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State of Ambiguity

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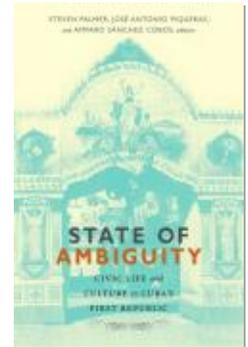
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CHAPTER 3



Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Cuba

A View from the Sugar District of Cienfuegos, 1886–1909

Rebecca J. Scott

Writing in 1902, Victor Clark, who had traveled to Cuba to report on labor conditions for the United States Department of Labor, made the following startling observation: “Cuba is one of the most democratic countries in the world. Nowhere else does the least-considered member of a community aspire with more serene confidence to social equality with its most exalted personage.”¹ Clark’s sweeping statements about national character, with their faintly mocking tone, can hardly be considered definitive evidence. But his remarks do suggest that four centuries of colonial domination and hierarchical authority in Cuba had not left precisely the visible legacy that one might expect. This raises the question: can one in fact document a widespread presumption to social equality and with it, perhaps, some of the practices that might be encompassed in the term *citizenship*?²

Scholars of Latin America have long noted the marked absence of full rights of citizenship for rural workers, including former slaves.³ Stanley Stein, for example, took up this question in a pathbreaking 1957 study, *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900*. In his introduction to the 1985 reedition, Stein clarified the challenge he had intentionally posed to the arguments of Frank Tannenbaum’s influential *Slave and Citizen*. Tannenbaum had argued optimistically that in Catholic Latin America the “moral status of the freed man” was higher than in Protestant North America, thus facilitating a relatively smooth transition from slave to citizen. Stein convincingly demonstrated that whatever the notional Catholic recognition of the moral equality of the slave, the coffee planters of Vassouras emphatically did not wish to see their slaves transformed into citizens.⁴ Subse-

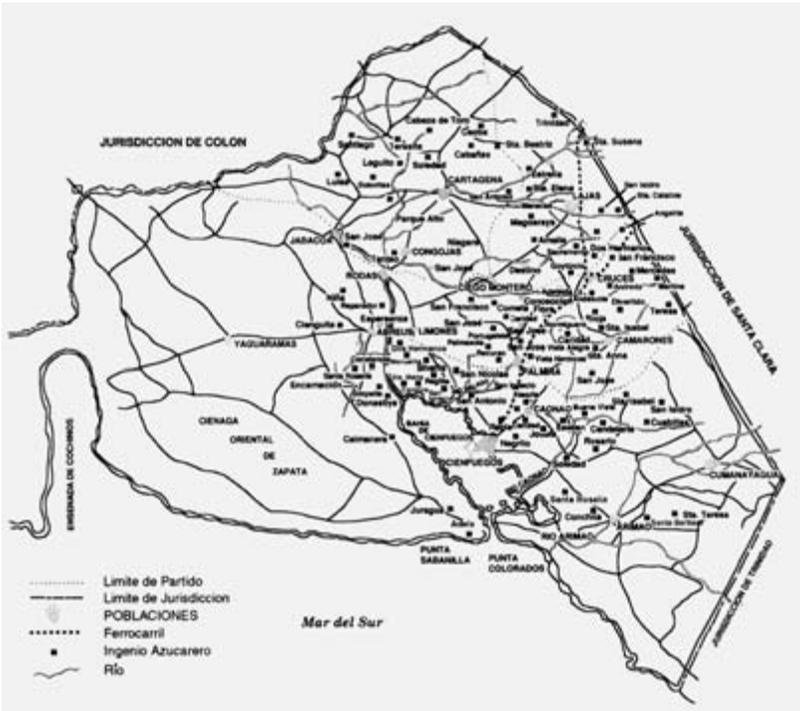
quent scholarship has emphasized continuities of impoverishment, patriarchal control, and patron-client relations in rural Brazil, particularly in the sugar regions of the northeast.⁵ Brazilian historians, including João Reis and Hebe Mattos de Castro, have retrieved some evidence of claims to citizenship on the part of slaves and former slaves in Bahia and in rural Rio de Janeiro.⁶ But such claims generally met with resolute opposition. The trend toward formal disfranchisement and informal subordination of rural workers was very strong in the late Brazilian empire and the early republic.⁷

It may therefore be particularly interesting to ask where, among Latin American slave plantation societies, there might be some exceptions to this powerful pattern. If in most instances economic transformations—including the shift from slavery to free labor—were accompanied by disfranchisement in the political sphere, perhaps in a few instances they were not. The purpose of such a search for alternatives is not to argue that deeply embedded structures failed to limit social transformations. Rather, it is to ask just what it took to break these patterns. Under what circumstances did some forms of political voice construed in terms of citizenship become a reality for those who had occupied the lowest rungs of plantation society? One can then proceed to ask how deeply embedded structures—or shallow contingent ones, for that matter—operated to shape the space and extent of that citizenship.⁸

On the island of Cuba the tumult of the wars of independence, which accompanied the process of slave emancipation, opened up possibilities that not even the prompt United States military occupation could close down. Moreover, these two phenomena—anticolonial war and foreign military occupation—each generated extensive documentary evidence, providing an unusual richness of detail for the study of a postemancipation society in Latin America. The dynamics of the search for political voice by former slaves and other rural workers can thus be examined on the ground, not only in particular regions, but even in neighborhoods.

From Slavery to Free Labor in Cienfuegos

The district of Cienfuegos on the southern coast of the province of Santa Clara, encompassing both the prosperous port city from which it took its name and an enormously rich hinterland, offers the possibility of a revealing case study.⁹ In the 1870s the rapidly developing hinterland of Cienfuegos comprised the *partidos* of Camarones, Cartagena, Cumanayagua, Las Casas, Yaguaramas, and Santa Isabel de las Lajas, which together contained some seventy-seven sugar estates (*ingenios*), most linked by water or rail to the port itself.¹⁰ The incomplete agricultural census of 1877 enumerated 5,396



Map 3.1 The jurisdiction of Cienfuegos, with its principal sugar plantations in 1878. Courtesy of Irá Millán.

slave workers on these estates, and the ingenios of Cienfuegos also relied on a smaller number of free wage laborers and Chinese indentured workers.¹¹ The river valleys of Cienfuegos thus encompassed a large, relatively recently arrived multiracial workforce in sugar, most of whose members were bound by slavery or indenture. At the same time, the hills rising to the east toward the Trinidad Mountains and the interstitial small farms in the valleys continued to be worked by long-free descendants of earlier settlers as well as by former slaves who had recently obtained their freedom.

The planters of Cienfuegos managed to sustain a substantial slave labor force despite the passage of the Moret Law of 1870, which freed children and the elderly, and even through much of the Ten Years' War (1868–78), which raged to the east and undermined the social relations of slavery in those regions that it touched. But Cienfuegos could not hold out indefinitely against the forces undoing slavery in Cuba. The late 1870s brought turmoil as individual slaves traded with, and in some cases joined, the anticolonial insurgents in the hills.¹²

Within the insurgent ranks, a conventional form of address was *ciudadano* (citizen), sometimes abbreviated in rebel records as *c.c.*, for *ciudadano cubano*, and sometimes modified by *de color*. The perceived need to specify that a given citizen was an individual *de color* hinted at the distinctions that still pervaded the thinking of white rebel officers, and some were reluctant to describe former slaves as *ciudadanos* at all. But the introduction of *citizen* as a term of description did not go unnoticed by those accustomed to racialized and derogatory forms of address from their social superiors. Rebel nationalists were explicitly proffering the notion of citizenship in an imagined free Cuba, even if some among them subsequently and selectively withheld equal rights from former slaves and other Afro-Cubans in the course of the struggle. As Ada Ferrer argues, the evidence suggests that “free persons of color demonstrated their awareness of the new rebel discourse of freedom and equality and their willingness to make demands on the basis of that discourse.”¹³

Challenges within and outside estates multiplied, and rumors of new alliances between slaves and their free neighbors plagued slave owners around Cienfuegos. An informant from the town of San Antón wrote confidentially to the administrator of the Santa Rosalía estate to warn of trouble in July 1879, just before the outbreak in Oriente of the Guerra Chiquita. He reported that word was spreading that “tonight or tomorrow the residents of this district are going to rise up along with the slaves of the plantation.”¹⁴

By 1880 the immediate political threat posed by the Ten Years’ War and the Guerra Chiquita had been suppressed militarily, but the breakdown of the social relations that underlay slavery was already well advanced. Moreover, Cuba was now one of only two societies in the hemisphere whose agrarian elite was still attempting to sustain chattel slavery. It had become increasingly evident to the Spanish parliament that to prevent anticolonial rebellion from being nourished by antislavery convictions and slave resistance, the term *slavery* had to be eliminated. Cuban slaveholders, unsurprisingly, hoped that much of its substance could nonetheless be retained. The colonial authorities tried to accommodate the needs of planters by designing a gradual abolition, which provided for an intermediate period of “apprenticeship” during which former slaves were to work for their former masters for token wages. Freedom was scheduled to come in small doses and, finally, by lottery between 1885 and 1888.

After twelve years of war and innumerable challenges from slaves, however, the power relations of a smoothly functioning slave society had become a thing of the past. Apprentices, denominated *patrocinados*, pushed



Figure 3.1 A view across cane fields of Limones, a *colonia* of Soledad (now Pepito Tey), toward Cumanayagua and the Trinidad (now Escombray) mountains. Photograph by Rebecca Scott.

at the limits of their masters' control. Many succeeded in exiting slavery altogether through self-purchase, legal challenge, flight, or negotiation. In the face of an accelerating breakdown, abolition was completed two years early. In the province of Santa Clara, of which Cienfuegos was an important part, the number of *patrocinados* had fallen from 23,260 in 1883 to 5,648 in 1886, whereupon all were freed by a Spanish decree that ended the *patronato* on the island.¹⁵

Though they had fought abolition for decades, large-scale planters in Cienfuegos hardly missed a beat, shifting quickly to new structures and new sources of labor. They adopted a three-part strategy, encompassing wage labor, tenantry, and contract farming. Plantations hired Spanish, Cuban, and Chinese workers directly or through labor contractors, they leased out land for the growing of cane, and they purchased cut cane from nearby suppliers. The Spanish government contributed to these strategies, introducing new subsidies for workers and their families who chose to immigrate to Cuba. Innovative planters with capital thus rapidly expanded their operations; others fell behind, and some were simply bought out by their neighbors.¹⁶

Successful landowners and merchants moved quickly toward modernization of the local infrastructure to facilitate commercialization of the region's

expanding production. The most prosperous planters transformed their estates into central sugar mills (*centrales*), grinding cane from multiple suppliers. The most impressive of these was Constancia, owned by the Marqués de Apezteguía, which produced sugar worth a staggering 1 million pesos. By 1890 Constancia's output was larger than that of any other single mill in the world.¹⁷ In an appeal for permission to build new rail lines for private use, Fermín de Solá wrote exuberantly that Cienfuegos was providing a brilliant example of work and of "faith in the future."¹⁸

A buoyant North American market for sugar, combined with new capital from the United States and from local merchants, made it possible for the most aggressive Cienfuegos planters to expand the scope of their operations and offer wages to old and new workers alike. The sugar plantations of central Cuba had largely escaped the kind of turmoil and open contest over access to resources that marked the occupied areas of the U.S. South during the process of emancipation, where war and Union presence inadvertently opened up the possibilities for cooperative agriculture and hastened the emergence of grassroots "labor companies" and Union Leagues.¹⁹ Nonetheless, labor mobility, the arrival of immigrants, and the continued threat of anticolonial insurgency on the island made an entirely smooth continuity of authority highly unlikely.

The Santa Rosalía estate, tucked in between the Arimao and the Caunao Rivers to the east of the bay of Cienfuegos, provides an example of the pattern of evolution of moderate-sized estates. In 1877 Santa Rosalía held 150 slaves and produced some 32,000 pesos worth of sugar. It had been developed by José Quesada and was later taken over by Manuel Blanco, a politically intransigent Spanish merchant.²⁰ In 1880 its *dotación* of slaves consisted of eighty-one men, forty-nine women, and sixty-one nominally free children. In 1887, immediately after slave emancipation, its payroll included many of the same names (though surnames now accompanied Christian names), and comprised seventy-four men, thirty-three women, and twenty-four children.²¹

By the early 1890s, the workforce had become significantly more complex. Many of the black laborers bore the surname Quesada, which publicly identified them as former slaves of the estate. Others carried the names of the region's prominent slaveholding families, including Iznaga, Zulueta, Argudín, and Goytisoló. But the estate also listed a series of laborers who had come from Spain and before whose name the honorific *don* was carefully placed. Don Bernardo Villar's pay, for example, was issued in a "letra y giro sobre España," and don Vicente Villar worked nearly every day for fifteen months before leaving the estate "para marchar a la Península." Little racial differ-



Figure 3.2 The livestock-raising settlement of Gavilán, eventually acquired by Soledad. Photograph courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Atkins Family Papers.

entiation in wages was evident: like the former slaves, the Spanish workers earned about seventeen pesos a month.²²

Adjacent to Santa Rosalía stood the expanding Soledad central, owned by the energetic Edwin Atkins of Massachusetts. Atkins had acquired the estate from the Sarría family through foreclosure in the mid-1880s, assuming rights over more than a hundred former slaves, now denominated *patrocinados*.²³ Benefiting from large-scale investments in equipment and a voracious policy of land acquisition, Soledad expanded its production and drew in large numbers of immigrants and other wage workers. Atkins saw the years from 1886 to 1894 as good ones and spoke with some pride of the hundreds of workers who came to labor on his estate. Though it was still overshadowed by giant estates like *Constancia* and *Caracas*, Soledad seems to have developed a reputation as something of a model plantation.²⁴

The plantation workforce that evolved in Cienfuegos was neither that of an all-male proletariat nor that of a family-based sharecropping system. The names of children and of women loomed less and less large on the plantation payrolls, as women turned to household labor, market gardening, and laundering, but they were not absent. The resident population of Santa Rosalía, for example, still included women. Some planters, however, refused to allow certain former slaves to remain on the estate if their services were no longer needed or if they showed too much independence. Tomás Pérez y



Figure 3.3 Cutting cane on Soledad, early twentieth century. Photograph courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Atkins Family Papers.

Pérez, born in 1902, remembers that his mother, Bárbara Pérez, a domestic slave who had learned to read from her young mistress, was forced off the Pérez Galdós plantation after emancipation, and she moved to the town of Arimao to work as a laundress. Toward the end of the 1886 grinding season, the administrator at Soledad took pains to expel “a great many negroes who have horses,” presumably in an effort to reduce their mobility and their consumption of estate resources.²⁵

Managers could not always afford to be quite so particular about the behavior of former slaves. The general expansion of production on the larger estates in Cienfuegos created a strong seasonal demand for fieldworkers and a challenge for employers. In March 1886 the manager of Soledad wrote that all the estates in the district were “short of hands and some have had to stop grinding for a few days.” The possible consequences were clear: “I fear if hands continue to be scarce we will have to increase wages and so bring men from other districts.”²⁶ The relatively high wages at harvest time drew not only men but also some women of color, who returned to the cane fields as short-term laborers.²⁷ There was thus continual mobility of male and female

workers, ensuring that workers in the cane would not be isolated from developments in town.

The growth of *centrales*, which drew in cane from multiple suppliers, brought new opportunities for small renters and landowners. After signing a contract with a nearby central, they could plant their land in cane and reliably plan for the mill to grind it. Smallholders thus gained a foothold in an industry that had previously been largely restricted to those prosperous enough to fund their own milling. These contracts, however, were often draconian. If a *colono* under contract to the Hormiguero estate in the 1890s failed to comply with the terms of the contract, he had just two months to sell out to someone more satisfactory to the estate.²⁸

Some colonos tried to resist the terms laid down by the estates, and their obstreperousness placed certain limits on the expansion of large plantations.²⁹ In 1884 the manager of Soledad wrote with impatience that “the *colonos* are giving us much more trouble than we anticipated; San Pelayo, Roque, and Cantignon all refuse to sign new contracts unless we make them larger advances, for more than their property is worth.”³⁰ In 1891 colonos in the province of Santa Clara organized an attempt to raise the level of compensation beyond the standard rate and seem to have met with some success.³¹

Though sugarcane covered vast swaths of land, it was not the only crop cultivated, nor did large estates monopolize the territory. *Frutos menores*, including sweet potatoes, bananas, and yucca as well as maize, were grown on hundreds of small farms, both for subsistence and for sale. In the property lists of Santa Isabel de las Lajas, in the northern part of Cienfuegos, most of the smallholders seem to have been individuals who could claim the honorific *don* and were probably categorized socially as white. But one can follow through the 1880s a slowly growing group of smallholders listed as *moreno* (black). The *morena* Mercedes Alonso, for example, occupied a *sitio* (small farm) called La Palmita and was taxed about two pesos a year. Her neighbor, the *moreno* Tomás Mora, occupied the even poorer *sitio* named Santo Tomás and paid just seventy centavos per year in taxes.³² From the point of view of former slaves and other rural workers, the hills and unoccupied land on the periphery of sugar estates could provide a kind of refuge. From the point of view of planters, the *monte* yielded wood and a trade in foodstuffs, but it was also suspected of harboring cattle thieves, bandits, and small communities that had escaped the direct supervision of local authorities.

This was not, then, a region of strict monoculture and dichotomous social divisions. At the extremes, of course, class coincided with the prevailing notions of race, and lines were sharply drawn. There was a cosmopolitan and

exclusive elite defined as white, some of whom participated in the concerts, “opera, garden parties, sailing parties, or excursions to some country estates” that Edwin Atkins had enjoyed as a youth. And there were former slaves in the *barracón* (barracks) at the Soledad plantation who, according to Atkins’s account, “being mostly imported Africans, came from many tribes and kept up their tribal customs for years after slavery was abolished.”³³ But both of these groups existed alongside, and of necessity interacted with, administrators, machinists, artisans, and overseers, in the midst of a vast population of Cubans from all racial groups and Spaniards who worked as day laborers, cane farmers, and small-scale cultivators. Moreover, town and country were intimately linked by the *vaporcitos* (little steam-powered boats) and *lanchas* that traveled the river between Soledad and Santa Rosalía and the bay, by the *stevedores* who loaded and unloaded the sugar, by families who moved back and forth in search of work, and by members of the elite who alternated life in the city of Cienfuegos with residence on their rural estates.

This world was porous and multiracial, but even at its base it revealed some lines of national and racial distinctions. When asked about the private guards on his estate, for example, Edwin Atkins replied that “they were mostly composed of men recruited from Spanish laborers who had nearly all of them served their time in the Spanish army.”³⁴ Though their ostensible purpose was to protect the estate from external threats, it is not difficult to see in them certain echoes of the white militia of the Southern United States. As Spaniards on the lookout for Cuban bandits, or as white men on horseback on the lookout for potential trouble from fieldworkers, they would at times have stood out as distinct from the men and women around them.

Even more starkly, the management of the Soledad estate seems to have moved toward denying employment in the mill to former slaves and their descendants, relegating them to fieldwork. The surname Sarría, taken by many former slaves on Soledad, is rare in the pay lists for mill labor in the 1890s, appearing frequently instead in the agricultural section. Tomás Pérez y Pérez, who worked for most of his life on Soledad, recalls the color consciousness of the administrators of Soledad. Pérez, whose mother, Bárbara Pérez, was a former slave and whose father, Manuel Lago, was a Spanish carpenter, obtained special dispensation in the early years of the twentieth century to work at the mill, from which the administration apparently otherwise excluded workmen of color.³⁵

These forms of exclusion coexisted with many forms of cross-racial interaction. On estates and on cane farms, people of all socioracial groups came and went, bought and sold, talked and drank coffee, collected wages and

argued about the price of cane. At Soledad, the squalid barracks built during slavery remained, with the same atrocious consequences for public health and personal comfort. But the prison-like control to which their inhabitants had been subjected was now largely gone, though it occasionally reappeared in moments of attack from smallpox or bandits. Partial residential segregation continued alongside growing spaces of integration. For example, the Spanish owner of a *tienda* and a parcel of land near the Caunao River, located behind the Soledad mill, apparently had no objection if families from Santa Rosalía settled there. There soon emerged the small multiracial community of El Palmar, composed of former slaves, some with the surname Quesada, as well as Spanish workers and Cubans of various groups.³⁶

The Search for Political Voice

The heterogeneous and mobile working population of rural Cienfuegos did not, by and large, have access to the vote in the early 1890s. The electoral law in force limited suffrage to those paying five pesos annually in taxes—a threshold that easily excluded smallholders like the moreno Tomás Mora.³⁷ His slightly more prosperous neighbor, Mercedes Alonso, was of course excluded both by her poverty and by her sex. But there were signs that some former slaves and other people of color were pressing for greater participation in the public sphere. The city of Cienfuegos had created a school for children of color, and in several of the district's towns, mutual-aid organizations had been constituted by members of the *clase de color*. As political conflict increased, new voices were raised in public debate, particularly in the towns.³⁸

The conservative pro-Spanish and integralist Constitutional Union Party had little electoral use for assertive nonelite Cubans, and few would have been drawn to its intransigent stance in any event. It was primarily the more oppositional Liberal Autonomists, supporters of electoral reform and limited self-government, who potentially stood to gain from wider mobilization. Their task, however, was a difficult one. They had come to an abolitionist position relatively late in the day, and their leaders at the national level were socially very distant from the agriculturalists and urban workers who constituted the majority of the population. Locally, they did develop their own networks of clientage and support, but they were increasingly reviled by Cuban separatists, who supported independence for the island and saw reforms as delusions for the gullible.³⁹

All of the Autonomists' difficulties came together in an ill-fated meeting in Cienfuegos in October 1886. Autonomist deputy J. Fernández de Castro was scheduled to speak in the Teatro Zorilla, the only meeting place his party

had been able to secure, located in a section of town largely populated by people of color. As the speakers made their way to the theater, several people of color accompanying them hurled corn kernels at the houses of suspected Constitutional Unionists. The theater was packed, with many of those in attendance described by the authorities as “people of little education, people of color in the majority.” When Fernández de Castro first criticized the Spanish government, the audience divided into those who applauded and those who hissed. When he claimed that the Autonomists could take credit for the abolition of the patronato and thus the definitive end of slavery, he was met with shouts of “¡mentira!” (a lie!). The hall broke out in disorder as some cheered for Spain and others for autonomy, while chairs began to crash.⁴⁰

The events in the Teatro Zorilla are not easy to interpret. Some of the “people of little education” present seem to have come in support of the Autonomists; others may have been recruited by pro-Spanish forces for the purposes of intimidation. Indignation at the Autonomists’ attempt to take credit for abolition could originate from several quarters: from supporters of the Spanish government who wished credit for the belated emancipation to go to the metropolitan lawmakers who formally promulgated the law, or from others who considered that popular pressure by slaves and rebels, not legislative steps in Spain, had accelerated the end of slavery. Whatever the precise mix of prior allegiances in the crowd, the meeting seems to have reflected the eruption into the field of public debate of a large number of people who did not have access to the vote but did claim the right to political voice.⁴¹

From the point of view of the forces of order, such mobilization was by its nature problematic. The police chief noted that Fernández de Castro could have avoided these troubles if he had taken into account “la clase de público a quien se dirigía” (the kind of public whom he was addressing).⁴² But it was not possible for politicians to entirely overlook the potential of such groups. The Autonomists were fighting a genteel but uphill battle, and they tried the weapons of debate, parliamentary boycott, and, in extremis, popular mobilization.⁴³

Despite the generally reactionary tone of much elite life in Cienfuegos, urban activists of color undertook various efforts to achieve racial integration, negotiating with Spanish authorities while consulting with the future *independentista* Juan Gualberto Gómez. Among these Cienfuegos organizers was Gabriel Quesada, a noted baseball player and later cofounder of the Sociedad Minerva, a mutual-aid and educational society for people of color.⁴⁴ The colonial government had formally ruled in favor of equality of access to public places, and on January 4, 1894, a group of men of color attempted to

integrate the elegant Teatro Terry by attending a performance of *Los Hugonotes*. The ensuing fracas precipitated ferocious debate in the press, denunciation of the activists from various quarters, and criticism of the colonial authorities for having failed to respect the opposition of the white majority to the idea of “decreeing social equality.”⁴⁵

As the Autonomists dithered on the question of race and failed miserably to achieve electoral reform from Spain, initiative was already shifting to the separatists in exile, who had long advocated full independence from Spain. At the same time, the financial panic of 1893 was followed by the expiration of the Foster-Cánovas agreement and a disastrous reconfiguration of trade relations between Spain and the United States. The 1891 commercial treaty between these two countries had facilitated the export of Cuban sugars to the U.S. market, but the Wilson Tariff of 1894 took raw sugar off the “free list” and undermined the entire structure of Cuban trade with the United States. In the vivid phrase of Louis A. Pérez Jr., “An impenetrable protectionist wall reappeared around the island in mid-1894, reviving memories of the worst features of Spanish exclusivism.”⁴⁶

From Edwin Atkins’s vantage point at Soledad, the effects were swift and deadly: As “the cost of living in Cuba advanced and the price of sugar dropped, credit became impaired.” By January 1895, wages and cane prices had fallen, and Atkins reported that he had to contend not only with rains and “customs house complications” but also with “strikes owing to low wages.” At Soledad the “poor laborers with their thin clothes were suffering from cold and an epidemic very like intestinal influenza.”⁴⁷

To many on the island, Spain increasingly looked to be not only an authoritarian colonial power but an incompetent one as well.⁴⁸ Cuban planters railed loudly and indignantly at the commercial crisis that threatened to engulf them.⁴⁹ For the nationalist movement in exile, the moment was fast approaching to unleash what they anticipated would be a brief but necessary war of liberation from Spain. In the Cienfuegos region, workers discharged at the end of the 1894–95 crop season faced a very uncertain future and might be expected to be receptive to such a call.

The story of the beginning of the final war of independence has been told so many times that it has taken on the character of an epic, marked by drama and a certain sense of inevitability. On February 24, 1895, in the eastern part of the island, insurrection against Spanish rule was proclaimed in the “grito de Baire,” and a short-lived “grito de Ibarra” in Matanzas echoed the call. Long-standing separatists in the east left the cities for the country-

side when word of the revolt reached them. Lino Sánchez y Murillo, for example, a young white man from a family of conspirators in Santiago de Cuba, reported somewhat boastfully that “since I had use of reason I used to talk about the war of ’68 and how the war had been lost by the pact made by Zanjón.” On February 23, 1895, the day before the formal uprising began, he took to the woods near a sugar estate in the eastern province, having been alerted by Cuban telegraph operators on the railway line that the police were planning to arrest him.⁵⁰

In April, Antonio Maceo landed near Baracoa, on the north coast of Santiago de Cuba province. One coffee planter later testified: “As he was the soul of the revolution, as soon as we heard that he was there, all of us that had 15 or 10 or 20 men went to join him.”⁵¹ Even elderly veterans of the Ten Years’ War joined the fight. Gaspar Caballero, an African-born fieldworker from San Luís, in the east, had fought in both previous rebellions. He enlisted with the rebels as a soldier in the first days of the 1895 war and was later transferred to the task of growing crops to provision the troops.⁵² Within a month after arriving on the island, Antonio Maceo wrote to his wife that he had six thousand men under his command and much territory under his control. He added an exultant postscript: “No day goes by without people coming to join me, all the youth of Santiago de Cuba have gone to the countryside; we have doctors and lawyers with us.”⁵³

In Santa Clara and in its core region of Cienfuegos, however, rebellion seemed less epic and certainly less inevitable. The nationalist movement, initially operating from exile, was calling on Cubans to take enormous risks in pursuit of a great gamble: a gamble that Cubans could win against Spain and that winning would make a real difference to the lives of those who suffered from unemployment, humiliation, or impoverishment. Some people from the central region took to the hills; others waited and watched. Already in mid-February, a group of insurgents was reported to be meeting at Los Guaos, near Soledad, and telephone lines were cut. But the anticipated local uprising did not follow.⁵⁴

On the surface, the Cienfuegos district remained relatively quiet through the spring of 1895. The landing of a rebel expedition on the coast of Santa Clara in late spring, however, provided a new impetus to revolt.⁵⁵ Troubles began by late June near the city of Santa Clara, and Edwin Atkins received reports that a party of a dozen or so rebels was being pursued in the area of Cumanayagua, close to Santa Rosalía and Soledad. By summer there was little work to be had in the area, and in Atkins’s view, “many, particularly negroes,

joined the insurgents or took to the woods to live by pillage.” Companies of pro-government *voluntarios*, meanwhile, were formed from among elements of the Spanish population.⁵⁶

Around Soledad and Santa Rosalía, black and mulatto men, some with the surnames Quesada or Sarría, began to head to the monte to join forces with others, forming the nucleus of what would later become companies of the rebel Ejército Libertador. Claudio Sarría, born a slave on Soledad, quickly emerged as a leader. Two neighbors from Santa Rosalía, Ciriaco and Cayetano Quesada, joined up as well. News was clearly spreading fast.⁵⁷

In the late summer, rebels from Oriente undertook the initiative that seemed essential to victory: they mounted an invasion westward, aimed at projecting their power out of their region of origin and placing the Spanish on the defensive. After gathering their forces, rebel generals Antonio Maceo and Máximo Gómez made their way across the central province of Camagüey (formerly Puerto Príncipe) and reached the economic heartland of the island. When the insurgent army from the east arrived at the edge of the rich, open central sugar zone, Antonio Maceo is said to have looked out over the land and observed, “Our ship has reached the high seas.”⁵⁸

The Spanish captain general, Arsenio Martínez Campos, responded by deploying thousands of new Spanish troops to the central sugar regions and transferring his headquarters to the city of Santa Clara. But the insurgent advance was relentless, and the breakout of the eastern rebel forces provided an additional stimulus for local insurgents to take initiatives of their own. In the town of Las Moscas, in the hills across the Arimao River to the east of Cienfuegos, the black rebel veteran and shopkeeper Benigno Najarro had linked up both with Alfredo Rego, a white conspirator from the city of Cienfuegos, and with Juan Ramírez Olivera, known as el mejicano, to form a cadre of leaders for the rebellion. It was less than a day’s ride from Las Moscas to Soledad and Santa Rosalía, and by August and September rebels in that area were said to be operating “under a chief named Rego.”⁵⁹

By November, Martínez Campos had relocated to Cienfuegos and was fortifying the immediate region. The insurgent forces under Maceo and Gómez confronted the Spanish in the dramatic battle of Mal Tiempo, near the town of Cruces. The rebel victory provided an impressive demonstration of the capacity of the insurgent armies from eastern Cuba, in conjunction with local forces, to defeat the Spanish troops.⁶⁰ The question was now starkly posed to the residents of the central sugar zones: Would the descendants of slaves and the descendants of slaveholders, as well as those who had been free rural dwellers on the margins of the slave system, perceive them-

selves to have a shared interest in this revolt? And if so, would they and could they mobilize together?

The Dynamics of Recruitment and Warfare

The rank and file of the forces from Oriente were composed in the majority of men defined as black or mulatto, strongly identified in popular perceptions with the dynamic figure of Maceo, son of a family of free people of color. Alongside them fought many Cubans who counted themselves as white and even a few renegade Spaniards. Rebel units from the central province of Santa Clara, also heterogeneous, had joined up as well. The official ideology of the rebels portrayed racism as a legacy of slavery and colonialism, destined to be eliminated in a democratic Cuban republic. Divisions and ambivalence on questions of race were for the moment muted, as a multiracial rebel army under multiracial leadership swept westward.⁶¹

This, then, was the force that was visibly overpowering the Spanish in the countryside and seeking new allies to assist in the task. Recruitment in Cienfuegos was becoming a personal, face-to-face affair, as friends and neighbors who had joined the insurgent army confronted those who had not. On the Hormiguero plantation, for example, workers watched as virtually the entire invading force rode or tramped across estate lands in their march to the west. Even those who resisted appeals to enlist found it hard to refuse requests for information.⁶²

The moment of recruitment itself could be ephemeral. Rural workers were, after all, committed to their homes and to their families and might have second thoughts about abandoning them, particularly if this meant marching out of their home district. One laborer from Cienfuegos, Miguel Angel Abad, had a small farm of his own but also worked on a colonia supplying the Hormiguero mill. He described the passage of Gómez and Maceo through the estate as they torched the cane before moving westward. Local insurgents came out of the woods to join them, though most of the workers on the estate did not. Abad had joined the insurgents after a friend in the invading force had urged him to go with them. But after a few hours, Abad later recounted, “I slowly fell to the rear, and as soon as I found I could separate myself, I started running for my house.”⁶³

As the main invasion force passed to the north, local insurgents in the *partido* of Cumanayagua consolidated their forces, and in early January 1896 the administrator at Soledad reported a “uniting of [the] small parties into one large party of rebels. Claudio Sarría, Rafael Monte, Torres, and Najarro have united their forces with *el mejicano* for their own safety.” The admin-



Figure 3.4 Officers of the rebel Cienfuegos Brigade, including E. Collado Curbelo. Photograph courtesy of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fototeca (ANC, Caja M-II, sobre 101, reg. 105).

istrators of Soledad had no clear idea of how many of their workers sympathized with the rebellion, and they could not stop rebels from entering the estate to collect supplies.⁶⁴

In mid-January 1896, the rebel troops of Quintín Bandera paid a visit to Soledad. The administrator, P. M. Beal, was impressed by Bandera's forces from the east. "They were here under trying circumstance, hungry, barefooted and half naked, yet not one of them appropriated the smallest thing without permission." He added that "with exception of the officers, they were all colored." So, too, was Quintín Bandera, whom the rebel high command had ordered to remain behind to guard their flank and consolidate their gains as they continued toward the west.⁶⁵

In the core sugar areas around the bay of Cienfuegos, the Spanish hastened to construct a garrisoned *zona fortificada*, blocking the penetration of insurgents and inhibiting recruitment. Confrontations continued on the margins and around estates like Santa Rosalía in Cumanayagua, but during 1896 and 1897 many of the major Cienfuegos estates were secured against insurgent attack. Soledad moved into a liminal state, guarded and fortified to permit grinding, but always vulnerable at its edges.⁶⁶

Despite Spanish efforts to inhibit recruitment, the multiracial world of sugar plantations and of the small farming sector had given rise to multi-



Figure 3.5 Officers of the Cienfuegos Brigade of the Ejército Libertador, including General Higinio Esquerra. Photograph courtesy of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fototeca (ANC, Caja M-II, sobre 100, reg. 104).

racial insurgent forces, and the experiences of cross-racial collaboration in the insurgency had changed the character of social relations in the countryside. To say this is not to claim that lines were so fluid that racial identities were insignificant. But shared grievances against the authoritarian Spanish state and its local manifestations, combined with popular imaginings of a “free Cuba,” provided points of convergence among what may in fact have been quite different visions of a postwar future.⁶⁷

In the central province of Santa Clara (Las Villas), most members of the rebel high command were individuals who were identified as white. For example, General José de Jesús Monteagudo, surrounded by white creole officers, appears to have presented himself as a member of the white creole classes.⁶⁸ General Higinio Esquerra, who commanded the Cienfuegos Brigade, was described as a white farmer, though his brigade itself was thoroughly multiracial, with significant numbers of black and mulatto officers. There were, however, notable Afro-Cuban members of the high command: Brigadier José González Planas exercised authority over white subordinate officers (including, early in the war, Esquerra himself) and commanded a large number of white, black, and mulatto troops.⁶⁹ Throughout the war, smaller bands under local leadership, often black or mulatto, controlled

large sections of the countryside. Claudio Sarría, for example, had joined the rebellion in August 1895 and by November 1896 was captain of Company 3 of the First Battalion of the Infantry Regiment of the Cienfuegos Brigade. His neighbor José Sarría was a sergeant, and Ciriaco Quesada, a former slave from Santa Rosalía, served as one of the soldiers under his command.⁷⁰

As the recent works of Ada Ferrer and of Aline Helg have demonstrated, this multiracial alliance was riven through with tensions and conflicts. These included resentment at the frequent relegation of African-born recruits to menial positions and competition for resources between units under the leadership of white officers and those under the leadership of black and mulatto officers.⁷¹ But despite these conflicts, the insurgency itself represented a massive effort at cross-racial mobilization under the formal aegis of equality and antiracism. It could thus serve as a seedbed for strong claims of citizenship, even when in practice many of its leaders fell far short of observing its egalitarian principles. It also led to the emergence and reinforcement of extensive cross-racial clienteles developed by white officers and to the consolidation of leadership by black and mulatto soldiers at various levels.

With increasing urgency and desperation, the metropolitan government, while denying the very idea of Cuban citizenship, had sought throughout the 1890s to persuade residents of Cuba that they had wide access to a qualified citizenship as *Spanish* subjects. In response to pressure from an urban-based movement for equal rights for Cubans of color, the Spanish government had conceded, at least in theory, that the honorific title of *don* could be claimed by all men, regardless of color. Cubans of African descent had also been formally accorded equal rights to education and to public accommodation.⁷²

In 1897, in the midst of war, the colonial government belatedly conceded the basic demands of the political reformists and, under the tutelage of Spain, constituted a new autonomist government for Cuba. In theory, a broader suffrage and a more expansive politics would now be possible. Surviving electoral lists from Santa Clara province in early 1898 highlight both the presence of Cubans of color among those recognized as electors and the persistence of distinctions of status in the lists themselves. The *ayuntamiento* of Sagua la Grande, for example, listed hundreds of electors in each district of the municipality, but accorded the title *don* to some and omitted it from others, generally following the names of the latter with the color terms *pardo* or *moreno*. The printed lists from Cienfuegos were more discreet, eschewing these distinctions. Those of the town of San Fernando included hundreds of fieldworkers, half a dozen of them with the surname Sarría, and were equally silent on color. Actual practice at election time, of course, cannot be inferred



Figure 3.6 Officers of the Cienfuegos Brigade of the Ejército Libertador. Photograph courtesy of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fototeca (ANC, Caja M-II, sobre 101, reg. 105).

from such sources.⁷³ But though the disruptions of war rendered these late electoral rights largely moot, the establishment of integrated electoral lists in itself established precedents for the postwar period. Both sides, in effect, were proffering citizenship without distinctions of color.

Autonomy under Spanish auspices had come much too late. The armed Cuban separatists had by now fought and harassed the Spanish forces to a standstill, though they could not yet expel them. Losses were mounting and raw recruits from Spain were expected to manage the rigors of irregular warfare in the tropics. Spanish forces could not move safely in most of the countryside; they were largely reduced to garrisoning the towns and trying to protect selected fortified rural zones.

By 1898 the effects of destruction were visible throughout the island. For rural Cubans, physical insecurity and widespread devastation were a harsh reality. Many sugar mills had been destroyed, and many others were unable to grind. José Martí had been quite wrong in imagining that the necessary war would be brief. Nonetheless, it seemed plausible to expect that the rebels' summer campaign of 1898 might extend their control from the countryside into the cities and finally win the war.⁷⁴

If the outbreak of the war is often portrayed as epic, its conclusion might best be depicted as tragic. The standoff between Cuban rebels and Spanish



Figure 3.7 Brigadier José González Planas (labeled #1) and members of the Remedios Brigade of the Ejército Libertador. Photograph courtesy of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fototeca (ANC, Caja M-10, sobre 97, reg. 101).

forces was broken by the intervention of the U.S. military, allied with the most conservative wing of the Cuban separatist coalition. The Cubans who had fought the war for three years were quickly constructed as the insufficiently grateful beneficiaries of American generosity and sacrifice. They were said to be, in the unforgettable words of General William R. Shafter, “no more fit for self-government than gunpowder is for hell.”⁷⁵ Instead of Cuba Libre, the island would become occupied Cuba, and a U.S. military government would take over the sovereignty relinquished by Spain.

Cienfuegos under U.S. Occupation

The leaders of the U.S. military government had little or no sympathy for the wartime vision of Cuban citizenship in which nationality transcended color and in which service in the Ejército Libertador entitled one to political voice and access to resources. The occupation forces represented a federal government that had itself debated the meanings of free labor and citizenship during its own civil war and afterward. After a period of experimentation, the notion of a right of access by former slaves to productive resources (particularly land) had been put aside, and free labor was defined more simply as the right to sell one’s own labor. Moreover, the federal government had all

but settled on its own territory the question of race and citizenship: although the Fifteenth Amendment prohibited restrictions on voting rights based on color, no significant effort would be made to halt local attempts at systematic disenfranchisement.⁷⁶

The officers of the U.S. occupation government were strongly disinclined to recommence an experiment in interracial democracy on an island they viewed as temperamentally and constitutionally unsuited for self-rule in the first place. Order was far more important than inclusiveness, and mechanisms for providing order were designed to reinforce the supremacy of the right sort of people. A rural guard, for example, if properly constituted, could help to curb disorder and importunate claims of representation. But the rural guard likely to emerge from the demobilized Ejército Libertador would be altogether too heterogeneous.⁷⁷

There was, however, a notable disjuncture between the larger structures of sovereignty asserted by the United States and the local patterns of power on the ground. In several areas of Cienfuegos, for example, Edwin Atkins reported that insurgents “under negro officers” were still effectively in control, keeping the peace and levying small taxes to support their men. When Máximo Gómez made a visit to Cienfuegos in February 1899, the insurgent force of the region, people of color in the great majority, assembled to greet him, demonstrating their continued capacity to mobilize.⁷⁸

The U.S. presence provided a substantive and symbolic counterweight to earlier visions of Cuba Libre. But this presence could not effectively prevent challenges, small and large, from emerging in the cities and countryside. Military pacification was one thing; social peace was quite another. One incident on the Santa Rosalía estate illuminates the tenacity of the claims advanced by ordinary Cubans, especially former slaves who had fought in the rebellion.

Santa Rosalía had been radically depopulated during the war. Some of its residents had joined the rebellion, others were consigned to the reconcentración villages set up by the Spanish general Weyler, and a few remained on the estate to guard the cattle and the property. Descendants of former slave residents recall that when the war was over, the *reconcentrados* returned to Santa Rosalía, only to find that Manuel Blanco would not let them resettle; the land was to be occupied by others. Women in particular seem to have been unwelcome, but arguments between the administrator and male workers, followed by expulsions, were also common.⁷⁹

The administrator of Santa Rosalía, Constantino Pérez, was accustomed to writing nearly every day to Manuel García Blanco, the agent of the owner,



Map 3.2 The various properties constituting Soledad. The Santa Rosalía plantation is its southern neighbor. San Antón, where Ciriaco and Cayetano Quesada settled, is in the southeast corner. Photograph courtesy of the Archivo Principal de Cienfuegos. Photograph by Jack Kenny.

Manuel Blanco. The administrator had many tales of woe, centering on the lack of willing workers and the insolence of those he found. On August 17, 1899, Pérez reported that “un tal Ciriaco y Paulino Quesada,” former slaves on Santa Rosalía and sons of “la vieja Francisca,” had come to see him about retrieving “la mula . . . de Gregoria.” Ciriaco Quesada had obtained his legal freedom in January 1886, and he and his brother Paulino had worked seasonally on the estate in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Ciriaco Quesada had enlisted in the rebel Ejército Libertador in August 1895. Now the war was over and he was back. The administrator stood on ceremony: he would not give up the mule without a written order from the owner or his agent. Indeed, Pérez seemed rather pleased with himself for turning away this request from Ciriaco and Paulino Quesada. (He said nothing about Gregoria herself, but other evidence suggests that she had moved to the city of Cienfuegos during the war.)⁸⁰

At seven o’clock the next morning, however, the chief of the Rural Guard appeared on the estate and called for Pérez, presenting him with an order from the mayor of Arimao to turn over the mule to Ciriaco Quesada. Pérez

initially refused, but the guardsman threatened to go after the mule himself. Pérez seems to have become a bit flustered. He relinquished the mule, but only in exchange for a receipt, in case Manuel Blanco wanted to collect for the grass the mule had eaten in the meantime. In his next letter, Pérez fumed that any day now Antonico (presumably another former slave) would turn up to look for *his* two mules, since he had come around earlier to get them. Pérez advised Blanco's agent to try to collect from Ciriaco Quesada for the three years the mule had been grazing on estate property, if only to make the point that Ciriaco should not have gone to the mayor.

What is most striking is the speed with which Ciriaco Quesada enlisted the assistance of the *alcalde* of Arimao and of the Rural Guard. He must have had a horse to reach Arimao so quickly, and he must have been received promptly by the mayor. Were these two officials perhaps fellow insurgent veterans, willing to take up the case against the estate's administrator out of friendship with Ciriaco? (Ciriaco Quesada had joined the Ejército Libertador well before the invading rebel army from the east swept through the countryside north of Soledad and Santa Rosalía, and he had served with a local rebel force under Claudio Sarría during 1896.) Was the mayor also moved in part by resentment against Manuel Blanco, an unreconstructed Spanish conservative? The existence of hostility against Blanco is confirmed by Constantino Pérez's later report that an employee on the estate had been mocked at the country store by "un ciudadano de esos Bandidos," who told him that he was "un sinvergüenza" (a person without shame) for guarding the cattle of Manuel Blanco. During these same months, Constantino Pérez feared a strike by Cuban workers. He later concluded that the workers would wait until the terms of peace—and perhaps the fate of Spanish property owners like Manuel Blanco—were settled.⁸¹

Ciriaco Quesada's decision to take his claim straight to the town of Arimao was an astute one. Arimao, whose population was composed of black, white, Chinese, and mulatto *campesinos*, was a likely spot in which to nourish and reinforce a claim of rights. Home to sugar workers from Soledad and from the Pérez Galdós estates, as well as to many small-scale farmers and tobacco workers, it had a long history of separatist activism. Some of the first rumors of war heard on Soledad had come from "over by Arimao." The 1898 electoral lists of the Arimao district, encompassing the surrounding countryside, accorded everyone the honorific title of *don* and included Francisco Achón, probably a Chinese worker from Soledad; Manuel Lago Tacón, the master carpenter from Vigo, Galicia, who was the father of Tomás Pérez y Pérez; and eight men with the surname Quesada, very likely former slaves



Figure 3.8 Tomás Pérez y Pérez, born 1902 in El Palmar, interviewed in 1998. Photograph by Paul Eiss.

from Santa Rosalía. Twenty-three of the registered voters in Arimao carried the surname Sarría, and many of them were almost certainly former slaves and their descendants from Soledad.⁸²

The electoral lists, of course, include only men. But from the memoirs of Tomás Pérez y Pérez we can identify another resident not on the lists and catch a glimpse of the public sphere in this dusty riverfront town. Tomás Pérez's mother, Bárbara Pérez, was born a slave on the Pérez Galdós plantation, where she later attended the owner's young niece as a personal servant. Among her tasks as a slave was to collect the mail when it arrived at the house. One day when she brought the mail back to the main room there was no one around, so she took the liberty of opening up a newspaper to see what she could make of it. Moments later the niece walked in, and Bárbara quickly folded up the paper and lowered her head, expecting punishment. Instead the niece said, "Don't tell anyone I saw you, and I'll teach you to read." Bárbara Pérez seems to have been a ready student, and by the time emancipation came, she could read and write.

In the late 1880s, Bárbara Pérez took her skills with her when she moved to Arimao, after being expelled from the Pérez Galdós estate. Whenever a newspaper arrived in town, her neighbors would each bring a chair from their living rooms out to the sidewalk, and she would read the news aloud to the *pueblo* of Arimao.⁸³ Bárbara Pérez and her neighbors had, in effect, reinvented that classic symbol of working-class Cuban political consciousness, the *lector* (reader). But instead of a male tobacco worker paid to read to his companions while they worked, this was a *lectora*, a laundress whose direct access to the news made her the central figure in a set of everyday interactions among her neighbors.⁸⁴

In the city of Cienfuegos, this was also a time of formal revindications and collective action. Port workers went on strike in 1899 and obtained a fifty-cent wage increase. On February 19, 1900, the lightermen struck again and were joined by a “sympathetic strike of stevedores, wharfmen, freight handlers on the railroad, cartmen, and etc.,” paralyzing business. The union membership and leadership included many workers categorized as black and mulatto.⁸⁵ The U.S. occupation forces attempted to set limits to this kind of action. In this instance, the mayor and the leader of the union were promptly “bounced” out of office by General Leonard Wood.⁸⁶ But this barely slowed the process of mobilization.

On the larger question of suffrage, the occupation government found itself obliged to back down. Hoping to place power in the hands of the better sort of people, the military government initially imposed property and literacy restrictions that might minimize the voting strength of lower-class Cubans, particularly people of color. Such restrictions, however, flew squarely in the face of the patriotic vision of the liberation army as the force that had won Cuba’s freedom from Spain and thus a right to political voice. The occupation government next incorporated a “soldier clause,” permitting those who had served in the army to vote. In 1902, when the United States relinquished power and conceded formal sovereignty to the government of Tomás Estrada Palma, the new Cuban constitution went the rest of the way and provided for universal manhood suffrage.⁸⁷

Rural residents of Cienfuegos continued to organize, both in political parties and in unions. In November 1902, “commissions” of workers marched from the town of Cruces to nearby sugar estates to try to obtain the suspension of work in solidarity with strikers in Havana. The U.S. consul at Cienfuegos reported that work had stopped in the municipalities of Lajas and Cruces, including the plantations of Caracas, San Agustín, San Francisco, Andreita, Dos Hermanas, and others. The men in charge of Hormi-

guero claimed that they “have been threatened by colored men to stop work and laborers have quit work through fear.”⁸⁸ Anarchists as well as veterans of the Ejército Libertador, including the mulatto officer Evaristo Landa, were conspicuous in these organizing efforts, which encompassed workers from multiple national and racial groups.⁸⁹

The extended suffrage of the early Republic nourished a vigorous local politics, albeit one marked by the proliferation of patron-client relations and corruption. The charismatic Liberal Party leader José Miguel Gómez adroitly sustained linkages of loyalty with former officers and enlisted men from his region. When, in 1906, the Estrada Palma government discredited itself through corrupt manipulation of the electoral law, the Liberal Party rebelled, mounting a military challenge to Estrada Palma’s effort to ensure reelection. Loyalties forged during 1895–98 were invoked, and many black and mulatto Cubans became both soldiers and officers in the rebellious Liberal army.⁹⁰

The manifest incapacity of the Estrada Palma government to contain the rebellion brought a reluctant United States back into Cuba in 1906, determined once again to try to create structures of continuity and authority that would protect its interests. A provisional government was set up, and Cienfuegos once again found itself occupied by the U.S. military. Bárbara Pérez, who had done laundry for the Spanish forces in Arimao, would now wash uniforms for the Americans at Soledad.⁹¹

The occupation forces seemed ill at ease this time. In 1907 the military information officer responsible for Cruces reported that the people of Cruces were “unfriendly toward the Americans.” Although some members of the elite welcomed the occupiers, the Military Intelligence Division of the Army of Cuban Pacification could not fail to note that they were surrounded by veterans of the independence struggle, the 1902 strikes, and the 1906 revolution.⁹² Even apparently reliable workmen and labor contractors might turn out to have alarming *antecedentes*. One local leader on the Constancia estate was described as follows: “Nicolás Fernández. Black or dark mulatto. Aged about 35. Speaks only Spanish. Soldier in War of 1895–98. Joined insurrection of 1906 as Captain and had company of about 80 blacks, all mounted and said to have been well drilled and under good discipline. Appears to be a strong character. Employed as overseer at Horquita because he has great influence over the negroes and has brought them there to cut cane.”⁹³

Here, then, was a man with authority over an impressive body of “negroes who have horses,” to use the phrase of the Soledad administrator who twenty years earlier had tried to rid his estate of such mobile and assertive workmen.

Automatic deference, one assumes, was not to be expected from Nicolás Fernández.

Some veterans of the 1906 Liberal uprising remained in the hills after formal pacification and the arrival of the U.S. military. One official of the occupation forces reported that “when we first located in Santa Clara in October last, members of detachments of these negroes of the mountain came to camp, some of them remaining all day, in uniform, watching the movements of camp.”⁹⁴ Each group may have been assessing, uneasily, the strength of the other and wondering how long they would stay.

In Arimao, former slaves from Santa Rosalía and their descendants again emerged as combative figures. Fermín Quesada had appeared on the estate’s slave list of 1880 as a seven-year-old. By 1907 he was described by a hostile intelligence officer of the Fifteenth U.S. Cavalry in the following terms: “Quesada, Fermín. Negro. Liberal. Age: About 35 years. A farmer by occupation. Lives near Arimao, Cienfuegos district. Served in the Cuban Army during the 95–98 war reaching the grade of sergeant. Was a soldier in the insurgent ranks during the recent disturbance. Has a very bad reputation. Is said to be a cattle thief operating in the vicinity of Arimao and La Sierra. Is controlled by General Esquerra. Has but little influence, and that among the negro farmers in the country. Is considered a dangerous man in case of trouble.”⁹⁵

In addition to enumerating the “dangerous men” in their neighborhood, intelligence officers also filed alarmed reports of contentious gatherings of various kinds. Some of these gatherings reflected party rivalries between Liberals and Conservatives, but others were provoked by conflict over such issues as the presence of U.S. troops or the legality of cockfighting. Observers often noted that the gatherings included blacks, whites, and mulattos.⁹⁶

The Politics of Leadership and Voice

Cuban politics, like Brazilian politics in a comparable period, can accurately be characterized as clientelistic. Its patterns of patronage bear considerable resemblance to familiar forms of Latin American *caciquismo*. But there is a distinctive feature: beginning in 1902 Cuba’s electoral system functioned with universal male suffrage in the midst of a politicized population, many of whose poorest members had recently participated in an armed struggle. This was an electoral system in which the construction of alliances involved acknowledging numerous midlevel leaders drawn from among black and mulatto veterans. In the small towns of central Cuba there were mulatto mayors as well as mulatto and black police chiefs and policemen. Overall, men of color made up more than 20 percent of the soldiers and policemen in

the province of Santa Clara—not a proportional representation, but a visible armed presence as part of civil authority in the countryside.⁹⁷

Black and mulatto leadership was exercised in the countryside in communities identified as predominantly black, such as Congojas and Parque Alto. It emerged in the cane fields and on the docks as part of the working-class movement. It was demonstrated in the towns at the intermediate levels of the system of clientelism. Some of these leaders suspected, on good grounds, that the most powerful members of the existing parties would not permit them to rise beyond a certain point, and a few undertook to organize an “*agrupación de color*” that could defend their interests.⁹⁸ Over the next few years, the national counterpart of this “*agrupación*” would give rise to the Partido Independiente de Color, which met with fierce repression.⁹⁹ The emergence of an “independent party of color,” however, was but one of several forms of assertion and organization at the local as well as the national level.¹⁰⁰

Certain features of turn-of-the-century Cienfuegos seem to have converged to make possible such vigorous contests over voice and space, along with associated claims to various kinds of rights. First, an expanding and multiracial rural workforce, marked by mobility and a certain fluidity of roles, underlay the multiracial organizing that occurred in the war of 1895–98, in the strikes of 1899–1902, and in the intermittent protest of 1906–9. Second, a recent and powerful experience of armed conflict, in which black and mulatto officers often assumed command over troops from all socioracial groups, provided experienced leaders and multiple patterns of leadership. Third, the wartime ideal of transracial national identity and citizenship, however often violated in practice, constituted a powerful ideological framework within which to claim rights to political voice and representation.¹⁰¹

These circumstances permitted a struggle for expanded citizenship to emerge; they by no means guaranteed that it would be successful. Recognizing the dimensions of that struggle, however, may help us to situate Cuba’s history among other postemancipation experiences. In this light, the multiracial organizing that characterized the Cuban war of 1895–98 may usefully be compared to the parallel experiment in interracial democracy carried out during Reconstruction in the United States and to the mobilizations in the cane fields of Louisiana that outlived Reconstruction itself. The fracturing of lines of authority on Cuban sugar plantations may also be contrasted to the relative continuity of authority on sugar plantations in the Brazilian northeast, although the settlement of families with the surnames Quesada, Pérez, and Sarría behind the Soledad mill, in the community of El Palmar, echoes

the fragile but decisive access of some former slaves in the Brazilian northeast to a *roça* (plot of land) inside or outside the sugar plantation.¹⁰²

Victor Clark's impressions of democracy and social equality in Cuba, with which we began, may by now make a certain amount of sense. Ciriaco Quesada's demand that Manuel Blanco, a wealthy merchant and former president of the Casino Español de Cienfuegos, defer to him in the matter of a mule was issued forcefully and with immediate and successful recourse to the civil authorities. This was precisely the sort of act that might cause a North American to marvel that "nowhere else does the least-considered member of a community aspire with more serene confidence to social equality with its most exalted personage." Though their assertions could not suffice to make Cuba a fully democratic polity, rural former slaves like Ciriaco Quesada and his neighbor Bárbara Pérez exercised rights of public voice in a context in which the concept of citizenship was widely available and vigorously debated. We need not assume that when Cubans chose to address or refer to each other as *ciudadanos* they used this term with precisely the presumptions attached to it by those who spoke it at other times or in other languages. Citizenship, like freedom itself, could be built up from the ground, even as occupiers and legislators debated its meanings from above.

Notes

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1. Clark, "Labor Conditions in Cuba," 780. Victor Seldon Clark (1868–1946) wrote for the Labor Department in the early twentieth century and later for the Carnegie Institution and the Brookings Institution.

2. An early draft of this essay was prepared for the conference “Empire and Underdevelopment: The Colonial Heritage of Latin America Revisited,” in honor of Stanley and Barbara Stein, Princeton University, December 2, 1995. The current text forms part of the larger project that later yielded the book *Degrees of Freedom*. It first appeared in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* 78 (November 1998) and is reproduced here with some bibliographical and stylistic revisions.

3. For an emphatic early statement, see Stein and Stein, *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America*, esp. 174–85.

4. Stein, *Vassouras*, xi–xviii, 160. See also Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen*, esp. 88–92.

5. See, among other works, Viotti da Costa, *Da Monarquia à República*. Graham, in *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, provides a subtle portrait of relations of clientelism and emphasizes their implicit reciprocities. A compelling picture of social relations in the sugar regions in the twentieth century, but one that presumes rather than demonstrates the historical roots of dependency, is García, *Libres et assujettis*. Fraga Filho, *Encruzilhadas da Liberdade*, provides an analysis of the historical continuities, discontinuities, and challenges to patriarchal control at the local level.

6. See Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*, 39, for an incident in 1831. See also Mattos de Castro, “El color inexistente,” on the apparent use of the term *cidadão* by rural former slaves to refer to themselves. She develops the evidence further in *Das cores do silêncio*, chaps. 15–18.

7. See Graham, *Patronage and Politics*, chap. 7.

8. I do not presume to engage here the vast literature on the meanings of the term *citizenship*, its presumed Enlightenment and French Revolutionary roots, or its continuing traps and snares. I simply aim to denote a set of practices of political voice that were at times accompanied by a self-conscious invocation of rights possessed as a member of the nation, or earned through service to the nation, or claimed in explicit terms of *ciudadanía*. On the larger concept of voice, see Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, esp. chap. 3, and Hirschman, *A Propensity to Self-Subversion*, chap. 1. On citizenship, see Cooper, Holt, and Scott, *Beyond Slavery*.

9. The best published overviews of the early development of Cienfuegos are García Martínez, “Estudio de la economía cienfueguera desde la fundación de la colonia Fernandina de Jagua hasta mediados del siglo XIX,” and the discussion on pp. 103–21 of Bergad, Iglesias García, and Barcia, *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790–1880*.

10. For the purposes of continuity in discussion, I am using “the Cienfuegos region” to refer to the extended agricultural zone around the bay of Cienfuegos, conforming in its general lines to the “judicial district” of Cienfuegos as defined in the 1877–78 agricultural census. By 1906 the judicial district of Cienfuegos had been expanded and redivided into five municipalities: Cienfuegos, Rodas, Palmira, Cruces, and Santa Isabel de las Lajas. (The *partido* of Rodas encompassed part of the old Cartagena, Palmira encompassed parts of Las Casas, and Cruces incorporated parts of the old Camarones.) See “Memorandum for Intelligence Officers,” United States National Archives, Record Group 395, Records of the United States Army Overseas Operations and Commands,

1898–1942, Series 1008, Army of Cuban Pacification, General Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division (hereafter USNA, RG 395, ACP, series 1008), file 71, item 2. See also the appendix titled “Nombres antiguos y modernos de los centrales azucareros de Cuba,” in Rojas, *Las luchas obreras en el central “Tacajo,”* as well as Gobierno Civil de Santa Clara, *Memoria: Año 1901* (Villaclara, 1902), table “Ingenios que muelen en esta provincia en la Zafra de 1901 a 1902.”

11. Quite a few owners, however, filed no returns, and the categories themselves are ambiguous. See “Noticia de las fincas azucareras en producción que existían en toda la isla de Cuba al comenzar el presupuesto de 1877–78,” *Revista Económica* (Havana), June 7, 1878, 7–24. The counts of “free and rented workers” (1,526) and Chinese laborers (380) seem particularly unreliable.

12. For evidence of the disruption of order on estates, see the correspondence concerning the Santa Rosalía ingenio in January 1877 in “Cartas diversas dirigidas en su mayoría a Manuel Blanco,” Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba, Colección Cubana, Colección Manuscrita Julio Lobo (hereafter BNC, CC, CMJL), no. 46.

13. On the use of the term *ciudadano*, see Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, chap. 1. On slavery and the insurgency, see Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, chap. 2.

14. See Rosendo Gutiérrez to D. José M. Pérez, July 25, 1879, in “Cartas de varias personas dirigidas a Manuel Blanco propietario del ingenio Santa Rosalía,” BNC, CC, CMJL, no. 9A. The text reads: “en esta se corre la noticia que esta noche o mañana se ban a alzar con las dotaciones de los ingenios los vecinos de esta Jurisdicción.”

15. Scott, *Slave Emancipation*, chaps. 6–8. Figures for Santa Clara are on p. 194.

16. These patterns are reflected in the correspondence between the administrator and the owner of the Soledad plantation, located east of the bay of Cienfuegos. See the letters of J. S. Murray to E. F. Atkins and Co., Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Atkins Family Papers, Atkins-Soledad Letters (hereafter MHS, AFP, ASL). On Spanish immigration, see Maluquer de Motes, *Nación e inmigración*.

17. See Edo, *Memoria histórica de Cienfuegos y su jurisdicción*, 663, and Iglesias García, “La concentración azucarera y la comarca de Cienfuegos.” See also García Martínez and Millán Cuétara, “Testimonios del quehacer constructivo en la industria azucarera cienfueguera.”

18. “Construcción de un ferrocarril para el servicio particular del Ingenio Cienguita . . . 1890,” Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Sección de Ultramar (hereafter AHN, Ultramar), leg. 201, exp. 5. Iglesias García portrays the Cienfuegos region as a pioneer in the centralization of sugar processing. Iglesias, “Concentración azucarera.”

19. For a powerful analysis of this phenomenon in South Carolina, see Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction*. On the sugar regions of Louisiana, see Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*; Eiss, “A Share in the Land”; and Scott, “‘Stubborn and Disposed to Stand Their Ground,’” 103–26.

20. See Rebello, *Estados relativos a la producción azucarera de la Isla de Cuba*, 14, and “Noticia de las fincas azucareras . . . 1877–78.”

21. See “Listas de la dotación del ingenio Santa Rosalía, 1879–1887,” BNC, CC, CMJL, no. 173.

22. See “Libro mayor no. 3 perteneciente al ingenio Sta Rosalía propiedad de Dn. Manuel Blanco y Ramos,” Archivo Provincial de Cienfuegos (hereafter APC).

23. Atkins, a Unitarian from Boston, refrained from acknowledging that he had become an owner of *patrocinados*, though one can infer their presence from earlier records of the estate and subsequent correspondence from the manager. In 1877 Soledad had held about 180 slaves. See “Noticia de las fincas azucareras . . . 1877–78.” In a letter from J. S. Murray to E. F. Atkins, May 24, 1886, the manager refers to “the fiew [*sic*] *patrocinados* that remain.” See MHS, AFP, ASL box 2.

24. See Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba*, 108–10. There are also many manuscript sources for the study of Soledad, including the testimony in Case 387 of the U.S./Spain Treaty Claims Commission, United States National Archives, Washington, D.C., Record Group 76 (hereafter USNA, RG 76, Treaty Claims); the papers of Soledad in the Fondo ICEA of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Havana (hereafter ANC, ICEA); the records in the Archivo Provincial de Cienfuegos, Cienfuegos, Cuba; and the Atkins Family Papers in the Massachusetts Historical Society. I am particularly grateful to Leonardo Alomá of Pepito Tey (formerly Soledad), to Modesto Hernández of Santa Rosalía, and to Tomás Pérez y Pérez of Cienfuegos, for sharing information about the estate. For a detailed case study of the Arimao and Caunao valleys and working conditions on the estates, see Scott, “Reclaiming Gregoria’s Mule.”

25. Interview with Tomás Pérez y Pérez, Cienfuegos, March 1998. On Santa Rosalía, see also “Libro no. 1 de los negros” and “Libro mayor no. 3,” APC. On Soledad, see J. S. Murray to E. F. Atkins, May 24, 1886, MHS, AFP, ASL box 2; and Scott, “Reclaiming Gregoria’s Mule.” Murray seems to have planned to take the workmen back if they got rid of their horses.

26. J. S. Murray to E. F. Atkins, March 9, 1886, MHS, AFP, ASL, box 1.

27. In the “Libro mayor no. 3 perteneciente al ingenio Sta Rosalía,” APC, pp. 103–10, one can see the pattern of employment of women workers with the surnames Quesada, Zulueta, and Argudín for the months of January, February, March, April, and sometimes into May or June, of 1892 and 1893. I have found no evidence of women other than former slaves and their descendants working in the cane on Santa Rosalía.

28. See deposition of Elias Ponvert, beginning January 25, 1904, USNA, RG 76, Treaty Claims, claim 293 (Hormiguero), pt. 1.

29. On the relationship between colonos and estate owners, see Dye, *Cuban Sugar in the Age of Mass Production*, chap. 6.

30. J. S. Murray to E. F. Atkins, May 14, 1884, MHS, AFP, ASL, box 1.

31. Juan Bautista Jiménez, *Los esclavos blancos por un colono de Las Villas*.

32. See the “Listas cobratorias de los recibos de fincas rústicas,” Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Havana, Miscelánea de Expedientes, leg. 1431, exp. B; leg. 872, exp. B; and leg. 1370, exp. x.

33. Atkins, *Sixty Years*, 45, 97.

34. See deposition of Edwin F. Atkins, USNA, RG 76, Treaty Claims, claim 387 (Atkins), pt. 1, p. 90.

35. See the pay lists for 1890 and 1891 in ANC, ICEA, Soledad, libro 707. Tomás Pérez

y Pérez was interviewed in Cienfuegos in March 1998 at the age of ninety-six. Manuel Moreno Fraginals, in personal communications in the 1970s, first called my attention to this kind of racial exclusion within plantations. Published accounts and testimony by E. Atkins and L. F. Hughes were so discreet as initially to obscure the phenomenon at Soledad. My later research in the unpublished Atkins papers, however, supports Moreno's general observations about the mill workforce, though it is clear that the field workforce remained quite heterogeneous. Cf. Scott, *Slave Emancipation*, 232–33.

36. On the unhealthy conditions of the barracks, see P. M. Beal to E. F. Atkins, July 23, 1887, ANC, ICEA, Soledad, libro 974. On smallpox, see J. N. S. Williams to Edwin Atkins, February 24, 1896, USNA, RG 76, Treaty Claims, claim 387 (Atkins), pt. 1. On the presence of former slaves from Santa Rosalía in El Palmar, see the letters of Constantino Pérez to Manuel García Blanco, 1899, in Correspondencia, Santa Rosalía, in the private collection of Orlando García Martínez (hereafter OGM, CSR). Manuel Lago built a house at El Palmar, and Bárbara Pérez had moved there from Arimao by 1902, when she gave birth to Tomás Pérez. Tomás Pérez recalls that residents of El Palmar entered each other's houses freely and that color differences were no barrier to neighborliness. Interview with Tomás Pérez y Pérez, March 1998.

37. Spain, Ministerio de Ultramar, *Spanish Rule in Cuba*, 20–22. On electoral reform, see Roldán de Montaud, “Cuba entre Romero Robledo y Maura (1891–1894).”

38. A key source on organizations in the city of Cienfuegos, and in towns such as Lajas and Cruces, is the Fondo Registro de Asociaciones, held in the Archivo Provincial de Cienfuegos.

39. For discussions of the Autonomists and Cuban politics during this period, see Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, 268, 300–304; Roldán de Montaud, “Cuba”; and Casanovas Codina, “El movimiento obrero y la política colonial española en la Cuba de finales del XIX.”

40. See the accounts in “Reunión autonomista en Cienfuegos, 1886,” AHN, Ultramar, leg. 4896, pt. 1, exp. 174. I am very grateful to Ada Ferrer for sharing with me her transcription of portions of this file.

41. On the complicated question of the relationship between vote and voice, see Barkley Brown, “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere.”

42. “Reunión autonomista en Cienfuegos, 1886,” AHN, Ultramar, leg. 4896, pt. 1, exp. 174.

43. This phenomenon was even more apparent in the eastern province of Santiago de Cuba. In August 1893, a proposal for colonial reform was on the table in Spain, and Autonomists and other reformers in the region of Holguín tried to rally support for it. An estimated three thousand men on foot and on horseback gathered to protest the naming of a new mayor known to be opposed to reforms. The organizers protested that official repression had prevented additional supporters located in the countryside from attending. See the telegrams of August 1893 from Holguín, collected in AHN, Ultramar, leg. 3899, pt. 1.

44. I am grateful to Alejandra Bronfman for sharing her transcription of the correspondence from Gabriel Quesada to Juan Gualberto Gómez, found in ANC, Fondo

Adquisiciones, caja 40, no. 3103. Gabriel Quesada's role in the Sociedad Minerva was conveyed to me by Santiago Pelayo in a personal communication in March 1998. On the colonial government's stance on integration, see Scott, *Slave Emancipation*, 272–75.

45. See the accounts in newspaper clippings from *El Día*, *Diario Nuevo*, *La Verdad*, *La Evolución*, and *Las Villas*, January 5, 1894, in Fundación Antonio Maura, Madrid, leg. 358, carp. 14. I am very grateful to Ada Ferrer for sharing her photocopies of these clippings.

46. Pérez, *Cuba between Empires*, 31.

47. Atkins, *Sixty Years*, 152–54. It is not clear whether the strikes to which Atkins refers extended beyond the cooks, whose work stoppage he mentions.

48. On the long-standing militarized character of Spanish rule, see Fradera, “Quiebra imperial y reorganización política en las Antillas españolas, 1810–1868.”

49. See the *Revista de Agricultura* (Havana), special number, 1894.

50. He and a group of companions quickly joined up with the forces of Guillermo Moncada. Following Moncada's death, command of the group was taken over by Garzón and then by Antonio Maceo. Sánchez served as a second lieutenant on Maceo's staff until September 1895. See depositions of Lino Sánchez, January 27 and 29, 1909, USNA, RG 76, Treaty Claims, claim 475 (Whiting), pt. 2.

51. Deposition of Lorenzo Gonzalez, February 9, 1909, USNA, RG 76, Treaty Claims, claim 475 (Whiting), pt. 2.

52. See the file of Gaspar Caballero, ANC, Fondo Ejército Libertador, 1–2–38 Rechazado.

53. See Maceo, *Antonio Maceo*, 2: 31–33.

54. Atkins, *Sixty Years*, chap. 12.

55. This expedition was under the command of Generals Carlos Roloff, Serafín Sánchez, and José María Rodríguez. See Pérez, *Cuba between Empires*, 45.

56. Atkins, *Sixty Years*, chap. 12; quotation is from p. 162. On the recruitment to the Ejército Libertador of former slaves from Soledad and Santa Rosalía, see Scott, “Reclaiming Gregoria's Mule.”

57. See “Documentos relativos a la inspección general del ejército: Expediente que contiene la relación de jefes, oficiales, clases y soldados y el estado de las armas y animales de la brigada de Cienfuegos,” November 27, 1896, Archivo Provincial de Santa Clara, Cuba, Colección de Documentos del Ejército Libertador Cubano (hereafter APSC, EL), exp. 60, inventario 1. I am grateful to Michael Zeuske and Orlando García for sharing their photocopies of these documents.

58. Maceo is quoted in Miró Argenter, *Cuba: Crónicas de la guerra*, 1: 170. For a discussion of the invasion westward, see chap. 7 of Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*.

59. For a careful analysis of the war in the Cienfuegos region, see García Martínez, “La Brigada de Cienfuegos.” The view from the administration at Soledad appears in Atkins, *Sixty Years*, 162–67.

60. See Pérez, *Cuba between Empires*, 50, 52. A classic account of the battle of Mal Tiempo is to be found in Miró Argenter, *Cuba: Crónicas de la guerra*, 1: chaps. 18, 19.

61. Scholars have differed on the question of the degree of commitment of the Cuban

rebel leadership to racial equality and on the relationship between verbal commitment and daily practice. See, for example, the contrasting perspectives of Ibarra Cuesta, *Ideología mambisa*, and Helg, *Our Rightful Share*. Ada Ferrer's *Insurgent Cuba* represents a major breakthrough in this debate. By reading insurgent texts and practices with close attention to nuance, distinguishing among different voices and moments in the development of the rebellion, and tracking the reception and resonance of distinct elements in rebel discourse, she is able to portray a movement that contained elements of racism and antiracism and an ideology that was both liberating and confining. See also Fuente, *A Nation for All*.

62. One Canary Islander who managed cane farms on Hormiguero ended up giving information to a friend who was an insurgent; the Spanish soldiers, by contrast, were strangers to him, and he did not speak with them. Deposition of Emiliano Silva y Placeres, beginning February 15, 1904, USNA, RG 76, Treaty Claims, claim 293 (Hormiguero), pt. 3.

63. He ended up spending much of the war in a *reconcentración* village at Hormiguero. Deposition of Miguel Angel Abad, USNA, RG 76, Treaty Claims, claim 293 (Hormiguero), pt. 1.

64. Atkins, *Sixty Years*, 192, 196. See also the Atkins depositions in his claim before the Treaty Claims hearings, cited in n34.

65. Atkins, *Sixty Years*, 196. For a discussion of Quintín Bandera and the controversies that swirled around him, see Ada Ferrer's examination of his court-martial in "Rustic Men, Civilized Nation."

66. See García Martínez, "Brigada de Cienfuegos," and Zeuske, "Movilización afrocubana y clientelas en un hinterland cubano." See also Zeuske, "Die diskrete Macht der Sklaven." Wartime conditions on Soledad are reflected in the correspondence of Edwin Atkins, MHS, AFP.

67. On the differing visions of a free Cuba, see Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*.

68. In 1994, the distinguished Cuban historian Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux suggested that José de Jesús Monteagudo was perceived by some as a mulatto and that aspect of his conduct should be understood in the light of his desire to make himself acceptable to the white elite. I have been unable, however, to confirm this hypothesis. Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux, personal communication, spring 1994.

69. The analysis of racial categories using lists of members of the Ejército Libertador is fraught with difficulties. First there is the obvious constraint that "racial" categories are social constructs, capable of shifting with time and context and not necessarily discernible or interpretable through memoirs, photographs, and biographies. Second is the silence in most of the historiography on this subject—a silence now being broken by the pioneering work of Ada Ferrer, Orlando García Martínez, Michael Zeuske, and others. I am indebted to several colleagues for their assistance in my effort to understand the racial composition of the Ejército Libertador, including Francisco Gómez Balboa of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias and Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux, who shortly before his death shared with me his thoughts on 1912 and the complexities of racial identity. I have also used, with caution, some of the holdings of the Fototeca in

the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, particularly reg. 104, sobre 100, caja M-11; reg. 105, sobre 101, caja M-11 (H. Esquerria and others); and reg. 102, sobre 98, caja M-11 (General José Monteagudo and others). See García Martínez, “Brigada de Cienfuegos,” and Zeuske, “Movilización afro cubana,” for careful analyses of the changes in the composition of the insurgent forces from 1895 to 1898.

70. See the records of Company 3, Second Division, Fourth Corps, in “Documentos relativos . . . Brigada de Cienfuegos,” November 27, 1896, APSC, EL, exp. 60, inventario 1.

71. See Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, and Helg, *Our Rightful Share*.

72. See Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, chap. 1. For a study of this activist movement, see Hevia Lanier, *El directorio central de las sociedades negras de Cuba, 1886–1894*.

73. See *Suplemento al Boletín Oficial de la Provincia de Santa Clara*, no. 63, March 15, 1898, Provincia de Santa Clara. I am very grateful to Michael Zeuske and Larry Gutman for their collaboration in the filming and printing of these lists, the originals of which are in the Archivo Nacional de Cuba. On the Autonomist government, see Mena Múgica and Hernández Vicente, *Fuentes documentales de la administración española en el Archivo Nacional de Cuba*.

74. The question of the state of the countryside in early 1898 is a complex one, and it is difficult to establish with any certainty the physical conditions and popular expectations prevalent in Cienfuegos during the months prior to U.S. intervention. I thank Louis A. Pérez Jr. for alerting me to the possibility that 1898 may in fact have brought elements of de facto peace to the countryside, as the area of rebel control expanded, and that most participants expected the rebels’ summer campaign to be successful. Louis A. Pérez, personal communication, April 8, 1997. See also Pérez’s very provocative essay, “Approaching Martí: Text and Context.” The research of Orlando García Martínez suggests that there was a last-minute wave of recruitment to the rebel forces in Cienfuegos in the summer of 1898, which suggests a high expectation of victory. See García Martínez, “Brigada de Cienfuegos.”

75. Quoted in Pérez, *Cuba between Empires*, 218.

76. There is, of course, an immense monographic literature on this subject. Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution*, provides a magisterial overview. For a penetrating general interpretation, see Berlin et al., *Slaves No More*.

77. The classic work on the occupation is Pérez, *Cuba between Empires*.

78. Atkins describes both the gathering at Cienfuegos and a similar gathering further up the railway line. Atkins, *Sixty Years*, 300–301.

79. Caridad Quesada, born in 1921, whose mother, María Cirila Quesada, grew up on Santa Rosalía, spoke of expulsions in an interview in March 1998. Her recollection of the family history as she was told it seems consistent with the 1899 correspondence of the administrator, Constantino Pérez, located in OGM, CSR. On the protection of the estate during the 1895–98 war, see also Sartorius, “Conucos y subsistencia.”

80. The 1880s lists of *libertos* and *patrocinados* for Santa Rosalía include Francisca, criolla, in her fifties; Ciriaco, age eighteen in 1880; Paulino; and two Gregorias, one of them age twenty in 1883. In 1889, Ciriaco Quesada appears as a worker on the estate, as

do Paulino Quesada and Antonico Apezteguía. See “Listas de la dotación del ingenio Santa Rosalía, 1879–1887,” BNC, CC, CML, no. 173; and “Individuos y los días que tienen trabajados en el transcurso del presente mes de Octubre del 1889,” as well as a similar document for April 1889, BNC, CC, CML, vol. 1, no. 159. The incidents surrounding Gregoria’s mule are recounted in the letters of Constantino Pérez to Manuel García Blanco, August 17, 18, and 19, 1899, OGM, CSR. A detailed discussion of the event and the evidence appears in Scott, “Reclaiming Gregoria’s Mule.” I am grateful to Orlando García Martínez, who located a land purchase by Gregoria Quesada in the notarial records.

81. See the correspondence of Constantino Pérez and Manuel García Blanco for August through December 1899, esp. the letter of December 27, 1899, OGM, CSR.

82. *Suplemento al Boletín Oficial de la Provincia de Santa Clara*, no. 63, Provincia de Santa Clara, March 15, 1898, Barrio de Arimao, sección única con La Sierra.

83. The details of these episodes are from an interview with Tomás Pérez y Pérez, Cienfuegos, March 1998.

84. On the institution of the lector, see Pérez, “Reminiscences of a *Lector*”; Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint*, 89–90; and Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery*, chap. 10.

85. See Edwin Atkins to Gen. Leonard Wood, February 21, 1900, in USNA, RG 140, entry 3, file 1900, 504. Participants included 250 lightermen, 200 stevedores, 110 long-shoremen, and 75 cartmen. See also Major Bowman to Adjutant, Rowell Barracks, Pasa Caballos, March 9, 1900, in the same file.

86. See the sources cited above on the strike and particularly Atkins’s opinion, in Atkins, *Sixty Years*, 315–16. These events can also be traced in the manuscript “Actas Capitulares” of the city of Cienfuegos, APC.

87. See Pérez, *Cuba between Empires*, chap. 16. For a discussion of questions of race, suffrage, and electoral politics, see Fuente, “Los mitos de la democracia racial.”

88. For information on the strike, see the telegrams of Baehr to Squiers, November 29 and 30, 1902, and the draft dispatch of Squiers to Hays, December 2, 1902, in USNA, RG 59, Dispatches from U.S. Ministers to Cuba (available as microfilm publication T158, roll 4); the reports in the Spanish-language pages of *La Lucha* during the period November–December 1902; and the essay by Dumoulin, “El primer desarrollo del movimiento obrero y la formación del proletariado en el sector azucarero.”

89. For a more detailed discussion of the strike, see Scott, “Raza, clase y acción colectiva en Cuba.”

90. The importance of 1906 in reinforcing patterns of patronage, while facilitating advancement by black and mulatto Cubans, is clear in the profiles of local political leaders prepared by the Military Intelligence Division (sometimes referred to as the Military Information Division) of the Army of Cuban Pacification. For Cienfuegos, see USNA, RG 395, ACP, series 1008, file 79.

91. Interviews with Tomás Pérez y Pérez, 1998.

92. See Ross Rowell to Supervising Intelligence Officer, Cienfuegos, September 10, 1907, USNA, RG 395, ACP, series 1008, file 68, item 33. Jorge Ibarra has recently carried out a systematic analysis of the profiles of public figures in Santa Clara province com-

piled by the Military Intelligence Division. See his “Caciquismo, racismos y actitudes con relación al status político de la República.”

93. Report no. 6, paragraph 14, 20 January 1907, Constancia, USNA, RG 395, ACP, series 1008, file 72, item 11.

94. See first endorsement on letter of Blanchester to Adjutant, Post of Santa Clara, January 19, 1907, USNA, RG 395, ACP, series 1008, file 46, item 51.

95. On Fermín Quesada, see the “Listas de la dotación del ingenio Santa Rosalía, 1879–1887,” BNC, CC, CMJL, no. 173; and Report no. 95, April 13, 1907, USNA, RG 395, ACP, series 1008, file 79, item 107.

96. For a detailed discussion of this evidence, see Scott, “‘The Lower Class of Whites’ and ‘the Negro Element.’”

97. In the category “policías y soldados,” the 1907 census counted 1,130 native white men, 343 men of color, and 177 foreign white men in the province. See U.S. Census Department, *Censo de la República de Cuba . . . 1907*, 549. See also de la Fuente, “Mitos de la democracia racial.”

98. For early evidence of initiatives aimed at forming an Afro-Cuban caucus or an incipient party, see Weekly Report of G. W. Kirkpatrick, September 28, 1907, Santa Clara, USNA, RG 395, ACP, series 1008, file 46, item 508. See also Confidential Report, October 4, 1908, Hormiguero, USNA, RG 395, ACP, series 1008, file 68, item 53.

99. See Helg, *Our Rightful Share*.

100. On the events of 1912 in Cienfuegos, see Bronfman, “Clientelismo y represión.”

101. Other features of Cuba might be added to complement these preconditions, including the tradition of mutual aid organizations and a vigorous pursuit of educational opportunities by Afro-Cubans. Alejandro de la Fuente calls attention to the role of education in his article “Negros y electores.”

102. On the strikes in the Louisiana cane fields in 1887, see Scott, “‘Stubborn and Disposed to Stand Their Ground.’” The literature on smallholding and tenancy in Brazil is extensive. See the discussions and references in Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels*; Barickman, *Bahian Counterpoint*; Scott, “Defining the Boundaries of Freedom in the World of Cane”; and Fraga, *Encruzilhadas*.