of the police, perceiving this as an affront to their authority over civil affairs. They defended their own authority by supporting the police against a common enemy.

Americans interpreted the brusque way local authorities confronted the American military officials regarding the inappropriate behavior of their men as an unwarranted challenge to their authority. Hines found the mayor’s behavior disrespectful: “He was very much excited, and I resented his attitude toward Catlin, because Catlin was very cool and calm.”699 The mayor tried to explain his actions: “It is a custom of mine to shake my finger when talking (he indicated how he meant). The statement made by me to the Lieut. was that I thought there was no excuse for the soldiers to fire on account of a disturbance, whatever the occurrence. That it was an affair of the municipal police who would arrest offenders and proceed accordingly.” As each group struggled to assert its supreme authority over civil affairs, the composition of the police force came under intense scrutiny. Although the bonds of nationality bound civil authorities to the police, at least temporarily, Americans rejected the authority of police they deemed incompetent an inferior to themselves.

Race and Incompetence in the Municipal Police Force

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698 Ibid., 9.

699 Ibid.
Public opinion reflected perceptions that “race feeling had occasioned” the San Juan Day Riot. Indeed, race became a powerful explanation for the incompetence of the Cuban police. The testimony of Americans who participated and witness this riot can help explain why these Americans rejected the authority of the municipal police, while casting list on the underlying reasons for the disputes between Americans and Cuban police. Americans described with disdain the racial composition of the police force, and connected the culpability of the police officers to their racial degeneracy.

Many of the quartermaster employees were America southerners. Fuller and Baker were from West Virginia, Barker and Donald were from Mississippi. George Donald was also struck by the blackness of the police force. Donald testified that he saw “a policeman, a negro, not the blackest I have noticed on the police force, but he was of the color that I would call a negro, raised to shoot the carriage [full of Americans]. I knocked his hand down.” When further questioned about what he saw, Donald recalled that he “saw three policemen firing. I could identify two of them positively. They were what, in the Southern states, we would call negroes.” Almost as if using race as an argument for why this person was guilty, Donald stated: “When the carriage drove off the first man that fired was a negro policeman. I can recognize that man if I see him.”

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701 Judge Advocate’s Office to Adjutant General, Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara, July 3, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331, 24.

702 Ibid., 28.

703 Ibid., 28.
Assigning the blame to policemen, while labeling them as black, was doubly powerful in condemning the accused.

Donald even flaunted his defiance of the police to the mayor. He infuriated the mayor to such a degree that that latter interjected: “So the police have no authority and you do not intend to comply with their orders?” Donald did not reply. Combined with his potently racialized testimony regarding the culpability of the black police officers, this exchange suggests that Donald may have expected sympathy from the mayor in his defiance of black authority. Unfortunately for him, the mayor affirmed national loyalties by defending the police, rather than focusing in on the racial differences.

Other American witnesses suggested that even the white policemen were racially degenerate. Cornelius Cornell, testified that he saw a police officer fire “point blank” at Fenton. “He was a white man, he was pretty brown though.” William Thomas Jefferson, an African American civilian driver working for the military government from Georgia, seemed to disagree about the race of the officer to which Cornel referred. Jefferson identified three colors of policemen when asked who fire at Fenton’s carriage: “One of the colored fellows fired once, and the other fellow fired. They fired two or three shots. One was fired by the yellow fellow and one by the dark one, and probably one more.” Jefferson may have used the term “yellow” to refer to mixed or ambiguous racial ancestry of officer Garrido. The testimonies of Cornell and Jefferson suggest that Americans understood the shortcomings of the police in terms of the natural racial

704 Ibid., 27.

705 Ibid., 38.

706 Ibid., 74.
inferiority of both black and Latin peoples. Apparently the racial makeup—the inclusion of blacks and the presumed inferiority of the Latin races—within the police force undermined their authority in the eyes of the Americans.

These Americans expected more deference from people who they presumed were their social and racial inferiors. They may have anticipated similar levels of submission from the black and mixed-race Cuban police officers as they had grown accustomed to from poor Southern blacks in the United States. The deference which Jefferson, afforded his white compatriots highlights a divergence in the possible expectations white Americans had of race relations in Cuba, and the realities prevailing after an anti-racist war. When the white man Donald demanded he hand over his gun so he could join in the shooting outside, Jefferson acceded without protest and without questions: “I started down the steps, got to the foot of the steps and met a negro teamster [Jefferson], I think, he spoke English. He had a 45 Colt buckled around his waist, full of cartridges. I said ‘Give me that.’ He began to unbuckle it. He said ‘Boss, take this; I saw them shooting at you a while ago.’”707 That Donald expressed uncertainty over the nationality of Jefferson, by questioning his language skills, suggests that he may have equated blackness with Cubans. Although Jefferson corroborated this testimony, General Wilson suspected witness tampering and asked Jefferson if he had been coached.708

Americans from non-confederate states also held expectations of deference from Cubans. McDowell, whose family was from Ohio and Kansas remarked at the racial composition of the Cuban police who approached him as he was attempting to force his

707 Ibid., 24-5.

708 Ibid., 78.
way into the brothel: “there were 5 or 6 police. Most of them were black and they sailed
into us.” McDowell may have confused the black veterans with the police, because
only two police approached the Americans at the brothel.

The police, not to mention the laborers, did not offer the Americans the same
deferece and submission as did Jefferson. At the same time as the Americans disparaged
the racially integrated police force, the veterans employed in those positions perceived
their role as honorable and an extension of the authority and service they had rendered
during the war. As police officers, they viewed themselves as the ultimate agents of
order. Moreover, the preservation of military hierarchies and patronage networks from
the war, in the police force led police officers to perceive—correctly, in theory—that they
responded to their police Chief, Joaquín Oropesa, who during the war had been the chief
of many of the veterans employed in the police force, and not to the American
authorities. In essence, the police force, unlike the Rural Guard, responded to local
authorities and not to military needs. These internal contradictions and tensions provided
the context for a series of violent conflicts between white American soldiers and black
Cuban police.

The American expectation that Cubans, especially black Cubans, would defer to
their authority conflicted with the leadership and authority Cuban veterans extended from
the war into their positions as police. From the perspective of some quartermaster
employees, the racial makeup and the lack of racial etiquette of the police condemned
them as incompetent and unfit for duty. One American explained: “My idea is that we
have got the wrong sort of policemen here, policemen who on any pretext draw revolver

\[709\] Ibid., 32.
or machete, when, as an American understands it, when somebody draws a revolver, somebody is to be killed.” The implication in this testimony was that it was unacceptable for black police officers to wield weapons, because they would use them irresponsibly.

Americans perceived race as a bond that unified the police with the working class and poor—against people they deemed as respectable (whites). On top of a racially heterogeneous police force, was a large black working class residing within the city center. In fact, the Office of the Captain of the Port, where Captain Barker and his employees worked, was located within the historically black neighborhood of Marsillán, peppered with the humble abodes of black port workers and members of one of the most powerful labor organizations in the island, at the heart of which was the predominantly black stevedore union. Havana, for example, was home to a significant labor movement, including stevedores, but many of the labor leaders in Havana were white, and the police officers were almost exclusively white, by order of General William Ludlow. In Santiago, on the other hand, the police force was decidedly multi-racial, but the labor movement seems not to have been as effective in paralyzing commerce through strikes as stevedores in Cienfuegos were. Cienfuegos had both a black police force and a militant

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710 Ibid., 28.


712 Labor Strikes in Santiago were reported much less frequently than they were in Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Cárdenas, and Havana. USNA, RG 140, E 3. It should also be noted that the military governor of Santiago, Leonard Wood, was known for his draconian repression of “disorderly element.” Louis A. Pérez, Jr., Lord of the Mountain: Social Banditry and Peasant Protest in Cuba, 1878-1918 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 67, 125.
black labor union, which Americans suspected would lead to collaboration between the supposed agents of order and the sector of the population judged as “lawless.”

Some Americans in Cienfuegos shared these negative impressions of the police. They viewed the Cuban police as incompetent and in need of American guidance. “The natives are naturally a quiet, inoffensive people, easily controlled,” reported C.J. Stevens, of the 10th Infantry. Americans, especially Stevens and Wilson observed that Oropesa was an ineffective chief, doubting his ability to “keep his force in hand.” Military officials had ordered the police to only use their firearms in case of emergency, “but on one occasion they became excited and used their revolvers unnecessarily and wounded and unoffending Chinaman.” Stevens attempted to explain the propensity to fire by the police in terms of the natural physical limitations of the Cuban man. “The Cuban being physically weaker than the American, has felt himself at a disadvantage and in consequence has been too prone to use his revolver.” The few incidents of police shooting in early 1899 combined with the prejudices Americans held against Latin and black races continued to inform their negative views of Oropesa and his men.

Barker and Stevens were not alone in doubting the capabilities and motives of the municipal police. Men who opposed the transfer of local power to the separatists, mainly Spaniards, Americans and some Autonomists, tended to depict law enforcement as criminals and persecutors of non-separatists. One anonymous man, who only identified himself as “A Mexican,” claimed that Cuban veterans in their capacity as police would persecute Spaniards, while turning a blind eye to infractions committed by their allies. He

713 C.J. Stevens to Adjutant General, 6 May 1899, Box 7, No File, RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

protested the order issued by General Bates that the police would disarm the population and collect all the loose arms from the towns. Even though they knew of all the houses storing guns and the locations of the weapons caches, the police were sure to disarm only the Spaniards, because “that is what benefits them.” The Spaniards, argued the Mexican, many of who had served in the Spanish forces defending the city, should be allowed to maintain their arms, while the Cubans should not be allowed to maraud about “the towns, armed, as if they were in battle.”

Many Americans, autonomists, Spaniards and other foreign residents in Cuba rejected separatist authority after the war, raising the stakes of consolidating power for those in office.

These charges may have reflected the persistence of war-time political cleavages in forging and interpreting social alliances under American rule. Veterans were supposed to receive preference in employment, and in the police force of Cienfuegos, the employees represented a microcosm of the Brigade of Cienfuegos, operating under their war-time leader, Oropesa. Moreover, Cuban veterans, whether they obtained employment in the police force or among the day laborers, harnessed war-time social networks to reinforce their positions vis-à-vis the Americans. Many of the unpaid laborers had fought for Cuban independence, and recognized in the police force a group of compatriots, companions in arms. The fact that the police had also received intermittent salaries if at all, most likely made them sympathize even more with the laborers, to whom Barker unlawfully denied pay. The patronage relationships that seemed to link the agents of order to the agents of disorder concerned the Americans. Indeed, this was one of the

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A Mexican, “Regarding collection of arms by Cuban police,” April 6, 1899, Box 3A, File 3019, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1466. Captain Beal, the manager of Soledad estate also protested when Lieutenant Colonel Machado arrived to the estate to disarm “all people about the colony.” Captain Beal, “Protests and request[s] to be allowed to carry arms,” April 3, 1899, Box 3A, File 425, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1466.
principal problems of employing veterans in positions of authority after the war: the
structures of loyalty and patronage and the hierarchies of power in effect during the war
would result in partiality in the administration of public affairs.

From the perspective of some American officials in Cienfuegos, the inclusion of
black veterans and the supposed racial inferiority of the Latin race more generally
condemned the police force to incompetence. Because the police were incapable of
preserving order, reasoned some Americans, the military would have to continue
occupying the island to protect property interests, many of which themselves were
American. The May Riot and the San Juan Day Riot demonstrated to Americans that
their mission of pacification and civilization was yet incomplete, and that they needed to
remain in Cuba.

**Turning the Tables on Civilization: Conflict and Discourses of Savagery**

As Americans viewed the San Juan Day riot as confirming the necessity of their
civilizing mission in Cuba, Cuban civil authorities saw the riot as yet another example of
the abuse and moral deficiency of an unwanted occupier. In the aftermath of the riot,
Cubans called into question the very premise of the American military intervention: that
Cubans were savage, uncivilized, and unfit for self-rule. Instead, Cuban leaders found
these very same traits in the behavior of the occupiers. The violent encounter of San Juan
Day functioned to expose the contradictions of the American monopoly on civilization,
and to further undermine the legitimacy of the military occupation, at least among certain
circles in Cienfuegos.
Civil authorities sharply criticized the actions of the Americans during the San Juan Day Riot, arguing that the lack of discipline, sexual and moral licentiousness, and wanton violence against an unarmed civilian population were acts of savagery. The mayor, for example, criticized the inappropriate and threatening behavior of the American officers. Immediately after the riot mayor Frías encountered Captain Benham, one of the parties to the disturbance, who threatened to “clear the street,” using the two companies under his command. Mayor Frías recalled that “there was no one present except myself and the American officers to hear what occurred, and the words were said to threaten me.”

By threatening the civil authorities, the Americans exhibited “an attitude of domination or superiority,” that “too frequently characterized the behavior” of American regiments in Cuba. In so doing, they tarnished the supposedly benevolent mission of civilization they represented.

If verbal disrespect were not enough, American soldiers and officers also shot at Cuban authorities. When the Chief of Police, Joaquín Oropesa approached the train station to investigate, the American soldiers shot at them. He retreated, and met Lieutenant José Antonio Álvarez, who spoke some English. He crossed the street and asked the American officer, Caitlin to cease fire: “That the firing should be stopped at

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716 Judge Advocate’s Office to Adjutant General, Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara, July 3, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331, p. 10.


718 Chief of Police Oropesa was suspended from the police force less than a year after this disturbance, for having shot the black veteran Dionisio Gil in Cienfuegos. General James H. Wilson to José Miguel Gómez, February 4, 1900, Box 32, File 86, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
once, as it was something that should not happen in a civilized country.” The American officer ordered his men to stop firing, but the soldiers continued to shoot.719

Police Chief Oropesa criticized the lack of control Captain Caitlin asserted among his men, who were called in to “restore order.” He related his confrontation of Caitlin after his men had shot into the crowd from their posts at the train station. After being repelled by the gunfire of the picket of American soldiers, “finally I succeeded to enter the courtyard and spoke to Captain Catlin to whom I questioned why they behaved so savagely against a defenseless people…”720 If the Americans, who upheld themselves as the model of civilization, were savages, then the legitimacy of the American occupation was severely tarnished.

While Oropesa characterized the Americans as savages, the local press emphasized their incompetence, the same charge that Americans hurled at the Cubans.

“Mr. Oropesa was compelled to struggle with an American sergeant to impede the firing, seeing as Captain Caitlin said that he did not order firing, to which the Chief of Police replied—that this was not discipline, that he was incapable of command.”721 Claims of American incompetence for command further undermined the premise of the military occupation by highlighting that Americans experienced the same failures as did Cubans.

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719 Judge Advocate’s Office to Adjutant General, Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara, July 3, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331, p. 42.


721 “Los Sucesos del Sábado,” newspaper clipping in USNA, RG 395, E 1331, OB 1, F 2

Original text reads: “El señor Oropesa se vió compelido a luchar con un sargento americano para impedir el fuego, puesto que el capitán Caitlen [sic] dijo que él no ordenaba los disparos, a lo que replico el Jefe de Policía—que eso no era disciplina que él estaba incapacitado para el mando.”
Other newspaper articles focused on the immorality of certain Americans. One article posed a cogent question: What was Fenton doing near a brothel? Indeed, that is what his wife and acquaintances back home in the United States wanted to know when they saw newspaper reports of connecting Fenton to charges of drunken and disorderly conduct and presence in brothels. Fenton wrote to Commanding General of Matanzas and Santa Clara, James H Wilson, pleading that he intervene to correct the false reports: “I have the honor to request you, unofficially and as a personal favor, in view of the distorted press reports regarding my actions […] that you write a personal letter to General Henry M Duffield.” Fenton hoped that General Wilson would clear his name: “tell him that there are no charges or evidence against me of drunkenness or of being in a house of prostitution, or any disturbance connecting me with either drunkenness or visiting bawdy houses.” The newspaper articles about his involvement in disreputable activities were enough to “seriously interfere with my relations at home.” The charges of immorality against one of the key military officials in Cienfuegos did more than worry his wife. The accusations inverted the moral hierarchy by depicting the American as a licentious and drunken sinner—unfit indeed to instill in Cubans the values of civilization. The immorality of American men became a central theme in Cuban criticism of the American occupation, highlighting the contradictions of the American claim to civilization.

Cuban men in Cienfuegos, regardless of color or occupation, viewed the American presence as a menace to their authority, and the abuses and impunity of drunken and disorderly Americans as a threat to their honor, though they acted on theses

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suspicions to varying degrees. Indeed, in May and June 1899, Cubans were again united against a common enemy: the United States. Wealthy white civil authorities defended underpaid black police, who in turn came to the rescue of impoverished urban residents, including prostitutes. The bonds of patriotism uniting Cubans across racial and class lines caused antagonism between Cuban authorities and American military officials, who clashed as each defended his right to supreme authority. Yet, Americans worried that this alliance would cause more than tension with military authorities. The relationships of patronage forged during the war, and the patriotism that bound civil authorities to the defense of their population undermined the colonial social hierarchy that guaranteed the wealth of the few through the obedient labor of the masses. Indeed Cubanidad, Americans claimed, undermined the social order.

**Conclusions**

In May and June 1899, Cuban police intervened in local disturbances on behalf of impoverished local residents against Americans, the self-proclaimed representatives of civilization and order. Operating under the assumption of their moral and racial superiority over Cubans, American military authorities intervened in local affairs to quell local disturbances by violently suppressing the masses and disarming and arresting the police. Cubans vehemently protested the abuses of their authority, leading to a direct confrontation between Cuban civil authorities and American military authorities. Each side claimed to be offended by the behavior of the other, and each claimed that they were the best equipped to handle the disturbances. Each riot began with Americans abusing Cuban of the lower classes, workers and prostitutes, and ended with the most
“respectable” residents defending them against the Americans. Cubans had once again united against a common enemy: the Americans. Just like they had during the war, Cubans transcended the boundaries of race, class, and respectability to protect their fellow compatriots against the invader.

Americans perceive the unity of Cubanidad as a threat their supreme control over local affairs. Yet, the conflicts were indicative of a broader problem: Americans stood little chance of dominating the island if the civil authorities responded to the needs and demands of the masses. According to the Americans, the masses were not only radical, but dangerous and unreasonable. Their patriotic demands for immediate independence and racial justice—the main goals of the separatist movement—proved to be too revolutionary for the future Americans imagined for Cuba. Although Americans initially expressed this apprehension in the form of direct confrontation and antagonism with the Cubans, they soon realized that social and political fragmentation just beneath the surface of Cuban unity provided the solution for winning over Cuban authorities. By linking the maintenance of racial order with the ability to self-govern, Americans drew upon the uneven adherence to the twin goals of the revolution, driving a wedge between those who favored independence more than racial equality and those who demanded racial justice as part of independence. The following chapters examine the deterioration of this initial unity binding separatists together against a common enemy. Cubans civil authorities in Cienfuegos changed their approach to American military officials, and the consequences this shift had for three principal groups they formerly protected: black veterans, black laborers, and the men and women associated with the vice district.
CHAPTER 6
Subjugating Black Urban Authority:
White Rule, Police Brutality, and the Demise of Racial Brotherhood

However powerful during the riots of May and June were, the cross-racial, cross-class alliance against American abuses of local authority soon began to show signs of turmoil. This cooperation between predominantly white Cuban civil authorities, the racially heterogeneous veterans of the police force, and the predominantly black residents of the urban peripheries had caused significant tension between Cubans and Americans. In a time when many Spaniards, Autonomists, and foreign residents, not to mention American military authorities, doubted the legitimacy of separatist authority, local politicians began to understand that continued alliance with the black masses jeopardized their claims to power.

In the early days of the military occupation, Cubans like mayor José Antonio Frías, resented and vehemently rejected American intervention in civil affairs. The heated animosity resulting from the series of violent conflicts between Cubans and Americans did not, however, help consolidate separatist authority, but rather threatened it. The racially-heterogeneous municipal police force, depicted by critics as criminal conspirators rather than agents of order, was a key source of conflict between American military officials and Cuban civil authorities in Cienfuegos. American authorities disparaged the police, leading to a series of racially-motivated conflicts between the Quartermaster employees and the Cuban police. Americans interpreted the conflicts as yet another
symptom of Cuban incompetence for self-government. After the impassioned war of words following the San Juan Day riot, civil authorities concluded that antagonism with American authorities was unproductive and threatened to extend the period of military rule.

Between June 1899 and the end of American rule, Cuban civil authorities in Cienfuegos transformed the ways they approached the American military presence. They attempted collaboration with the military government as a strategy to diffuse tensions with Americans, and ultimately to demonstrate their capacity to self-govern. Collaboration with American authorities required Cuban civil authorities to transform their relationship with urban residents. Instead of continuing to protect the people as they had in the early days of the occupation, the authorities began to see in the racially-heterogeneous poor and working classes another enemy—the reason the Americans had not relinquished control over the island. Cuban authorities in Cienfuegos turned to the arms of government and law enforcement to suppress this social and political threat, leading to increased violence against the urban poor, among who were many black veterans. Collaborating with the Americans meant a fundamental transformation of the goals of Cuba Libre, as racial brotherhood was transformed into a critical component of the struggle for independence into the principle obstacle to achieving this goal.

Civil authorities increasingly placated American criticism of the racial composition of the police force by transforming it into a repressive force. Through changes in personnel and policy, the police force was transformed into a more conservative white institution, a potent symbol of the Cuban capacity to maintain order. This transformation severed the ties binding the police to the urban working class and
poor, absolving civil authorities of the link to the unruly masses. As the police force transitioned from a protector of the people to a repressive force, the burden of repressive violence fell disproportionately upon the predominantly urban black masses. This chapter documents the transformation of the police force and several instances of police violence, showing that racially-motivated hiring practices had real consequences for residents of Cienfuegos.723

“The Trumpet of Cuban Dignity”: Political Criticism in the Radical Press

“In undefined political situations like the one the Cuban people are going through when the future fate of a country is doubted, lowly characters, men lacking honor who reduce their aspiration to support the faction with the highest probability of success, emerge like a disgusting mud from an overflowing river…” This passage appeared in the introduction of an article titled “Against all the Tyrants,” in the Cienfuegos newspaper La Tribuna, the self-proclaimed “trumpet of Cuban dignity,”724 between the May and June riots. The author likened the Cuban who collaborated with the Americans to a dog, who, “awaiting the scraps, licks the hand of the one who beats him, if he is willing to throw him a bone.”725 While the author of the above news article sharply criticized American

723 Racial discrimination in hiring practices during the American military occupation of Cuba has been alluded to by numerous scholars including Alejandro de la Fuente, Aline Helg, Melina Pappademos, and much earlier by Thomas Orum. The consensus among many scholars of race in turn of the century Cuba is that blacks faced discrimination in employment but the results of that discrimination have not been studied. This is partly attributable to the national scope of most scholarly research on this period. This case study affords a more in-depth look at the micro-dynamics of these general patterns.

724 “Brooke, Wilson, y el Director de ‘La Tribuna’,” La Tribuna, July 12, 1899, Box 1, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1352.

725 “Contra todos los tiranos,” La Tribuna, June 13, 1899, Box 21, File 4199, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
military authorities, who they claimed believed themselves “owners and masters of the land,” the weight of condemnation fell heaviest on Cubans who collaborated with the American military authorities.726

The author, José B. Alemán, a prominent Cuban veteran, wrote the article in response to another article published in the New York Herald by a Cuban criticizing the radical content of La Tribuna. Alemán proudly assumed the title of agitator that his opponent had launched at him, claiming that he would continue to struggle tirelessly against the American tyranny and for the absolute independence of Cuba. In this article, Alemán highlighted a key division within what had seemed during the May and June riots as a unified coalition of Cubans against American abuses. Even though civil authorities rejected American presumptions of superiority and impunity, this position did not necessarily indicate that they favored immediate and absolute independence, as Alemán demanded.

The radical press in Cienfuegos actively condemned American abuses of authority, and chasised Cubans perceived as collaborators of the military occupation. After the San Juan Day Riot, discontent regarding the response of civil authorities to American abuses again graced the pages of local newspapers, foreshadowing the widening gulf between interests of the masses and those of the men in power. Public opinion, captured in the local press, not only denounced the American abuses, but also chastised local authorities for, what was perceived as their insufficient militancy against American domination.

726 “Newspaper Clipping, ‘La Tribuna,’ A violent attack against American occupation of Cuba,” June 13, 1899, Box 21, File 4199, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
The local press indicted civil authorities for not taking a firmer stance against the Americans. Failure to punish the Americans with sufficient zeal to satisfy the public was interpreted in some of the more radical newspapers as betraying the nation. “They would sell their honor and dignity for the lucrative position offered them in exchange for becoming the evil gravediggers of our independence on the altars of which three generations of Cubans have sacrifices themselves […] a constant threat to the public tranquility, taking the good care to silence the excesses committed by American soldiers who stumble along the streets, who attacked the police, who fired against a defenseless population, and who assassinated honorable citizens.”\(^{727}\) While Americans rejected the confrontational demeanor of the civil authorities, they sought to silence criticism of their actions in the local press.

When *La Tribuna* labeled the death of Santa María, who was wounded in the San Juan Day shooting, as an “assassination” by the Americans,\(^{728}\) military authorities were quick to silence this newspaper. American authorities argued that they “should not permit the newspaper to give us trouble,” and directly confronted the editors of *La Tribuna*.\(^{729}\) Wilson also prohibited the police from facilitating information about crime to the press. This order resulted only in increased antagonism. Several newspapers protested the order. The newspaper *La Verdad*, published an article ridiculing the order as “one of the most

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\(^{727}\) “Fuera Caretas,” *El Siglo, semanario de Cienfuegos*, September 13, 1899, Box 575, File 1, ANC/FDR. Article titled “Venderían su honor y dignidad por el puesto lucrativo que les ofrecieran a truque de convertirse en siniestros sepultureros de nuestra independencia en aras de la cual se han sacrificado tres generaciones de cubanos […] una amenaza constante a la tranquilidad pública, teniendo el buen cuidado de silenciar los desmanes cometidos por soldados americanos que recorrían nuestras calles dando tumbos; que atacaban a la Policía, que disparaban contra un pueblo indefenso, y que asesinaban a honrados ciudadanos.”

\(^{728}\) “Venga el Castigo,” *La Tribuna*, May 28, 1899, Oversize Box 1, File 2, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\(^{729}\) General James H. Wilson to John Rutter Brooke, June 28, 1899, Box 44, LOC/MD/JHW.
original [orders] we have ever known,” and lamenting the sorry fate of “disgraceful” regimes that “have to ally themselves with obliged silence.”\textsuperscript{730} \textit{La Tribuna}, unsurprisingly, also ran a taunting reply, titled, “Boberías, Señor!” (Foolishness, Sir). “We are a little bit too old, unfrightenable and convinced of…..well….that we don’t care, you know,” read the article jeeringly.\textsuperscript{731} The intense criticism of the American intervention in the local press revealed a divergence between the demands of two groups of separatists: one that demanded immediate and absolute independence, and the other that sought to negotiate with and even appease the American occupier.

While the American authorities censored the press, the civil authorities implicated themselves in the imperial project through their own inaction and complicity in with American abuses. The accusations of complicity with the military occupation levied by \textit{La Tribuna} indeed resulted in some political struggles in which certain civil officers were accused of condoning and even agreeing with the radical demands voiced in that newspaper. The accusers aimed to undermine the legitimacy of their political opponents by labeling them as radicals and anti-Americans, leading to a public rejection of radicalism among civil authorities.\textsuperscript{732}

Critics pointed to the disbandment of the Cuban army as yet another example of the betrayal of the Cuban cause by civil authorities: “And nobody forgets that they were the first to sing the victory song when they saw the Cuban turn in his triumphant arms to

\textsuperscript{730} “Nueva Orden ¡Viva la Libertad!” Clipping from unknown publication, July 8, 1899, Box 1, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1352.

\textsuperscript{731} “Boberías, Señor,” \textit{La Tribuna}, June 28, 1899, Box 12, File 5798, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{732} “Brooke, Wilson, y el Director de ‘La Tribuna’,” \textit{La Tribuna}, July 12, 1899, Box 1, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1352.
the ragamuffin who conserved his own, virgin from struggle, and who had never heard the whistle of a bullet.” The perceived failures of the civil authorities indicated a broader pattern in American occupied Cienfuegos: the increasing complicity—even collaboration—of civil authorities with the Americans.

The criticisms levied not only Americans, but the very Cuban civil authorities, though subtle in the aftermath of the May and June riots, foreshadowed an increasing divergence in the interests of those in power and the original goals of Cuba Libre. “It is necessary to have descended to the lowest rung of human degradation, to allow space in the brain to the vile idea of selling the adored land in which lies the ashes of our elders, as if it were a commodity subject to selfish mercantile transactions,” read one article critiquing the civil authorities. Articulating the gulf between the ideals of the revolution and the actions of local authorities, the radical press admonished the public to “Let those evil ones continue their work, but do not forget that Cubans are free men, that they put their honor and dignity before all and above all, and that they would happily die before being sold like miserable slaves to a foreign nation.” The sharp criticism of the perceived alliance between civil authorities and American military authorities in the local press suggested diverging expectations about the way Cubans should negotiate their contentious relationship with the invaders. As civil authorities sought to distance

733 “Fuera Caretas,” El Siglo, semanario de Cienfuegos, September 13, 1899, B 575, F 1, ANC/FDR.

734 Ibid. “Y nadie olvida que ellos fueron también los primeros en cantar victoria cuando vieron al cubano entregar sus armas triunfantes al granuja que conservaba las suyas vírgenes de lucha y que jamás había escuchado el silbado de una bala. Preciso es haber descendido hasta el último peldaño e la degradación humana, para dar cabida en el cerebro a la idea infame de vender la tierra adorada en que yacen las cenizas de nuestros mayores, como si fuera una mercancía sujeta a egoístas transacciones mercantiles.

735 Ibid. “Sigan esos envilecidos su labor infame, pero no olviden que los cubanos son hombres libres, que ante todo y sobre todo ponen su honor y dignidad y que gustosos irían hasta la muerte ante que ser vendidos como esclavos miserables a un pueblo extranjero.”
themselves from these radical political demands, they began to ally themselves more explicitly with the occupation, and distance themselves from the masses.

**Making the Police Respectable: Whiteness, Fear, and Legitimacy**

In order to bolster their claims to respectability and legitimacy, civil authorities sought to sever their allegiance to the masses. The municipal police force posed one of the most significant obstacles to this goal, because American authorities presumed that the racial heterogeneity of the force naturally inclined them to ally themselves with the masses. Moreover, the police force was a crucial instrument of government, because it was the guarantor of order, and as such, represented the Cuban capacity to self-govern. This assumption was often at the root of conflicts between Cuban civil authorities and American military officials. Civil authorities endeavored to transform the police force from what Americans saw as a racially degenerate agent of disorder into a respectable institution that guaranteed order and stability.

Although no explicit orders were given to whiten the police force of Cienfuegos, American officials agreed that the men at that moment employed were not the best-suited for the position. Implicit in the assessment of the Cienfuegos police force was a demand for change in the personnel. Nevertheless, this would make sense given the horrified American reactions to black municipal police in Cienfuegos, and especially because other Cuban cities developed similar policies of racial exclusion for law enforcement bodies.

In Havana, General Ludlow was known to have prohibited the employment of people of color in the police force. Informing this policy were contemporary racial discourses that linked civilization, modernity and progress to “order,” and to whiteness.

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The idea of order implicitly signaled racial hierarchy, in which whites occupied the most prestigious and power social positions and blacks and other people of color were to be controlled, subservient to the white—“knowing their place” in the social hierarchy.

The police force, being one of the most important institutions of order, in turn, had to be composed of whites, who were believed to be the most orderly elements in society. “In the police force,” recollected Esteban Montejo, a former runaway slave and Cuban veteran, “there was not even one percent blacks, because the Americans got the word out that when the black man had power (cogiera fuerza), when he became educated, he was harmful to the white race. In that way the black man was completely separated.” Nor were the Americans the only ones with whom this sentiment resonated. “The Cubans of the other race kept quiet, did not do anything, and that is how the situation stayed.”

White police would be more vigilant in protecting the public order, and more disposed to punish the disorderly elements, who were most frequently believed to be people of color. In contrast, and considering the examples of riots and public disturbance in the first months of the military occupation in Cienfuegos, a police force composed of people of color would tend to be more sympathetic toward disorderly elements, especially those of color, thereby encouraging, and even fomenting disorder.

Not everyone agreed with this assessment, however. In the aftermath of the war, many people of color began to question this implicit link between order and whiteness. “In the Island of Cuba the preoccupation of races and of colors is transformed until being confused in general with the repairs taking place in civilized countries of differences in culture and social status, the colored race is the part of the population that possesses the

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736 Miguel Barnet, Biografía de un Cimarrón (Havana: Ediciones Ariel, 1966), 188.
best elements of information by being intimately mixed with all of the private acts of families.” According to this critique of the policy of hiring whites to staff the police force, blacks were better suited than whites because blacks better than whites were familiar with the most intimate parts of private life of both white and black families. After all, blacks occupied the majority of domestic positions, such as midwives, domestic servants, cooks, coach drivers, seamstresses, laundresses, not to mention most occupations of manual labor. By hiring only whites as police “they have excluded from its midst the class [of people] best informed of all the individual particularities of our population. It is known that there is not a single family that does not have as confidants people of the colored race.”

Implicit in the critique of racial hiring policies in the police force were fundamental disagreements about the purpose of that law enforcement body. Whereas local authorities increasingly believed that the police should protect propertied interests, poor and working-class urbanites, among who were many black veterans saw the police as protectors of the people, and agents of justice. A police force composed mainly of white men would likely not defend the interests of the racially heterogeneous working classes. A white police force served no other purpose than decoration: “In its actual composition, the Police [Force] seems more destined to be a public ornament than to the exact discharge of its functions.”

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737 Unknown Author to Máximo Gómez,” [n.d.], Box 38, File, 4719 (new 5392). ANC/FMG.

738 Parteras, nodrizas, manejadoras, criados y criadas de mano, cocineros y cocineras, cocheros, lavanderas, costureras…todos los oficios manuales.

739 Unknown Author to Máximo Gómez,” [n.d.], Box 38, File, 4719 (new 5392). ANC/FMG.

740 Ibid.
authorities subscribed to and obeyed prevailing discourses of criminality linking blackness to a predisposition for crime.

While critics of the policy of whitening the police force were skeptical that whites would be better agents of order than blacks, American military authorities were assured that so-called “improvements in personnel” of the police force would ensure that the police force “will prove equal to all demands placed upon it.”741 The predictions of both the critics and the American authorities were well founded. With the transformation of the police force, no significant change in the level of order in the city of Cienfuegos resulted. Nevertheless, the types of disturbances that occurred from the second half of 1899 onward, were, according to American military authorities, more “acceptable” forms of violence—that is, they targeted black men who more closely fit the image of criminality, rather than white Americans.742

Through violent repression of the black masses, the police force came to define itself not as the defenders of the people, but as the guarantors of the status quo, and a potent instrument of state control. Violence against blacks, particularly black veterans served to consolidate the rejection of radicalism, a political tendency tied to militant separatists and blacks that had threatened to undermine the legitimacy of Cuban authority. The growing racist current in local political appointments showed up in the


“repressive and markedly racist character” of the police force.\textsuperscript{743} One of the early markers of this shift in the policies of the Cienfuegos police force was the assassination of a black General of the Liberating Army, Dionisio Gil.

\textbf{From Defenders of the People to Murderers: The Assassination of Dionisio Gil}

The afternoon of December 29, 1899, black Dominican-born veteran Dionisio Gil entered Fonda Mariposa, one of his preferred cafés in the Cienfuegos city center, just as he had grown accustomed to doing in the months after the war. During his visit, the city Sanitary Inspector, Enrique Quintana entered the establishment, demanding that the owner, Chinese man Antonio Achón, to make some repairs and clean the patio. Overhearing the dispute between the owners of the café and the Sanitary Inspector, Gil interposed that imposing the cost of repair on the tenants constituted “an abuse,” because the responsibility should lie with the property owners.\textsuperscript{744}

According to some witnesses, Gil assumed “an aggressive insolent attitude in words and manner towards Quintana.”\textsuperscript{745} Gil declared that “he was General Gil, with whom [the Sanitary Inspector] could not behave as he had with the Chinese man.” Quintana replied that he respected him as a patriot, but that he did not recognize him as


\textsuperscript{744} Tribunal Supremo, \textit{Jurisprudencia del Tribunal Supremo en material criminal}, Volume III (Havana: Rambla y Bouza, 1908), 70.

\textsuperscript{745} Brigadier General James H. Wilson to Adjutant General Hugh L. Scott, January 1, 1900, Box 42, File 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
his boss. Snapping back, Gil proclaimed that “there, there was no other boss but him.”

After a brief exchange of words with Gil, Quintana left the Fonda.

At around nine o’clock the same night, Quintana again encountered Gil, as he passed the café, en route to the barbershop. He suddenly felt a hand around his neck, as Gil pulled him into the Fonda. Quintana reported that Gil beat him over the head with the butt of his revolver, “hitting him in the temple and making him fall to the ground.”

With the intervention of several bystanders, Quintana collected himself and managed to get to the street where he blew his whistle for help. Gil, too, turned to flee the scene toward Velasco Street, when Eduardo Hernández García, a sworn guard from the nearby Dos Hermanos plantation, attempted to stop him. Breaking away from the sworn guard, Gil reportedly shot him in the gut. Gil fled to the northeast, running across a police officer Antonio Hernández on Hernán Cortés Street at Vives. According to one report, when Hernández attempted to detain Gil, the latter shot him in the right leg. Gil fled

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746 Tribunal Supremo, Jurisprudencia del Tribunal Supremo en material criminal, Volume III (Havana: Rambla y Bouza, 1908), 70.

747 F. J. Kernan, Captain and Adjutant 2nd Infantry to The Adjutant, Rowell Barracks, January 27, 1900, Box 42, File 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Tribunal Supremo, Jurisprudencia del Tribunal Supremo en material criminal, Volume III (Havana: Rambla y Bouza, 1908), 70.

748 Also reported to be a sworn guard of ingenio Manuelita.

749 Possibly refers to officer Ambrosio Hernández, as no officer by the name of Antonio Hernández appears on the roster. José Miguel Gómez, “States that the Mayor of Cienfuegos has notified him of the killing by a policeman of the ex-general Gil of the Cuban Army,” December 30, 1899, Box 31, File 24, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

northeast, along the railroad line, toward the outskirts of the city. Police chief Joaquín Oropesa ordered his force to capture Gil.\footnote{751}{Tribunal Supremo, \textit{Jurisprudencia del Tribunal Supremo en material criminal}, Volume III (Havana: Rambla y Bouza, 1908), 71.}

Initial reports justified the shooting as self-defense. General James H. Wilson admitted in his report on February 3 that “The first and official [version] is that Gil was killed, after committing crimes against the peace of the community, by the police while resisting arrest.”\footnote{752}{Mayor J. A. Frias, “States that the lower class of colored people asked to have the body of General Gil turn over to them for embalming, guarding and burial with honors…,” December 30, 1899, 6\textsuperscript{th} Endorsement, February 3, 1900, Box 29, File 20, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.} As police pursued Gil, Sergeant Agustín Rabasa and police chief Joaquín Oropesa claimed, Gil had fired three shots at the approaching policemen without wounding them, and Rabasa fired in self-defense from his horse.\footnote{753}{Brigadier General James H. Wilson to Adjutant General Hugh L. Scott, January 1, 1900, Box 42, File 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.} According to Captain F.J. Kernan, if indeed Gil shot at the police, then “the killing is justifiable and all should be at [la]rge.”\footnote{754}{F. J. Kernan, Captain and Adjutant 2\textsuperscript{nd} Infantry to The Adjutant, Rowell Barracks, January 27, 1900, Box 42, File 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.} Most initial reports on the shooting, based on preliminary questioning of the police, justified the killing as self-defense and exculpated the police.

Some local residents contested the claims that the police were innocent and had acted in self-defense. General José Braulio Alemán, the President of the Center for Veterans highlighted a number of inaccuracies in the official version of events. Alemán addressed the Judge of Instruction in a published newspaper, asserting that Gil had actually turned himself in to the police and handed over his weapon peacefully, and listed a half dozen witnesses who saw Gil securely in police custody before his death. Gil had
not resisted arrest, and the police had not acted in self-defense; they, particularly officer Rabasa, had murdered Gil.\(^{755}\)

**Map 3: Events Leading to Assassination of Dionisio Gil, December 1899.**

Subsequent investigation followed the leads Alemán indicated in his article, exposing a plot to cover up police culpability in the murder.\(^{756}\) After evading the first police officer, Gil did flee northeast out of town. But, contrary to preliminary reports, Gil did surrender to police when they confronted him in the north margins of the city. A mulatto police officer, Rogelio Celada, and his partner, the white man José Vázquez Carreras spotted him on Hernán Cortés Street at Gazel Street. Celada gave him the “alto.”

"It is I, General Gil.”

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\(^{756}\) Mayor J. A. Frías, “States that the lower class of colored people asked to have the body of General Gil turn over to them for embalming, guarding and burial with honors…,” December 30, 1899, 6\(^{th}\) Endorsement, February 3, 1900, Box 29, File 20, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
--“Will you surrender?”
--“If you are Cubans, you can advance.”\(^{757}\)

Celada with his partner approached, informing Gil that he was being detained and to turn over his weapons. Gil complied, uttering “in a moment of obfuscation, that he had wounded the individuals, but that he would go with them because they were Cubans, so they could bring him to the station.”\(^{758}\) Having surrendered his pistol, Gil in the custody of Celada and Vázquez proceeded back on the same street toward town. They encountered a group of police including José Morales, José Fernández and Policarpo Lafont, “looked like a white man” all of whom confirmed that Gil went peacefully in police custody.\(^{759}\)

After walking for ten minutes, they saw a figure at some distance before them: Police Sergeant Agustín Rabasa on horseback. Officer Vázquez approached and “reported the arrest of Gil, whereupon” Rabasa “rode forward to the prisoner, inquired who it was, and on receiving from Gil a reply that it was he, Gil, thrust a revolver in the latter’s face and firing killed the prisoner instantly.”\(^{760}\) Subsequent investigation confirmed that Rabasa shot Gil point blank, because of the horizontal angle of the entry

\(^{757}\) “La Muerte de Gil,” in *El Telégrafo: Periódico Político*, 21 January 1900. Municipal Historical Archive of Trinidad (Hereafter cited as: AMHT) Courtesy of Orlando F. García Martínez.

\(^{758}\) “La Muerte de Gil,” in *El Telégrafo: Periódico Político*, 21 January 1900, AMHT. Courtesy of Orlando F. García Martínez.

\(^{759}\) F. J. Kernan, Captain and Adjutant 2\(^{nd}\) Infantry to The Adjutant, Rowell Barracks, January 27, 1900, Box 42, File 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; “La Muerte de Gil,” in *El Telégrafo: Periódico Político*, 21 January 1900, AMHT. Courtesy of Orlando F. García Martínez.

\(^{760}\) F. J. Kernan, Captain and Adjutant 2\(^{nd}\) Infantry to The Adjutant, Rowell Barracks, January 27, 1900, Box 42, File 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
The bullet entered Gil just below his left eye, fracturing his cranium and killing him “like a lightning bolt.” Witnesses noted that Gil had placed his hand “in a deprecating manner resting on Rabassa [sic]” right before the later shot him in the face.

In an attempt to cover up his crime, Rabasa ordered Celada to fire several shots from Gil’s revolver, which he had in his hand. “Celada refused and threw the pistol from him, whereupon someone picked it up fired several shots and subsequently place it in or near the dead man’s hand.” When Sergeant Duval arrived on the scene, Rabasa admitted killing Gil. Several other men from the police force appeared on the scene, including chief Oropesa, and jail warden Pablo Hernández, asking who had killed the prisoner. “I was the one who killed him,” replied Rabasa.

The testimony of several witnesses revealed that police sought to cover up the murder through an elaborate plot designed to give the appearance that Gil had resisted arrest. Oropesa and Hernández, who by all reports arrived last to the scene of the crime, reported that they were out searching for Gil, when they heard four or five shots fired one block away. He proceeded to the place where he heard the shots and saw Gil lying dead, Rabasa, Celada and Vázquez standing over him. Chief Oropesa told authorities that when he inquired what had happened, that “one of the party, Celada it is thought, answered,

761 Tribunal Supremo, Jurisprudencia del Tribunal Supremo en material criminal, Volume III (Havana: Rambla y Bouza, 1908), 72.

762 “La Muerte de Gil,” in El Telégrafo: Periódico Político, 21 January 1900, AMHT Courtesy of Orlando F. García Martínez.

763 F. J. Kernan, Captain and Adjutant 2nd Infantry to The Adjutant, Rowell Barracks, January 27, 1900, Box 42, File 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

‘He was firing at us and we had to kill him.’” Celada recanted this statement, claiming that he had been forced to sign a statement without knowing what was contained therein. José Morales also reported that he had been pressured to make a statement to exonerate the police.

The investigation following the article published by Alemán cast light on the changes occurring not only within the police force, but in the dynamics of the relationship between the men in power and the masses. After the investigation revealed the culpability of Rabasa, he was arrested, tried, and found guilty of murder. He was sentenced to 14 years, 8 months and one day in confinement, indemnification in the amount of 5,000 pesos to the family of the late General, and the payment of one-third of the costs of legal proceedings. Despite the guilty verdict, residents of Cienfuegos rallied around the death of Gil as a sign of ominous change in the corrupted objectives and repressive strategies of local government. Public protest in the wake of the assassination highlights the widening gap between the visions of social order of civil authorities and those of poor and working-class Cienfuegos residents.

Public Responses to Police Brutality

765 F. J. Kernan, Captain and Adjutant 2nd Infantry to The Adjutant, Rowell Barracks, January 27, 1900, Box 42, File 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

766 Ibid.

767 “ Expediente relativo a la comisión del cónsul de Santo Domingo solicitando detalles sobre la muerte del General del Ejército Libertador dominicano Dionisio Gil,” 26 April-9 June 1900: May 10, 1900, Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo Secretario de Estado y Gobernación (Hereafter cites as ANC/FSEG). Thank you to Orlando García Martínez for pointing out this document.
The day after the murder, masses of urban dwellers crowded into the Center for Veterans to protest. Prominent veterans, including Bartolomé Masó, Jesús Rabí, and José Miró Argenter had arrived from eastern Cuba and gathered in the Center for Veterans to address the crowd. The crowd demanded that the body of the deceased Dominican General be turned over to them for embalming, guarding and burying it with honors.”

Both civil and military authorities emphasized the racial dynamics of the protest. Mayor Frías reported considerable agitation among the negroes of the city, labeling the crowd of protestors as the “worst classes [of] colored people.” When the courts refused to turn over the body, and upon the arrival of Masó and Rabí, “the same colored classes made cries in the streets.” F.J. Kernan, who was sent to investigate the matter, worried that the racial tensions resulting from the murder would lead to disorder. Indeed, people of African descent across, along with veterans and other residents from the poor and working classes in Cienfuegos mobilized to protest the racially motivated police brutality and violence against blacks in the aftermath of Gil’s death.

Frías assured military officials that civil authorities were competent to ward off disaster without military intervention: “Police preserved order, and [the] Generals and I recommended people to disperse immediately. Police with modification will preserve order, avoiding alteration of [the] public order,” Frías communicated in a redundant and


769 The Mayor J. A. Frías states that the lower class of colored people asked to have the body of General Gil turn over to them for embalming, guarding and burial with honors…,” December 30, 1899, Box 29, File 20 USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

770 F. J. Kernan, Captain and Adjutant 2nd Infantry to The Adjutant, Rowell Barracks, January 27, 1900, Box 42, File 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
frantic telegram to military authorities.\textsuperscript{771} He pressured the prominent insurgent chiefs at the Center for Veterans to disperse the crowd of protesters, which they obediently did.\textsuperscript{772} While Masó gave a speech promising to take the greatest care in the situation, other insurgent chiefs demanded justice, then told the protesters to disperse. Alemán, seconding the previous speeches, ordered the people to return to their homes.\textsuperscript{773}

Instructions from respected veterans to disband the crowd of protesters highlighted the exact set of circumstances that had motivated the murder. Whereas Americans initially viewed all veterans with distrust because of their tendencies toward solidarity, certain distinguished veterans, namely, those in positions of power, began to distance themselves from the rowdy masses. Instead of reinforcing their ties of loyalty to all veterans by defending their interests, veterans in positions of power sought to defend their own advantageous positions, while advancing the Cuban claim to sovereignty. They did this by presenting themselves as just before the public, while repressing public display of discontentment. By urging the protesters to disband, Alemán and his fellow political elites presented themselves as agents of order before American authorities.

The eagerness of the prominent white veterans to disperse the black protesters highlighted shifting allegiances among Cuban veterans. Prominent white veterans like Alemán, Miró, and Masó collaborated with civil authorities in Cienfuegos to silence and disperse black veterans, whose agitation, they knew, would likely provoke American

\textsuperscript{771} The Mayor J. A. Frías states that the lower class of colored people asked to have the body of General Gil turn over to them for embalming, guarding and burial with honors…,” December 30, 1899, Box 29, File 20 USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{772} García Martínez, “Caciques, elites, clientelas y los problemas raciales,” 106.

\textsuperscript{773} “Hechos Lamentables,” in El Telégrafo: periódico Político, ?? January 1900, AMHT. Courtesy of Orlando F. García Martínez.
intervention as it had in May and June. In dispersing the protesters, civil authorities and white veterans showed a keen awareness and sensitivity toward what they perceived as American racial views.

Cuban authorities became aware prevailing racial views in correspondence with military authorities, who conveyed essentially that Gil was no more than a common criminal. Cuban veterans including the General Máximo Gómez portrayed Gil as a hero, who “honorably defended the liberty of this land and moreover, he was a man of color who was able to make many friends.” Some American military officials disagreed with this assessment, summarily condemning Gil based on a series of assumptions about his background, service record, and disposition toward criminality. Alpheus Henry Bowman, of the 2nd U.S. Infantry wrote that Gil “seems to have been a disreputable character. I knew the man by sight as a fellow without occupation, of questionable reputation, and one liable to be engaged in disorder, his killing was an incident of disorderly conduct.” This comprehensive attack on the character of Gil mirrored typical characterizations of blacks as vagrants and criminals, and likely reflected an attempt to justify the initial narrative of events blaming Gil for his own death.

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774 General Máximo Gómez to General Leonard Wood, March 1, 1900. Courtesy of Orlando F. García Martínez.

775 Alpheus Henry Bowman was born in Virginia, his mother and father hailing from Tennessee and Virginia, respectively. He moved to the North, residing in Delaware, then Pennsylvania, where he enlisted in Union Army in 1861. He was accused of being too lenient toward Confederates, and his regiment was on the verge of mutiny early on. Between the American Civil War and his assignment to duty in Cuba, Bowman served in a number of battles against Indians on the plains. “Alpheus Henry Bowman,” http://freepages.military.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~pa91/pbowma1.html Accessed on November 28, 2012.

Bowman also belittled the military achievements of the black General. He described Gil as cowardly rather than valiant: “Gil was in the Cuban Army but appears to have acquired a reputation as an expert forager rather than a fighter, appropriating property without reference to whom it belonged.” Bowman depicted Gil as a natural criminal exonerated the police from culpability, because it implied that Gil himself was responsible for the disorder. By diminishing his service record, Bowman emasculated Gil, presenting him as a coward, and unworthy of honorable burial. By depicting Gil as a vagrant and coward, Bowman delegitimized the demands of the protestors to honor Gil with a decent burial.

While employing racial stereotypes to legitimize the death of Gil, American officials did point to prevailing public perceptions that the murder was racially-motivated. Bowman dismissed the protesters as black agitators, reporting that “there has been a good deal of inflammatory talk among the negroes growing out of Gil’s killing.” Despite significant discontent among blacks, Bowman claimed that the assassination lacked “any significance, political or otherwise.” One American official, F.J. Kernan, recognized that race was at the core of this tragedy. “Considerable race prejudice is involved in this affair,” he stated outright in a report on the murder.

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778 Ibid.

779 Ibid.

780 F. J. Kernan, Captain and Adjutant 2nd Infantry to The Adjutant, Rowell Barracks, January 27, 1900, Box 42, File 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
Certainly, the family of the deceased Gil also recognized the prominent role of racism in the death of the black General. The eldest son of General Gil, Perfecto Gil, wrote to his Dominican compatriot Máximo Gómez, decrying the poor treatment Cubans had given his father: “I believe that being my father a general who defended the Cuban cause so much, [they] shouldn’t have given him such bad treatment as they have given him only because he was black…”\textsuperscript{781} For Perfecto, the loss of his father was devastating, but the lackluster burial was insulting. “Not only did they kill him,” he wrote to Gómez, “but also they who treated him like a dog in that [he did] not even [receive] a burial as a Liberating General that he was.”\textsuperscript{782} Perfecto was indignant at the apparent racism which had ended the life of his father and disgraced him in death.

Perfecto turned to the perpetrators of the crime, harnessing the very language with which Americans had condemned his father to describe the murderers. According to Perfecto, his father was slaughtered upon the orders of Joaquín Oropesa, then police chief, and lieutenant colonel of the Brigade of Cienfuegos.\textsuperscript{783} “Only from a bunch of bandits could such an assassination be expected.”\textsuperscript{784} By calling the white police bandits, Perfecto undermined the assumption that hiring white men to serve as police would bring about more order in the city. These very men—the agents of order—were a bunch of outlaws.

\textsuperscript{781} Perfecto Gil to Máximo Gómez, [n.d.], Box 9, File 1265-B ANC, ANC/FMG.
\textsuperscript{782} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{783} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{784} Ibid.
He denounced the impunity with which the perpetrators were treated: “the murderers are walking the streets of Cienfuegos so satisfied, not knowing the crime they have committed.” Perfecto referred to the release of two of the suspected accomplices in the murder, officers Rogelio Celada and José Vázquez. Years later, the release of these two men—murderers in the eyes of many—would loom in the public memory.

“Unjustly,” Perfecto wrote, “this has been a stain on the Cuban flag.” The assassination of General Gil had shattered in the minds of many the utopian dream of a colorblind Cuban republic.

Indeed, for many Cienfuegos residents, the assassination of a decorated black war hero underscored the failure of the revolution to transform the social order in that city, and even marked a return to the repression of Spanish rule. Celebrated as an anti-racist struggle as much as for its anti-colonial elements, the Cuba Libre movement had vilified Spain for promoting racism and racial inequality in Cuba, while exalting the revolution for its supposedly equalizing colorblind principles. The discourse of racial brotherhood failed to materialize in the aftermath of the war as white veterans in positions of power turned their backs on their compatriots in favor of collaboration with the occupying forces. In this complicity, civil authorities had allowed, even condoned, the murder of a black war hero.

785 Ibid.
786 Nicolás Valverde to Juan Gualberto Gómez, May 18, 1902, Box 48, File 32, Number 3831, ANC/FA. Origina text reads: “Después de leer en la lucha que se han condenado a los asesinos de campechuela, me pregunté ¿no se podrían castigar los cómplices del asesinato de Gil?”
787 Perfecto Gil to Máximo Gómez, [n.d.], Box 9, File 1265-B ANC, ANC/FMG.
A Failed Revolution

The murder of Gil became a national symbol of the failure of the promises of independence. In the weeks after the assassination, Captain Pedro P. Mutos and Commandant Juan Sardiñas y Villa, both black veterans, published a leaflet titled “To the Colored Race, Glory to General Gil” in Havana. Mutos and Sardiñas outlined two potential futures for Cuba. The first was that proposed by José Martí, based on equality and justice. The second was a republic “for a certain class, for an oligarchy without conscience, that gives people more rights for being white than “to us for being black.” Mutos and Sardiñas vehemently rejected the second possibility, asserting that “those who thus think are sorely mistaken, because with the blood of Aponte, Plácido, Guillermón, Crombet, and the Maceos, we say, we can never, ever, whisper ‘coward!'”788 They warned that the republic that Cubans were trying to establish was in grave danger.

For Mutos and Sardiñas, the murder of Gil revealed the racial prejudice upon which certain Cuban veterans sought to build the republic. They proposed to make a thorough investigation of the assassination of General Gil, “the great Dominican soldier who was our pride as he was a humiliation for some Cubans who were before with the Spaniards more Spanish than Santiago, and who are today with the Americans more American than Washington itself.”789 Like the editors of La Tribuna, Mutos and Sardiñas charged Cuban civil authorities with complicity in the American imperialist project.

788 Captain Pedro P. Mutos and Commandant Juan Sardiñas y Villa, “To the Colored Race, Glory to General Gil,” January 27, 1900, Box 42, 86, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

789 Ibid.
By collaborating with the Americans in establishing a republic for whites, white veterans had betrayed the Cuban cause, and more importantly, they had turned their backs on the very people who had made victory against Spain possible: black veterans. Blacks had in 1897 stood “alone in defending independence while the revolutionary rank was dwindling down by the surrender of the timid ones.” The republic was theirs as much as it was for whites, Mutos and Sardiñas argued: “They speak of union and concord, and yet it cannot be conceived that while they embrace the old enemy and partake of their pleasures, and while decorate duplicitous patriots without distinction […] that belongs to all of us…” Yet, blacks continued to face exclusion: “black generals, chiefs, officers and soldiers are starving, and shamelessly removed from positions, for the sole reason of being black.” Mutos and Sardiñas identified a pressing, though problematic, contradiction, which would become emblematic of the black struggle for inclusion in the new republic throughout the twentieth century: if blacks had been the main pillar of the Liberating Army, then they should be entitled to an equal share of rights and benefits in the emerging republic.

The assassination of General Gil highlighted a fundamental continuity in the experience of black Cubans from before and after the war: marginality. Mutos and Sardiñas harnessed the widespread discontent among blacks in Cienfuegos to mobilize a national movement against the emerging state racism: “As General Gil rests in eternal glory, we in this valley of bastardized and adulterated ambitions [ambiciones bastardas y mezquinas], we will always be disposed to die before consenting to be pariahs in our own

790 Ibid.

791 Ibid.
The emphasis on black militancy and willingness to take up arms to secure rights, responded to a moment of acute frustration among blacks in Cienfuegos, but may have reinforced white fears of radicalism. Members of the black elite in Cienfuegos took a more moderate approach, immortalizing the memory of Gil in a monument that spelled in cement the immortal link between Cuban patriotism and anti-racism.

**Anti-Racism as Patriotism: The Commemoration of Gil**

Well after the immediate public outrage of the murder of Gil had subsided, prominent black residents of Cienfuegos sought to harness the memory of the black General to articulate a dissident vision of *Cuba Libre*. This vision, similar to the one articulated by Mutos and Sardiñas, placed racial equality at the center of *Cubanidad*. The movement to commemorate Gil in Cienfuegos centered on correcting the undignified burial by building a mausoleum and constructing a monument in his honor in a park in the predominantly black neighborhood in which he was slayed.

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792 Ibid.
Image 17: Monument to Dionisio Gil, Cienfuegos\textsuperscript{793}

\textsuperscript{793} Courtesy of Orlando García Martínez.
Among those leading this movement was Nicolás Valverde. A member of the local black elite of Cienfuegos, Valverde owned a tailor shop in the downtown, and published a weekly newspaper in defense of working-class interests. With a long history of combating racism in Cienfuegos, Valverde was a prominent figure among the working classes and black Cienfuegos residents more generally. At least since 1894, he had pushed the boundaries of what was deemed socially acceptable, and protested for racial equality. Later, American military officials would accuse Valverde of conspiring to unify blacks into a solid political block in Cienfuegos in 1907.

Continuing his tradition of activism, Valverde undertook to erect a monument in honor of General Gil in the aftermath of this death. This was no easy feat, especially considering the resistance and non-cooperation of some members of the city council of Cienfuegos. In October 1901, Valverde wrote to Juan Gualberto Gómez that he had “made it easy to see for Figueredo,” the president of the Ayuntamiento. “I recommended that he approve the permit to celebrate a bazaar to collect funds for statue to Dionisio Gil,” which was to be placed in the middle of a park dedicated to the late General at the end of the month. Valverde planned to enhance publicity for his fundraiser by inviting prominent black Cubans to speak. He invited Juan Gualberto Gómez, writing that “If you

794 For example, in January 1894, Valverde was one of the first to attempt to enjoy a performance at the Tomás Terry Theatre, under the protection of a recent Spanish decree mandating racial integration in public establishments. Although the white public rejected his presence, shouting to expel him, and ordering the police to disperse his followers on the outside, he attempted to assert his rights under Spanish law. “Lo de Anoche,” newspaper clipping courtesy of Orlando García Martinez.

795 W.D. Beach, Major 15th Cavalry to Chief of Staff, Army of Cuban Pacification, September 28, 1907, Box 2, File 17.33, United States National Archives, Records of the Army of Cuban Pacification, (Hereafter cited as, USNA/RCPA/RG 199/E 5).
could speak at the party, much good it would do us!" The monument as well as the quest to secure funds and construct it would serve as a testament to the accomplishments and respectability of black Cubans.

Despite his energy and enthusiasm in mobilizing support for the monument, Valverde faced continuous obstacles in his quest to commemorate Gil. Materials, funding and the support of the city council were decidedly lacking for the project of dignifying the burial of General Gil. Reluctance to support the public commemoration black veterans marked a general pattern across the island after the war, part of a broader tendency to “whiten” the national pantheon of heroes. Earlier in the year, Valverde had petitioned the city council to donate some extra tiles that were stored in the building and without any use, so they could be used in the construction of the monument. The city council denied this request. In May 1902, Valverde wrote again of holding a bazaar in benefit of the statue, this time on “Saturday of Glory,” suggesting that Figueredo did not see the issue as clearly as Valverde might have wanted the previous year. Lack of support from the city council meant limited access to money and resources necessary for construction, and delayed the construction of the monument. The statue was inaugurated a full 11 years later in May 1911, and is the centerpiece in the park called Panteón de Gil in the San Lázaro neighborhood of Cienfuegos.

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796 Nicolás Valverde to Juan Gualberto Gómez,” October 26, 1901, Box 48, File 32, Number 3831, ANC/FA.


798 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, January 10, 1902, Volume 50, Actas Capitulares, Provincial Historical Archive of Cienfuegos, (Hereafter cited as, APHC/AC).

799 Nicolás Valverde to Juan Gualberto Gómez,” May 18, 1902, Box 48, File 32, Number 3831, ANC/FA.
As Valverde struggled to secure support for the monument to honor Gil, he lodged a formal complaint against Joaquín Oropesa. Public sentiment had steadfastly condemned Oropesa as the one who had ordered Gil assassinated. Although Oropesa no longer worked as police chief, he continued to exert significant influence in the city, becoming the Auditor of the Ayuntamiento. Valverde did not forget that he had acted as police chief when Gil was murdered, and like many, he may have held Oropesa responsible for the death of the war hero. Valverde accused Oropesa of abusing his new position as a member of the city council by living in the Ayuntamiento building without prior permission, and discharging a firearm in the courtyard. One of the bullets that escaped his gun, Valverde charged, nearly wounded another employee of the Ayuntamiento, Julio Dacosta, he claimed.\(^{800}\)

The acting mayor, J. H. Hernández, vehemently denied that any disorder had occurred in the Ayuntamiento building under his watch.\(^{801}\) Dacosta also wrote to undermine the accusations, stating that he had never authorized anyone to make a complaint on his behalf or to represent him.\(^{802}\) Valverde’s complaint was dismissed, and neither civil nor military authorities took any action against Oropesa. Although Valverde faced significant obstacles in bringing justice to Gil and his family, his civic activism was yet another way in which black Cubans contested the increasing marginalization and suppression of the poor and working class that they witnessed under American rule. At

\(^{800}\) Nicolás Valverde to General Leonard Wood, October 30, 1900, Box 118, File 6323, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\(^{801}\) J.H. Hernandez to Civil Governor of the Province of Santa Clara, December 14, 1900, Box 118, File 6323, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\(^{802}\) Julio Dacosta to J. H. Hernández, December 12, 1900, Box 118, File 6323, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
the same time as Mutos and Sardiñas and Valverde, among other black activists struggled to reverse the subordination of racial equality, civil authorities sought to catalyze this development. They again turned to the police as a way to bolster their respectability and claims to power.

**Policing Political Power after the Assassination of Gil**

After the San Jan Day Riot, Americans had labeled the police as inept in large part due to their perceived defense of the masses. Indeed, General Wilson even urged the mayor to fire chief Oropesa, who, he wrote, had “failed to satisfy me of his capacity to command such a force.” Wilson seemed to blame Oropesa for the inadequacies of the police, arguing that he was “lacking in energy and in the power to enforce discipline.”

By October, 1899, Wilson again wrote to the Provincial governor, José Miguel Gómez, urging him to dismiss Oropesa as police chief, to which Gomez responded that he authorized an investigation.

He recommended—in good accordance with the established pattern of appointing educated white veterans to positions of leadership—that Higinio Esquerra replace Oropesa as the police chief. Wilson further suggested that the rural guard, then under the command of Esquerra, could be collapsed into the police force. For Wilson, then, the problem was the police chief, Oropesa.

The low opinion of Oropesa held by General Wilson, and his desire to remove him from his position as police chief, placed pressure upon him to prove his competence

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803 José Antonio Frías, “The Mayor J. A. Frías states that the lower class of colored people asked to have the body of General Gil turn over to them for embalming, guarding and burial with honors…, 1st Endorsement,” December 30, 1899, Box 29, File 20, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

804 José Miguel Gómez to General James H. Wilson,” October 14, 1899, Box 20, File 9132, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
in guarding order. Dionisio Gil threatened order by asserting black authority, and Oropesa saw an opportunity to redeem himself and his force for previous shortcomings. The shooting, whether justified or not, was sufficient to compel General Wilson to renew his recommendation to remove Oropesa immediately. The removal of Oropesa did not become urgent, however, until the discovery that Rabasa had murdered Gil, rather than shooting in self-defense. Prior to this both military and civil authorities seemed willing to dismiss the death of Gil as self-defense on the part of police.

The militancy of the masses forced further investigation. José B. Alemán found himself in a particularly precarious situation as the mediator between the veterans and angry masses and the civil authorities. Alemán himself may have thought that the murder of Gil was justified and necessary for the preservation of order. In his appeal to the Judge of Instruction, he labeled Gil a delinquent.® Nevertheless, he sought to appease the masses by demanding an investigation of police brutality, that corroborating the suspicions of the public. With the investigation unveiling the police cover-up, military authorities saw an opportunity to oust Oropesa. Civil authorities complied. José Miguel Gómez directed mayor Frías to remove Oropesa. Instead of consolidating the rural guard and municipal police under the leadership of Esquerra, Frías appointed, Juan José Campillo y D’Wolf, a member of the Cienfuegos elite, in January 1900.® Born in Cienfuegos in 1872, Campillo had joined the insurrection in 1895 at age 23. He later joined the invasion force of Antonio Maceo.


806 Luis J. Bustamante, Diccionario Biográfico Cienfueguero (Cienfuegos, 1931).
Under Campillo, the police clashed with poor and working-class residents of Cienfuegos numerous times. Nicolás Valverde wrote of some of the outrages in his weekly publication, *Ecos Populares*. He accused the police of corruption, cowardice and physical abuse of prisoners. “There is not a single child of the town capable of being able to wear the police uniform with dignity; on the other hand there are for cowards, who raise their hand to slap a handcuffed man in the middle of the police station. Valverde also accused Campillo of abusing his force, citing an example “when a poor guard enters a café for an indispensable need, they apply a fine of two days salary.” Campillo showed his despotism by mistreating his men, and targeting poor and working-class Cubans for police repression.

Valverde juxtaposed the misconduct of certain police officials with persecution of those who denounced crimes or criticized police brutality. “For that cowardly official, who abuses his authority, there is no law. On the contrary, to file charges, a witness is required of the person who denounces the deed, which seems to us like a way to discourage him from following through, because none of the people in that station would lend himself to the case, fearing to lose their job.” These obstacles to justice ultimately hurt the entire town: “in the meantime, the victim is made to appear every fifteen days in the station, to mortify him and make him desist in his right as a citizen, to make claims

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807 Nicolás Valverde, *Ecos Populares*, Cienfuegos: Tipografía de B Valero, 1900,” August 4, 1900, pp. 116–118, Box 90, File 4425, ANC/FA. Original text reads: “No hay ningún hijo del pueblo capaz de poder llevar dignamente el uniforme de oficial de policía; en cambio si lo hay para quien cobarde, levanta la mano para abofetear a un hombre esposado y en plena sala de Jefatura, y cuando a un pobre guardia porque para una necesidad indispensable entra en un café, se le aplica una multa de dos días de haber…”

808 Ibid. Original text reads: “…para ese oficial que cobarde, comete un abuso de autoridad, no existe reglamento por el contrario: se inicia un expediente se le pide un testigo al que denuncia el hecho, lo cual se nos antoja un recurso para no seguir adelante, porque ninguno de los que allí en la Jefatura esa, se prestaría para el caso a trueque, de perder su destino…”
before the tribunals, against that agent of authority who abused so villainously.”

Valverde pointed to the parallels between the repression suspects suffered under Oropesa and the treatment they receive under Campillo. Although the appointment of Campillo was supposed to improve the performance of the police, repression of the poor and working class seemed only to grow worse.

Campillo was at the center of the political struggles surrounding the 1901 elections, highlighting two diverging strategies for local governance. One the one hand, Figueroa sought greater collaboration with the Americans, which he fostered through a heavy-handed police force headed by Campillo. Gonzalo García Vieta, on the other hand, aligned more with the platform for immediate and absolute independence, a position much more appealing to poor and working-class urbanites who police under Campillo targeted. Figueroa relied on Campillo to rally support for his candidacy in the weeks leading up to the elections. One way he accomplished this was by requiring his police force to vote for Figueroa.

Figueroa lost despite efforts to coerce voters in his favor. With his electoral defeat of Figueroa, Figueroa sought to punish those who he suspected had not voted for him. He ordered the dismissal of 63 municipal police officers for voting for his political opponents. These men were mostly veterans, at least a portion of them black, including Inocencio Sarría, José González González, Francisco Fernández, José Bermúdez, and Benigno Ortíz. These former police officers wrote in July 1901, complaining that Campillo had denounced them to Figueroa, resulting in their dismissal “for the good of

809 Ibid. Original text reads: “y mientras tanto al ofendido se le hace comparecer cada quince días en la Jefatura para así mortificarlo y hacerlos desistir del derecho que tiene como ciudadano, para reclamar ante los tribunales contra aquel agente de la autoridad que abusó tan villanamente.”
the force.” Campillo withheld their pay, as a form of “revenge.” This was only one of numerous abuses that Figueroa had committed against them. 

In his last speech to the city council, Figueroa hinted at his motives for dismissing the police. After thanking his men, he turned to “the Municipal police, that is to say for the chiefs and officers and individuals who today form part of that body,” announcing that they deserved similar thanks. He extended his gratitude to them as “a modest but very sincere and deserved recompense for the magnificent and commendable behavior they have observed in the fulfillment of their delicate duties, in which they have recognized exactly the sacred mission they have to fulfill.” Figueroa ended by praising the upstanding services of the police, who “have constituted true safeguards of Society proceeding always with justice and with the severest energy.” Those who no longer formed part of the force, Figueroa implied, had not fulfilled their duties in their failure to vote for him as mayor.

The incoming mayor, Vieta, addressed the petition of the fired police officers, resulting in significant animosity between him and Campillo. In addition to reinstating the dismissed police officers, he ultimately fired Campillo from his office as police chief and several policemen who had who favored Figueroa. He replaced the vacant positions with men more closely aligned to his political platform, including men who had been fired by Figueroa. One of these men had given an inflammatory speech right before the

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810 Inocencio Sarría, Lorenzo Cabrera, José Ayala, Gavino Crespo, Herminio Quirós, Manuel Sánchez, R. Rodríguez, Pastor Ruiz, Florentino Leon, Aniceto Soto, José López, Narciso P. Blanco, José González, Gustavo Lescano, José Pagola, Andrés Díaz, Marcelino Cabrera, Adalio Torre, Alejandro Torres, Abelardo González, Manuel Alduncin, Francisco Fernández, and others, “Application stating they have been discharged,” June 17, 1901, Box 195, File 1846, USNA/MGC/RG 140/ E 3.

811 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, July 20, 1901, Volume 49, APHC/AC. (My emphasis)
election “denouncing Americans and proclaiming that he was ready to drive them out of the Island.” According to Barker, Vieta had made other appointments “equally discreditable as this one.”

The dismissal of Campillo provoked a public protest against Vieta. Dismissed members of the police force gathered in their uniforms to receive Campillo upon his arrival at the train station. Vieta ordered one of his police officers, José Miguel Valle, to disarm the protesters. As the few remaining police officers collected the weapons of the dissenters, Vieta ordered the rural guard from various stations in the province to help conserve order in the city until he could re-populate the police force. The disbandment of the public protest in favor of Campillo was only the beginning of the reaction against Vieta by supporters of Figueroa. In early July, several residents presented a petition to the city council, protesting the dismissal of Campillo and his subordinates.

The mayor responded to protests by defending his decision to fire Campillo, citing “more than enough reason,” for doing so. According to the mayor, “far from deserving protest or censure,” the decision “should have been considered as the most brilliant, just and necessary act that could ever have been realized…” The conflict between the mayor and chief Campillo showed a gradual shift in the police force, which increasing supported the needs of the military occupation rather than the civil government. Vieta had a long list of complaints against Campillo, who he likely considered the pawn of his recently-defeated political rival, Figueroa. In a letter to

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812 Walter B. Barker to Adjutant General, July 9, 1901, Box 183, File 2698, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
813 Federico Rasco to Adjutant General, July 6, 1901, Box 183, File 2698, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
814 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, July 3, 1901, Volume 49, APHC/AC.
Barker, Vieta enumerated an exhaustive list of 9 reasons Campillo was unfit to serve as chief of police. He cited his “violent temper,” which had been abundantly evident in his behavior during a legal Valverde had levied against him. Campillo had been known for occasionally arresting citizens. Vieta also accused him of appointing men to the police force without the approval of the mayor. Moreover, Campillo allegedly condoned and even attended cockfights, which the military government had outlawed at the beginning of the occupation.

One of the most severe indictments Vieta hurled at Campillo was his alleged inability to preserve order. “Apart from the revolutionary achievements of Mr. Campillo, as police chief, he has failed completely.” According to the mayor, Campillo was incapable of maintaining order, as evidenced by the “repeated and unnecessary summoning by the previous mayor, Figueroa, of the American military forces, who he bothered without cause, and to the detriment of the town, for which the former police chief was responsible.”

Vieta was referring to the protest Figueroa had staged after his electoral defeat in June of that year.

According to Barker, the tension between mayor Vieta and chief Campillo was a result of struggles for local political power. At the bottom of everything was Barker’s old nemesis, former mayor José Antonio Frías, who had returned to Havana to teach at the University of Havana and later to take up a post as senator after being forced to resign in

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815 Gonzalo García Vieta to Walter B. Barker, July 6, 1901, Box 183, File 2648, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

816 Civil Governor of Santa Clara, “Enclosing a communication addressed by him to the Mayor of Cienfuegos relative to some grave charges of irregularities preferred against the chief of police of that town,” March 8, 1902, Box 243, File 945, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

817 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, July 3, 1901, Volume 49, APHC/AC.
February 1900. According to Barker Frías still exerted influence over politics in Cienfuegos, however: “Senator-elect Frías controls the entire administration, including the Civil Governor, who at first backed up Campillo, but Frías made him crawl down.”818 Indeed, José Miguel Gómez wrote to military authorities urging the removal of Campillo in March 1902.819 Frías opposed Campillo in part due to the instrumental role he played in coercing the police force to vote for Figueroa in the 1901 elections.

Campillo may not have been popular with Frías and Vieta, but he had certainly pleased the American military officials. Barker noted that the police chief was well-connected: “While the private life of the chief of police is not what it should be, he is undoubtedly strong with all the best people.”820 According to Barker, Campillo served the “better classes,” exactly the goal Americans sought to promote in civil affairs. The strict enforcement of urban order, which translated into the suppression of poor and working-class urbanites that characterized the mission of the police under Campillo had won acclaim among wealthy property owners. Edwin F. Atkins even wrote on his behalf, assuring military authorities that Campillo held the “respect of the business community of Cienfuegos.”821 Elias Ponvert of Hormiguero Central also wrote on behalf of Campillo.822

Military officials favored Campillo to such a degree that when mayor Vieta dismissed him from office, they reinstated him, citing Military Order Number 156 of

818 Walter B. Barker to Hugh L. Scott, March 21, 1902, Box 243, File 945, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
819 José Miguel Gómez to Leonard Wood, March 8, 1902, Box 243, File 945, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
820 Walter B. Barker to Hugh L. Scott, March 21, 1902 Box 243, File 945, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
821 Edwin F. Atkins to Hugh L. Scott, March 11, 1902, Box 243, File 945, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
822 Elias Ponvert to Hugh L. Scott, March 13, 1902, Box 243, File 945, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
June 12, 1901. They argued that they had to investigate the complaints before approving the dismissal of Campillo. Until then, they re-instated him. When Vieta refused to comply, they forced him to resign as mayor. Some local residents vehemently opposed the reinstatement of Campillo by military authorities. Roger Frank wrote to Adjutant General Hugh L. Scott in mid-July, alerting him to an impending attack upon Campillo. A group “composed of the worse [sic] element of this city,” and organized by former mayor Frías, Sixto Roque, and one [José] Camacho, would leave on the night train to Havana to attack the supporters of Campillo. The police “openly declare that in order to disarm them they will have to be killed.”

Frías, Vieta and others of their political coalition disliked Campillo for his support of their opponent, Figueroa, and for his close ties to the military authorities.

American military officials sought to quell the discontent following the election of Vieta by replacing him with Higinio Esquerra. He was another prominent white veteran who had been the chief of the brigade of Cienfuegos during the war and had served as the chief of the Cienfuegos rural guard in the first two years of military rule. Although Esquerra was recognized for his military service, the removal of Vieta met with considerable discontent, protest and even violence.

The removal of Vieta could not erase tensions between the Frías faction and the Figueroa coalition. During the first weeks that Esquerra was in power, Frías and


824 “Gran Escándalo en Cienfuegos,” La Lucha, August 7, 1901, Box 183, File 2648, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Report of the Havana Detective Bureau, August 17, 1901, on affairs at Cienfuegos, August 17, 1901, Box 183, File 2648, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3. Police officers who supported Vieta allegedly attempted to assassinate the editor of the newspaper La República for praising American military authorities.
councilman Rafael Pérez Morales brought charges against Campillo for a dispute over police uniforms, Campillo had decided to outfit the police force with new uniforms identical to the ones used under Spanish rule, to match the police force of Havana, replacing the uniforms of the Cuban army that they had used up until then. When the change of police uniforms entered the attention of the city council, they ordered the chief to revert to the old uniforms, as they had not authorized the change.\textsuperscript{825} When Campillo did not comply with this order, the city council sought to remove him, once again, from his post, and dismissed his subordinates as well. Military officials ruled that the city council could dismiss the chief, but not the subordinates, because they were not responsible for the dispute, and could not have opposed orders from their chief.\textsuperscript{826} Military authorities eventually restored Campillo to his post after all.\textsuperscript{827}

The tension between the mayor and the police chief highlights a process of negotiation between local civil authorities and American military officials in Cienfuegos. Whereas military officials disliked Oropesa because of his hostile attitude toward Americans during conflicts, Campillo seemed to present the opposite problem. Neglecting the defense of the people, Campillo aimed to please American military officials by collaborating with them during public disorder. Consequently, American military officials tended to defend Campillo, even when he had alienated the city council. By the inauguration of the Republic on May 20, 1902, the police force was composed

\textsuperscript{825} Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, March 29, 1902, Volume 49, APHC/AC.

\textsuperscript{826} José Miguel Gómez to Municipal Mayor of Cienfuegos, 8 March 1902, Box 243, File 945, USNA/MGC/ RG 140/E 3.

\textsuperscript{827} Civil Governor of Santa Clara, “Enclosing a communication addressed by him to the Mayor of Cienfuegos relative to some grave charges of irregularities preferred against the chief of police of that town,” March 8, 1902, Box 243, File 945, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
almost entirely of educated, white men, many of whom had been veterans of what had once been a colorblind struggle for independence.\textsuperscript{828}

\textbf{Conclusions}

In the first half of 1899, the multi-racial police force of Cienfuegos clashed with American soldiers and civilian employees, the two most violent encounters occurring in May and June. Americans pointed to the incompetence of municipal police, especially the impropriety of black authority in that force. As municipal authorities assessed their ultimate goal of independence in the face of American rule, they realized that cooperation, rather than conflict, with Americans would be most conducive to their success. Between late 1899 and the end of American rule, Cienfuegos authorities attempted to construct a more honorable police force, one that would command the respect of white American and that would prove their capacity to self-govern. One of the ways they realized this goal was by employing a greater number of respectable citizens—whites.

The transformation of the mission of the Cienfuegos police force from defenders of the people to collaborators with the American resulted in tangible changes in the ways police interacted with local citizens. An increasing wave of violence against poor and working-class citizens of Cienfuegos, especially people of African descent, developed over the course of the American occupation. One example of this violence was the

assassination of General Dionisio Gil by a white police officer, Rabasa. The murder of Gil in December 1899 was an ominous preview of what was to come in free Cuba. The racial unity and the war-time goal of racial equality had been tarnish, even discarded, as a white veteran killed a black one. Collaboration with Americans in search of independence meant that racial equality was not only sacrificed, but that whites began to enforce through violence a new version of the colonial racial order.

In response to the assassination of the prominent black general, black activists in Cienfuegos and across Cuba harnessed the anger of the masses to criticize the increasing tide of racism. Dionisio Gil became a national symbol of the failures of the revolution to ensure equal opportunity for blacks. While some activists threatened to again take up arms to claim rights for blacks, others used civic channels to commemorate Gil through patriotic monuments. Both strategies centered on protesting the increasingly exclusive concept of Cuban nationality. Activists using both strategies faced significant obstacles in disseminating their message, as black militancy consolidated white fears of black radicalism, and white control over government funds and resources meant limited support for public memorials.

At the same time as black activists protested increasing marginalization from Cuban nationality in the form of heightened violence and repression by the police, civil authorities sought to continue to mold the police force into a respectable institution. Their efforts to reform the police force backfired, however. The police chief appointed to replace Oropesa showed a growing allegiance to the occupying government, rather than to the interests of the
civil government, resulting in acute conflict between police and civil authorities. Even though civil authorities chastised the police chief for flouting their authority and for his exceedingly intimate ties with military officials, both bodies participated and collaborated in the occupying project at the expense of the masses. With Esquerra succeeding Vieta in the office of mayor, the opponents of Campillo had been alienated from local government. Under Esquerra, civil authorities continued to collaborate with military authorities as they had under Figueroa.

Ironically, the immediate result of the assassination of black General Dionisio Gil was the transformation of the police force into an even more repressive institution and the rise of socially-conservative men, like Figueroa and eventually Esquerra, into positions of civil authority. As black Cienfuegos elites and radical black nationalists sought to harness the memory of Gil to demand racial justice, military authorities and their allies in the municipal government supported an increasingly narrow vision of Cuba Libre. The next chapters examine how Cuban authorities and American military officials enforced this vision of Cuban society by targeting and systematically suppressing the poor and working-class black urbanites.
CHAPTER 7
Towards a New Racial Geography:
Rape, Riots and the Regulation of Vice

Between 1900 and the end of the American military occupation, conflicts between Americans soldiers and civilians and poor and working-class Cubans occasionally escalated into riots in Cienfuegos. Working-class blacks sought to challenge an increasingly unfavorable racial order and a hardening color line that followed American expansion into Cuba and the emergence of scientific racism into the mainstream of Western intellectual thought. One of the ways they protested increasing marginalization was through violent exchange in urban riots.

Most of the riots exhibited strikingly similar patterns. Most began in predominantly poor and working-class black residential areas, often also known for the houses of entertainment and prostitution. Riots frequently started when residents and neighbors contested American pretensions of unbridled sexual access to Cuban women, a subject especially sensitive after a string of brutal rapes perpetrated by Americans in 1899. Residents and the local press alike branded Americans as sexual predators against Cuban women. Despite the recognition of American sexual transgression, most, perhaps all of these riots resulted in the suppression of urban black populations. With the rise of socially-conservative Leopoldo Figueroa to the office of mayor in early 1900, civil authorities began to play a more prominent role in the suppression of black urbanites as part of their increasing collaboration with military authorities. In addition to violent
repression of urban blacks, civil authorities sought to transform the urban geography to redefine the image of the city as respectable before the eyes of the occupying forces. Seeking to eliminate the possibilities for conflict between the black urban masses and Americans, civil authorities focused on pushing these troublesome populations to the urban margins, creating a white, wealthy urban center.

Having identified the red light district as an area of confrontation and conflict between Americans and poor and working-class Cubans, civil authorities sought to eliminate the potential for future conflict by moving that zone from the city center to the urban margins. Conflict between Cubans and Americans followed the tolerance zone out of the city, but Cuban civil authorities responded to the disorders through collaboration rather than antagonism with Americans military officials. By examining two riots, the Dancehall Riot of 1900, and the Transvaal Riot of 1901, this chapter charts the transformation of the racial geography of Cienfuegos during American rule, as civil authorities further pursued their policy of collaboration with American military officials. With the disturbances and poor, working-class and black populations relegated to the urban margins, order and whiteness prevailed in the urban center, supporting the contention of the ruling elite that they could indeed maintain order.

“Racha de Salvajada”: Rape, Racial Protest and Questioning Civilization

Protection of women was a central tenant of Cuban manliness. Over the course of the military occupations, however, the quality of women “worth” protecting became increasingly narrow. Whereas during the San Juan Day Riot, black Cuban veterans rescued a sex worker from the abuse of three drunken Americans, subsequent conflicts
focused more intensely on protecting women judged as respectable. This category, which became synonymous with Cuban womanhood, largely excluded poor and working-class women, especially women of African descent and sex workers.

In the aftermath of the San Juan Day Riot, the newspapers of Cienfuegos printed numerous articles protesting against the American abuses of local residents and authorities. One of the many criticisms levied against the Americans involved their sexual misconduct and abuse of Cuban women. Charges of American sexual misconduct centered on the threat to respectable (white) women and corrupting young virgins. The Cienfuegos-based separatist newspaper, *La Tribuna*, reported a series of rapes and attempted rapes perpetrated by American soldiers and officers against Cuban women at the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba. First, two American soldiers, one armed with a shotgun and the other with a revolver, attempted to rape the wife of a canteen-owner, who was absent in that moment. This was apparently the second attempted rape in that canteen. Shortly thereafter, an American sergeant brutally raped a 15-year-old girl, Leonor, as her younger sister, Inés, was held in an adjacent room hearing her cries. An American woman, Katherine, served as an accomplice to the American sergeant. Katherine, a friend of Leonor’s mother, convinced her to allow her daughters to go see a rental house in Caney. Katherine delivered the two girls to a house near the Plaza de Marte, where the American sergeant was waiting. They forced Leonor to drink alcohol, and then locked her in a room where the rape took place.829

The population of Cienfuegos was incensed by the article about the rape at Santiago. Witnessing the unrest, American military officials sought to censor the article.

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just as they had suppressed reports that Americans had assassinated Santa María. A. H. Bowman was in charge of investigating: “I sent for the two editors of La Tribuna to day [sic], José Alemán and Martin Moruah [sic] Delgado, (the latter a coffee colored man of African origin educated of good address) they reported at one o’clock.” He interrogated them regarding the origins of the article and warned them not to publish inflammatory statements: “I cautioned Alemán and Moruah [sic] Delgado, they would have to be more cautious, intimidating that the patience of the authorities was about exhausted, and that they were pursuing a course not in the interest of Cuba.” Bowman attempted to appeal to the sense of patriotism of both men to censor them from reporting unflattering news about the American soldiers, implying that appeasement, rather than antagonism, would be the best strategy vis-à-vis the occupation. Indeed, censorship of the press became a common strategy through which the United States military government in Cuba controlled its image with the Cuban public.

Even though these horrible acts did not occur in Cienfuegos, the news fell upon very sympathetic ears. After all, just weeks earlier the people of Cienfuegos had united before the very same enemy for a similar crime—abuse of local women—that had

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830 José Braulio Alemán was a prominent Cuban veteran. This man was engaged in an ongoing public scandal with Ramiro Iznaga, once editor of the rival newspaper La República. The conflict involved a duel in Cienfuegos in September 1899. A.H. Bowman, “Report on the trouble at Cienfuegos,” Box 19, File 1690, September 26, 1899, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

831 Martín Morúa Delgado was a black political leader, active in politics in Palmira, a town near Cienfuegos. He served in the Cuban senate, and is famous for introducing the Morúa Law, banning political parties based on race.

832 “2nd Endorsement,” July 5, 1899, Box 13, File 6092, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

833 The United States military government in Cuba censored the Cuban press on multiple occasions. Censorship occurred across the island. In Cienfuegos, newspapers such as La Tribuna were targeted for their inflammatory depictions of Americans. For example on June 28, that newspaper was censored for referring to the “foolishness” of General James H. Wilson just days after the scandalous San Juan Day Riot. “Foolishness, Sir,” La Tribuna, June 28, 1899, Box 12, File 5785, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
originally sparked the San Juan Day Riot. Similar incidents were happening frequently in
cities across Cuba as American soldiers pursued and harassed Cuban women and girls. In
Holguín, for example, private Frank D. Bennett attempted to rape the wife and sister-in-
law of a Cuban man, Andrés Montero. Bennett attempted first to pay the women for sex,
offering one, then five dollars. When Montero intervened, Bennett became violent, laying
his hands on the women. General James H. Wilson, the commanding officer for
Matanzas and Santa Clara Provinces, also noted men under his command raping women.
He wrote of one disturbed soldier, “a reckless fellow” who “forced his way into the bed
of a sick girl.” That soldier ended up contracting yellow fever, although Wilson reflected
that he probably became infected during his frequent visits to unhygienic places such as
brothels: “he was out on a ‘bat’ and frequented places where germs were evidently
plentiful.” Wilson lamented that “unfortunately he recovered.” Numerous rape and
attempted rape cases against Americans in Cuba caused tension with Cubans, who
resented American presumptions of unbridled sexual access to Cuban women, as it
evidently did in the Cienfuegos press.

Rape and the specter of sexual abuse became a powerful rhetorical device in
expression contempt for the American presence in Cuba. No doubt, the sexual politics of
intervention gained an increasingly prominent role in the antagonism between Cubans
and Americans, especially when the victims were perceived as respectable. Allegations of
American abuse of respectable women provided a powerful motive for violent

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834 “Court-Martial of Frank D. Bennett,” August 28-September 9, 1899, Case number 13333,
USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.

835 James H. Wilson to William L. Bull, August 12, 1899, Box 44, Volume V, folio 47, Library of
Congress, Manuscript Division, James H. Wilson Papers (Hereafter cited as LOC/MD/JHW).
confrontation of a common enemy. Indeed threats made against respectable women provoked greater scandal, highlighting a prioritization of the honor of respectable (white) women over that of poor and working-class women. Although the San Juan Day Riot began with the defense of prostitutes, subsequent conflicts show hierarchies of honor and respectability that more closely mirrored those of colonial times.

“Get your hands off my woman”: Drunken Americans and the Dancehall Riot of 1900

The anxiety over the sexual misconduct of American soldiers featured in the local press provided the framework through which the Cuban public interpreted the disorderly actions of American soldiers surrounding Cuban women. Just one year after the San Juan Day Riot, on June 3, 1900, another riot broke out in Castillo de Jagua, a town near the American military encampment of Pasa Caballos. The circumstances were astonishingly familiar: three American soldiers under the influence of alcohol created a disturbance at a dance held at the house of Cuban man, Francisco Montaño. The Americans reportedly molested one of the women at the party.

At about 1:30 in the morning, the policeman, Marcelino Soto found the two soldiers on the porch of the dancehall, and they “started to jump up and down on the porch outside.” Soto reprimanded the rowdy Americans. The soldiers ignored officer Soto, and entered the party, scandalizing the attendees. They proceeded straight to the canteen, where they used obscene language. Campbell was indecently dressed, with his

undershirt exposed, and without a hat, a style that was considered unacceptable in turn-of-the-century Cuba. The mayor of Castillo de Jagua, José Alegría, who had been summoned to the party on account of the disturbance, reprimanded both of the soldiers and scolded Soto for not having taken control of the situation. “[The mayor] said to me ‘If they don’t obey you, go and get the Corporal that is over in the Castle,” remembered Soto. Instead of attempting to arrest the Americans straight away, the police sought out military authorities to handle them.

When Soto returned to the party with the American corporal, the situation had deteriorated further. Simpson was sprawled out on the floor of the canteen, and the other soldier, Campbell was “leaning close to the window vomiting.” The corporal dragged both Simpson and Campbell out of the party by the arms, reprimanding them along the way. Just then, another American soldier, Private William Griffin approached them, and “created a disturbance by interfering in [the detention and] not allowing the Corporal to conduct to the Castle the other two men…” He cursed and insulted the corporal and the policeman.

Soto sought to subdue the unruly private. Griffin resisted arrest, insults and attacking the policeman and assaulting the mayor. Soto bore the brunt of the Griffin’s aggression: He “came up and with an empty package of cigarettes [he] rubbed it in my

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838 Trial of Private Fred C. Campbell, June 21, 1900, Box 3117, Case 18233, United States National Archives, Court Martial Records, Record Group 153, Entry 15, (Hereafter cited as USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15); Trial of Private William Griffin, June 21, 1900, Box 3117, Case 18234, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.

839 Trial of Private Fred C. Campbell, June 21, 1900, Box 3117, Case 18233, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.

840 Trial of Private William Griffin, June 21, 1900, Box 3117, Case 18234, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.
face. I told him to wait, that the Corporal had come, and then for a second time he struck me in the face and in the shoulder and called me a ‘son of a bitch.’” At that point, Soto arrested Griffin and turned him over to the corporal.

As the confrontation intensified, a crowd began to form around the civil authorities, the corporal and the rowdy Americans. Seeing the Griffin disrespect the police officer, the crowd grew angry, and “then the struggle began in which a lot of people were mixed up and I was standing there near where the fight was going on.” The crowd turned on the Americans, especially Griffin: “I was attacked by four or five Cubans,” he recounted during his court-martial trial. “They ran in and grabbed me by the arms and legs and started to search me. One of them had me by the neck and was choking me.” Griffin remembered that “the crowd kept getting bigger all the time, and I just fought in self defense [sic]. […] They were at me with machetes, sticks, stones and revolvers. They all looked alike to me. I had no friends among them.” Just like in the San Juan Day Riot, a personal confrontation between a few Americans and Cubans became a struggle between “Americans” and “Cubans.”

Griffin, Campbell and Simpson fled the blows of the crowd, and headed toward the docks. The Cubans pursued them, apparently “with reinforcements.” At one point, the mob lashed out against him: “One of them walked up and kicked me in the back while they both had hold of me.” Once at the edge of the docks, Griffin claimed that “the Cubans made their final charge. I got knocked off the dock into the water.” Perhaps the irony was not lost upon members of the crowd, that tossing the offending parties into the

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841 Ibid.

842 Trial of Private William Griffin, June 21, 1900, Box 3117, Case 18234, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.
water seemed to symbolize separatist desires to expel the “Yankees” who had overstayed their welcome from Cuban soil. The corporal retrieved his men and brought them back to the barracks.

The presence of the Americans was not so much the problem as were their actions with the Cubans at the party. The mayor pointed out that even though he did not think these soldiers had any business being at the dance, this was not the source of the problem: “I do not know how they [the soldiers] came to be there. It was not a public dance, but a dance given among the families over there. In Cuba, nothing is thought of it if strangers not invited go to these dances.” At the heart of the original conflict was an alleged abuse of a female attendee at the party. The mayor confirmed that he had received a complaint about the Americans harassing the women of the dance. Campbell and Simpson were accused of “laying hands on a woman” at the party. The mayor and policeman seemed to judge that this offense warranted and justified violent reaction by the men at the party. The mayor testified that the dance attendees were “orderly people,” only provoked to violence by the offensive and abusive actions of the Americans.

What had perhaps made the conduct of the Americans so offensive to the Cubans at the party and the civil authorities was that they interacted with “respectable” people in a way they judged was more appropriate for people of the “lower” classes. Cuban civil authorities, namely the police and the mayor, intervened in the dispute, not only because the Americans were causing a scene outside a dancehall, but because that behavior

843 Ibid.
844 Ibid.
845 Ibid.
jeopardized the safe environment for the female attendees, and threatened the honor, respectability and status of the families attending the party. That the Americans resisted arrest suggests that the conflict was about diverging views of the way Americans should interact with “respectable” Cuban women. The reaction of the civil authorities and crowd was about guarding the moral purity and honor of the so-called respectable Cuban families from the vulgar and “low-class” behavior of the Americans. By defending the honor of women of their same social class, middle- and upper-class men asserted their own manliness before the American occupying forces.

The local press also condemned the incident severely. In one article appearing in *El Siglo*, Lt. Colonel Jiménez, a police inspector condemned American soldiers, who were “seen daily in the streets of Cienfuegos, or elsewhere, in a drunken condition.” The dancehall riot was yet another example of this broader pattern. The article met with a harsh response from military officials who sought to silence critical views of Americans in Cuba. A. W. Bowman, the commanding officer of Rowell Barracks at Pasa Caballos, confronted Carlos García, the editor of the newspaper, *El Siglo* for an inflammatory account of the dancehall riot: “I advised the fellow that his paper would be held responsible for false statements.” The editor denied knowledge and responsibility for the article, claiming that he did not agree with the views expressed therein, but published it “as a matter of current news […] for what it was worth.”846 The editor had conceded, promising not to publish future articles defaming Americans, and rather turning them over to the military authorities.

846 A.W. Bowman to Adjutant Rowell Barracks, June 19, 1900, Box 39, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
The Dancehall Riot and the public responses to it encapsulated broader tensions in Cuban society: the constant quest to prove to the interveners that Cuban men could in fact guard public order, property, and family. While the crowd of Cuban men descended upon the three American soldiers to defend women, civil authorities approached the incident as an opportunity to bolster their future political power. The cooperation between the mayor and the American corporal marked a stark departure from the interaction between the mayor José Antonio Frías and captain Walter B. Barker during the San Juan Day Riot. Whereas the relations between Frías and Barker had been characterized by unremitting hostility and antagonism, Alegría and Soto called upon the corporal to deal with the Americans instead of arresting them themselves. By deferring to the American military official, Alegría, much like Leopoldo Figueroa across the bay, enacted a new style of local governance, which privileged cooperation with the military officials. The best indication of manliness for Alegría was his political power, which increasingly relied on a positive relationship with American military officials in his area.

Regulating Cuban-American Gender Relations: Prostitution and Venereal Disease

Although the Cuban public at the party and in the press had certainly convicted the Americans of sexual misconduct at the party, the judge of the court-martial found insufficient evidence to convict Campbell and Simpson of harassing the woman. This was probably due to the very limited testimony collected. The investigation relied mainly on three witnesses: the mayor, who confessed that he came after receiving a complaint, and stayed only 45 minutes, the Officer Soto, who mainly patrolled from outside of the dancehall, and the corporal, whom Soto retrieved after having trouble with the
Americans. Given none of these witnesses was present to observe the interactions of the Americans inside the dancehall, they would not be able to substantiate accusations that the Americans had abused the woman. The only witness who mentioned even the presence of women was the police officer, Soto. The mayor recounted a conversation he had with Soto the day after the disturbance: “…the Policeman next day, after what had happened, told me that the Americans while the dance was going on, for a while, were jumping up and down, and once in a while bumped into some of the women; but he said that it seemed that they were not doing it intentionally.” When asked directly, if they had seen the Americans harass women at the party, each admitted that they did not know. No party-goers, women, or onlookers were included in the investigation, however, and all charges for harassing women were dropped.

Bowman claimed that the American soldiers were very well-behaved in and around Cienfuegos, and that all the residents with whom he conferred confirmed that relations between soldiers and civilians were amicable. The conduct of the troops in the brothels was indeed a sensitive subject for American military officials, as it called attention to American preservation of prostitution, an institution that was becoming rapidly socially unacceptable in the United States. In the United States, progressive social reformers (Balch’s “narrow-minded people”) increasingly targeted urban vice, especially prostitution, in a movement to address the social ills arising from industrialization at the turn of the twentieth century. This made “tolerated tenderloins” increasingly unpalatable.

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847 Trial of Private William Griffin, June 21, 1900, Box 3117, Case 18234, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.
in light of “proper” gender roles, emphasizing female domesticity and male breadwinning.848

Downplaying prostitution in Cuba was essential for preserving the legitimacy of the military occupation among progressive Americans, and this meant silencing references to American misconduct in the Cuban brothels. Major Louis Balch worried that “…this subject is one which if brought to public notice in the U.S. would raise an outcry from all the religious and narrow-minded people.”849 “I agree with Dr. Balch that public sentiment in the United States would not tolerate any legal recognition of prostitution except for the purpose of abolishing it,” the Chief Surgeon of Santa Clara Province confirmed.850 Despite these preoccupations, toleration of the commercial sex industry in Cuba very much became a state of exception.851

Although he preferred to deny the misbehavior of the soldiers at Pasa Caballos, Bowman had to admit that sometimes they soldiers partook in prostitution, and became rowdy in the process. One of his informants “noticed some months ago a soldier who had too much beer.” Bowman himself noted that “the U.S. soldiers have occasionally been boisterous within the houses of prostitution.” Apparently, the recently discharged soldier


850 “2nd Endorsement,” Box 4, File 1614, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

with his final pay and the recent recruit were “two very fruitful classes for minor disorders in the houses of prostitution.” The problem, however, was under control according to Bowman, who noted that the few culprits were already awaiting court-martial sentences. He concluded that the Americans who resisted arrest at Castillo de Jagua—the very men standing court-martial—probably served as a pretext for the article. In his discussion of the motivations for the article, Bowman seemed to conflate American conduct in brothels with their actions in the parties of “respectable” people.

As Bowman implied, American military officials focused on prostitution to regulate interactions between American men and Cuban women. In late 1898, the thousands of soldiers, officers and civilian employees serving the military intervention and subsequent occupation breathed new life into Cienfuegos brothels. During the occupation, Cienfuegos was the only city in Cuba to have a higher number of prostitutes than the provincial capital (See Image 18). There had been a precipitous increase of venereal disease among American soldiers in Matanzas and Santa Clara provinces during the first several months of the military occupation. High rates of venereal disease among American troops incapacitated large numbers, rendering them unfit for service and imposing high costs for treatment. As a result, by January 1899, military officials had crafted and put into effect a new code governing prostitution, based in large part on previous Spanish codes.

852 A.W. Bowman to Adjutant Rowell Barracks, June 19, 1900, Box 39, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

853 A.W. Bowman to Adjutant Rowell Barracks, June 19, 1900, Box 39, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

Americans sought to regulate prostitution by issuing a new *reglamento* in January 1899. One of their main objectives was to curtail the spread of venereal disease, especially syphilis, among American troops while still offering soldiers an outlet for their “necessities.” Thus, it embodied contemporary debates about the causes of prostitutions, its moral implications, and ideas about how best to control the negative consequences it supposedly brought. Some military officials pointed to the careless sex practices of

soldiers as one of the main causes of the explosion of venereal disease during the first year of the occupation. They generally looked down upon the ordinary enlisted men, judging them as an unruly, unintelligent, and irresponsible lot. “The average enlisted man is as a rule careless and reckless as to the women with whom he cohabitates…,” wrote one officer of his men.

Major Frank J. Ives, Chief Surgeon of Matanzas and Santa Clara province, noted that enlisted men tended to contract diseases around the time of their pay day. For him, this was no coincidence: “I believe that at this season,” Ives wrote in July 1899, “pay day exerts a very deleterious effect upon the command, not only on account of the drinking of intoxicants incidental thereto, but many men on these occasions frequent those portions of the city more liable to contain yellow fever and miasmatic infection.” He explained that the increase in sick soldiers in July was most likely due to his men visiting brothels, where hygienic conditions were allegedly so poor as to be foci of infection. Between July 1899 and July 1900, physicians at the military hospital at Rowell Barracks (Pasa Caballos) treated 94 cases of venereal disease. Only malarial fever and diarrhea were more common ailments among troops at Cienfuegos during periods without yellow fever epidemics.

Moreover, the infected soldier generally did not seek treatment from the proper sources: “if infected, he is loath to present himself to the Medical Officers for treatment

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856 James H. Wilson, Annual Report of Brigadier General James H. Wilson, U.S.V., Commanding the Dept. of Matanzas and Santa Clara (Matanzas, 1899), 175.

857 Wilson, Annual Report, 1899, 175.

858 “First Lieutenant W.J. Barden “Submits report in compliance with letter from this office dates June 26, for the fiscal year of 1900,” July 7, 1900, Box 41, File 6297, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
and is liable to prolong the duration of the disease by either taking no treatment at all or consulting more or less with irresponsible persons.” Military official observed that soldiers generally continued to be intimate with women even after infected: “He also places no restraint upon his actions, but whilst infected cohabitates promiscuously, thus probably spreading the disease; drinks and carouses thus retarding his recovery.” Soldiers would only seek treatment when the disease had progressed so far as to incapacitate him: “If some particularly disagreeable duty falls to his lot or his conditions becomes so grave as to render it imperative he goes on sick report and the government loses double the time than if he had reported to the Surgeon in the first place.”

American soldiers cost the government substantial amounts of money due to their reckless sexual practices and neglect of their health.

Recognizing that at least part of the problem lay in the behavior of American soldiers, some military officials suggested they be held accountable. Ives recommended “the men should be stripped” for weekly physical examinations, and diseased men publically humiliated: “A list of all the men found infected with venereal troubles should be made out under the direction of the Company Commander and posted conspicuously on the bulletin board or in the Barracks of each company organization.” He also recommended that the canteen and leave privileges be denied to infected soldiers, asserting that this measure should not be interpreted as punishment, but rather intended

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859 Chief Surgeon, Frank J. Ives to Adjutant General, Department of Matanzas & Santa Clara, March 8, 1900, Box 34, File 3199, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

860 United States Surgeon-General’s Office, Report of the Surgeon-General of the Army, 280; Chief Surgeon, Frank J. Ives to Adjutant General, Department of Matanzas & Santa Clara, March 8, 1900, Box 34, File 3199, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
prevent the exacerbation of their afflictions due to “fresh exposures or by the use of stimulants.”  

Military officials in Matanzas and Santa Clara disagreed on the accountability of American soldiers in spreading venereal disease. The Adjutant General rejected the prospect of punishing sick men. He claimed that “venereal disease is a general misfortune, and not misconduct,” and therefore should not be punished. Others, like Ives, recognized that venereal disease was a normal part of military duty: “a certain percentage of venereal disease amongst soldiers might be considered unavoidable,” but that measure can be taken to reduce disease. Although military officials implicated the recklessness of their soldiers as a key cause of the explosion in venereal disease, consumer-centered policies such as humiliation and punishment of diseased men were never accepted policies for curbing disease, nor were they mandated on an island-wide scale. Instead, military officials in Matanzas and Santa Clara responded to their peculiarly high rates of infection by subjecting their troops to physical exams every other Friday, which “gave excellent results.”

While military officials attempted to protect their men and the government coffers from the ravishes of venereal disease, the 1899 *reglamento* almost exclusively focused on controlling public women. Nineteenth-century medical discourses linking female immorality and sexual degeneracy to spread of disease meant that the burden of

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862 Adjutant General, Division of Cuba, March 2, 1900, Box 34, File 2063, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

863 Chief Surgeon, Frank J. Ives to Adjutant General, Department of Matanzas & Santa Clara, March 8, 1900, Box 34, File 3199, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

regulation fell disproportionately upon the body of the prostitute. Accordingly, military officials targeted the women of the sex industry as the vectors of venereal disease and moral disorder. Americans made few changes to existing laws governing prostitution. Rather, they augmented enforcement, which they argued had been lacking under Spanish rule. Military officials in Cienfuegos criticized the ineffective enforcement of regulations governing prostitution under Spanish rule, noting that the physical examinations of the prostitutes under the Spanish law had not been effective in controlling venereal disease. “It would appear from this that the inspection which was supposed to be made of prostitutes was not thoroughly or carefully done, and like many another public work in Cuba was merely perfunctorily performed in order to get the money which was paid for it.”

Through regulated prostitution, Americans were able to curb the venereal disease to a sufficient extent that they could allow the prostitution to remain legal. Increasing state control over prostitutes and madams through more rigid enforcement of the laws had mixed results. By 1900, American military officials claimed that these behavioral issues among their soldiers had been resolved: “The drain on the strength of the command for duty,” wrote General Wilson, “caused by venereal affections, made strong measures necessary. A bi-weekly inspection of all the men by the Company Commanders and the Surgeon, ordered by the Department Commander, resulted in substantial

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reduction of this kind of disease.” Yet, civil disorder involving Americans buying sex continued to define the America presence in cities across Cuba, not least of all Cienfuegos, as the Dancehall Riot suggests.

**An Urban Landscape, Transformed**

While Americans focused on prostitution to regulate interactions between American men and Cuban women, Cuban civil authorities identified a different problem: threats to “respectable” women. This problem had been most clearly encapsulated in the Dancehall Riot. The riot marked a turning point for Cuban-American relations in and around Cienfuegos. Whereas previous disturbances had targeted sex workers and women of the “lower classes,” who middle- and upper-class men already associated with moral impurity, the Dancehall Riot underscored the dangers of American sexual misconduct for so-called “respectable” women. American abuses of “respectable” women offered a challenge to the manliness of middle- and upper-class men, including civil authorities, which rested in part upon their chivalric duty to protect women of their same social class. This affront to their manliness, in turn, threatened to undermine the claims of civil authorities to political power, which implicitly rested upon their ability to represent themselves as the highest order of man.

Civil authorities had to defend their masculine image before two main groups, each with a different and often contradictory standard of manliness. One the one hand, they had to uphold their revolutionary credentials before a Cuban populace that desired

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Cuban independence. Patriotism was the most important quality in a man, provided that the racial and class standards had already been met. On the other hand, civil authorities also had to demonstrate to the Americans that they were “fit” to govern. In this case, the ultimate demonstration of manliness was the ability to maintain order. Thus civil authorities were forced to reconcile the ideals of socially-radical ideals of patriotism with the socially-conservative value for order to consolidate their political power. In the context of American relations with Cuban women, this meant simultaneously protecting “respectable” women from American soldiers, while collaborating in the projects of military authorities to regulate prostitution and promote “hygiene.”

One way to accomplish both goals was to construct separate spaces for “honorable” and “fallen” women. Increasing physical restrictions imposed on prostitutes since the late colonial period served as a precursor for the eventual codification of a distinct geographical space for prostitution in Cienfuegos under American rule. Between 1875 and 1886, in the wake of the first anti-colonial war (1868-1878), Spanish colonial officials implemented a series of regulations on prostitution. These included the system of paid licensing for prostitutes, madams and brothel owners, and bi-weekly pelvic exams for prostitutes. By the early 1890s, hygiene administrators mandated the physical segregation of prostitutes from mainstream society by declaring that prostitution must be confined to a tolerance zone in the capital city of Havana, though the implications for other Cuban cities remains unclear.868

On the eve of the American military occupation, Spanish regulation of prostitution imposed strict limits on the behavior, visibility, and mobility of prostitutes.

Spanish colonial officials issued a *reglamento* specifically governing prostitution in the province of Santa Clara in 1898. The 1898 *reglamento* prohibited the prostitute from entering into the public view. It forbade her from exhibiting herself freely in public view, forbidding her to exhibit herself in windows or doors, on streets or walkways. Regulations censured scandalous or “indecent behavior” in public places. Prostitutes were forbidden from making gestures to entice men to come to them, and they were not allowed to “occupy” seats or stages in theatres, places in which under Spanish rule often designated marginal spaces for prostitutes to engage in their activities with their clients. Prostitutes could not ride in uncovered carriages through town, or enter places of recreation where “honest families” gather.\(^{869}\) The 1898 *reglamento* clearly established that certain spaces in cities where prostitution existed were “moral” and others were “immoral.”

The 1898 *reglamento* also provided some guidelines on distinguishing between supposedly moral and immoral women. “The manner of looking, laughing, walking, adorning herself, the unashamed way of insinuating herself’ serve as indirect signs of immorality, while an immoral woman can be recognized directly for “showing her naked reserved parts, screaming, proffering blasphemies or morally offensive words, making signs or directing provocative words, grabbing, throwing, hugging, kissing a bystander, getting together with public women or entering into domestic service of prostitutes.”\(^{870}\)

Indeed, the *reglamento* of 1898 specified that women who interacted with prostitutes, would themselves be defined as prostitutes and registered with the Hygiene police. One

\(^{869}\) Higiene, “Reglamento para el régimen de la prostitución en la provincia de Santa Clara,” 1898, Box 20, File 5456, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

\(^{870}\) Benjamín de Céspedes, *La prostitución en la ciudad de la Habana* (Havana: O’Reilly, 1888), 165.
way in which authorities could become aware of individual social interactions, was through reports from community members.\textsuperscript{871}

The physical restrictions imposed on prostitutes were designed to protect the sexual morality of “respectable” women, who were usually, by implication, white. Black women were judged as immoral for their alleged promiscuity, their supposedly higher propensity to engage in extra-marital sex, and higher rates of concubinage. White women, on the other hand, were the symbol of moral purity, which they upheld through their chastity, and sexual virtue.\textsuperscript{872} These racialized generalizations about morality would seem to suggest that most prostitutes were women of African descent. Available data on the racial, education and national background of prostitutes in Cienfuegos, however, contradict this assumption. Women practicing prostitution included black, white and immigrant women. Indeed, more registered prostitutes were white than black in Cienfuegos, as in all other Cuban cities where data exists (See Image 18), although the proportion of clandestine prostitutes was reportedly higher among women of African descent. Among prostitutes treated at the Quinta de Higiene (Hospital for Prostitutes) at Havana, two-thirds of those from the province of Santa Clara were classified as white.\textsuperscript{873}

\textsuperscript{871} Charges of immorality sometimes led to the arrest of girls and young women, some of whom fought to uphold their respectability in court. Records of the Municipal Judge, Juicio Verbal, Provincial Historical Archive of Cienfuegos (Hereafter cited as APHC/MJ/JV). Erroneous accusations, however, were often met with violence. One example is the case of a black West Indian, Samuel Roberts, who was living and working in Havana. A scandal erupted between him and a group of locals who accused him of harassing “honest women,” and mistaking them for prostitutes. Lionel Carden, British Consul, “Request for investigation,” June 22, 1900, Box 98, File 3406, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.


\textsuperscript{873} Statistics for the nationality of prostitutes in Cienfuegos are not available. In Havana, about 21\% of registered prostitutes were of foreign birth, representing Spain (the highest number), Mexico, Puerto Rico,
Although prevailing assumptions about the connection between race and morality seemed not to reflect the realities of commercial sex, they remained a central tenant of American regulation of prostitution during the military occupation. In 1899, American military authorities renewed Spanish efforts to remove prostitution from major urban centers, but this time in cities across the island. “Brothels would best be confined to some one portion of the town and not only be under police supervision and their inmates registered at the police department, but physical examinations of the women should be made not less than once a week,” wrote the chief surgeon of Santa Clara province in February 1899. This policy of districting prostitution reflected practices in some American cities during this epoch. Aimed most directly at improving urban “hygiene” and “morality,” this order simultaneously affected the largely black neighborhoods often containing the red light districts.

American military officials recommended the policing of the social and moral boundaries of the city through implicit means, rather than any explicit law. The chief surgeon in the Santa Clara province recommended exactly this: “While I do not mean that a general law or order should be made or issued, the tacit recognition by municipal authorities, guided in their action by the governing power, so as to have a uniform rule, would have the effect of holding prostitution in check and lessening the evil effects from

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United States, Canary Islands, France, Belgium, Austria, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, England, among others. Alfonso y García, La prostitución en Cuba, 22, 24, 26, fold-out.


875 Article 12 of the 1899 reglamento established the spatial parameters of urban prostitution: “…Said houses [of prostitution] shall be located outside of the commercial and central streets, in zones or places where it is more difficult to disturb the public order or the decency of customs.” Alfonso y García, La prostitución en Cuba, 171.
This strategy mirrored prostitution policies in some American cities, where local government and law enforcement officials employed explicit documentation, mapping, and training to monitor the physical location and social consequences of urban vice.

The transfer in the jurisdiction over prostitution regulation from the provincial to the municipal government under American rule left prostitution regulation in the hands of the mayor. José Antonio Frías largely neglected implementation of American recommendations. When he was forced to resign in February 1900, American military officials urged the interim mayor, Leopoldo Figueroa, to address the issue of prostitution. With the consolidation of his political power in the June 1900 municipal elections, military officials reminded Figueroa of his obligation to cooperate with them in improving urban hygiene. They expressed disappointment that he had not given “as cheerful co-operation in assisting the sanitary authorities to perform their duties, as might be desired.” Figueroa assured military authorities of his commitment to urban hygiene, pointing to the competent doctors on the Board of Sanitation, and also to the successes in reducing the death rates from disease.

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878 Thomas-Woodard, “Desiring nation,” 297, 298. In Cienfuegos, municipal authorities sought to abolish the “Hygiene tax” imposed on prostitutes, while provincial authorities criticized this proposition, pointing to Budget deficits. Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, February 28, 1899, August 19, 1899, January 25, 1900, July 15, 1900, October 11, 1900, December 13, 1901, APHC/AC.

879 S.H. Lincoln to Leopoldo Figueroa, July 5, 1900, Box 39, File 4528, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

880 Leopoldo Figueroa to S.H. Lincoln, July 18, 1900, Box 39, File 4528, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
integral part, provided one source of tension between Figueroa and military officials in the first critical months he was in office.

To be sure, the issue of hygiene concerned Figueroa too, though perhaps for different reasons than for American military officials. Prostitution thrived within the boundaries of the city despite the de facto segregation by race, socioeconomic status, and occupation that already defined the urban social geography to a large extent. Indeed, the brothel-lined streets of the historically-black port-side neighborhood of Marsillán were located just blocks from the neighborhood where the wealthiest and most “respectable” families of the city lived. This presented a problem for Figueroa, because it potentially exposed “respectable” women to the sexual whims of American soldiers visiting the proximate red light district, implying that he had failed in his manly duty to protect women. Simultaneously, it supposedly undermined the moral and social order in the city center, an indicator for Americans that he was insufficiently manly to be fit for political power.

Shortly after his election, Figueroa sought to consolidate his political power both among American military officials and his Cuban constituency. He used prostitution regulation to solidify his image as a member of the “intelligent classes” in the eyes of American military officials. This meant he would have to demonstrate his collaboration rather than antagonism with the occupying government, reduce tensions between civil and military authorities. The suggestions from American military officials to remove prostitution from the city center provided the perfect solution to the problem of hygiene, as Figueroa conceived of it. It also afforded the mayor the opportunity address another of the problems plaguing his administration. Removing the brothels from the city center
would help curb the threat of American sexual misconduct against “respectable” Cuban women because Americans would be drawn outside the area where these women resided. Figueroa sought to reorganize the urban social geography of Cienfuegos to solidify his hold on power, reward his political patrons, and appease American military authorities.

The solution entailed removing “immorality” from the supposedly honorable spaces in the city to areas beyond the urban boundaries. Prostitution regulation provided one way to target a broad array of “undesirable elements.” Indeed, one of the first orders of business Figueroa brought to discussion in the city council in early July was an initiative to “improve the hygiene of the houses inhabited by the workers.” With this initiative, the mayor linked the living conditions of the working class to one of the key problems his administration sought to address: the hygiene in the city. Having identified one of the supposed sources of the unhygienic conditions as the poor and working-class residents, the solution seemed simple: remove these populations from the city.

All of these goals converged in one policy: the relocation of the red light district—the locus of conflict between Cubans and Americans—from the southwest corner of the city to the urban margins in the far western liminal zone known as the Barriada del Oeste, an un-urbanized peninsula on the far western frontier of the city. This place became known as the Transvaal, a name that echoed the struggle of the Boers against British imperial incursion during the second Boer War (1899-1902). Likely, the irony of this denomination for the emerging neighborhood was not lost on most Cubans. Cuban newspapers carefully followed developments in South Africa, often relating their own struggle under American rule to that of the Boers. In November 1899, for example,

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881 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, July 1, 1900, Volume 46, APHC/AC.
one Cuban newspaper ran a political cartoon depicting the British in the Transvaal in a strikingly similar light as a Cubans often portrayed the United States in their *Patria.* “Experience offers a valuable lesson to them and it is that small, worthless and weak communities become strong when they struggle to be independent,” the caption read. Applying the name Transvaal to this marginal neighborhood may have reflected a popular identification with the Boer cause. The name also may have highlighted the parallels between the forced relocation of urban residents to this marginal area and the concentrations camps imposed by the British in the Transvaal, where thousands perished due to starvation and unsanitary conditions, both of which occurred in the same year, 1900.

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Map 4: Relocation of the red light district, 1900
The Transvaal neighborhood had been a marginal space for much of the nineteenth century. It had been the designated place for dumping the refuse of the city during the war. The carcasses of horses and other animals, found in great numbers throughout the city and on the outskirts, were collected and deposited in this neighborhood bringing “grave risks to the public health and principally to the residents that already live in that western zone.” Latrines were also emptied in this area, which had, according to city council members, “had been the place where they were always...

883 “La Guerra del Transvaal,” La Discusión, November 7, 1899, In USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3. File 6462
Although the city council resolved to begin incinerating the animal carcasses and allotting funds to the guerrillas to facilitate caring for their horses, this western zone continued to be the dumping ground of the city. By 1900, the zone was still known for its unhealthy conditions.

Map 5: Un-urbanized spaces of Cienfuegos, mid-19th century

The Transvaal was isolated from the Cienfuegos city center. Roads from the city center toward Reina abruptly ended at railroad tracks on Paseo de Arango, the

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884 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, May 29, 1896, July 3, 1896, APHC/AC.
westernmost street within the city limits. Whereas gas, and in some areas, electric lighting illuminated city streets, the Transvaal was consumed by darkness. The lack of public infrastructure, the poverty of the residents and the unsanitary history of the neighborhood all added to its marginality and undesirability for well-to-do urban dwellers. The isolation of the neighborhood made it an ideal location in which to confine urban vice.

By mandating the removal of the tolerance zone from the urban center of Cienfuegos, municipal authorities transformed the urban landscape. The confinement of the tolerance zone to the western margins had two principal consequences for urban residents. First, it resulted in the practical removal of supposedly immoral and unhygienic elements from the city center. Indeed, the inspector of hygiene, Abelardo Rodríguez, allegedly targeted more than just prostitutes. One anonymous author wrote to military authorities in July 1900 charging that Rodríguez “dedicated himself to removing every woman who had been a prostitute (even if today she was not)” requiring them to relocate to the tolerance zone. By casting a wide net for the removal of individuals supposedly partaking in immoral activities, Rodríguez purged the urban center of populations considered undesirable or threatening to public order. Because prostitution had been at the heart of many of the conflicts between Americans and Cubans during the first half of the occupation, the removal of brothels from the urban center helped municipal authorities construct an image of an orderly and well-governed city.

Second, the forced relocation of the red light district functioned to consolidate the legitimacy of the new municipal government among their separatist patrons by

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885 Anonymous to General James H. Wilson, July 6, 1900, Box 38, File 4110, USNA/MGC/RG 395/E 1331.
redistributing wealth from stakeholders of Spanish rule to the political patrons of the civil authorities, most notably the mayor. When prostitutes were forced to rent houses within the designated tolerance zone in the Transvaal, a previously under-populated zone with low property values was transformed into the heart of a rising commercial district. Property values soared and previously vacant properties filled with public women, cafés cantinas, and other venues of entertainment.

Many of the members of the city council had allegedly purchased property in the Transvaal, and they benefited greatly from the forced relocation of prostitutes. Civil authorities relocated the red light district to extort high rents for previously unrented properties in a marginal part of town owned by himself and several of his associates. In a complaint letter sent to Wilson, one man denounced the dishonest ways of Figueroa and his allies in the municipal government. He charged that the mayor and his friends were “a dirty crowd.” As evidence of the corruption of municipal authorities, he claimed that “they avail themselves of their influence and do all sort of business to their own benefit. The Mayor is a thief.”

Apart from having interests in the reconstruction of city hall and the dispensation of medicines to the city hospital, civil authorities directly benefited from the relocation of the vice district.

Various members of the city council allegedly conspired to exploit their political positions to increase their personal wealth. Lino Hernández, secretary of the city council, Pedro Modesto Hernández, propriety owner and former mayor of Cienfuegos, and city councilman Abelardo Rodríguez “have transacted the most shameful business. They obtained from the mayor and order to transfer all the prostitutes to a very unhealthy

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886 Ibid.
place…” This reordering of urban space had significant consequences for the real estate market, and its stakeholders: “…by that way, the Secretary of the Ayuntamiento could sell his houses and lots or rent them. These properties had no value as they were before, and at present they are worth a lot of money.” 887 The anonymous author, furthermore, charged the Inspector of Hygiene with purposely abusing women to secure financial gain, forcibly relocating the women “with the idea of populating that [zone] and receiving the highest gratification of the property holders.” Rodríguez enjoyed impunity, which enabled him to commit “all sorts of abuses with those women, as he is the favorite of the Mayor.” 888

While the property owners of the Transvaal benefited substantially from the designation of the new tolerance zone there, people who owned property in the former entertainment district suffered. “The property owners who have for forty years rented their houses to prostitutes today, their houses find themselves unoccupied, as for such a long time the prostitutes had resided there, there are very few houses are today rented.” 889 Because this zone had been associated with vice, immorality and poverty for so long, it was difficult for property owners to appeal to respectable families to reside there, at least in the short-term.

The property owners most harmed by the relocation of the vice district seemed to have been pro-Spanish or Autonomists. Clues to the political affiliation of the author of the anonymous letter complaining about the relocation of the red light district betray that

887 Ibid.

888 Ibid.

889 Ibid.
he likely belonged to one or the other of those groups. He condemned the civil authorities for their anti-American sentiments, a line of argument commonly employed by opponents of separatist rule in their petitions to military authorities for political power.\footnote{Numerous autonomists, calling themselves “pacíficos” wrote to the military authorities during the period of transition from Autonomist to separatist authority, protesting the disenfranchisement of honorable, qualified Cubans in place of separatists, who they charged were incompetent, inexperienced, and anti-American. Disenfranchised Spaniards, such as the anonymous writer Javier Medina Escalona also sought to undermine separatist authorities by labeling them as anti-American.} The author cited the intentions of the mayor to appoint to local office Rafael Jiménez, “the author of a rude and insulting letter to Americans.” In addition, he alleged that municipal authorities had made a secret pledge to oppose all orders of the American government, were supporting the political aspirations of men known for their “anti-American sentiment,” and would exclude from power all Cubans who sympathized with Americans.\footnote{Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, November 30, 1900, APHC/AC.} These were ironic accusations considering the general cooperation and amity between Figueroa and American military officials, and the substantial American support for the relocation of the red light district.

Indicting civil authorities for corruption and anti-Americanism, this author suggested that the stakeholders in property in the former vice district may have been men like him—non-separatists. If many stakeholders negatively affected by the relocation of the tolerance zone were opponents of Cuban rule, then the relocation of the vice district seemed to have transformed local power structures effectively, shifting the benefits of local property ownership to separatists, thereby legitimating their claims to power and prestige.
Although certain property owners in the old vice district suffered from empty houses after the removal of the prostitutes, other stakeholders in the same neighborhood benefited from the removal of vice due to their political connections. Apparently, one of the benefactors of the relocation of the prostitutes had already secured a government contract for one of his properties in the center of town: “Pedro Modesto was able to rent an empty house he possessed for a school. He was unable to do it before as it was located at the prostitutes’ ward…”\textsuperscript{892} Moreover, the Sección de Higiene played an important role in enforcing this transition, and the property-owning beneficiaries rewarded them handsomely: “the Inspector [of Hygiene], Abelardo Rodríguez received a large amount for finishing that deal.”\textsuperscript{893} Apparently Modesto provided a substantial incentive for Rodríguez to enforce the Relocation order. The political patrons of civil authorities benefited most directly from the re-location of the vice district.

The relocation of the vice district exacerbated existing divisions between Cuban separatists and men who opposed separatist political power. Several months later, renewed accusations that Figueroa had committed fraud accompanied demands that he be removed from the office of mayor. However, military officials were reluctant to remove a man who they so favored. He seemed to embody the perfect balance of revolutionary credentials, social-conservatism, and cooperation with the occupying government. After a two-month leave of absence, Figueroa continued his full term as mayor.\textsuperscript{894}

\textsuperscript{892} Anonymous to General James H. Wilson, July 6, 1900, Box 38, File 4110, USNA/MGC/RG 395/E 1331.

\textsuperscript{893} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{894} The Committee, “Telegram,” September 22, 1900, Box 112, File 6097, USNA/MGC/RG 10/E 3; Leopoldo Figueroa, “Telegram stating that on the 21\textsuperscript{st} inst. He made application to the Civil Governor for a two months leave of absence,” September 22, 1900, Box 112, File 5090, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3;
In addition to privileging the political patrons of the mayor, the relocation of the tolerance zone transformed the way urban residents thought about their urban space. Whereas before 1900, prostitution had been an unremarkable feature of daily life in Cienfuegos, the removal prostitutes seemed to afford urban residents a new-found moral righteousness, simply for their residence within the city limits. After the official relocation of the tolerance zone, residents of the urban center rejected even the brief passage of prostitutes through the city. This became problematic because the hospital where prostitutes were required to undergo weekly pelvic examinations was located on the far eastern extreme of the city. Arriving there meant that prostitutes had to pass through most of the city. In August 1900, residents of the urban center complained to the city council about the scandal of public women on the public streets. They urged the city council to establish a clinic for prostitutes in their own neighborhood, “in order to avoid the spectacle of [them] passing through the entire town.” The city council moved to rent a house on Comercio Street between Mar and Paseo de Reina in the heart of the Transvaal to establish the hospital. This would keep public women out of the city.895

Confining prostitutes to the Transvaal met with limited success. In January 1901, after unsuccessful attempts to confine all the sick prostitutes to their neighborhood, and an unresolved push to move the hygiene hospital to the Quinta “La Nacional,” the city council sought a temporary solution to reduce the visibility of prostitutes in Cienfuegos. Postponing the transfer of the hygiene hospital, civil authorities sought to use the old military barracks in back of the aqueduct to remove the prostitutes from the civil hospital,

Leopoldo Figueroa, “Telegram reports that he has this date again taken possession of his office,” December 27, 1900, Box 112, File 5090, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

895 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, September 27, 1900, November 17, 1900, APHC/AC.
because General Leonard Wood, military governor of the island, would soon visit the city. More than appeasing the delicate bourgeois sensibilities of middle- and upper-class urban families, civil authorities sought to present an orderly image of the city and a modern, civilized image of themselves as authorities to American military authorities. The Quinta de Higiene, as the hospital designated to treat sick prostitutes was called, opened in May of that year.

At the same time as civil authorities sought to eliminate supposed instances of sexual immorality by relocating the tolerance district, they also enacted policies to suppress elements of black and African cultures from the urban center. In 1900, the city council perpetually entertained discussions of morality, culture and public order in an ongoing effort to present a respectable, white, middle-class image of Cubans. In August and September, the city council ordered alcaldes de barrio (neighborhood authorities) to punish carretoneros, an occupation commonly held by men of African descent, for using profanity in public. They prohibited African drumming in public, especially the dances and parades organized by the cabildos, arguing that these were “contrary to the culture, and because they “bother the neighborhood.” The city council even refused to grant permission when cabildos requested special permits to celebrate religious holidays. For example Eulogio Abreu, an 85-year-old African-born property-owner and representative of the Cabildo Lucumí petitioned the city council to allow drumming in honor of the

896 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, January 2, 1901, APHC/AC.

897 Walter B. Barker, “Quinta de Hygiene [sic] is in working condition and has been occupied as a hospital since May last,” September 23, 1901, File 2363, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

898 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, August 16, 1900, APHC/AC.

899 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, September 27, 1900, APHC/AC.
“Santo Patrono” (Patron Saint). The city council required all drumming to remain inside the Cabildo meeting house, and warned that “in the future, this concession will not be made.” These policies targeting black urban residents contributed to a broader pattern of efforts to remove “undesirable” populations including blacks from the city center.

The gradual transformation of the former vice district into a “moral” space was a critical step in the consolidation of a “respectable” and “orderly” urban center. The removal of immorality from the southwestern neighborhood, despite the initial inconveniences for the political opponents of the regime, increased the desirability—and the property values—of real estate in that area. As property values, and consequently rents increased, residing in the urban center became increasingly inaccessible to poor and working-class residents.

Families that had populated this historically-black neighborhood since the 1830s relocated to cheaper areas, mainly on the urban margins in neighborhoods such as San Lázaro and Pueblo Grifo in the northeast, the eastern margin that would become the neighborhood of La Juanita, and not least, the marginal western zone of Transvaal, that would become the neighborhood of La Reina. In contrast to the “few residents” residing in the neighborhood during the war, in June 1900, the voting district of Paradero, which contained the neighborhood of Reina, had 412 registered voters.

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900 Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, December 3, 1900, APHC/AC.


902 José Miguel Gómez, “Forwards statement of number of voters registered and number voting in each of the municipalities, and gives the names of officers elected,” June 25, 1900, Box 35, File 3738, USNA.RUSA/RG 395/E 1331. The numbers of registered voters in Cienfuegos, by voting district were as follows: Aduana 636, Paradero 412, Recreo 310, Mercado 649, Pueblo Nuevo 430. Official figures
The re-location of the red light district seemed to coincide with a shift in one of the centers of urban black residence. Many of the residents registered in the district of Paradero were part of the urban working classes. Numerous residents were active in the port workers’ unions, including mainly men of African descent like Juan de Dios Torre, Victoriano Machado, Teodoro Terry and Florentino Pascual y Pérez. Other residents were black veterans of the Liberating Army, like the insurgent chief Benigno Najarro. This effective dispersal of a previously autonomous black community within the city limits was also politically useful for white elites, because it fragmented black interests and removed a black stronghold from an increasingly white area.

Removing poor families and “immoral elements” from the city tended to benefit the financial standing of the new ruling elites, political patrons of Figueroa. Moreover, it helped increase property values by making available territories that were previously out of reach due to moral and social concerns. Property values and renting possibilities for many of the white landholders in the area rose, creating added wealth among the new ruling elite, at the same time as ambitious black property interests were motivated to sell and capitalize on increased property values and relocate to more marginal settlements to expand their holdings. For Figueroa and his administration, this was a crucial step in consolidating their political power by showcasing a semblance of patriotism and his devoted cooperation with Americans.

published after the election showed 414 registered voters in Paradero. Gobierno Civil de la Provincia, “Boletas de los candidatos debidamente designados en cada término,” June 11, 1900, Box 74, File1305, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

Taking Back the Transvaal: Vice as Strategy

With the relocation of the tolerance zone to the Transvaal, a formerly marginal, isolated dumping zone was transformed into a thriving residential and business district. Indeed, the designation of the tolerance zone within the Transvaal contributed to a rapid expansion in the population of that neighborhood, as cafés and entertainment venues followed the brothels and bawdy houses. Urban residents were quick to recognize that they could use entrenched interests of the ruling elite in this marginal community to improve their own living conditions. By late 1900, Transvaal residents petitioned the city council to improve infrastructure and sanitation, often arguing that these measures would help municipal authorities police the vice district. For example, in July, residents requested that La Mar street, which ended at the railroad tracks between Paseo de Arango and Fomento street, be opened westward. The western neighborhood, they argued, was almost completely constructed with buildings, and the population had grown.\textsuperscript{904} In October, residents petitioned for public lighting, water service, and street repairs.\textsuperscript{905}

The residents of the Transvaal eventually appealed to the concerns for order and morality among civil authorities to support their petitions for improvements in their neighborhood. By November residents renewed their requests for lighting, arguing that because the neighborhood was home to the prostitutes, “where the police have to be in

\textsuperscript{904} Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, July 26, 1900, APHC/AC.

\textsuperscript{905} Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, October 27, 1900, APHC/AC.
permanent vigilance, this force cannot lend more effective services” without lighting.\(^{906}\)

Because they voiced appeals in terms of maintaining order, civil authorities seemed to respond favorably to these petitions, which additionally afforded increased benefits to property owners of the Transvaal. Despite the marginality of the neighborhood because of its association with urban vice and immorality, these petitions to the city council show that residents embraced the preoccupations of civil authorities to demand better living conditions for themselves and their families, though from the marginal space of “immorality” on the urban fringes.

Map 6: Urbanization of the Transvaal, circa 1902

\(^{906}\) Cienfuegos City Council Minutes, November 30, 1900, APHC/AC.
The geographic pairing of sexual immorality and racial stain worked to reaffirm prevailing stereotypes about both black sexual immorality and the racial, moral and hygienic threat of prostitution. If prostitution was confined to an urban space civil authorities and “respectable” urban residents viewed as already corrupt, such as a black neighborhood, hygiene specialists reasoned, then at least the morality of white women could be protected from contamination by the prostitutes. Relocating the vice district to the marginal western zone of the city also substantially removed the main source of conflict between American forces and Cuban civil authorities, helping to construct an orderly white urban center, symbolizing the modernity, civilization and competence of Cuban authorities. In contrast, all the evils that civil authorities sought to remove from the center congregated into the urban margins, eliminating the disorder and conflict that continued define the tolerance zone from the immediate view of the respectable center.

**Terror in the Transvaal: The Chiquito disturbance of 1901**

On the morning of September 11, 1901, about one year after the official re-location of the tolerance district to the Transvaal, a group of drunken Americans wandered into that neighborhood. Two soldiers, Private Louis M. Schaefer, and Private James Hynds carried their military-issued revolvers. They stopped at their preferred brothel near the café called “Chiquito,” where ladies knew each man by name. American soldiers and civilian employees broke out into a violent encounter among themselves that escalated into public disturbance outside the brothel.

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907 Trial of Private Louis M. Schaefer, October 1, 1901, Box 3296, File 26983, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.
The disturbance attracted the attention of the municipal police. José G. Vázquez, a Cuban police officer who intervened in the squabble, testified that, “I and my companion, Vincente [sic] Hernández, were on duty at the Transvaal and a party of Americans, composed of two soldiers, one corporal, and two civilians, the two soldiers half intoxicated, were having a brawl among themselves, making quite some noise.” The two policemen approached the Americans an “asked them in polite terms to desist from their quarrel.” Like in previous encounters between Americans and Cuban police, the culprits of the Chiquito riot did not take kindly to police intervention. “I suppose they took this in a bad way, and turned to fight toward us,” remembered Hernández. Several Americans pointed revolvers at the police.

Hynes and an American civilian employee, who had been inside the brothel, went outside to intervene in the dispute, leaving his weapon behind, but taking a knife with him. The owner of a lunch counter at the “Chiquito” café witnessed the events: “I saw when the policeman grabbed the knife from the soldier, and then I closed the doors of the coffee house.” One of the women who had been in the brothel testified: “when I heard the noise outside, I thought they were fighting; I looked out the window, and saw the civilian have the policeman’s club in his hand, and the policeman had his pistol in his hand,” testified one. Police promptly disarmed the Americans.

Hynds was not deterred, however. He returned to the brothel to collect his weapon. “When Hynds came in, he said to me:-‘Give me my belt.’ I gave it to him, and

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908 Ibid.
909 Ibid.
910 Trial of Private James Hynds, October 3, 1901, Box 3296, File 27020, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.
he put it on,” testified one of the ladies of the brothel. As soon as the other soldier left the
room, Hynds again left the brothel to join the fight against the police. When she heard
loud talking outside the house, the prostitute gazed out the window to see that the
“policeman had his pistol in his hand, and demanded of Hynds for him to take off his
revolver; Hynds unbuckled his belt and dropped pistol, belt and holster on the porch.”
The policeman grabbed the weapon and handed it to a woman in the café, telling her “to
take care of it until it was called for.” She took it and disappeared into the
establishment.911

As the police subdued Hynds, Schaefer attempted to rescue his friend. Schaefer,
who witnesses identified by two distinctive marks, “by a scar on his face, and by a tattoo
mark on his right arm, resembling a knife with a snake around it,” remained inside the
brothel. He went into another room in the house with one of the ladies. Upon hearing
raised voices again a few moments later, Schaefer asked her where his friend was. She
told him that he had gone out. “He made the remark that he would go out and bring him
back in again before the police got him, and the remark he made was this:—‘Well, I’ll
bring the Son of a Bitch back again before the police gets him.’” Florence testified that
“Hynds was standing on the porch of the café; I turned back from the window, and the
other soldier asked me whether Hynds was in trouble; I told him he was.”912 As soon as
Schaefer stepped out of the brothel “he was struck by a policeman before he could get
into the café door, as he turned to go into the café door, the policeman struck him first in
the neck, and the back of the head, and that blow knocked him own, and as he turned and

911 Ibid.

912 Ibid.
fell, he was struck across the face.” Seeing her client subdued by the police, Florence retreated into the house.\textsuperscript{913} Policemen Julio Acosta and Rafael Hernández took Hynds, who had retreated into the café with a bloody nose, to the public dispensary to receive treatment.

The Chiquito Disturbance highlights two important changes in the relations between Cubans and Americans in Cienfuegos. In contrast to previous disturbances, the relative absence of direct confrontation between civil authorities and military officials, and also between sex workers and Americans, indicates a more collaborative relationship had evolved. The testimony of soldiers and sex workers suggest that sex workers defended their clients at the court-martial trials. Similarly, this conflict differed substantially from previous ones because of the relative lack of attention from the civil authorities. The location of the conflict outside the city limits, seemed to have lowered the stakes of disorder for civil authorities.

One of the most striking aspects of the testimony on the riot was apparent collaboration between the prostitutes and the Americans, a development glaringly absent from the San Juan Day Riot and other disturbances across Cuba between 1899 and 1900. For example, on June 25, 1900, Private Louis M. Schaefer, accompanied by one of his buddies, Trumpeter Justus W. Lyman,\textsuperscript{914} had a violent encounter with a sex worker at Placetas, a town about 50 miles northeast of Cienfuegos. He shot a black prostitute, Luisa Moreno, directly in the face at close range, and Lyman shot and killed the rural guard.

\textsuperscript{913} Trial of Private Louis M. Schaefer, October 1, 1901, Box 3296, File 26983, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.

\textsuperscript{914} Justus W. Lyman engaged in violent encounters not only with Cuban authorities, but also with American ones. In January 1901, he was sentenced to 14 days solitary confinement with bread and water diet for threatening violence against an officer. Trial of Private Justus W. Lyman, January 14, 1901, Box 3197, File 22395, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 5.
Lorenzo Rabada, who came to intervene on Luisa’s behalf. Just two weeks earlier, at 9:30 pm, there had been another public disturbance involving American soldiers, prostitutes, and Cuban police in the central city of Sancti-Spíritus. In the San Juan Day riot, and the riots in Placetas and Sancti-Spíritus, antagonism and violence defined the relationship between prostitutes and American brothel client.

In contrast, prostitutes and their American clients seemed to collaborate during the Chiquito riot and the subsequent investigation and questioning for the Court-martial trials. It is evident that Schaefer was a regular client of the brothel in which Florence, Caridad and María worked. When asked if she knew Schaefer, Caridad replied quite straightforwardly: “I know him, Schaefer, a soldier.” The familiarity between the prostitute and her client may have shaped the way she recounted the events of the disturbance.

All three women downplayed the disorderly conduct of their clients. For example, even though the Americans clearly carried weapons and ammunition, the sex workers claimed that they either did not have them or only carried them for a short time. María Contrera, a third woman in the house during the disturbance, recalled the arrival of

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915 Major A. G. Hennissee, “Report regarding the shooting of Luisa Moreno,” June 26, 1900, Box 40, File 5357, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331; Chief of Rural Guards, Rasco, Sec’y in Charge, June 26, 1900, Box 40, File 5333, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331. Military officials confirmed that the majority of witnesses to the crime were colored prostitutes, an idea one official, Major A. G. Hennissee, reinforced by calling the brothel “a very disreputable house of ill fame.” He suggested that Schaefer and Lyman be tried not by civil authorities but rather by court martial because the trial would inevitably cause much excitement among the Cuban population, and because there would “be much conflicting testimony,” as the witnesses to the crime were mostly black prostitutes. Major A. G. Hennissee to Adjutant General, June 28, 1900, Box 40, File 5357, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

916 Commanding Officer F. P. Fremont, “Report regarding the alleged trouble between soldiers and civilians,” June 22, 1900 Box 40, File 5357, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

917 Trial of Private Louis M. Schaefer, October 1, 1901, Box 3296, File 26983, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.
Schaefer and his companion to her house the day of the scuffle: “Schaefer and his companion were half intoxicated, and Schaefer had no revolver, and his companion had a revolver, but no shells in it; I know there was none in it, because it could be seen there was none in it.”918 Hynds himself admitted that he carried a revolver: “I had been on a detachment and had always been in the habit of carrying my gun with me,-we had no orders against it; we were camped right in the town, I took mine with me; I was returning at the time from a tour of detached service.”919 If he was returning from service, Hynds likely carried ammunition for his weapon, in contrast to the claims made by the prostitutes. Court-martial testimony also revealed that Schaefer carried a loaded revolver.

Two of the women, Caridad Cartaya and María, stated that they did not even remember a conflict happening outside the house on that day.920 Caridad, the “girlfriend” with whom Schaefer transacted, testified that she remembered Schaefer coming to her house that day, but did not recall any struggle with the police.921 The rest of the testimony makes this assertion difficult to credit. The prostitutes most likely became aware of the scandal occurring right in front of their house, and being of the loud and scandalous nature described. It is plausible that the three prostitutes formulated their testimony to protect their clients, as a means of securing future business from them.

Besides protecting their customers by downplaying the disorderly conduct of the American soldiers, the prostitutes were also protecting themselves. Laws regulating

918 Trial of Private Louis M. Schaefer, October 1, 1901, Box 3296, File 26983, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.
919 Trial of Private James Hynds, October 3, 1901, Box 3296, File 27020, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.
920 Trial of Private Louis M. Schaefer, October 1, 1901, Box 3296, File 26983, USNA/CMR/RG 153/E 15.
921 Ibid.
prostitution assigned prostitutes and madams responsibility for disorder within their houses, and prohibited the sale of alcohol therein. Fearing that they would be held accountable for the violent and disruptive behavior of their drunken patrons, the prostitutes may have tried to downplay the involvement of their clients in the disturbance. Moreover, they all clearly stated that all of the men entered the house already intoxicated.

The prostitutes also tended to emphasize the brutality with which the police treated the soldiers during the conflict. María recalled in graphic detail when the police clubbed Schaefer: “the policeman struck him with a club, and when he turned his face was when the policeman struck him again and felled him.” Florence, too, recalled the violence with which police treated the soldiers, claiming that Hynds went out of the brothel and before he could even get to the café the police had assaulted him. The emphasis on the police brutality may have signaled a shift in the attitude of poor urban dwellers toward the police. Whereas in the May riot and the San Juan Day Riot, police had allegedly protected poor and working-class urban dwellers including prostitutes, the increasingly repressive tactics of the force combined with the abuses against prostitutes committed during the relocation of the tolerance zone may have led to rising tensions between police and the urban poor.

While increasing tensions between the police and the urban poor are evident in the testimony of the prostitutes, the lack of attention civil authorities afforded to the conflict showed a widening gulf between the interests of the ruling elite and those of poor and working-class subjects. Previous conflicts had attracted substantial attention from the mayor, to the point of causing direct confrontation between military and civil authorities.

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922 Ibid.
With the relocation of the tolerance district to the urban margins, the preservation of order in the most visible areas of the city—the urban center—and protection of respectable citizens therein was no longer threatened by disorder in and around brothels. Civil authorities lead by recently-appointed mayor Higinio Esquerra seemed to have little direct interest in punishing disorder involving Americans so long as it was contained to urban margins where few or no respectable residents resided. Any discussion of the disturbance was conspicuously absent from city council meeting minutes, which were rather concerned with how to respond to the recent assassination of U.S. President McKinley. Removal of disorderly elements from the city had successfully reduced friction between American military officials and Cuban civil authorities, even when Americans caused disturbances.

**Conclusions: Conflict, Continuity and Change**

The series of riots between American and Cuban men in Cienfuegos highlights diverging conceptions of masculinity and competing ideas about the future of *Cuba Libre*. Evidently, civil authorities had to perform patriotism to secure the support of the Cuban masses. One of the ways they displayed their patriotism was by protecting Cuban women from American men, a potent demonstration their chivalric honor. To secure American backing for their political power, civil authorities had to cooperate with military officials in the preservation of “order” and hygiene in the city. Fulfilling these

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923 City Council Meeting Minutes, Cienfuegos, October 13, 1901, October 30, 1901, APHC/AC.
goals often entailed enacting policies that adversely affected poor and working-class urbanites, among who were many men and women of African descent.

In the first major public disturbances, the May Riot and the San Juan Day Riot, local disputes between poor and working-class Cubans and American soldiers and civilians erupted into violent confrontations. At the heart of these local disputes were black claims to autonomy and authority within a prime urban space, as well as the defense of black manliness, often expressed as protection of local women and families from Americans. Civil authorities in Cienfuegos confronted American military officials over the abusive and disorderly behavior of their soldiers, seeming to support not only the police but also the urban poor and working classes most affected by the riots.

The fragility of this “alliance” between civil authorities and the local poor and working classes became readily apparent in the days after the riots. The virulent attacks of Americans in the radical press in Cienfuegos were accompanied by scathing critiques of the complacency of civil authorities. Veterans with more radical political views denounced their compatriots in office for failing to censure American abuses sufficiently. In so doing, they revealed a divergence between the interests of civil authorities who sought to remain in power, and the goals of the revolution which married absolute and immediate independence with the promise of social justice. To preserve their political power, civil authorities sought to reduce conflict with the Americans and increase collaboration.

Violent conflicts between Americans and Cubans in and around Cienfuegos continued, but after mid-1900, they occurred primarily outside the urban center. The responses to these riots suggest increased collaboration between American military
authorities and Cuban civil authorities and police officers. For example, in the Dancehall Riot of 1900, the mayor instructed the Cuban police officer to summon the commanding officer to deal with disobedience from three drunken soldiers. The police officer complied with these orders, suggesting a degree of cooperation and collaboration between American and Cuban authorities.

One of the most important realizations civil authorities had as a result of the Dancehall riot was that American disorder threatened the safety of respectable residents. Prostitution regulation provided a perfect opportunity for civil authorities to protect “respectable” women while cooperating in American projects for “order.” A key part of preserving order was fostering good “hygiene,” a seemingly benign concept that proved to be laden with assumptions about the moral pathologies associated with the poor and working-classes, and African-descended peoples. The emphasis on hygiene converged most clearly with racial and class divisions in the relocation of the red light district in 1900, which displaced from the urban center populations considered immoral to the marginal western zone known as the Transvaal. With vice relegated to the urban margins, conflicts between Americans and poor and working-class Cubans were less visible perturbations of the urban order. Consequently, riots like the Transvaal riot of 1901 received less attention from civil authorities. The transformation of the social geography of Cienfuegos purged undesirable populations from the urban center, successfully displacing the threat of American disorder to respectable residents, and leading to the reduction of tensions between Cuban and American authorities.

The increasingly benign reactions of Cuban civil authorities to the riots suggest a gradual convergence in interests between white Cuban elites and American military
authorities. The ultimate goal of many Cuban separatists in power was to gain full sovereignty, for which the insurgents had fought for four years. Whereas initially advocates of immediate independence, like mayor Frías pursue this goal by attempting to assert Cuban authority over civil matters amidst American rule, men like Figueroa and later Esquerra pursued a more collaborative strategy. They reasoned that one of the only ways to achieve that goal was to convince the Americans that they could protect foreign interests from the presumably chaotic and disorderly black masses—preserving “order.”

Although the efforts of the civil authorities to transform the urban geography of Cienfuegos had successfully reconfigured the southwestern neighborhood into a zone of white respectability, they recognized “disorderly elements” still remained in other sections. The predominantly black port workers posed one of the most substantial threats to the newly constructed white urban center. The next chapter charts the struggle of black port workers to carve out a space for themselves in an increasingly racialized and classed urban center.
In the very same year that civil authorities mandated the re-location of the tolerance zone to the Transvaal, unionized port workers organized a city-wide strike that paralyzed the Port of Cienfuegos and immobilized the most powerful sectors of the city. Planters, merchants and military authorities refused to accede to the demands of the laborers, considering that their concessions in previous strikes had afforded the laborers too much control over working conditions, which in turn gave them influence over the economies of the wealthy and the commerce of the port. Previous strikes had transformed a mass of obedient workers into one of the most powerful and militant labor organizations in Cuba. Considering the dire consequences of their past failures to control laborers, American military officials turned to repression to quell strikers.

The wealthy commercial elite and the American military authorities in Cienfuegos rejected the demands of unionized port workers. Planter and merchants sought to keep wages low to maintain high profit margins. Organized labor threatened to reduce the profit margins of the commercial elite, while possibly overturning the social order that guaranteed a large, docile work force. Port workers were instrumental in connecting planters and merchants to the world of trade, the very basis of their prosperity. Planters so closely relied on those men who loaded and unloaded the ships, facilitating the exports of sugar and the imports of the machinery. The pliability of this labor force hinged on the
vulnerability of the laborer to the whims of the employers, whose low wages ensured long-term dependence on the plantation economy and its urban offshoots, such as railroads and sea ports.

Collective action among workers undermined the position of total authority of employers, and forced them to reckon with union demands for a family wage, at their own expense. Yet, in Cienfuegos, the conflict took on an added dimension, as mainly Spanish merchants and American planters confronted a racially-heterogeneous union. The port workers unions, especially the stevedore union, organized black, white and immigrant workers, exhibiting a cross-racial class alliance that was rare in the United States. Although the stevedore union counted both blacks and whites among its membership, the largest number of members was of African descent, a fact planters and merchants well recognized. One American in particular, Edwin F. Atkins, exploited the racial composition of the union to delegitimize the demands of stevedores by portraying the union as a racial, rather than a class union. Workers, in turn, combated these racialized depictions and accusations by consistently employing a language of class to demand concessions from capital. Regardless of the internally- and externally-imposed “identities” of these workers, they emphasized their role as working-class men over all others subjectivities.

The series of port worker strikes between 1899 and 1902 illustrate the conflicting strategies of approaching racial inequality. While merchants turned to racial arguments to

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encourage the intervention of the American military in labor strikes, port workers demanded a living wage, based on their status as working men and heads of household. Civil authorities including the mayor and the chief of police served as mediators between laborers, merchants and planters, and American military officials. Although elected officials relied on the working-class vote for continued political power, they used their position to silence the labor unions, showing collaboration with the Americans, while still retaining claims to political patronage of urban laborers. Moreover employers used their connections to the military government to promote an increasingly repressive agenda against labor, while they fostered internal divisions within the union itself. Fragmentation within the union combined with collaboration of civil authorities, military officials and the commercial elite contributed to the disintegration of the stevedore union as threat to elite power in the urban center of Cienfuegos.

The Race-Labor Hierarchy and Post-War Expectations

“At the close of the revolution in 1898 the blacks as a whole dropped into their accustomed place and resumed their industries. Some remained in the field until the final disbandment in the spring of 1899.”925 This passage appeared in an American newspaper, The Herald, in November 1906, shortly after the onset of the second American intervention. To a certain degree, this statement rightly points out the overwhelming continuities in the social structure before and after the war of independence. Reading this statement, Americans might have assumed that blacks willingly returned to the low-

925 “Cubans, Ugly, Plot Against Liberals,” The Herald, November 16, 1906, Volume II.64, MHS/EFA.
paying jobs in cane cutting, manual and day labor. More accurately, however, this statement suggests how successful American and Cuban authorities were in maintaining racial order after the war.

At the time the war began, planters and merchants in Cienfuegos relied heavily upon a workforce that had changed little since the times of slavery. The lives of men and women of African descent who acquired freedom during the gradual process of emancipation between 1870 and 1886 changed relatively little. Many families remained on the plantations on which they were born or had lived most of their lives, and continued to work for the same hacendados after they achieved freedom. Sufficient laborers remained on sugar plantations in Cienfuegos after emancipation so as not to disrupt the sugar production.\(^{926}\) If they did not remain as laborers on sugar estates, some enslaved men and women sought work as colonos, independent cultivators of sugar, who were usually bound to the large mills who bought and processed their raw cane.\(^{927}\) While planters increasingly employed imported Spanish labor, formerly enslaved men and women remained a vital source of labor on the sugar estates (See Table 9).\(^{928}\) Numerous formerly enslaved people with the last name of Sarría worked as colonos on lands surrounding the Soledad estate.\(^{929}\) At the ports, black men also provided the labor to load the sugar onto steamers destined for the United States and elsewhere since at least the

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\(^{927}\) Ibid., 240.

\(^{928}\) Edwin F. Atkins to Brooks, January 30, 1899, Volume II.19, Massachusetts Historical Society, Atkins Family Papers, (Hereafter cited as, MHS/EFA).

\(^{929}\) “Spanish Treaty Claims Commission: Edwin F. Atkins against the United States,” February 4, 1899, Box.II.4, MHS/EFA.
The immense wealth generated from sugar production, then relied on the steady labor a predominantly black workforce.

### Table 9: Race of Workmen on Soledad, by Colonia, January 1899

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spaniards</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Native Whites</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factory</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railroad</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belmont</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosario</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>González</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martínez</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>1183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>31.79</td>
<td>39.57</td>
<td>10.23</td>
<td>16.43</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The war disrupted the labor force in two main ways. First, the Cuban and Spanish armies both prohibited work on sugar estates and persecuted laborers who remained on the estates. In late 1895, Máximo Gómez ordered the Cuban army to “Destroy all sugar estates; burn their cane and defen[s]es at their factories, as well as destroy their railroad lines. Every laborer shall be treated as a traitor, who lends any assistance to these sugar factories.” At one place they found some men working and cut off their hands and feet; at another place two days ago they killed seventeen laborers—this by people who are appealing to the United States to stop the barbarous warfare of the Spanish troops.”

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931 Edwin F. Atkins to Brooks,” January 30, 1899, Volume II.19, folio 87, MHS/EFA.

932 Edwin F. Atkins to Honorable Edward F. Uhl, December 9, 1895, Volume II.39, MHS/EFAP.

other instances, workers were captured and taken by the insurgents, as was the case of the cowboy [boyero] on Soledad in early January, 1896.934

Men of African descent seemed to be especially vulnerable to attack if they continued laboring on the sugar estates instead of taking up arms for Cuba Libre. For example, the black insurgent chief Claudio Sarría, killed one worker carrying his same last name, one which indicated a common link to enslavement on the Soledad estate which he shared with Claudio: “One of our monteros was hung the other day; Blas Sarría by Claudio Sarria.”935 Another example of war-time violence against working blacks was the case of Elias, a vender of bread and sweets, who was slayed on the outskirts of the Amistad plantation in Güines owned by the Cienfuegos-based Terry family: “…the cadaver of a black man was found machete […] missing the left arm and presenting various machete wounds in the body and on the head…”936 “Of the versions collected on said estate, it appears that a few days ago the said black man was foraging in the same place where he was killed, the insurgents gave him various blows with flat of a machete and threatened to kill him if he returned to that point, and verifying it yesterday they consummate the threat they had given him…”937 Work proved to be a dangerous undertaking for some rural men during the war.

Shortly after the Cubans prohibited the sugar harvest, General Pedro Pin, Spanish Commander in Cienfuegos, received orders from Valeriano Weyler, Captain General of

934 Ibid., 191.

935 Ibid., 172.

936 “Muerte del moreno Elias por individuaos de una partida rebelde,” June 26, 1898, Box 99, File 1, Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones (Hereafter cited as ANC/FDR).

937 Ibid.
Cuba, to suspend the harvest until the 15th or 20th of January, as punishment for having paid off the insurgents in the previous season.\footnote{The Spanish generals ordered that the guerrillas arrest workers who attempted to work without passes. Sometimes passes were denied to the workers who requested them, as they were on December 28, 1896 with a contractor of Soledad, the Chinese man Damian Machado. Peter M. Beal complained to the United States Consul in January 1897 that a Spanish guerrilla unit under the command of Severino Pérez declared the passes invalid to prevent 200 laborers from working on Soledad. The persecution of laborers from both Spanish and Cuban sides of the war was enough to frustrate workers and discourage them from returning to the estates to face more obstacles.}

A second way the war disrupted the labor force was that it transformed some poor country dwellers into proud war heroes. This was especially the case for men who had ascended in the ranks of the Cuban army. One such example was Claudio Sarría, who had lived his entire live on the Soledad estate up until joining the insurrection in 1895. By November 1896, he was captain of his own company. After the war, Sarría did not

\footnote{Atkins quotes his own personal translation of this letter, which General Pin showed him. He could not retain a copy of the letter, so when General Pin left the room, he wrote down a translation of the letter, which he quotes in his Claim testimony. MHS: Edwin F. Atkins Papers, Box.II.4: “Edwin F. Atkins, Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, f. 54.}

\footnote{“Edwin F. Atkins to Consulate of the United States, Cienfuegos,” January 20, 1897, Volume II.39, folio 121, MHS/EFA.}

\footnote{“Edwin F. Atkins, Petition before the Spanish Treaty Claims Commission,” December ??, 1905, Box II.4, folio 10, MHS/EFA.}

\footnote{Peter M. Beal to United States Consul, Cienfuegos, January 21, 1897, Papers of the United States Consul at Cienfuegos, Microfilm Reel #6, Walter Royal Davis Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Hereafter cited as WRD/UNC/USCC).}

\footnote{García Martínez, “La Brigada de Cienfuegos,” 182-183.}
return to the countryside, partially because his activities during the war earned him the passionate hatred of local planters, and perhaps as well because he sought to break free of plantation life by moving to the city. As a result, veterans were more reluctant to return to work on the sugar estates if they remained in the countryside, and may have been more inclined toward collective action if they took up manual work in the city.

Planters, who relied on cheap labor in both the countryside and the city worried that the war had disrupted the social order to such a degree that it threatened their ability to procure a workforce. The situation “is not all one could wish here and the insurgents, particularly the negroes do not show a disposition to give up their arms or go to work; labor is scarce and uncertain,” wrote Atkins of black veterans. In response to anxieties expressed by other military officials and local planters in Matanzas and Santa Clara, a confident James H. Wilson asserted in June 1899 that “the intelligence and dominating tendencies of the white race, aided by the docility and usefulness of the dark races, may surely be trusted to settle the race question.” Planters and American military officials concurred that the natural place of blacks was in the laboring classes. Bartolomé Masó, a prominent Cuban patriot reassured Americans that “our negroes will work as before [the war] in the cane-fields, and I see no reason to anticipate trouble from them.”

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944 Edwin F. Atkins to Geo Lawton Childs Esq, March 8, 1899, Volume II.19, folio 224, MHS/EFA.

945 James H. Wilson to Professor Goldwin Smith, January 19, 1899, June 22, 1899, Box 43, Volume 2, LOC/MD/JHW.

American planter, a high-ranking American military official and a Cuban patriot could all agree that the proper role for blacks was labor.

In the city, black veterans had few options for employment. In general, men of African descent faced exclusion from politics, education and government employment. Some black veterans were able to secure work in the municipal police force, while most others poured into the ranks of the working class. It is no mistake that the workers of Cienfuegos erected an arch of triumph in celebration of the inauguration of the Cuban republic in 1902, celebrating the culmination of the achievement for which many of them had fought. Most significant was the placement of this monument representing the racially-heterogeneous working-class population of the city in a prominent and highly visible space in the central Parque Martí, a zone that catered to the predominantly white elite residents who resided there.947

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As the urban working class expanded after the war, so too did the prominence of labor unions. Numerous associations of workers—some with roots in the late colonial period—emerged with renewed vigor in the first months of the military occupation. Between 1899 and 1900, laborers across the trades created organization to represent their interests and secure their economic survival, resulting in an explosion of unions during the first year of American rule. By early 1900, 26 organizations explicitly labeled as unions (gremios) were registered with the police in Cienfuegos. Among the unions were diverse trades, skilled and unskilled workers from cow-milkers and tobacco workers to

948 Photograph courtesy of Orlando García Martínez.
bakers and day laborers. Several other clubs also reflected collective action among workers, including the Circulo de Trabajadores, at the same time as other organizations under police supervisions sought to provide safety networks for the poor and maintain bartering and resource sharing associations.\textsuperscript{949}

It is probable that veterans of color nourished the ranks of a burgeoning number of urban labor unions after the war. This was certainly the case for the unions of the port. The gremio de lancheros, or lightermen’s union had as its president the prominent veteran Antonio Gómez Sosa. Numerous members of the largest and most powerful unions in Cienfuegos, the gremio de estibadores, or stevedore union were also veterans. Indeed, roughly one of every five men who joined the union between January 1899 and May 1902 appeared in the roster of Cuban veterans compiled by General Carlos Roloff. Nearly as many more men had patronymics too common to ascertain for certain whether they participated in the revolution.\textsuperscript{950} There was even variation among the veterans, some like Juan Garmendia, having joined in the early months of the war, and others, such as Miguel Palacios, enlisting after the American intervention. Some of these men had reached non-commissioned officer rank in the army. Abraham Castillo, Modesto Madrazo, Pedro Mendoza, Juan Álvarez, and Juan Garmendia finished the war as 2\textsuperscript{nd} sergeants, Antonio Bacallao was 1\textsuperscript{st} sergeant.\textsuperscript{951}

\textsuperscript{949} Civil Government of the Province of Santa Clara, Section of Public Order and Police, “Relación de las sociedades existentes en esta Provincia,” April 1900, Box 36, No File, United States National Archives, Records of the States Army Overseas, (Hereafter cited as, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331).

\textsuperscript{950} Gremio Mutuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Lista de Socios, 1902, APHC/MP; Carlos Roloff, \textit{Indice alfabético y defunciones del Ejército Libertador de Cuba, guerra de independencia, iniciada el 24 de febrero de 1895 y terminada oficialmente} (Havana: Imprenta de Rambla y Bouza, 1901).

\textsuperscript{951} Ibid.
Though not unique to the period of American military occupation, the unions provided a vital resource for working men and especially veterans after the war. This was a critical time. Food and housing prices were high, and well-paying work was scarce, and competition for these jobs was fierce. For example, most working-class families could not afford to by meat because of the high prices. Americans estimated that the price of food was 30 centenes per capita per day, which they labeled as “high,” as most rations were imported from the United States.  

At the same time as prices for necessities soared, merchants and planters sought to recuperate their financial losses from the war by keeping wages low for workers. This led one American military official to the conclusion that “the slave idea” still prevailed among certain plantation owners.  

Doubtless, this same mentality applied to their dealings with urban laborers.

Collective action provided workers a greater possibility to securing higher wages and more humane working conditions. For example, the self-proclaimed mission of the coopers’ union was to “protect the workers of the Union against the unjust demands of manufacturers and obtain the highest prices possible for the work.” The butchers’ union similarly formed “to defend the workers.” The painters’ union stated as its objected to support the “moral and material good” of its members. These among other

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953 Fred S. Foltz to Adjutant General, February 3, 1900, Box 83, File 664, USNA/MGC/RG 140/ E 3.

954 “Reglamento del gremio de toneleros,” July 17, 1899, Provincial Historical Archive of Cienfuegos, Registro de Asociaciones, (Hereafter cited as APHC/RA).

955 “Reglamento del gremio de espendedores [sic] de Carne,” May 22, 1899, APHC/RA.

956 “Reglamento de pintores, tapiceros y doradores,” August 31, 1899, APHC/RA.
unions provided workers with a powerful tool with which to navigate the discouraging economic conditions after the war.

At the core of the organized labor movement in Cienfuegos were the workers of the Port. Port workers performed a variety of different jobs and were essential in keeping the shipment of goods in and out of Cienfuegos. Lightermen operated lighters, boats that transported the good between the ships anchored in the Port and the docks. Longshoremen loaded and unloaded cargo from the littoral, while stevedores loaded and unloaded cargo on the docks located on the southernmost frontier of the city bordering the Ensenada of Marsillán. Most aspects of port work involved heavy manual labor and required tremendous physical strength, agility and endurance as working hours tended to be long. Work was generally dangerous, inconsistent and poorly remunerated, making the livelihoods of many laborers precarious. The port workers’ unions aimed to defend the interests of workers, secure higher wages, and provide safer working conditions, amidst the punishing conditions of port work. These goals seemed to be very attractive to the dock laborers. In 1899, over one hundred workers had joined the stevedore union. By 1901, the union boasted a membership of at least 250.\textsuperscript{957}

\textsuperscript{957} Major A. H. Bowman “Reports on recent strike at Cienfuegos,” March 9, 1900, Box 31, File 1378, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
Map 7: Docks in the Bay of Cienfuegos
Image 21: Southward view of Steamer at the Muelle Real (Royal Wharf) circa 1900.\textsuperscript{958}

Image 22: Northward view of wharf and warehouses, circa 1900\textsuperscript{959}

\textsuperscript{958} Courtesy of Orlando García Martínez.

\textsuperscript{959} Courtesy of Orlando García Martínez.
A Black Union in a White City

Men of African descent were at the core of the port worker mobilization from early on. As early as the 1870s, stevedores in Cienfuegos had developed organizations to represent the interests of dock workers.\textsuperscript{960} For example, Manuel Soriano, a member of the black mutual aid society called San Cayetano, organized a society of stevedores. In May 1889, his employers took him to court, demanding the disintegration of the society of stevedores Soriano had established. Exceedingly polite and conciliatory, Soriano requested that a neutral third party inspect the accounts so that the workers could be paid.

\textsuperscript{960} Collector of Customs, Cienfuegos, “Telegram,” January 18, 1900, Box 61, File 504, United States National Archive, Military Government of Cuba Records, (Hereafter cited as, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3).
before the society was disbanded.\textsuperscript{961} Although the Soriano attempted to bolster the position of laborers by experimenting with collective action, the employer sought to undermine their position by disbanding the union.

What in 1889 had met failure, became one of the most powerful organizations representing the rights of workers during the American military occupation. Stevedores, alongside their comrades in other port workers unions including the lightermen and longshoremen confronted the wealthiest merchants and planters of the city to demand better working conditions, more control over hiring practices, and higher rates of compensation. By confronting the commercial elite directly, the stevedores violated prevailing expectations of racial etiquette and challenged elite pretensions to perpetuate the colonial social hierarchy that they had fought so many years to dismantle.

In contrast to the other port workers unions, the stevedore union was composed of a large proportion of men of African descent. The stevedore union included men of diverse places of origin, including a few European (mainly Spanish) immigrants, and even men who had been born in Africa. Nevertheless, the vast majority of union members were men of African descent.\textsuperscript{962} Whites did join the union as well, but they were few in numbers, and for the most part did not occupy positions of leadership. In 1904, the first year for which racial statistics are available, 5 of the 35 men who joined the union were

\textsuperscript{961}Damian Yzarzagaza and Esteban García versus Manuel Soriano, “Acta de Conciliación,” September 18, 1889, File 18, APHC/JMC.

\textsuperscript{962}Gremio Mutuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, “Libro de Identificación del Gremio Mutuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos,” 1904, Archivo Provincial Histórico de Cienfuegos, Fondo Movimiento Portuario, (Hereafter cited as, APHC/MP). Only four workers identified as white joined the union in 1904.
classified as white. These were Wenceslao Rodríguez, Manuel Pérez Alberme, Manuel Delgado Matenz, José de Jesús Zerquera and José Juan de M. Delgado.  

Black men composed the leadership of the stevedore union. Indeed, the president of the union for the majority of the military occupation was a mulatto man, Romualdo Amezquita. He was from a fairly well-off family. He likely benefited even further from his leadership position in the union and through his collaboration with the conservative-leaning local politicians including José Antonio Frías. By 1905, he had reached a position that enabled him to run for a seat in the senate. Moreover, delegates and union office holders seemed to have enjoyed a certain degree of prestige among local black associations and wielded some landed property and a modicum of wealth. Manuel Soriano was the president of the Sociedad San Cayetano. The union maintained official relations with a variety of African societies and associations of color of Cienfuegos. Among the associations of color recognized by the union were the prestigious Sociedad Minerva, and the Institución Antonio Maceo. The union also recognized and sustained

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963 Ibid.

964 Enrique Collazo, *Los sucesos de Cienfuegos* (Havana: Imprenta C. Martínez y Compañía, 1905), 33; Gremio Mutuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, November 28, 1902, APHC/MP. The union waived the membership dues for José Amezquita, the son of the president.


966 Gremio Union de Estibadores de Cienfuegos: Lista de Socios, 1902, f. 170-171, APHC/MP. The Union also maintained relations with White associations like the Casino Español and Union de Cienfuegos and ones without explicit racial exclusion such as the Círculo de Trabajadores, Centro de Detallistas, Centro de Veteranos, Centro de Dependientes, and Sociedad de Toneleros.
relations with the African societies including Divina Caridad, Santa Bárbara, and San Cayetano.  

Another prominent organization whose membership included several members of the union was the Cabildo Congo, though this organization was curiously absent from the list of official relations of the union. Francisco Garmendia served as vice president of the Cabildo Congo in 1902, at the same time as he occupied the position of cabeza de cuadrilla in the Stevedore Union. Juan de Dios Torres, whose membership in the Union was firm until his defection in 1902, also held key leadership positions in the Cabildo Congo and a parallel ethnic association called Sociedad de Instrucción y Recreo de Africanos Nación de Portugués San Teresa de Meditando. Members of these and other black societies were common among the membership of the stevedore union, suggesting that many of the members had reached some level of economic stability, to be able to pay the members’ dues of these societies.

Many more members emerged from more humble origins. During the military occupation, many of the members of the union came from several of the largest plantations in the area, on which they or their parents had been enslaved. Of those workers who joined during the military occupation, five held the patronymic Sarría, indicating former slave status on the Soledad sugar plantation once owned by one of the most prominent slave-owning families of the region. Another held name with the last

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967 Assorted papers of the societies of instruction and recreation Divina Caridad, Santa Bárbara, and San Cayetano, APHC/RA.

968 Cabildo Real Congo San Antonio de Paduá, Society Documents, 1902, APHC/RA; Gremio Mutuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, March 14, 1907, APHC/MP.

969 Cabildo Real Congo San Antonio de Paduá, Society Documents, 1902, APHC/RA; Sociedad de Instrucción y Recreo de Africanos Nación de Portugués San Teresa de Meditando, Society Documents, 1902, APHC/RA.
name of Pombert is likely to have toiled as a slave on the Hormiguero estate, owned by
the Ponvert family. Yet another member, Teodoro Terry, probably worked on the Caracas
estate owned by another wealthy slave-owning family, the Terrys. Other patronyms among the union members, including Acea, Tartabull, Abreus, and Quesada suggest that formerly enslaved men and their descendants were represented strongly in the stevedore
union. At least one of these men was African-born. Manuel Congo kept the typical last
name assigned to African slaves recognized as Congo. Surviving photographs of stevedores from the early twentieth century suggest that some members may have had Chinese ancestry as well, though they retained racial labels showing their African
descent.

Furthermore, eleven members had the last name Terry, five of which joined in 1904. The progenitor of the Terry family in Cienfuegos was the Venezuelan-born Don Tomás Terry Adans. Luis J. Bustamante, Diccionario Biográfico Cienfueguero (Cienfuegos, 1931), 177; Rebecca J. Scott, Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba After Slavery (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 22. The Terry family owned numerous sugar plantations in southern-central Cuba. Nine members with the last name Sarría appear on the member roster, four of whom joined in 1904. The slaves of the Sarría estate were numerous, and by the 1880s made up a substantial part of the workforce of one of the largest sugar central in Cuba: Soledad owned by Bostonian Edwin F. Atkins. At least four members held the last name Quesada, suggesting a connection with the Cienfuegos plantation Santa Rosalía, owned by José Quesada, and eventually becoming part of the Constancia estate. The Tartabulls were also represented in the union, connecting it to the old Caridad plantation owned by José Tartabull. At least one former slave with the last name Pombert, appears on the membership roster, showing the connection with the last of the three largest plantations in Cienfuegos: the Hormiguero estates, owned by Elias Ponvert.

971 Gremio Mutuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Lista de Socios, 1902, APHC/MP.
Image 23: Miscellaneous photographs of Stevedores, 1904-1921
The union members occasionally were involved in racial protest. The Union maintained official relations with a numbers of local unions in Cienfuegos, some with black memberships. Stevedores were active in the struggle to end segregation in Cienfuegos. Stevedore Daniel Rufalé known by the alias of “Machete” because involved in a brawl with the owner local café “Primero de Artesanos” in 1894. Rufalé testified in during the trial against him for “maltrato de obra,” that the owner of the café Manuel Fernández charged blacks a prohibitively high price for coffee. When Rufalé protested, Fernández threw the tray and cups into the street, a scandal which attracted a crowd of onlookers. Rufalé left the café quietly.

The union sometimes extended its solidarity to other workers on issues of racial inequality. They worked in conjunction with trade unions across the island—especially the provincial capital of Santa Clara and the national capital of Havana, and even internationally. For example, the Union sent a delegation to Havana in support of a strike on behalf of the tobacco workers. The tobacco workers, according to the stevedores, had a just cause: higher wages in the cigar band, and the de-segregation of the schools for children at the tobacco factories, to promote the “learning of all Cuban children without distinction of color.” Florentino Pascual and Manuel Méndez were sent to Havana as the representatives of the Union.

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972 In Cienfuegos, the union recognized official relations with the unions of Braceros, marinos de bahía, tabaqueros, albañiles, cocheros, expendedores, escogedores, pintores, panaderos, tipógrafos.

973 Manuel Fernández versus Daniel Rufalé and Manuel Casanova, January 2, 1894, Juicios de Falta File 1307, APHC/JMC/JF.

974 The Union supported the Strike of Typographers in the United States in December 1905, for example. Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, December 13, 1905, APHC/MP. The union was also invited to participate in the American Federation of Labor in Detroit in July 1905. Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, July 19, 1905, APHC/MP.

975 Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, November 24, 1902, APHC/MP.
in support of the Tabaqueros. Racial solidarity, it seems, was a significant feature of union activity.

Racial solidarity did not equate to racial unity. The union brought together men of conflicting political beliefs and histories of service. While numerous members had served in the Cuban army, at least two men served Spain. Juan Garmendia, a member of the union in 1899, also served Volunteer in Spanish Cuerpo de Ingenieros (Engineer Corps). Máximo Cuesta also served as in the same force at least as early as 1894. He appeared among the union ranks in 1901, likely having been a member since much earlier. In this capacity, Máximo frequently clashed with urban criminals, including several encounters with Magín himself. On one occasion, Máximo accused Magín of slapping and threatening him. Magín allegedly “between the insults, said offensive words [palabras groseras] because the claimant belongs to the Engineers Corps as a volunteer.”976 The emphasis on political animosity between these two men suggests that even if Magín did not directly serve in the Cuban army, he may have enacted his political allegiance to the Cuban cause through his resistance to Spanish military officials like Máximo. Magín, it seems, was somewhat of an urban variety of social bandit, rather than a common criminal.977

The encounter between these two men illustrates some of the political rivalries entering into the union in 1899. The union brought together men who taken up arms for Spain, men who fought for or in some way supported Cuba Libre, and men who refused to take sides. What is more, most of these men were black, regardless of their political orientation, and including the two men who actively served Spain. This contradicts the conventional wisdom that blacks almost

976 “El moreno Magín Torres versus el idem Don Máximo Cuesta,” February 10, 1894-February 13, 1894, APC/JMC/JF.

unanimously supported the revolution, and may have produced conflict within the union as well. Máximo did not get along well with other union members, weather for political or personal reasons. “Said compañero each time becomes more undisciplined, fighting with members, insulting Delegates when he is not called to work, undermining their instructions when called to work, instituting proceedings against the board of the union among other behaviors that reflected poorly on the union,” charged Federico Ramírez. Máximo was increasingly censured in union meetings in 1901 and 1902, including a forced removal from the meeting hall for disruptive behavior. Eventually the members of the union including several Cuban veterans voted to expel him from the association altogether. This incident suggests that while race certainly provided a commonality among most of the stevedores, it was insufficient to foster unity amidst political and personal fragmentation.

Although race may not have been the only—or even the most important, for that matter—motive of union among stevedores, it was a significant feature of union life that workers had to confront. The racial composition of the union presented unique challenges for the workers. The union boasted a large, organized and militant black membership and powerful black leaders, while merchants and planters were white. This gave class-based confrontations between labor and capital a semblance of a racial confrontation between blacks and whites. Indeed, with the proliferating rumors of black rebellion and the omnipresent specter of “Negro rule” that seemed

978 Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, September 27, 1902, APHC/MP.

979 Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, August 26, 1902, APHC/MP. Original Text: “Máximo Cuesta desde que empezó la Asamblea mostró una actitud irrespetuosa interrumpiendo a los oradores unas veces, otras cubierto, otras abandonando un asiento para ocupar otro. La presidencia lo requirió por primera y segunda vez y por tercera, lo mandó abandonar el local, y negándose a hacerlo tuvo necesidad de expulsarlo para poder mantener el orden que lo tenía interrumpido.”

980 Gremio Mutuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, September 3, 1902, APHC/MP.
to define local politics during the American occupation, demands of black workers could easily fit within an already-existing framework of racial conflict.

It probably did not help the stevedores that some of the members had been involved in crime in prior years. Workers in more precarious economic circumstances resorted to various alternatives to supplement their incomes. Some members dabbled in crime to supplement their incomes. One example was Magín Torre, the brother of Juan de Dios Torre. Born in August 1864 to the emancipated African Josefina, Magín first entered the criminal system in Cienfuegos in February 1881, when he was only sixteen. He began as a petty thief, living on Dorticós Street, between Casales and Velasco, the historic port-side black neighborhood and entertainment district. During the war, Magín had turned from petty crime and robbery to pimping, facing imprisonment numerous times. Magín, despite various expulsions, remained part of the union until his death in 1922.

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981 Bautizo de Magín Torre, Libro 9, Folio 183, No. 855, Santa Iglesia Catedral de Cienfuegos, Libro de Bautizos de Pardos y Morenos, (Hereafter cited as, SICC/LBPM). “Martes veintisiete de diciembre de mil ochocientos sesenta y cinco […] Magín que nació el diez y nueve de agosto próximo pasado, hijo de la morena emancipada nombrada Serafina [Josefina], de nación Conga, y de padre no conocido, a cargo de D. Ignacio María de la Torre vecino de esta parroquia: fueron sus padrinos Pedro Barroso y Bárbara […]” It is possible that Magín was the older brother of the prostitute María, who reported a violent attack by the prostitute Rosa Valdez. Although the María in the case against Rosa was María de las Mercedes, and Magín’s sister was baptized with the name of María Magdalena, it was common for prostitutes to change their names, as Rosa Valdes (aka María del Rosario Fernandez, or Rosario Fernandez) did. Bautizo de María Magdalena Torre, morena libre, Libro 12, Folio 176, No. 580, SICC, LBPM. “Día veinte y seis de Julio de mil ochocientos setenta y cinco […] una párula que nació el día veinte y dos del presente mes y año, hija de la morena libre procedente de emancipada Josefa a cargo de Dn Ignacio María de la Torre, natural de África […] le puse por nombre María Magdalena. Fueron sus padrinos Vicente Mauri y Merced Díaz.”


983 “Recibo de Cantidad,” April 14, 1923, No. 81, f. 720, Archivo Provincial Histórico de Cienfuegos, Protocolos Notariales, Felipe Silva Fernández, (Hereafter cited as, APHC, PN, FSF). Magín died on July 3, 1922 while working as a stevedore, unloading wood from the ship “Lake Girth,” off the Avilés dock in the Bay of Cienfuegos. His membership in the union afforded him an insurance plan covering work related injuries and death. His mother, Josefa, collected 256 pesos and 27 centavos from the Compañía de Seguros y Fianzas de Cienfuegos.
Arguments and fights were known to occur. Indicative of earlier conflicts between union members was one fight that broke out between two union stevedores, Tomás Padrón and Manuel Mendez in September 1902.\textsuperscript{984} The fight began with a work accident. Attempting to board a boat to return to shore, Tomás threw a plank toward the launch on which Manuel rode. As the plank came down, it smashed Manuel in the head. Manuel shouted profane words to which Tomas took offense. Tomas “rejected it [the obscene word], saying to the compañero Méndez that he did not permit anyone to use those words on him.”\textsuperscript{985} Manuel replied that he had said the words in “the explosion of pain that was caused him by the blow of the said plank that had been delivered to him in the head, but without mind to personal offense.” Tomas was not satisfied. He began to insult Manuel with offensive words. Uniting action with words, he inflicted upon Méndez a wound with an \textit{arme blanche}, as the verbal exchange escalating into a physical attack.\textsuperscript{986}

The portside neighborhood of Marsillán was an area stevedores and other port workers frequented as they awaited the shape-up, took a meal, or gathered after work in one of the many cafés and bars that lined the streets closest to the wharves. Their meeting house was located in this neighborhood as well. The neighborhood, already known for various forms of vice including prostitution, consumption of alcohol, and gambling was also the site of violent conflicts among stevedores. The rowdy and violent behavior of some union members reflected poorly on the union because it seemed to corroborate prevailing racial ideologies that condemned blacks for their innate criminal tendencies. Indeed, the stakes of “respectable” behavior were high, union

\textsuperscript{984} September 10, 1902

\textsuperscript{985} APC, Fondo Movimiento Portuario, Book of Meeting Minutes, 1902-1907, f. 68.

\textsuperscript{986} Ibid., f. 69.
leaders knew. The behavior considered dishonorable or uncivilized could cost the union success in their negotiations for workers’ rights.

Union leaders recognized that the racial composition of the union could pose unique challenges to securing gains for workers. The culture of respectability emphasized among the union leadership was one of their key strategies in bolstering the power and influence of the union among people who assumed the laborers were just a bunch of brutes. At the heart of protecting the working-class (black) family was the discourse of dignity and prestige. To uphold the image of working-class men as respectable, dignified and honorable, union leaders enacted a strict code of conduct among its members. The union leadership demanded that its members engage in “proper” behavior, etiquette, and order at work and in public. This meant using polite language, avoiding profanity and violence, and remaining calm so as to preserve “moral order”. These prohibitions, leaders claimed, were necessary to protect the prestige of the association.

The high value union leaders placed on orderly behavior was evident in the strict codes of discipline maintained by the union. The union had its own system of surveillance: the Delegados supervised all work and were responsible for reporting any incidents or fights. The union also had its own justice system in the form of internal courts staffed by members who tried offenders of the Reglamento and order. Fights between members, dishonesty and even profanity were censured severely in the name of the prestige of the union and its members.

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987 Walter B. Barker to Louis V. Caziarc, “Relative to the strike of laborers at the government dock, and the statement of same,” April 7, 1899, Box 6, File 2905, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1466.

988 Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, 1902-1907, APHC/MP.

989 Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, September 27, 1902, January 21, 1905, APHC/MP.
The racial composition of the Stevedore Union of Cienfuegos provided stevedores an added challenge in their confrontations with the merchants and businessmen of Cienfuegos. While the union demanded higher wages and better working conditions for the workers, planters and merchants rejected these demands as excessive, sometimes turning to racial arguments to undermine the claims of workers. This ongoing struggle between labor and capital, thus, took racial overtones. Workers initially made gains, while avoiding racial language in their claims. The series of strikes of the Cienfuegos port workers during the first two years of the military occupation paralyzed business and crushed white hopes of a docile black working class. The union became powerful challenge to hopes that blacks would simply return to their pre-war “place.”

The Strike of April 1899

One of the first signs of the power and militancy of organized labor in Cienfuegos was a strike by the stevedores in collaboration with other dock workers, and laborers of the warehouses and railroads in early April 1899. Although this was not the first strike during the military occupation, it was one of the first to command the undivided attention of local military officials. Laborers demanded an increase in their pay by $0.50. Merchants and planters denigrated these demands as harmful to their interests, unreasonable, and even excessive. Captain Walter B. Barker, Captain of the Port of Cienfuegos, supposedly an arbiter between the two sides of the conflict, seemed to be an advocate and spokesperson for the propertied classes during the strike. In an investigation of the strike, he reported that “for the past two days I have made a thorough investigation of their grievances and I am constrained to say that the claims of the laborers are
unjust.” American military authorities, in communication with sugar and shipping interests, justified their refusal to negotiate with the laborers by calling attention to their low status of in implicit comparison with the supposed respectability of the property owners.

Barker was particularly forthcoming with his contempt for the workers, which he expressed in unfavorable descriptions of them. “Investigation proves that this movement was instigated by a rabble element acting in the guise of a labor union which had no organization at the time the strike took place,” wrote Barker of the laborers. He emphasized the disreputable character of the strikers, suggesting that they not only threatened wealth but also menaced order. “This movement is inspired by a low, disorderly element, and unless checked instantly will lead to serious trouble,” wrote Barker urgently. The depiction of the union workers as a “rabble” and a “low, disorderly element,” possibly encompassing certain racial undertones, highlighted an assumption that stevedores were incapable of forming a real union. This characterization of the workers “acting in the guise of a labor union,” served to delegitimize their demands.

Certainly, the position taken by Barker in the preliminary negotiations suggests that he had already decided who was “right” before talks even began. While property owners stood to lose profits if sugar was not shipped, laborers risked extreme hardship and even starvation of their families in order to demand better working conditions. Both laborers and property owners refused to stand down from their respective positions, and intervention from military authorities proved futile. After the failed attempt to resolve differences, conditions were becoming desperate for the property owners. The collective action of laborers across the trades paralyzed work in the Port, resulting in financial losses for sugar planters among others. Barker again voiced the

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990 Walter B. Barker to Louis V. Caziarc, “Relative to the strike of laborers at the government dock, and the statement of same,” April 7, 1899, Box 6, File 2905, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1466.

991 Ibid.
concerns of merchant and planters to his superiors: “Due to the strike all available transportation, both in the harbor and on the railroad is useless. Lighters and tugs are being loaded with sugar. If a transport arrives here within the next three or four days and laborers do not resume work at once we are very helpless to make any movement.” The language Barker employed in his communications to his military superiors was almost identical to the language property owners, especially Atkins employed in his later protests.

Due to the militancy of the laborers, Barker recommended “drastic action” to suppress the strikers. He encouraged a military solution to a civil dispute, suggesting that American troops be called in to end the strike. Even as he awaited an answer to his request for military intervention, Barker was eager to take matters into his own hands. He informed his superiors that he would preemptively detain the lead strikers: “While awaiting instructions I shall, if able to apprehend them, hold in custody the men who have assumed to represent the strikers.” Barker contended that violence was the most effective method to control the laborers.

Revealing his more private sentiments toward the strikers, Barker sent a hand written, seemingly unofficial note to his commanding officer, Louis V. Caziarc. He confessed how he had actually handled the strike at Cienfuegos: “I put it to them that unless the lighters were unloaded at once and other necessary work required to enable me to proceed with the work before me, I was [going to] ‘shoot ‘em on the spot.'” This note reflected an increasing willingness among military authorities across the island to use violence to control poor and

992 Ibid.

993 Ibid.

994 Ibid.
working-class Cubans. Military action and summary detention of strikers would become the principal methods for controlling labor across the island.

The April strike ended when employers agreed to increase the wages of laborers by $0.50. On a holiday or at night, the wages were doubled. No military force was allowed to suppress the strikers. Nevertheless, the gains achieved by the union were marred by the ominous precedent Barker had set with his demands for military action. Indeed, the strike of April 1899 highlights the project of certain ambitious military men, namely Barker, to play a more dominant role in civil affairs under the occupying government. Even though a civil government had been established in January, and technically had legal jurisdiction over municipal matters, “each little jackass seemed to feel that he was called upon to command the people, manage their public business, and supervise their daily duties,” as James H. Wilson put it.

The increasingly prominent role of American military officials in local affairs would become evident subsequent conflicts with laborers. Just one month after the settlement of the strike, quartermaster employees under Barker engaged in a violent dispute with stevedores contracted by the captain of the port. This conflict, the May riot, resulted in questions about how Barker had come to occupy the position as captain of the port. The self-appointment of American military officials to civil posts reflected a broader pattern under the rule of General John C. Bates, the commander of Cienfuegos, a development that Cuban civil authorities

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995 Major A. H. Bowman “Reports on recent strike at Cienfuegos,” March 9, 1900, Box 31, File 1378, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

996 James H. Wilson to Captain Arthur Murray, May 25, 1899, Box 44, LOC/MD/JHW.

997 Chief Quartermaster, “Telegram requesting information as by what authority Captain Barker holds position of Captain of the Port at Cienfuegos,” June 7, 1899, Box 17, File 3680, USNA/MGC/RG 140/ E 3.

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resented. In the coming months, civil authorities would play in increasingly prominent role in negotiation with organized labor interests. Indeed, the civil authorities would act as the mediators between American military authorities of the port and property owners on the one hand, and union leaders on the other.

The Dock Workers Strike of February 1900

In February 1900, the tension between capital and labor again came to a boiling point in Cienfuegos, as dock workers struck work for the seventh time within one year. Rallying the powerful network of labor unions and associations of color, the dock workers successfully paralyzed business in the port, and even threatened the ability of planters on the adjacent sugar plantations to export their products. While dock works demanded higher wage, commercial elites sought military suppression of the workers, and the forced disbandment of the unions to secure their position and control of business in the port.

In this strike, Cuban civil authorities played an active role in mediation between capital and labor. They sought to prevent American military intervention in civil affairs, not only to preserve their image as fit to govern, but also to secure public support for their candidacy in the upcoming June elections. At the same time as the proximate elections reduced their willingness to accede to military action, civil authorities also had to keep up the appearance of “respectability” and “intelligence” by defending the interests of property owners. Civil authorities served as the mediators among labor, capital and American military officials, while balancing their own dual need for working-class votes and legitimacy with Americans.

998 “Todo lo intervienen,” La Tribuna, May 22, 1899, Box 1, No File, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/ E 1352.
The events leading up to the strike begin several weeks earlier when lightermen demanded higher wages and to be paid in American gold instead of Spanish currency. In a letter to the owners of lighters on February 5, 1900, Antonio Gómez Sosa, president of the Lightermen’s union wrote: “I have the pleasure of enclosing you a copy of the new tariff by which this association is to be governed hereafter. In sending you the new tariff, we beg you notify us before the 8th of your views, as the desire of this association is to harmonize your interests with ours.” The language and tone of the letter seemingly leveled the status of humble workers and wealthy elites. Gómez Sosa who had rendered distinguished services as the commandant of the Gómez regiment in the Cuban Army. The transformative experience of combat perhaps instilled him with a semblance of the revolutionary goals of social justice, as he confronted some of the wealthiest and most powerful men and firms of Cienfuegos.

Merchants did not respond well to such a firm challenge to their authority. On February 8, Nicolás Castaño of Castaño & Co., replied to the letter from the lightermen: “we have to state: That we cannot agree to what that association by itself has made, without consulting, discussing, or consenting previously with the owners of lighters, consignees, freighters, and merchants, as naturally and reasonably it should have been done.” Moreover, Castaño refused to pay the higher wages: “The undersigned cannot admit nor will admit [an]other tariff for the payment of day wages to pilots and sailors than what the present one orders,” Castaño wrote. He made clear his resentment of the demands of the workers, pointing out that the previous rates had been “imposed a few months ago at the free will of that association, who considers itself owner and arbitrator of the interests of all this city.” Castaño feared that any further concessions to the


1000 Roloff, Indice alfabético, 376.
laborers would lead only to the rising power of the union: “Inasmuch as the demands greater day by day endear life in general and cause notable damage to commerce without caring a straw about one thing or the other.” Castaño perceived the growing influence, power and exigencies of the laborers in Cienfuegos as a threat to the social order that provided a strict division and power differential between capital and labor.

According to Castaño, the workers exceeded their role by demanding a higher wage. He expressed this idea in terms of rights: “Neither can we, nor should we consent to impositions of any kind, and much the less to tolerate that what belongs to us be governed and regulated by whom for the same is unauthorized nor has any right to.” An ardent defense for the necessity of economic stratification, Castaño argued that the business interests were the only ones with the authority to change the terms of work, because their interests were at stake. He signed off with a menacing warning to the Union. He would not hesitate to defend what he perceived as his rights: “To conclude, I remind you, expecting you will not forget the warning, that our laws forbid menace and coaction, and that we are disposed to defend our rights and interests at all costs, even with sacrifices and costing whatever it may cost.” By expressing his interests in terms of rights, Castaño revealed a vision of Cuban society that centered on the social and economic subordination of the working classes.

Image 24: Esteban Cacicedo y Torriente

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1001 Nicolás Castaño to Lightermen’s Union, February 8, 1900, in Major A. H. Bowman, “Reports on recent strike at Cienfuegos,” March 9, 1900, Box 31, File 1378, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

1002 Major A. H. Bowman “Reports on recent strike at Cienfuegos,” March 9, 1900, Box 31, File 1378, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

1003 Pablo L. Rousseau and Pablo Díaz de Villegas, Memoria descriptiva, historia y biográfica de Cienfuegos y las fiestas del primer centenario de la fundación de esta ciudad (Havana, Establecimiento tipográfico “El siglo XX,” 1920), 436.
Property owners pointed to the recent history of labor unrest to bolster their claims that the demands were excessive and unreasonable. Two dozen merchants and businessmen of Cienfuegos, including Esteban Cacicedo, an ardent defender of Spanish rule, and members of the Huike and Terry families, petitioned General Wood to dissolve the labor unions. Just weeks earlier, dock workers of Cienfuegos organized a strike to protest the importation of foreign workers by shippers to unload the vessels.1004 “Strike of Shore Laborers stevedores and the Bay Cartmen and others as lightermen connected with the Commercial Trade which gives the life to this town have happened so frequently and [it] is taking place again today,” a group of merchants and businessmen wrote to the military authorities in Cienfuegos. The merchants could not understand why the laborers were striking, because they considered that the work was so “well remunerated.”1005 It seemed that a settlement with the stevedores had just been brokered with the lightermen were issuing new demands.

Under what they claimed was the constant threat of strikes, the merchants appealed to General Wood for help: “we consider ourselves at the mercy of the Laborers association existing

1004 Collector of Customs, Cienfuegos, “Telegram,” January 18, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
1005 Castaño, Cacicedo, Huike, Terry and twenty others to General Leonard Wood, February 21, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
here which cause[s] a general trouble with their regulations formed by themselves without having consulted the paying classes…”1006 Appealing to the implicit mission of the military occupation, merchants and businessmen begged the military government to defend the interests of the wealthy, many of whom were American, American-financed, or proponents of American rule. We “beg you very respectfully to dissolve the laborers association until new regulations have been formed with General approval of the paying classes and governments [sic] authority,” they pleaded to General Wood.1007

The dissolution of the unions, the merchants claimed, would benefit everyone involved. Certainly, their plan would “protect our interests as well as all concerned of the general trade and also avoid a decreasing condition of prosperity of the harbor and town of Cienfuegos which may be the consequence of high tariffs and continuous strikes.” They also argued, though, that the dissolution of the unions would be the best outcome for the workers as well. It “will, we consider, result in their own benefit for a better march of their association.”1008 With this rather paternalist argument, the merchants may have been referring to what they perceived as the damaging consequences of high expectations and agitation among labor leaders, inciting the fancies of workers and resulting in strikes.

No one more than Edwin F. Atkins bristled before the labor demands. He approached the strike with two main strategies. First, he sought to undermine the claims of the workers by using racial arguments. Second, he simultaneously criticized the way civil authorities handled the strike in order to compel American military intervention in the strike. According to Atkins the

1006 Ibid.
1007 Ibid.
1008 Ibid.
strike provided proof that Cuban separatists were unfit for self-government, as they could not preserve order.

Atkins argued that the strike was yet another manifestation of racial disorder. Similar to the way Barker depicted laborers during the April 1899 strike, Atkins attributed the increase in the demands of laborers in 1900 to agitators. He wrote frantically to General Wood pointing out the fragmented interests within the lightermen’s union: “Careful inquiry satisfied me that the lightermen who are Spaniards are satisfied as a class with present wages, and would go to work did they not fear to disobey the orders of the union, which seems to be dominated by certain Cubans.” According to Atkins, the Spaniards “were afraid of the negroes and Cubans who, they said, would kill them if they disobeyed orders or refused to join their associations…” He seemed to suggest that blacks were responsible for the trouble.

Barker concurred with Atkins. He interpreted the strike as yet another example of agitators inciting the lower classes: “As far as I can ascertain facts their claims [are] not founded on justice but an imposition on merchants and apparently the work of a few agitators for no other purpose than to keep themselves in prominence.” Barker echoed Atkins, claiming that most of the laborers wanted to return to work, but that the leaders of the union had threatened to prosecute the laborers if they did. Although it was not uncommon for strikes to become violent, especially when strikebreakers undermined the cause of the laborers, the strikes in

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1009 Edwin F. Atkins to General Leonard Wood, February 21, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

1010 Atkins, Sixty Years in Cuba, 315.

1011 Walter B. Barker to Adjutant General, February 21, 1900, Box 31, File 944, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

1012 Strikes at Matanzas and Santa Clara became violent in 1900 and 1901. Cipriano Silveira to Department of Justice, March 26, 1901, Box 122, File 78, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Civil Governor Betancourt to General Wood, March 12, 1901, Box 122, File 18, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Lieutenant Colonel W.M. Wallace to Adjutant General,” February 11, 1901, Box 122, File 18, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Colonel Noyes, “Telegram stating that
Cienfuegos had for the most part been peaceful. Nevertheless, members of the commercial elite, eager to complete their shipments and guarantee their profits, requested military intervention to protect the strike-breakers.

Atkins insisted that conceding to the demands of workers would only serve to legitimize their authority. He cited the tumultuous history of organized labor in Cienfuegos, growing more powerful each day since the beginning of American military rule. “This is the seventh strike within a year,” Atkins complained. In 1898, wages for lightermen were fixed at $2.50-$3.50, and the captains of the lighters received $3.50-$5.25, Spanish gold, per round trip from landing to ship anchored in bay and return.\(^{1013}\) “Wages having been fixed in previous settlements, the merchants feel they cannot submit to further demands, without serious consequences, and there are possibilities of matters taking a critical turn.”\(^{1014}\) With ever-increasing demands for higher wages, the unions jeopardized the high profit margins of the property owners.

While the demands of the laborers troubled him, Atkins most vehemently protested against what he saw as the failures of civil authorities to defend propertied interests. Claiming that the civil authorities were not acting with sufficient force against the strikers, he demanded the presence in Cienfuegos of the commanding general of the province, General Wilson: “The civil authority is timid and unable to cope with the situation, and U.S. officers cannot move without authority of the commanding officer. Allow me to suggest that conditions are too delicate to be handled from Matanzas.” Atkins characterized the strike as an emergency, and urged military authorities to use U.S. troops to quell the strike: “the Department Commander

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1013 The rate of wages varying according to the size of the lighter and distance.

1014 Edwin F. Atkins to General Leonard Wood, February 21, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
should be on the spot, and prepared for an emergency, or authority should be vested in some local U.S. officer.”  Atkins suggested that military intervention would be the only viable way to end the strike.

As a result of the multiple letters from Atkins and Barker, General Wilson issued orders to mayor Frías to have the municipal police force protect strike breakers. Mayor Frías complied. He ordered the police to “protect efficaciously all persons, whether they belong or not to the labor corporations, that are doing the work of those on the strike, since it is the duty of the authorities to guarantee the liberty to work.” He also ordered the police to prevent the strikers from marauding around the port: the force should likewise “avoid that the unoccupied workmen be hanging about the places and wharves where work is being done.” These, he affirmed “are duties that under your strict responsibility are recommended to you and subordinates.” The police were thus ordered to protect the strikebreakers. The municipal police played a critical role in undermining the demands of labor unions in the February 1900 strike, underscoring the transformation of the force from agents of urban justice to a defenders of the commercial elite.

For Atkins, though, police supervision was insufficient to quell anxieties. Instead, it actually augmented his anxieties. He claimed that the police were defending the laborers, as they supposedly had during the May riot the previous year. In a desperate telegram, General Wood wrote to the Civil Governor of Santa Clara Province, probably in response to the appeal of Atkins: “Situation [in] Cienfuegos demands your serious attention and presence in that city. […] the Chief of Police is in active sympathy with it. The interests of your people are suffering

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1015 Ibid.

1016 Major A. H. Bowman “Reports on recent strike at Cienfuegos,” March 9, 1900, Box 31, File 1378, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.
severely as the demands of the strikers are excessive.”1017 This frantic communication, Atkins referenced existing fears among military officials in Cienfuegos that police collaborated with disorderly elements, to argue for the necessity military action against strikers.

In addition to indicting the police for conspiring with labor, Atkins also charged the civil authorities with complicity in the strike. Atkins wrote to Wood, informing him that the president of the lightermen’s union, “who is directing strikers is an employee of Municipal Gov’t here, who was discharged by US officials last year” for dishonesty and later the mayor named him sanitary inspector.1018 He referred to Gómez Sosa. If the civil authorities supported the workers and even served as union leaders, Atkins reasoned, they could certainly not be trusted to protect business interests. “The strikers rightly or wrongly feel they have the support of the Civil Authorities and a cartman was arrested by a policeman two days since and threatened with fine for working, contrary to order of the union.”1019 Even if a settlement was reached, Atkins doubted that the Cuban authorities could enforce it, for lack of common sense: “I hesitate to make recommendations [Not True] but what I think is most needed is a little determination and what we in Massachusetts know as ‘Horse sense’”1020 This is something Atkins judged could not be found in the Cubans. According to Atkins, the civil authorities were as much of a problem as the strikers, a not-so-subtle argument for military action to suppress the strike.

1017 Leonard Wood to Adjutant General, February 26, 1900, Box 32, File 1094, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

1018 Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba*, 315; Edwin F. Atkins to General Leonard Wood, February 26, 1900, Volume II.20, MHS/EFA.


1020 Edwin F. Atkins to General Leonard Wood, February 26, 1900, Volume II.20, MHS/EFA.
Atkins could no longer point to the racial similarities between municipal officials and the so-called disorderly elements to support his claims. After all, the civil authorities including the mayor, chief of police, city council, and most other important municipal posts were filled by whites. Nevertheless, civil authorities were sensitive to the demands of urban workers, a sufficient number of who would have been able to vote, even under restricted suffrage because of their literacy or service in the war. Atkins argued that the Cuban authorities had no interest in upsetting the strikers because they were trying to ensure their re-election the following year: “The Civil authorities are looking for the support of these strikers at the coming elections.” Even though the restricted suffrage probably excluded many of the poorer and less educated men who had not served in the Cuban army, Atkins effectively harnessed ties of political patronage to argue that even white Cuban separatists represented the unruly masses, and therefore posed a grave threat to American and commercial interests.

Wilson eventually permitted military action. After several days, the strike affected more than just sugar planters and merchants and began to inhibit government business. When Barker found that the strike prevented him from shipping government goods, he wired General Wilson, requesting permission to call in the troops. Wilson “who was at that time was apt to favor the Cubans,” acceded to this request. Civil authorities at the municipal and provincial level appealed to military authorities to refrain from sending in troops. Indeed, dozens of letters and telegrams from mayor Frías, José Miguel Gómez, the Civil Governor of Santa Clara Province, José de Jesús Monteagudo, the Chief of the Rural Guard and Commanding General Wilson to General

1021 Ibid.
Wood and the Adjutant General repeatedly confirmed that there was never any threat to order.1022

The threat of military intervention “seemed to alarm the alcalde,” Friás most of all.1023 He assured military authorities that he and his men could maintain order without U.S. military interference. He again pledged to protect strike-breakers, affirming that “full protection is given to all laborers who desire to work.”1024 He made it clear to the Adjutant General that his orders to the police force were sufficient to maintain order in Cienfuegos and that intervention from American troops would be unnecessary; “The police force is sufficient to cover all emergencies and I consider unnecessary any aid from other forces though I thank you for your offer.” Friás reminded General Wood that order was maintained and no disturbances had occurred, and that the strikers were entirely “pacific.”1025 Friás emphasized the peaceful nature of the strikers, and the ability of police to maintain order to prevent military intervention in the strike. These letters confirming the maintenance of order in Cienfuegos were appeals to the military authorities to refrain from heeding the requests of wealthy merchants like Atkins who demanded violent suppression of labor by U.S. troops.1026 Civil authorities sought to avoid the tensions arising

1022 José Miguel Gómez to General Leonard Wood, March 1, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; General Wilson to Adjutant General, February 23, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; General Wilson to Adjutant General to General, March 1, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; José de Jesús Monteagudo to General Wilson,” February 28, 1900 USNA, Box 31, File 1128, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331.

1023 Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba*, 316.

1024 José Antonio Frías, “Telegram acknowledging receipt of two messages,” February 24, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

1025 Mayor Frías to General Leonard Wood, February 21, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Mayor Frías to General Leonard Wood, February 24, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Mayor Frías to Adjutant General,” February 23, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3; Mayor Frías to Adjutant General, February 23, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

1026 Edwin F. Atkins to General Leonard Wood, February 26, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
from calling in the troops both to bolster their own authority, and to ensure the political allegiance of the working classes by avoiding a repeat of the deadly disturbances of May and June 1899.

Civil authorities played a central role in negotiating an end to the strike. Mayor Frías reported that the workers had agreed to return to work the following morning if their claims were considered by a commission of six, including himself, Barker, two laborers, and two merchants.\footnote{Mayor Frías to General Leonard Wood, February 28, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.} The commission resolved to deny the request for higher wages but did stipulate payment in American currency rather than Spanish gold.\footnote{Edwin F. Atkins to General Leonard Wood, February 28, 1900, Volume II.20, MHS/EFA.} On February 27, strikers, the union presidents Antonio Gómez Sosa, Joaquín Pompa and Romualdo Amezquita, signed the agreement with the merchants, shippers, and agents of the sugar estates.\footnote{Major A. H. Bowman “Reports on recent strike at Cienfuegos,” March 9, 1900, Box 31, File 1378, USNA/RUSA/RG 395/E 1331. The owners of the lighters included Cobas & Co., Aferino Mendez, Boullón & Co., Nicolas Castaño, Cienfuegos Coal Co., Nicolas S. Acea, F de Mazarredo, Nicanor Calzada, Emilio Apezteguía, and Castaño & Co., and various sugar estates.} The strike was over, and the most substantive demands of the laborers had been defeated.

The port workers of Cienfuegos had returned to work, and business again resumed its usual rhythm, but profound changes were underway. Civil authorities effectively repelled military suppression of the workers, but police served decidedly in the favor of the commercial elite. Civil authorities engaged in a delicate balancing act while navigating the strike. One the one hand, they relied on the support of the workers to renew their claims to power in the coming elections, then just three months away. This may have made them more reluctant to crush the strike by force. On the other hand, they simultaneously relied on a tenuous and often contentious relationship with American military authorities for their political power. Appeasing military
officials meant responding to the demands of the commercial elite, and defending the interests of the wealthiest residents of the region. This entailed controlling labor unions. Ultimately, Frías and his cabinet failed this balancing act in the eyes of Atkins and Wood, who judged his late and timid intervention as evidence of his collaboration with labor.

“The incarnate enemy of Cuba” and Union Breaking

Although the strike had been defused by February 27, the underlying issue—the collaboration between labor and civil authorities—remained, according to Atkins. He reiterated his previous charges that civil authorities collaborated with the strikers: “It is the general belief of those best informed that the Alcalde was in a large measure responsible for the trouble. The President of the [lightermen’s] union, one Gómez [Sosa], holds a position under the Municipal Government, and was the one to direct the strikers.” He chastised union leaders of approving wage increases before the contractors were even notified. The alleged support of Frías and Gómez Sosa for the laborers made it so “the strikers felt sure of the support of the civil authorities.” To a certain extent, Atkins correctly identified key relationships of political patronage tying Frías to key labor leaders, including Gómez Sosa and the president of the stevedore union, Romualdo Amezquita. The workers of the port after all were a key constituency for securing election, not only in the municipal government, but also at the national level. Frías himself soon run for a seat in the senate. The labor leaders provided the key to obtaining the vote of the workers.

1030 Edwin F. Atkins to General Leonard Wood, February 28, 1900, Volume II.20, MHS/EFA.
1031 Ibid.
Atkins pointed out the political bonds between labor leaders and civil authorities to indict Frías and foster a change in the municipal political leadership. For him, the lessons to be learned from the strike were quite clear: the separatists in power were incompetent for self-government, and Americans were the only authority that could guarantee order and prosperity in Cuba. The strike “would not have ended but for the interference with Government business,” he claimed. Atkins further undermined the role of civil authorities in resolving the dispute. “I feel confident that the Commanding General, had he been on the spot and disposed to do so, could have stopped the trouble at the outset, without using force; as could any one of the half dozen excellent officers here, had they been vested with authority,” Atkins asserted in a letter to General Wood after the strike ended. With his usual false humility, he closed the letter by suggesting more direct American control over civil affairs: “I do not think it proper for me to make suggestions without being asked, but there are some things here which should be corrected and will not be attended to unless investigated direct from Havana, through local officers and the business community.” American military authorities acceded to his request and conducted an investigation, which resulted in Wood ordering the removal of both the Frías and Gómez Sosa from their government positions.

The centrality of Atkins in demanding American military intervention in the strike earned him the title of the “incarnate enemy of Cuba.” Atkins noted that “the alcalde was very angry with me for the part I took during the strike.” As a consolation to the bad press, Atkins seemed to believe that the replacement of mayor Frías by Figueroa would benefit his interests more than the

1032 Ibid.

1033 Ibid.

former administration: “I hope the new man will do better,” he confessed to his wife, “There seems a general feeling of relief at the change, and the better class of Cubans are coming to the front.”  

Although both Frías and Figueroa came from similar educated, elite urban backgrounds, Americans favored the more collaborative attitude of Figueroa with regard to the American military government.

A test of the new mayor came in early 1901, when port workers again struck work, demanding higher wages and a shorter work day. The strike in Cienfuegos was part of an island-wide labor movement organized by port workers and including other workers such as railroad workers and lumbermen. According to Gerardo A. Cárdenas, the president of the stevedore union of Matanzas, explained that “the jobs are too heavy (demasiados fuertes) and frequently it happens that the merchants have the union members from 4:30 in the morning until 9 at night, not having but one hour to eat, and said work not being compensated.”  

In Cárdenas, longshoremen (playeros) and stevedores went on strike, requesting higher wages. They complained that the cost of food, clothing, and rents was rising, making the lives of working men harder than ever before: “We are hopeful and are blinded by deceiving glimpses and false hopes. We have peace, but we do not have everything to reach our desires to live comfortably with our work on a clear conscience. We lack what is necessary: money.”  

There were rumors that other workers would follow, and that a general strike of railroad workers would ensue as

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well. Stevedores at Trinidad and Ciego de Ávila, railroad workers in Santa Clara, and lumbermen in Santa Cruz similarly demanded higher wages and struck work.

In Cienfuegos, the conflict between port workers and merchants in 1901 was part of a longer trajectory of labor militancy. “We are going through a hard time here with the labor unions of Cienfuegos, who are making the most absurd demands, which so far we have resisted,” Atkins complained to General Wood in January 1901. Stevedores again threatened to strike work. They demanded more than four cents per bag of sugar they loaded, and refused to allow captains to use their own crews to load the cargo. According to Atkins, “this is going too far, and I have notified Gen. Wood in order to be prepared in case of a lighterman’s strike, or any interference on the part of the stevedores.” "I am expecting trouble with the lightermen at Cienfuegos within a few days. Upto [sic] the present time all their demands have been acceded to, and the more they get the more they want.” Atkins vowed to “take a stand” against the excessive demands of the laborers: “[I] decline to pay the stevedores over four cents per bag and insist upon the captain’s right to employ his own labor,” he wrote to Wood.
The demands of the laborers were getting out of control, Atkins thought: “their demands are increasing day by day, and are being carried beyond all reason.” Unless the unions were disbanded, Atkins feared that he would not make any progress. The stevedores in other central Cuban cities were also making demands upon their employers. In Trinidad, laborers threatened to strike work for similar causes: higher wages and extended jurisdiction over loading and unloading freight. Atkins vowed to cable Wood with the first word of a strike. He feared that a strike in Trinidad would provoke a strike in Cienfuegos as well. Even outside of striking work, the Stevedore union forced merchants and planters to consider labor at every step of their business. “At these prices I am disposed to sell as fast as sugars are made, or a little ahead if prudent, but labor conditions are so uncertain that we can not [sic] but take them into account when selling ahead.” Through collective action, stevedores had effectively challenged the monopoly of wealthy businessmen over their labor conditions and over commerce in the Port.

Atkins was not alone in criticizing the labor unions. Juan Rios, a man of unidentified location and occupation, complained to General Wood about the unions following the series of 1901 strikes. “For some time now, I have noted that the strikes of the lightermen, stevedores, and wharf peons happen frequently, without ever being resolved in the favor of capital, which is not the cause of these [strikes].” The union leaders were corrupt, he charged, taking advantage of the

1044 Edwin F. Atkins to O. H. Stilling, February 4, 1901, Volume II.22, MHS/EFA.
1045 Edwin F. Atkins to General Leonard Wood, February 2, 1901, Volume II.22, MHS/EFA.
1046 Ibid.
1047 Edwin F. Atkins to O. H. Stilling, February 4, 1901, Volume II.22, MHS/EFA.
1048 Edwin F. Atkins to Mr. Welsh, January 17, 1901, Volume II.22, MHS/EFA.
large membership to live comfortably, while continually demanding higher wages. Rios considered the demands unreasonable because the wages requested were “excessive” and because not all the workers were “apt to earn it.” He suggested that the unions be dissolved and their leaders and secretaries exiled, because “they were the ones who perturb the social order to live without working.” He claimed that “real workers” would not require unions to survive, as the market would ensure the selection of those fittest to earn wages.\footnote{Juan Rios to General Leonard Wood, no date (received May 14, 1901), Box 122, File 18, USNA/MGC/RG 140E 3.} In Havana, unionized workers were labeled as “rebellious,” due to their frequent strikes, which some merchants judged were without reason.\footnote{Manuel Alonso to General Leonard Wood, February 5, 1901, Box 122, File 18, USNA/MGC/RG 140E 3.}

Atkins was determined to crush the threatened strike in Cienfuegos. First, he requested the intervention of the military authorities: “I fully realize that I cannot accomplish anything without some support, for the united gremios will undoubtedly call a strike on the part of the lightermen and laborers in this way tying us up,” he wrote to General Wood in February 1901.\footnote{Edwin F. Atkins to General Leonard Wood, February 2, 1901, Volume II.22, MHS/EFA.} When military authorities did not send in the troops to suppress the strikers, Atkins set in motion his own plan to undermine the unions. He bypassed the union leadership and dealt directly with individual laborers.

This strategy was not altogether new for merchants and property owners in Cienfuegos. They had employed strike breakers in previous conflicts with the port workers unions. Atkins especially had exploited his personal relationships with certain laborers in the past to end strikes. For example, in 1899 Atkins negotiated a compromise with one labor leader, who he called “the mulatto president of the lightermen’s union” (Not Gómez Sosa). This lighterman “used to be a
slave in the Jova family,” who owned a sugar estate near Soledad. Atkins had known him since he was a boy because he had visited that estate frequently. He bribed the lighterman to convince his comrades to return to work: “…you take my advice and call this strike off and I will get that little concession, but I want you to go to work again,” Atkins told the laborer.\footnote{1052} Through negotiations with an individual rather than the union leaders, Atkins secured a group of strike breakers.

His willingness to deal with more malleable black workers suggests that Atkins may have employed the racialized language denouncing the unions to the military authorities strategically. By depicting the conflict between capital and labor in terms of race, he targeted fears of black rule that would have been easily recognizable to American military officials, many of who had served in the American Civil War. It certainly found resonance with Barker. Race, after all, had been a useful tool for dividing workers in the United States, especially in the 1890s with the rise of Jim Crow.\footnote{1053} In Cienfuegos too, it seemed to be a much more powerful tool for delegitimizing the stevedores, rather than class. Discourses of class struggle, with which Atkins and American military officials would have surely been familiar considering the tumultuous renegotiations between capital and white labor unions in the late nineteenth century, seemed to be much more tenuous, especially considering the growing role of the American government in mediation in the early twentieth century, as part of a growing Progressive agenda.

In January 1900, shippers tried bypass the union by using imported labor to load and unload freight. Planters, merchants, and other property owners had resorted to (and would

\footnote{1052} Frederick Cooper, Professor Thomas C Holt, Rebecca Jarvis Scott, Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina press, 2000), 93; Atkins, Sixty Years in Cuba, 314.

\footnote{1053} Moreno, Black Americans and Organized Labor, 41.
continue to rely on) immigrant labor because supplied cheaper workers. Moreover, with the application of American immigration laws banning “the landing of undesirable” aliens including most black and Chinese immigration meant that eligible immigrants more racially-acceptable.\textsuperscript{1054} As one American military official would later remark, imported laborers were “white and desirable.”\textsuperscript{1055} The use of immigrant workers undermined domestic labor unions, as it certainly did in 1900. Dockworkers responded by organizing a strike. Although they allowed the crew of the ship to unload cargo onto the edge of the wharf, and even onto lighters, they refused to allow any further handling of the freight by anyone but members of their union.\textsuperscript{1056} The strikers claimed they had been unloading the ships for 27 years and it was their “recognized right.”\textsuperscript{1057}

Military authorities confirmed that the union of dockworkers (lightermen, stevedores, cartmen), which “has been in existence for a long time” had a recognized monopoly on loading and unloading freight. Judge Advocate Edgar S. Dudley recommended negotiation and compromise to resolve the strike, instead of military force, which “can only in cases of need, be controlled at times by force.”\textsuperscript{1058} While military authorities cited the convention that unionized dockworkers would handle freight on the docks, they noted that no law protected this custom.

\textsuperscript{1054} G.D. Meikeljohn and L.S. Gage, “Letter from Assistant Secretary of War enclosing one from the Secretary of the Treasury, both in relation to the entry of Chinese in Cuba,” January 17, 1899, Box 1, File 486, USNA/MGC/RG 140/ E 3; Colonel Tasker H. Bliss, “Enclosing a telegram in which he acknowledges receipt of copies of U.S. immigration laws which are to be applied to the island of Cuba” April 27, 1899, Box 11, File 2772, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\textsuperscript{1055} Collector of Customs, “Telegram: states Spanish American Iron Company and The Cuba Company request authority to import 620 laborers, Porto Ricans, white, able-bodied, selected,” July 17, 1901, Box 185, File 2837, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\textsuperscript{1056} Castaño, Cacicedo, Huike, Terry and twenty others to General Leonard Wood, February 21, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\textsuperscript{1057} Collector of Customs, Cienfuegos, “Telegram,” January 18, 1900, Box 61, File 504, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\textsuperscript{1058} Ibid.
The absence of any law protecting the sole right of union laborers to perform the loading and unloading work provided shippers an opportunity to undermine union interests without direct military force.

Atkins combined his experience securing strike breakers with his business connections in the port to neutralize the port workers unions in 1901. In April, he negotiated a deal with a group of laborers: “I have a special rate with one of the best men in Cienfuegos, who for a long time has loaded all my vessels and steamers.” Atkins claimed that the main benefit in employing his stevedores was that he had more control over them: “The ship gets the benefit of the rate as I make nothing out of it, but it is an advantage that our chartered steamers employ our man, as I have control over him and he reports to me once or twice a day.”1059 Control over laborers, better than a commission on the work they performed, ensured that his products would be loaded onto ships, thereby guaranteeing his continued profits from sugar.

Atkins tried to mandate that his stevedores be employed on ship charters. Finding out that one shipper, Alonso, did not wish to employ his stevedores, he resorted to guilt as a means of persuasion: “You will gain nothing by employing another man, and you will put me to a good deal of inconvenience if you do so. I hope that you will not, and that you will give the necessary instructions to Alonso.”1060 Recognizing that the use of his stevedores was not required as per the charter, he resolved to include it in the ship charter that his stevedores be employed to avoid future disputes. The process of hiring workers to perform the duties of the port became one of the most critical points of contention between unionized workers and merchants in Cienfuegos.

1059 Edwin F. Atkins to E.P. Searle, April 7, 1901, Volume II.23, MHS/EFA.

1060 Edwin F. Atkins to E.P. Searle, April 7, 1901, Volume II.23, MHS/EFA.
The nature of hiring practices prevailing among port workers in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Cienfuegos afforded employers great influence over the lives of workers. During most of the colonial period and even into the American military occupation, the contractors had the authority to select the workers. Under this system, often called the shape up, the laborers were forced to compete fiercely with their fellow workers, friends, and even family for the favor of the employer. For the worker, this could be a humiliating experience, one that they had to face every day with the hope of contracting work to earn a living.\textsuperscript{1061} This process, reminiscent of a slave market, may have seemed familiar to some of the laborers who had recently gained freedom in the 1870s and 1880s.\textsuperscript{1062}

The island-wide port worker strikes in the first months of 1901 seem to have catalyzed a re-adjustment in the relationships between workers and merchants, especially the mechanism for hiring workers. In Havana, for example, military officials sought to streamline the flow of goods and reduce the price of labor by creating a single organization to take charge of the collection, dispatch and turning in of merchandise in the port. “It would go a long way toward putting a stop to strikes and would make impossible the petty pilfering which constantly goes on upon the wharves and in the lighters.”\textsuperscript{1063} Workers opposed the creation of this entity, which they labeled a trust and a monopoly that would “take away our daily bread, which we have earned with so much fatigue.”\textsuperscript{1064} While consolidating the process of hiring workers into one institution may

\textsuperscript{1061} Anna Green, “The Work Process,” in Dock Workers, 2 volumes, ed. Sam Davies, Colin J. Davis, David e Vries, Lex Heerma van Voss, Lidewij Hesselink and Klaus Weinhauser (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 562.

\textsuperscript{1062} Ibid., 563.

\textsuperscript{1063} Tasker Bliss to Adjutant General, June 24, 1901, Box 188, File 3003, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.

\textsuperscript{1064} “General Wood, alerta,” El Estibador, June 24, 1901, Box 188, File 3003, USNA/MGC/RG 140/E 3.
have benefited merchants, workers equated the loss of control over hiring to reduced living conditions.

In Cienfuegos as well, merchants began taking more control over working arrangements. Atkins was at the center of this shift. By guaranteeing work to certain stevedores who were willing to cooperate with him, Atkins undermined the solidarity binding laborers to the union. When Atkins began to co-opt certain labor leaders, this system became problematic and led to extreme inequality in the distribution of work. This set in motion a process of internal struggle within the stevedore union. Inequalities in access to work combined with the precarious economic situation of many working-class families combined to exacerbate existing cleavages within the union, whether political, personal, or professional. Union leaders recognized the favoritism of employers in hiring certain stevedores, but certain workers, especially those who benefited from the new arrangements sought to preserve the status quo. After 1901, the stevedore union of Cienfuegos became consumed with debates on how workers would be hired. Indeed, the manipulation of hiring patterns marked the beginning of the end for the stevedore union in Cienfuegos.

Stevedores in Cienfuegos sought to address the severe fragmentation in their own union by demanding control over hiring. This occurred amidst a series of changes negotiated between port workers and commercial elites in the Port of Havana. Negotiations following the February 1901 strike resulted in two key military orders, one lowering the tariffs of port work, and a subsequent decree affording unions control over hiring. At the core of demands over hiring practices in Cienfuegos was Military Order #59 (MO 59), which applied all agreements, regulations and tariff current in the Port of Havana, to Cienfuegos. This effectively meant the

1065 Military order #59 stated: “Havana, February 28, 1902. In view of the mutual agreement entered into on February 22, 1902, in the office of the Captain of the Port of Cienfuegos, by the representatives of the shipping
reduction of pay for port workers in Cienfuegos. Some stevedores in Cienfuegos sought to offset the lower wage by securing some of benefits secured by Havana workers, namely control over hiring.

Serious debates ensued in the meeting hall of the stevedore union with this proposal. The union meeting on April 5, 1902 was perhaps typical of the dissention and arguments that pervaded the union between 1901 and 1904. Federico Ramírez, a union delegate, explained that because MO 59 had imposed the lower tariff rates reigning in Havana onto the Port of Cienfuegos, the Cienfuegos workers should at least receive some of the benefits Havana workers had won, namely the power to select their own workers. The imposition of lower tariffs was due to the “unbridled desire of those who presented themselves to the military government with a proposition to lower the tariffs that applied to this Union, and as a result, he is of the opinion that since the Delegates are supposedly the ones who nominate the personnel in Havana, that this Union makes [the order] apply in all its parts.” In Havana, the delegates chose the workers, therefore, Federico concluded that in Cienfuegos they should do the same. 1066

Other union members argued that the current hiring arrangements should remain in effect. Felipe Santana, for example, begged his fellow workers to consider the possible discord that has emerged from the competition over jobs. “…if in contrast to what several other comrades sustain, another group obsesses itself with the Delegates being the ones who nominate the personnel, discord will always prevail until we could lament this tense state with one or

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1066 Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, April 5, 1902, APHC/MP.
another group, even killed, because one and others resort to force.” Florentino Pascual, another delegate, agreed. Santana and Pascual highlighted the high stakes of the debate at hand: if the union could not agree on the right decision, competition and tensions among workers for work could become so heated that conflict and even death could result. It seemed that some workers were unwilling to confront capital over the issue of hiring.

Ramírez again took the floor, arguing that the Delegates should name the workers “by law and logic of convenience, to avoid the vengeance of the Contractors on those who know how to reclaim their rights against the foreigners who oppose a law by the government and the union.” Ramírez identified a potent source of tension among the workers—that some members were more militant and more committed to the union cause than were others. Perhaps he also alluded to a difference in the perception of militancy: whereas black labor militancy was rapidly criminalized and chastised by white contractors and merchants, white labor was typically viewed as more rational and reasonable. With this suggestion, “a great number of associates abandoned the hall without prior permission from the Presidency, manifesting themselves to be offended by the last words of compañero Ramírez…” The pointed debate and strong reactions among union members underscore the extent of the divisions over the issue of hiring.

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1067 Ibid. Original text reads: “…si en contra de lo que sustentan varios de sus compañeros, otro grupo se obstina en que sean los Delegados los que nombren el personal, suscitará siempre la discordia hasta que puede suceder que de ese estado de tirantez con uno y otro grupo haya que lamentar, hasta matados, porque incitados uno y otros apelen a la fuerza.”

1068 Ibid.

1069 Edwin F. Atkins to General Leonard Wood, February 21, 1900, Volume II.29, MHS/EFA.

1070 Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, April 5, 1902, APHC/MP.
Francisco Salcerio “in very brilliant phrases,” stated the need for the conversations among union members to be “measured and without controversy or heatedness.” Just then several members, including Solozábal, Pérez, Pascual, Padrón, among others, proposed a new solution: “to resolve [the issue], a commission be sent to Havana demanding justice before the Military Government to get the right for the personnel for the jobs to be named by the Union Delegates, just like is done in that Port.” The commission would be composed of three members, chosen by the directorate, and supported by 100 pesos Spanish gold extracted from the Union treasury for expenses. The union resolved to demand control over hiring. They appealed to Havana, and Adjutant General Hugh L. Scott seemed to have acceded to their request by June 1902.

Securing control over hiring, however, did not end dissent within the union. Even after the inauguration of the republic in May 1902, stevedores would vacillate over how best to distribute work among the members. By 1904, fragmentation within the union reached the breaking point when the union president mandated that delegates control hiring. Shortly thereafter, rumors that a group of former union stevedores had broken away from the union and formed a separate organization, reached the halls of the Stevedore Union. Union leaders

1071 Ibid.
1072 Ibid.
1073 Ibid.
1074 Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, December 15, 1903, APHC/MP.
1075 Gremio Mútuo de Estibadores de Cienfuegos, Book of Meeting Minutes, October 20, 1902, APHC/MP.
rightly worried that the establishment of the new union could destroy the position of the workers after the union had worked so hard toward the “emancipation of the Stevedores of this Port.”

Conclusions: The Demise of the Union and the Consolidation of “Urban Order”

In 1899, the stevedore union of Cienfuegos flouted the expectations of wealthy planters, American military officials, and even some prominent Cuban patriots by refusing to assume positions of servitude vis-à-vis commercial elites. The stevedore union presented a potent challenge to the relationship between capital and labor with its militant demands for higher wages and better working conditions. Simultaneously, the union challenged the urban order in Cienfuegos by denying commercial elites absolute control over the urban spaces straddling the port and bordering the city center.

The racial background of many of the stevedores presented unique problems for the union. Fortified by the influx of numerous Cuban veterans in the months after the war, the union had a diverse and multi-racial membership, but was composed primarily of men of African descent. From the perspective of merchants and planters the stevedore union was more than an association of workers. It was a union of blacks, Cuban veterans, and worst of all, black veterans. The organization of a large number of black men and veterans fit comfortably into an already-existing framework of an allegedly impending race war, an idea based upon fears that an armed black population with military experience would overthrow white rule on the island.

Confrontations between the union and the commercial elite took on racial undertones, as

1076 Ibid. In Havana, the stevedore union underwent a similar split in January 1901. American military officials guessed that this spilt resulted from “some internal cause of dissatisfaction,” and this was “purely a personal one,” as both unions demanded the same wage. Collector of Customs of Cuba to Adjutant General, January 2, 1901, Box 122, File 18, USNA/MGC/RG 140E 3.
property owners like Atkins delegitimized labor demands based on racial arguments. Stevedores, however, avoided references to race almost completely. The language of class, specifically the idea of being a respectable working-class man, provided black stevedores a way to dispel racialized imaginings of union activities, even if they were port-paralyzing strikes. In 1899 and to a certain extent in 1900, the union was able to secure various gains for workers, in the face of fierce petitioning from merchants and planters to disband the unions by force.

By 1901, however, tides began to turn. Atkins began to exploit already-existing divisions among workers to dismantle the unity in the labor organization. By affording some workers greater access to employment than others, Atkins and his associates set in motion of process of intense conflict within the union, stemming primarily from the way workers were hired. These debates immobilized the union and debilitated organized action to secure benefits for workers. Eventually the intense fragmentation emerging therefrom led to the formation of a separate stevedore union in 1904, spelling the end of a united front against capital in the port of Cienfuegos.

The gradual dismantling of the stevedore union beginning in 1901 seemingly marked the close of an epoch in Cienfuegos. The stevedores were one of the last strongholds of black authority in the urban center, in the vital portside neighborhood of Marsillán. With internal dissention consuming the union, commercial elites were able again to consolidate their control over the port and commerce. Although the men of African descent still composed the majority of port workers, the authority of organized labor had been severely compromised. The demise of the stevedore union contributed to the demographic transformation of the city center that had begun with the persecution of black veterans like Dionisio Gil and the relocation of the vice
district. These three key changes brought the city of Cienfuegos closer to realizing Wilson’s 1899 claim that “the white man is in the majority and in absolute control.”

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1077 James H. Wilson to Professor Goldwin Smith, June 18, 1899, Box 44, LOC/MD/JHW.
EPILOGUE
Under the Veil of Racial Brotherhood:
Consequences and Lessons from American Rule

Of course strenuous objections would be made to annexation at this time, even if the Cubans were unanimous in desiring it, by all who believe that a state based solely upon the Roman Catholic religion would not be a desirable acquisition; by all who believe that Cuba is tropical and barbaric; by all who believe that the Spanish-American is revolutionary; by all who believe that the population is mongrel and constitutes a part of ‘Niggerdom’; by all who believe that we have enough territory and cannot properly govern any more; By all who are afraid of ‘expansion’ and ‘empire’, and by a great part of the Democrats who are naturally opposed to every measure brought forward by the Republicans. –General James H. Wilson, 1899.1078

What hurt them [Cuban separatists] the most was the Americans putting them in checkmate. It seems that they thought that those people were coming for hell of it. Then it was proven they had not, that what they wanted was to take the crème of the cake. The population allowed those things to happen. There were people who were happy that the Americans were calling the shots. They were saying, and still there are those who say, that the best part of the whole war was the American intervention. –Esteban Montejo, 1963.1079

On May 20, 1902, the Cuban Republic was born. It looked quite different than some Cubans had imagined it would in 1899. Cuba Libre was transformed from a political and social revolution to a campaign aimed at preserving the social hierarchy had prevailed under Spanish rule and bolstering the political goals of certain white separatists. Initially a racially-inclusive project, the separatist agenda became ever more racially-exclusive to the extreme that maintaining patronage relationships with blacks and appealing to them as voters condemned


1079 Miguel Barnet, Biografía de un Cimarrón (Havana: Ediciones Ariel, 1966), 187. Original text reads: “Lo que más les dolió fue el jaque mate de los americanos. Parece que pensaron que esa gente venía aquí por gusto. Luego se comprobó que no, que lo que ellos querían era cogerse lo mejor del pastel. La población dejaba que las cosas pasaran. Hubo gente que se alegró de que los americanos cogieran la sartén por el mango. Y decían, todavía hay quien dice, que lo mejor de toda la guerra era la intervención americana.”
white politicians in the eyes of Americans. Even the political posturing of separatists took on racial implications, with demands for immediate and absolute independence allegedly implying “Negro Rule,” while pro-American platforms suggested the preservation of racial order, thereby gaining greater political clout. All this seemed to have occurred in the span of a few short years.

Between 1895 and 1902, Cubans confronted a world of change and uncertainty. With the anti-colonial struggle erupting anew in 1895, the twin goals of independence and social justice challenged the social order that had prevailed for centuries under Spanish rule. With the announcement of the American intervention in 1898, the Cuban army swelled with new recruits emanating from the most privileged sectors of society. This shift exacerbated the struggle for military prestige as different factions of separatists sought to lay claim to future political power. The American military occupation and the evacuation of the Spanish army from the island confounded the political tensions among separatists and other men vying for political power, such as Spaniards and Autonomists. One of the principle conflicts among political hopefuls was determining the role men of African descent would play in the emerging republic. Under American rule, racial order became a precondition for separatist political power—and for Cuban self-government more generally—in a time when national self-determination and citizenship were synonymous with whiteness and manhood.

Separatists confronted this whirlwind of uncertainty by consolidating their own political power, a feat that increasingly hinged upon preservation of racial order. Racial exclusion became evident during the first months of the military occupation. Opponents of Cuban rule attempted to undermine separatist political pretensions by connecting the revolution to racial disorder. They portrayed black men, especially black separatists, as hypermasculine by implicating them in banditry, alleged military uprisings against American rule, and sexual aggression. Because
opponents of Cuban rule defined the Cuban army as “mostly black,” the threatening image of black hypermasculinity seemed to undermine even white separatist claims to political power. White separatists, in turn, responded by excluding blacks from political power to bolster their own candidacy. Americans, on the other hand, found political exclusion insufficient. They responded to the threat of black hypermasculinity with attempts at discursive emasculation—attempting to exclude them from manhood suffrage, disbanding the Cuban army, and disarming the police, for example. Radical separatists initially rejected these actions as contrary to the colorblind tenets of *Cuba Libre*. Political exclusion by white separatists themselves was acceptable, but *American* attempts to disenfranchise Cuban blacks were not.

Although whiteness and social prestige were initially enough to qualify certain Cuban separatists for political power, these qualities eventually became insufficient to warrant American favor. Americans realized that the mere condition of whiteness did not correlate to a single political platform. White separatist defiance of American attempts to disenfranchise blacks in the first year of American rule was the ultimate example of this. Political radicalism, namely nationalist demands for independence and solidarity against the occupying force, became increasingly associated with social radicalism, which triggered the specter of black rule. Political hopefuls who did not submit to American authorities fully faced intense conflict with them, which ultimately cost them their political power. Through creative political engineering, Americans promoted the candidacy of politically- and socially-conservative white veterans to positions of power in the Cuban government. These were men who would preserve the racial order. They would also collaborate with the military government.

The rise of socially-conservative separatists into political power especially after the first year of military rule compounded black political exclusion with campaigns to “cleanse” the city
of “undesirable elements.” In Cienfuegos, civil authorities used violence to subdue black veterans who sought to extend their military authority to civil affairs. They transformed the urban social geography by relocating the tolerance district, resulting in the removal of poor and working-class blacks from view and the reduction of direct conflict between Americans and black Cubans in the city center. They forcibly dismantled the organized labor movement, the final obstacle to the consolidation of white supremacy in the city. The assassination of the black insurgent general Dionisio Gil, the relocation of the red light district, and the gradual dismantling of the stevedore union suggest that civil authorities targeted perceived centers of black authority within the city limits. By crushing black urban strongholds, civil authorities consolidated their political power by demonstrating to the Americans their ability to preserve racial order. In effect, civil authorities sanctioned and carried out the racial exclusion that Americans had initially attempted in 1899.

The persistence of racial inequality after what had promised to be such a transformative war prompted some Cubans to contemplate the culpability of the Americans in this development. They were, after all, known for their racist views.  

1080 Esteban Montejo reflected on the American presence in Cuba over a half century later. “To tell the truth,” he said, “I prefer the Spaniard to the American; but the Spaniards in his [own] land. Each one in his land. Now, the American, I don’t even like him in his [land].”  

1081 For all the contempt that Montejo held for Americans, he recognized that white separatists also played a prominent role. “The majority of people say that the Americans were the most rotten. I agree. They were rotten,” he wrote. “But one has to think


1081 Miguel Barnet, Biografía de un Cimarrón (Havana: Ediciones Ariel, 1966), 188
that the white creoles were just as much to blame because they allowed themselves to be bullied in their own land.”

Although a certain degree of coercion is perhaps undeniable in the context of a military occupation, Montejo implicated the “white creoles” in the consolidation of American rule, the adulteration of Cuban sovereignty, and the intensification of racial inequalities. Indeed, the preceding chapters do suggest that there was a degree of complicity between Cuban political elites and the American occupiers. Political elites exchanged support for American visions of urban racial order for the promise of political power, seeking to convince the occupiers that they were capable of self-government. Amidst heightened racial discrimination, violence and exclusion, black Cubans began to vocalize their disenchantment with civil authorities. These same civil authorities recognized that the stakes of racial discontent were high: their political futures depended upon silence about racial issues. Owing to the necessity of pacifying an increasingly marginalized and suppressed urban black population, civil authorities attempted to uphold the discourse of racial brotherhood by expressing inequalities in terms of masculinity rather than race. This meant that expressions of racial grievance became unpatriotic and even criminal.

Some poor and working-class black urbanites quickly abandoned racial language in their demands for justice. Instead, these black men appropriated the very language of masculinity that had formerly justified their racial exclusion, to fight against it. Veterans emphasized their military honor to validate their claims to employment and positions of authority. Poor and working-class residents of the red light district petitioned the city council as the protectors of the neighborhood to improve the sanitary conditions, infrastructure and law enforcement therein.

\footnote{1082 Ibid., 190.}
Black workers justified their demands for higher wages and better working conditions upon their status as heads of household. These varying articulations and diverse matrices of black manliness commonly abandoned racial language to demand racial justice. By voicing their claims in terms of masculinity, black men were sometimes able to secure small concessions from civil authorities in an otherwise exclusive political and social environment. At the same time, black emphasis on masculine qualities as a discursive strategy to fight racial exclusion may have contributed to fears of black hypermasculinity, evidently used as a justification for their marginalization.

Although civil authorities effectively dismantled black authority and silenced racial protest, Americans retained their doubts about the Cuban capacity to self-govern. Domestic political considerations in the United States, rather than the behavior or demands of Cuban political elites, determined how the occupation would end. The self-imposed restrictions of the Joint Resolution guaranteeing Cuban independence, the anti-imperialist fervor, and negative racial stereotypes of Cubans made outright annexation a contentious option. Yet, the perceived Cuban incapacity for self-government required prolonged period of American tutelage. The Platt Amendment (1901) laid the groundwork for a nominal acknowledgement of radical Cuban demands, while consolidating American supremacy on the island. The emergence of socially-conservative white separatists as the guarantors of American interests in Cuba compromised both revolutionary goals of absolute independence and social reform. Racial exclusion persisted under the veil of racial brotherhood.

Cuba thus emerged on the world stage with limited sovereignty, severe social inequality, and profound political fragmentation. Yet, the silence on the increasing degree of racial exclusion did not last long. The overwhelming social frictions mounting since the end of the war in 1898, and especially since the inauguration of the Republic in 1902, reached a boiling point in
1905. Members of the recently-formed Moderate party perpetrated a wave of political repression and violence targeting Liberal Party candidates in the approaching December elections. In Cienfuegos and the surrounding area, Moderates assassinated Liberal leader Enrique Villuendas and attacked the Liberal meeting houses. These, in addition to other tactics of intimidation, persecution and outright violence, forced many Liberals to withdraw their candidacy from the December elections. As a result, the Moderate Party swept the Legislature and presidency amidst allegations of fraud and repression.

The re-election of pro-American president Tomás Estrada Palma provoked a political uprising led by Liberal supporters of rival presidential candidate and former governor of Santa Clara province, José Miguel Gómez. The August Revolution, as this uprising was called, relied on the disproportionate participation of black veterans, who equated the continued rule of the conservative-leanings Moderate Party with the frustration of the revolutionary goals of absolute independence and social justice. Pressured by reports of racial unrest in Cuba, Americans rushed in to “pacify” Cuba, inaugurating the second American occupation, which lasted until 1909.

For Americans, the August Revolution provided proof that the Cubans were incapable of preserving racial order and therefore were unfit to self-govern. One of the main pillars of the second American campaign in Cuba was the strict surveillance of black populations. Cienfuegos and the surrounding villages like Lajas and Palmira became core sites of surveillance in Santa Clara, a province defined by political and racial agitation. “It is known that there is considerable uneasiness among the negroes in the vicinity of Palmira, Cruses [sic] [and] Lajas, and that negroes leaders are moving from place to place and holding secret meetings,” reported an
American investigator in August 1907. During the second American military occupation, the jurisdiction of Cienfuegos became a center of black political mobilization and a home base to the black political party called the Independent Party of Color (PIC).

The PIC broke with the pattern of black silence on race issues. The party was known for its militant political discourse and explicit condemnation of racism. Its adherents had witnessed first-hand the injustices of the post-war period, as their white compatriots secured well-paid government jobs while they could only turn to manual labor or cane cutting as a means for subsistence. PIC activists addressed these very concerns with a 1907 political manifesto directed at the black men of Lajas. During the war “… there was no separation between the black soldier and the white soldier,” they proclaimed. But “after the war finished, us blacks are abandoned while the whites are sucking the figs that the majority of us blacks have conquered.” To Americans this manifesto only served as further proof of the “swashbuckler spirit” of blacks in Lajas and the vicinity of Cienfuegos.

At the same time as some black veterans flocked to the PIC as a new source of hope for their claims to political inclusion, other groups of black men and women devised alternate strategies to challenge their exclusion while still upholding the social convention of racial silence. For example, in 1908, women who allegedly worked as prostitutes in Lajas protested American demands for racial segregation by organizing an armed uprising in their neighborhood

1083 W.D. Beach to Chief of Staff, “Confidential Report,” August 23, 1907, Box 1, File 14, United States National Archives, Records of the Army of Cuban Pacification, Record Group 199, Entry 5 (Hereafter cited as USNA/RACP/RG 199/E 5).

1084 “Manifiesto al pueblo de Lajas y a la raza de color,” September 13, 1907, Box 1, File 14, USNA/RACP/RG 199/E 5.

1085 “Manifiesto al pueblo de Lajas y a la raza de color,” September 13, 1907, Box 1, File 14, USNA/RACP/RG 199/E 5.
known as Little Africa, or “the land of congos,” (Barrio Guinea).\textsuperscript{1086} This was a neighborhood composed of a conglomeration of “Negro Shacks.” Formerly enslaved men and women had purchased land and settled along the city margins marked with the passage of railroad tracks beginning in the late 1870s from the wealthy plantation owner Emilio Terry.\textsuperscript{1087} Many of the people who first settled in Little Africa were formerly enslaved women, including Mónica and Victoria de la Torre, Antonia Terry, Natalia Fortún and even the grandparents of the famous Cuban musician, Beny Moré.\textsuperscript{1088}

Although military reports reveal little about the precise actions of the prostitutes, it is clear that the women played a central role in planning and executing this uprising. The women, one American military officer wrote “planned this attack, which when started assumed proportions quite unexpected.”\textsuperscript{1089} These women rejected American demands for two main reasons. First, the “removal” of black men from the neighborhood conflicted with the ability of the sex workers to maintain relationships with their partners. Second, the American presence hurt the livelihoods of the public women by reducing the clientele who frequented the brothels. “As the Cubans would not come about while the Americans were at hand, the women lost much in their services,” informed Furlong. “So they determined to free their houses of the unprofitable Americans.”\textsuperscript{1090} What began as a failed negotiation between prostitutes and their American clients, escalated into a violent conflict as two groups competed to impose their vision of order.

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\textsuperscript{1086} “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff,” February 15, 1908, Box 1, File 225, USNA/RACP/RG 199/E 5.
\textsuperscript{1088} Scott and Zeuske, “Property in Writing…,” 679-681.
\textsuperscript{1089} “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff,” February 15, 1908, Box 1, File 225, USNA/RACP/RG 199/E 5.
\textsuperscript{1090} “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff,” February 15, 1908, Box 1, File 225, USNA/RACP/RG 199/E 5.
\end{flushleft}
on Little Africa. Whereas Americans sought to foster white sexual privilege and racial segregation in this black neighborhood, the prostitutes rejected American demands in favor of local authority and dignity in their own urban space.

In 1908, public women in Lajas emerged as powerful political agents by assuming informal local positions of authority within their neighborhoods. Prostitutes in Lajas addressed the decidedly local issues emerging from the presence of Americans in their neighborhood, namely, sexual subjugation and racial discrimination. These women began their fight with their own bodies, a potent means of reclaiming ownership over not only the self, but over their livelihoods, families, and community. They defended their rights as workers to control the conditions of their labor. At the same time as they defended the role of black men in the neighborhood, the prostitutes also asserted female authority over a space that American men had claimed for themselves. They regulated their own sexuality by defining who would have access to their bodies and under what terms, rejecting the assumption of white sexual privilege to the black body. The central role of women in planning and carrying out a violent uprising against men articulated a cogent rejection of the prescription of female docility and black marginality in Cuban society.

As these women reclaimed their bodies and their barrio, they also entered into a political debate that defined Cuban society from the beginning of the first American military intervention in 1898 until the abrogation of the Platt Amendment in 1934. The gender and occupation of prostitutes in Lajas, on the other hand, helped disguise the multiple layers of their protest, which escaped American labeling as a race riot. They articulated some of the same racial issues as did the men of the PIC, but employed a language of labor. Radical demands of dignity and control
over their industry helped veil an implicit racial protest, one which rejected American visions of racial segregation as un-Cuban.

Admittedly, this 1908 uprising of prostitutes was far from an everyday occurrence. Yet, it likely indicates an emergent pattern of racial protest in early Republican Cuba. As explicit articulation of racial grievances in terms of race seemed to have failed, black men and women were able to escape the condemnation of their protests as “race war” by couching their demands in terms of gender and employing gendered language. Another characteristic of this pattern of protest was that it was likely to be local, rather than national in nature. While large scale political organization among blacks threatened racial order, a local dispute involving only a small number of people on the urban margins would be more difficult to portray as a race riot.

These localized forms of protest seemed to voice demands for black autonomy within already-peripheral urban areas, which were often out of sight from the wealthy residents of the city centers. The physical marginality of these smaller local protests also potentially allowed for a greater degree of autonomy among local blacks than if they had claimed central urban spaces as they had during the first American military occupation. By asserting authority within their marginal neighborhoods, poor and working-class blacks may have resisted further marginalization from the city. The reliance on localized forms of protest that avoided direct racial language likely allowed racial inequality to persist beneath a veil of racial brotherhood.

The local and intentionally non-racialized claims of some black Cubans during the second military occupation certainly proved safer and may have even been ultimately more effective than the explicit racial protest. The trajectory of the PIC between 1908 and 1912 illustrate this. Upon discovering the black political mobilization of PIC activists in late 1907 and 1908, Americans were determined to neutralize black political pretensions and restore socially-
conservative whites to power. White liberals, too, had an interest in subduing the PIC, which threatened to steal black votes, thereby favoring the Conservative Party that had emerged after the August Revolution to replace the Moderate Party. Liberals, finally united under Gómez, sought to attract black votes by placing blacks on the party rosters, securing victory over Conservatives in 1908. The fragmentation of the Liberal Party into the miguelista and zayista factions and the subsequent Liberal mobilization against the PIC resulted in the election of an unprecedented fourteen black politicians to Congress in 1908.1091

While the participation of the PIC in the 1908 elections forced mainstream political parties to actively fight for black voters, the victorious Liberals under Gómez halted their support of black politicians at that. The Liberal Party refused to employ blacks in public positions, and Gómez pursued a severely repressive policy against black dissenters during his presidential term. This culminated in 1912 with the brutal massacre, when PIC activists sought the abrogation of the 1910 Morúa Law that banned political organization by race. Thousands of PIC activists and black civilians were assassinated and mutilated by Cuban forces, white civilian brigades and American military personnel. By condoning the 1912 massacre, Gómez continued the pattern of exchanging repression of blacks for American political support.1092

The 1912 massacre of the PIC activists became a symbol of a political and racial order than had been conceived in 1899 with the inauguration of the first American military occupation. White politicians, including Gómez himself, justified the massacre by depicting the black activists as un-Cuban because of their racial allegiances. The massacre highlights an explicit rejection of racial organization amidst an implicit and violently-defended vision of Cuban


1092 Ibid., 56-57.
nationality as white. So profound and pervasive is the belief in an inherently race-less Cuban nationality, that even contemporary historians condemn the PIC for their activist strategies.\(^{1093}\)

While many scholars have honed in on the 1912 Massacre as a rupture in Cuban history, this project has demonstrated that systematic state-sponsored violence against men and women of African descent had earlier origins. Indeed, I have argued that in order to understand the intense racial inequality of the early republic, including the racial violence of 1912, and the culture of silence on issues of race characterizing the Cuban republic, we must return to the inception of American military rule in 1899. Such ruthless and bloody repression of black activists and civilians by white separatists in 1912 effectively hushed black expressions of racial discontent, at least in the most explicit forms using racialized language. Silence on issues of race, in turn, allowed the myth of racial brotherhood to reign, unchallenged, despite the practical realities of intense racial discrimination, exclusion and marginalization. American rule effectively equated Cuban patriotism with silence on racial issues. The relationship between Cuban politicians and Americans forged during the American occupation helped consolidate Cuban nationality as outwardly race-less but implicitly white, and marked racial dissent as un-Cuban.

The persistence of racial discrimination in republican Cuba casts light on a broader pattern of social stratification in Latin America and the Caribbean. Cuba may not be the racial paradise some have claimed it to be. Scholars have long speculated about the inherent differences between Iberian and British models of race relations.\(^{1094}\) Some historians have argued

\(^{1093}\) Rolando Rodríguez, *La conspiración de los iguales: la protesta de los Independientes de Color en 1912* (Havana: Ediciones Imagen Contemporánea, 2010).

that the discourse of racial brotherhood so common throughout Latin America indicates a less virulent form of racism than in former British colonies, like the United States were the racial line is imprinted in physical space as deeply as it is carved into the law. The case of Cuba demonstrates that silence on racial issues does not indicate their absence from social relations. The societies of the Spanish Caribbean continue to be riddled with racial inequalities. While some may argue that these vestiges of racism are but legacies of an ugly history of slavery, the violence is much more recent. In order to begin to address the contemporary problem of racism, it is first necessary to acknowledge the continued propagation of ideas of racial difference, and the contemporary complicity in the ideal of racial brotherhood.

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