

4-1-2022

## Afro-Cubans, Incorporation, and Cubanidad in Miami, FL

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

AFRO-CUBANS, INCORPORATION, AND CUBANIDAD IN MIAMI, FL

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

GLOBAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL STUDIES

by

Elena M. Cruz

2022

To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.  
School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Elena M. Cruz, and entitled Afro-Cubans, Incorporation, and Cubanidad in Miami, FL having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Andrea Queeley, Major Professor

Date of Defense: April 1, 2022

The dissertation of Elena M. Cruz is approved.

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Dean John F. Stack, Jr.  
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Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

DEDICATION

To Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior

and

To Mom

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my major professor, Dr. Andrea Queeley, for her untiring dedication and support and each of my committee members, Dr. Guillermo Grenier, Dr. Percy Hintzen, and Dr. Danielle Clealand, for their pivotal roles in my long but productive academic journey. I want to thank the faculty and staff of GSS, especially Dr. Gail Hollander and Maria Cristina Carrodegua for assisting me in each step of the way. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge the staff of University Graduate Studies, Maria Melendez-Vargas, and the staff of the Office of Research Integrity for their welcome help with the various forms and the IRB process.

I want to express my wholehearted gratitude to all of my cheerleaders over the years who have encouraged me to reach my highest academic aspirations. Were it not for their words of wisdom and support, I would not be here today. These include but are not limited to the following people: the late Dr. E. George Simms (who always saw me as Dr. Cruz), the late Dr. Helen Ellison, David L. Cole, Santos Cayetano, Robert M. (Bob) Coatie, Dr. Thomas Monahan, Adly Norelus, Dr. Crystal Archable, Dr. Yehonatan Elazar-DeMota, Dr. David La Rosa Presume, and David Riera. A special thank you goes out to Sifu Besufekad (Dennis) Dereje and the Addis Kung Fu Family. I truly appreciate the Veterans Upward Bound family for their encouragement: Joe Mireles, Nuria Claramunt, Roy Williams, Raymond Smith, and Donna Zazanis-Burke. In this past year, the MDC Homestead family has been instrumental in this final stretch: Dr. Wesley Fox, Takevess Hatcher, Yilian Fraga, and Dr. Hong (Wendy) Zhu.

Last and most significantly, I would like to thank my family for their belief in me: mom, Angelo, Pat, Ischaji, and Mariana. I extend this gratitude to my family who are no longer here and to my ancestors for paving the way.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

AFRO-CUBANS, INCORPORATION, AND CUBANIDAD IN MIAMI, FL

by

Elena M. Cruz

Florida International University, 2022

Miami, Florida

Professor Andrea Queeley, Major Professor

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how Afro-Cubans as double diasporic subjects have been incorporated into the socio-cultural landscape of South Florida and the relationship between these methods of incorporation and the evolution of ethno-racial identification. The study examines the role of race and racism in shaping the socio-economic adjustment of Afro-Cubans in South Florida. Miami is the appropriate research site as home to half of all Cuban immigrants in the United States where cubanidad is most closely associated with whiteness. Miami also has a substantial population of other Afro-diasporic populations, including Afro-Caribbean immigrants as well as African-Americans.

This ethnographic study employs a mixed-methods approach that used participatory research (semi-structured and in-depth interviews), and participant observation as principal methods. Self-ethnography, archival research, and the most recent census data are used to complement the principal research methods. This project engages in three overarching theoretical frameworks to elucidate the experiences of Afro-Cubans in South Florida: African Diaspora theory, Critical Race Theory, and theories

grouped under migration studies. Intersectionality is the focal point which connects the theoretical paradigms.

The study concludes that Afro-Cubans are indeed members of two diasporas, the Cuban diaspora and the African diaspora, which differentiates their experiences of incorporation from their white co-ethnics. Moreover, Afro-Cubans use their double diasporic, intersectional identity to create diasporic alliances with other communities, particularly afro-descendant ones, to ease social isolation and create economic opportunities. While race continues to be a significant factor in determining socio-economic outcomes for South Floridians, superdiversity theory was used to consider other areas of difference that intersect with race - including wave of migration, gender, phenotype - that impact incorporation. This research not only hopes to fill in a void in the study of Afro-Cubans in the United States, but also endeavors to make a significant contribution to the study of Afro-Latinos and other black immigrant populations in the United States.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

We have already seen the impact of the divisive rhetoric [critical race theory] used in the new mission statement. Through various communications that have been shared with parents since June of this year [2020], your words have indicated a push to replace what's left of Carrollton's Catholic foundation with subversive ideology. What lessons will come from the adaptation of shapeshifting language that absolves itself of finite parameters? Some might find it innocuous as this language by design discounts the possibility of anyone opposing it. By opposing it, you are automatically assumed to be part of the problem, intrinsically racist and implicitly biased. Allowing for this foundational shift to take root will lead Carrollton down a limitless destructive path wherein the pursuit of the metrics of "diversity" will be upheld as the moral imperative. (Excerpt from Parents' Letter to Carrollton, Twitter post by Billy Corben, reprinted by the New Times, April 2, 2021)

This astoundingly tone-deaf letter was dated October 23, 2020 and addressed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart, an elite private Catholic school for girls in Coconut Grove, FL. A group of 155 parents denounced the revision of the Carrollton's curriculum to include Black History and the addition of a statement about the school's commitment to social justice, inclusion, and diversity on its website (Alvarado 2021; Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart 2020). The authors of the letter equate anti-racism with anti-Catholicism and pro-Marxism. Among those who signed this letter were several prominent white Cuban Americans, including now Coral Gables mayor Vince Lago, Former Florida House Speaker Jose Oliva, and former Miami-Dade Commissioner Bruno Barreiro (Santiago 2021d).

The administration of Carrollton was responding to the national and international outrage caused by the unlawful death of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, at the hands of a white police officer. The racial reckoning and calls to conscience took many forms, including a letter from Carrollton alumni with 300 signers, dated June 26, 2020,

requesting changes to address the racist classroom experiences exposed in the Instagram account “Being Black at Carrollton” (Alvarado 2021). The mission of this Instagram account is to “provide a safe space for the Black students and alumni of the Carrollton community to share their experiences with racism, prejudice and microaggressions” and “to voice their experience with a wider audience” to create solidarity and positive change in the school (@blackatcarrollton). In Miami, moments of solidarity between Blacks, Hispanics, and other groups during Black Lives Matters protests of the summer of 2020 (Viglucchi et al 2020; Garcia 2020) were overshadowed by pro-Trump counter-protests largely populated by non-elite white Cubans and white Hispanics and exposing deep-seated racial animosity (Leibowitz et al 2020). Efforts to address historical racial grievances by renaming streets and buildings were opposed by prominent Cuban Americans, such as Coral Gables Mayor Vince Lago and Karelia Martinez Carbonell of the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables (Gross 2021b). Coral Gables stood out as the only Miami city government to vote against renaming Dixie Highway in honor of Harriet Tubman (Gross 2021a). Cuban American Juan Fernandez-Barquin proudly assisted Governor Ron DeSantis in sponsoring an anti-riot bill (signed into law) intended to curtail the ability to peacefully protest, such as a majority of the Black Lives Matters protests (Santiago 2021a). Missing from this conversation are the voices of Black Cubans. How are Afro-Cubans responding to these times of crisis?

Rarely seen, hardly ever heard in Miami, some Afro-Cubans expressed dismay at the lack of empathy shown by their white co-ethnics during these times (Gamez Torres 2020). Afro-Cuban American Yvonne Rodriguez, co-owner of the Tres Lindas Cubanas cigar shop, thinks that the racial animosity of white Hispanics toward Blacks has gotten

worse (Grinspan 2021). Others, such as Leilani Bruce, have been inspired to create a virtual book club CANDELA (Cuban-American Dialogues for Equity, Liberation and Allyship) to make visible the unique voice and contributions of Afro-Cuban to the Cuban and African diasporas (Grinspan 2021). Likely, there were Afro-Cubans at *both* BLM protests and Trump counter-rallies – those who feel solidarity with the cause of Black racial justice and those who find that Trump’s version of Republican ideology resonates with their Cuban American identity, even if it is tone-deaf to the pain of African Americans and other minoritized communities.

### **A. Statement of Problem and Purpose**

“In the United States, black Cubans are invisible, *to some extent unthinkable*,” asserts University of South Florida anthropologist Susan D. Greenbaum (2002:1 italics mine). Greenbaum is commenting on the common association of Cuban-ness in the American context with whiteness, rendering Black Cubans almost nonexistent to the public imaginary. “The popular construction of Cuban American identity stands in deliberate opposition to blackness” (Greenbaum 2002: 1). However, even in the first wave and definitely in subsequent waves from 1980 onward, Afro-Cubans were part of the Cuban immigration to the U.S. – in some waves as high as 30% of the migrant population (Clark, Lasaga and Reque 1981).<sup>1</sup> What factors have contributed to this invisibility? What is the Cuban migration story if retold emphasizing the presence of

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<sup>1</sup> Black Cubans are not one monolithic group that identifies under one label nor is there a rigid line demarcating black and white. Hay has a revealing discussion of the different labels (Black Cuban, Cuban Black, Afro-Cuban) (2009). See also Roland for a continuum of racial labels (2010) as well as Newby and Dowling (2006). For the purposes of this study, Afro-Cuban is the term used to describe afro-descendent Cubans.



Afro-Cubans? How have Afro-Cubans been incorporated into South Florida, where *cubanidad* (Cuban-ness/Cuban identity) has been most forcefully exerted? What is the role of race and racism in shaping the socio-economic adjustment of Afro-Cubans in South Florida? How might we better understand Afro-Cuban immigrants if viewed from the lens of double diaspora? This study addresses these unanswered questions which emerge from the documented presence *and* relative invisibility of U.S. Afro Cubans.

Central to the narratives of Cuban American identity are the overarching concepts of Cuban exceptionalism (Grenier and Perez 2003), Cuban Success Story (Garcia 1996), the enclave theory (Portes 1987, 2006), and Cuban privilege (A. Lopez 2010; De la Torre 1999). Although the narratives of exceptionalism have been challenged by scholars (see Whitehead and Hoffman's 2007 compendium of essays on the topic), they still remain as part of the popular discourse of Cuban identity. This narrative of Cuban-American identity is belied by the economic reality of many Afro-Cubans, especially those in South Florida. Studies using 2000 and 2010 Census data (Hay 2006; Aja 2016) show that Florida Afro-Cubans were doing worse than their white co-ethnics on many socioeconomic indicators. In a recent study published by Ohio State University, Duke University, Florida International University, and the Insight Center for Community Economic Development, race in Miami was more predictive of decreased socioeconomic outcomes than ethnic background, and those who self-identified as Black possessed far less net wealth than those who identified as white (Aja et al 2019).

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how Afro-Cubans as double diasporic subjects have been incorporated into the socio-cultural landscape of South

Florida<sup>2</sup> and the relationship between these methods of incorporation and the evolution of ethno-racial identification. The study examines the role of race and racism in shaping the socio-economic adjustment of Afro-Cubans in South Florida. Miami is the appropriate research site as home to half of all Cuban immigrants in the United States where *cubanidad* is most closely associated with whiteness. Miami also has a substantial population of other Afro-diasporic populations, including Afro-Caribbean immigrants as well as African-Americans.

#### **a. Summary of Research Questions**

Overarching Research Question: What impact has migration and incorporation had on Afro-Cubans' ethno-racial identity?

Research Question 1: What is the Afro-Cuban Cuban migration story? How have Afro-Cubans of each wave of Cuban migration been incorporated into Miami's changing racial landscape?

Research Question 2: What is the role of race and racism in shaping the socio-economic incorporation of Afro-Cubans in South Florida? Is the role of race compounded or refracted through other intersecting identities and methods of incorporation?

Research Question 3: In what ways do Afro-Cubans use their double diasporic positioning to form diasporic alliances? Can these alliances be discerned through patterns of residential incorporation of Afro-Cubans in South Florida?

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<sup>2</sup> South Florida is defined as the tri-county area: Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach.

These are my principal contributions: I argue that Afro-Cubans are members of two diasporas, the Cuban diaspora and the African diaspora, which differentiates their experiences of incorporation from their white co-ethnics. This double diaspora is unique in that Afro-Cubans are not only subject to abjection and exclusion from the host community (Americans) but also from their own white co-ethnics, a double exclusion. Moreover, Afro-Cubans use their intersectional identity to create diasporic alliances with other communities, particularly afro-descendant ones. Miami emerges as both a place of superdiversity and one dominated by a white Latino supermajority. While race continues to be a significant factor in determining socio-economic outcomes for South Floridians, I advocate for a nuanced intersectional approach that considers other areas of difference that impact Miami Afro-Cubans.

## **B. BACKGROUND**

In terms of race relations, most of the literature focuses on Afro-Cubans in Cuba. These seminal studies highlight the contributions of Afro-Cubans to Cuban society and reveal the challenges of race relations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Ferrer discusses the role of race in the Cuban revolutionary wars against Spain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1999a, 1999b). Helg traces the events leading to the tragic 1912 massacre of 6,000 Afro-Cuban men, women and children (1995). Pappademos's offers fascinating insights on a heterogenous and dynamic population of black Cuban activists who used clientelism and the informal systems of patronage to obtain resources and political positions in Republican Cuba (2011). Bronfman uncovers how prominent theories of social science, legislation and actions of the state, and Afro-Cuban intelligentsia and others contribute to theories about black Cubans during the Cuban republic (2004).

Notable authors that go beyond Republican Cuba include de la Fuente who gives an exhaustive overview of the issue of race in Cuba spanning 100 years in the text *A Nation for All* as well as in other articles of note (1998, 1999, 2008). Spence Benson delineates the duality of antiracism and racism within the rhetoric of the early years of the Revolution and its enduring implications for Afro-Cubans, refuting the idea of a “return to racism” that never left (2016). Cleland traces the silencing of race and the dismissal of structural causes of racism to the unique incorporation of the ideology of racial democracy into Cuban socialism (2017). Sawyer presents the “race cycles” approach, a historiographical model which he analyzes Cuban history for moments of aperture with racial progress and moments of retrenchment (2005). Nadine Fernández concentrates on the discussion of race and interracial relationships in Cuba since 1990 (2001, 2010). Few studies have focused exclusively on Afro-Cubans in exile and the issues associated with identity that these individuals face, especially those that live in Miami (Hay 2006; Aja 2016).

**a. Demographic Composition of the post-1959 Cuban Migration Waves**

While Cubans have been entering the United States since the late 1800s (Duany 1999), the five main waves of Cuban migration into the United States took place after Fidel Castro took power in 1959. Cubans who arrived in the first wave are called the “golden exiles” and came between 1959 and 1962. Approximately 280,000 Cubans fled the island to the United States during that period. They were estimated to be 94% white, mostly middle-aged, and well-educated. The second wave departed between 1965-1973 in the historic Camarioca “Freedom Flights” initiated by Lyndon B. Johnson’s administration. Seventy-six percent were white, and the remaining 24% were black,

mulatto, and Asian. While there was still an exodus of professionals in the second wave, working class people were also among the 273,000 Cuban exiles (Dixon 1988: 230-1).

These two groups are considered the “exilio histórico” or the historic exiles.

In 1980, the Mariel boatlift crisis brought another 125,000 Cubans to the shores of the United States. However, this group consisted of many more unskilled laborers who were predominantly male and single (Dixon 1988: 231), and they were stigmatized as being criminals and outcasts of the Castro regime. Approximately 30% of this ostracized cohort were Afro-Cuban (Clark et al, 1981; Poyo and Diaz-Miranda 1994: 317). The Mariel exodus can be considered to be the most racially representative of the Cuban population (Grenier and Moebius 2015: 65).

The fourth wave began with the balsero crisis of 1994. In that year over 30,000 Cubans attempted to enter the United States through makeshift rafts over the dangerous Florida straits. Although their numbers were much smaller, balseros continued to make this risky trip well after 1994 and even until the present day (Penton and Guillen 2020). The balsero “crisis” inspired a shift in U.S. policy that defined their arrival until 2017. The so-called “wet foot, dry foot” rule allowed Cubans to stay if they make it to land; however, if they were caught at sea, they would be sent back to Cuba. In 1994, President Clinton then authorized the 1994 U.S. Cuba Migration Accord which placed a minimum threshold of 20,000 Cuban migrants per year. All told, some 389,048 Cubans obtained U.S. legal permanent status in the fifteen years between 1994-2008 (Díaz-Briquets 2010: 52-3), exceeding the number of Cubans who arrived in the first wave and almost equaling the historical exiles in terms of numbers.

While Jackson contends that the fourth wave mirrors the Cuban population on the island (2006), this diversity of almost 400,000 people is not reflected in the most recent U.S. Census. In the 2010 Census, 88.7% of the 1.7 million Cubans in the United States identified themselves as white, versus only 4.79% were listed as black, and 6.02% described themselves as some other race. Some 3.7% acknowledged being of 2 or more races.<sup>3</sup> If we take the 2002 and the 2012 Cuban Census into consideration (65% white; 25% mulato/mestizo, and 10% black), the fourth migration in no way mirrors this population.

Historically, the numbers of U.S. Cubans who identify as Black have been lower than in Cuba. In 1960, 6.5% of Cubans in the United States identified as Black, whereas in 1970 (after the Golden Exiles and in the midst of the Camarioca Flights), only 2.6% were listed as Black (Pedraza-Bailey 1985). A Census report from 1985 (post Mariel) indicated that 84% of U.S. Cubans identified as white, 3% as black, and 13% as other (Dixon 1988). However, the greater Miami area has been viewed as whiter than the nation at large, with the present day Miami Cuban population being 95% white (Grenier “Cuba Poll” 2020). This is in complete contrast to Afro-Cubans in Cuba, who were approximately 27% of the population before the arrival of Castro (Poyo and Díaz-Miranda 1994: 316) and are 35.9% Black and mulato according to the latest Cuban census. When you compare the diversity of the Cuban population on the island (before and after Castro) to the U.S. Cuban population, it is easy to agree with the statement that

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<sup>3</sup> Like the 2002 census, the official figure from the 2012 census is 35.9% combined Black and mulatto (Cuban Demographics Profile 2018), but most observers outside of Cuba agree that the real percentage is closer to 60% or the majority of the Cuban population.

the Afro-Cuban presence in the U.S., including Miami is “muted” (Grenier and Pérez 2003: 39).

However, the Census data does not tell the whole story because of the fluidity of racial identifiers in Cuba versus the rigidity of the black-white U.S. racial dichotomy. It also doesn't take into account the percent of Afro-Cubans who elide the selection of a race by choosing other because discussions around race are considered uncouth, even unpatriotic. The earlier exiles created a racial climate in South Florida that makes it distasteful to mention race. Some of the children of these exiles have continued this denial of the relevance of race and have derided the discussions addressing racism, such as those in the wake of the death of George Floyd. These modern-day proponents of a raceless cubanidad believe that discussions of race divide the Cuban community. On more than one occasion I have heard a Cuban American vehemently correct a person of another nationality that Celia Cruz was not Black, she was Cuban. These comments accumulate over time and may sediment a pre-disposition to not choose Black as an identity. Nationality is supposed to trump race, but every day socioeconomic outcomes for Afro-Cubans does not bear this out.

The fifth wave of Cuban migration began in the Obama era and shows no end in sight despite changes to immigration policy pertaining to Cubans. From 2009 – 2019, 519,866 Cubans obtained U.S. legal permanent residence (United States Department of Homeland Security 2019), which quadruples the number of Cubans who arrived in the Mariel boatlift. In the 2015 fiscal year (October 2014 – September 2015), 43,157 Cubans entered the United States according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (Krogstad 2015). Non-traditional gateway cities, such as Laredo, Texas, saw a spike in the number

of Cubans attempting to enter the United States in 2015 (Aguilar 2015). This was in anticipation of an expected change in U.S. policy (Duany 2017). On January 12, 2017, President Obama ended “wet foot, dry foot” which effectively ended the special status of Cubans immigrants. President Trump did not overturn this decision but has pulled back on some aspects of the normalization of relations between the two countries. President Biden has not lifted the travel and remittances restrictions put in place by Trump, but instead has enacted stricter measures as a result of the historic anti-Cuban government protests of July 2021 (Wilkinson 2021). By the end of 2017, irregular immigration of Cubans had decreased by 64% while over 37,000 Cubans were subject to deportation (Gamez Torres 2017). Currently, of the over 2 million U.S. Cubans, there are 130,824 Cubans who identified as Black alone or in combination with another race (ACS 2019). This is an example of the documented presence yet simultaneous invisibility.

**b. Cubanidad and the Cuban Success Story**

It was during the era of the historic exiles that the dominant narrative of *cubanidad* in exile was asserted through the Cuban success story. The Cuban success story has persisted as an ideal for the subsequent waves to either aspire to or be measured against it. Maria Christina Garcia describes the emergence of this story in prominent U.S. periodicals as early as the 1960s (1996: 110). This fable falls into the familiar literature on the model minority (Lee 2009 [1996], Fong 1998), and in Miami this story has oftentimes been invoked in comparison to other groups who are considered less successful, such as African Americans or Nicaraguans. According to the story, many Cubans came “with the shirt on their backs” (or “con una mano a’lante y otra atrás”). Yet they were willing to work hard to overcome having to start from nothing, and many



became successful. Rags to riches stories (a la Horatio Algiers) were cited as models of what America could provide to Cuban exiles who worked hard enough with the opportunities afforded to them in the U.S. However, it must be noted that along with hard work and entrepreneurship, the U.S. government subsidized the transition of many of the historic exiles, which differs significantly from its treatment of other Latin American immigrants. The exiles received assistance totaling almost \$1 billion between 1961 and 1974 (Grenier and Stepick 1992) which included flights from Cuba, training for employment, and other forms of financial assistance (Grenier and Perez 2003). While Black Cubans would have benefitted from the sponsored flights and other forms of assistance for newly arrived Cubans, it is doubtful that they were well-represented in receiving small business loans and CIA jobs where Jim Crow discrimination was still dominant.

Another key factor to the Cuban success story is the Cuban enclave theory espoused by Alejandro Portes (1987, 2006). According to this theory, Cubans have been more successful than other immigrant groups because they were able to live and work in the Miami enclave. This allowed for Cubans who arrived earliest and were established to offer jobs to other Cubans and to circulate resources within the enclave. The enclave allows for the retention of ethnic identity while propelling rapid economic advancement - the third option of segmented assimilation (the first being assimilation into the white American middle class mainstream; the second, entering the urban, largely Black, underclass) (Portes and Zhou 1993). However, even Portes himself has had to acknowledge that the enclave did not welcome the Marielitos who have become less successful over time than the historic exiles (2006). This group was noticeably darker

than the previous waves and received a caustic reception from the press and Miami Cubans (Fulger 2012; Mirabal 2003).

In Hay's 2006 ethnographic study of U.S. Afro-Cubans, she did not find that the Cuban enclave was particularly helpful to Afro-Cubans, nor did they benefit from the community's "social capital," and some of her participants noted that they had to establish their careers outside of the enclave first (2006: 137, 144). Moreover, her participants feel that white Cubans have become more racist while living in the United States, and their rejection from this dominant group has influenced their career mobility (2006: 65, 142). Another study using data between 1980 and 2000 concluded that white Cubans have 15% higher wages than non-white Cubans, and non-white Cubans have lower returns for their educational attainment (Zavodny 2003). Both the ideas of Cuban exceptionalism and the enclave theory seem questionable when they are applied to Afro-Cubans in the United States (A. García 1998).

Moreover, the Cuban success story and its corresponding "enclave" does not account for the 16.2% of U.S. Cubans of all races who live below the poverty line (Macartney, Bishaw and Fontenont, 2011: 5). When viewed from that metric, Cubans have been shown to be less successful than Jamaican immigrants for example (Dunn 1997, Center for Immigration Studies 2010). When comparing Black Cubans to White Cubans living under the poverty line in Florida (36% vs. 15.2%), the data is even more compelling (Hay 2006: 149-151). This narrative which is at the bedrock of Cuban-American identity (*cubanidad* in the United States) excludes many Afro-Cubans and some white Cubans who have not become the model minority in the United States. This study recovers the Afro-Cuban presence in the Cuban migration story.

**c. Inclusion and Exclusion**

Narratives of inclusion and exclusion, such as the narrative of cubanidad in exile, are critical to understanding immigrant incorporation<sup>4</sup> into the United States, as well as the role of place-making and belonging. Walker and Leitner (2011) contend that “an inclusive imaginary welcomes racial and cultural diversity rooted in an open and constantly emerging conception of multicultural community, place, and nation; an exclusive imaginary desires cultural homogeneity and is rooted in clearly bounded conceptions of a White community, nation, and place” (165). These imaginaries can become public discourse intended to include or exclude (172-173). While an individual can experience both moments of inclusion and exclusion over a lifetime, there is a master narrative that can be constructed from media accounts, residential patterns, and at the most intimate level, familial unions.

Afro-Cubans in Miami have been subject to exclusion in the form of residential segregation and “differential racialization” (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, 6-9; Pulido 2006:19). Ricardo Gonzalez Zayas’ recent memoir *Black Pedro Pan* documents his stinging personal experiences of residential discrimination as one of the few Black Cuban children that were part of the Pedro Pan migration<sup>5</sup> (2020). Miami is a notoriously segregated city: whites and Hispanics do not live where Blacks live for the most part (see

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<sup>4</sup> While interrelated, incorporation and inclusion are the not the same. There are methods of immigrant incorporation that lead to socio-location in society; genuine, inclusive discourse and policies can lead to positive incorporation while exclusion can lead to the opposite (see Meager and Lindell 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Between 1960-1962, over 14,000 unaccompanied minors were sent by their parents from Cuba to the United States in an effort to avoid communist indoctrination. The program, known as Operation Pedro Pan, was sanctioned by the U.S. government and facilitated by Catholic Charities <https://www.history.com/news/cold-war-refugee-operation-peter-pan-cuba-eisenhower>

maps in Appendix A<sup>6</sup>). Allapattah (a traditionally Dominican area in Miami), Opa-Locka, and Miami Gardens (both mostly African American areas) are known by Miami residents to be the places where Afro-Cubans live (Allapattah and Opa-Locka being lower socio-economic areas, whereas Miami Gardens is closer to being a middle-income neighborhood). There is an unmistakable hyper-invisibility of this group where there is no distinctly Afro-Cuban residential area in Miami. Furthermore, the relationship between the Cuban community and the African-American community in Miami has not been characterized by alliances but more by conflict and distancing (Grenier and Castro 1998). Have Afro-Cubans been involved in place making and is there a sense of belonging in a microgeography (Nelson and Hiemstra 2008) of the Miami community? Moebius makes the case for contested place-making in the Little Havana area (2019), but this is only one neighborhood in a vast county.

In stark contrast, there are plenty of largely white Cuban neighborhoods in Miami which makes the case of Cuban-American self-segregation (Price 2014:6) from other groups, other Hispanics, and even their co-ethnics (Afro-Cubans). For example, Hialeah has the highest population of Cubans than any other city in the United States (73.37%) (World Population Review 2021) and is 89.4% white Hispanic and 2.3% Black of any ethnicity (ACS 2019). Westchester is also known as a predominately white Cuban neighborhood with 85.9% white Hispanics, 7% white non-Hispanics, and 2.8% Black of any ethnicity (ACS 2019). Moreover, this can lead to a white racial viscosity where

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<sup>6</sup> While helpful in pointing out residential patterns, these maps can be enhanced by identifying where Black Hispanics live.

white bodies are seen as normal and black bodies are seen as marked (Price 2012b:582). This is an example of how place can make race “sticky” and “viscous” (Price 2012a:807). Expanding on Bonilla-Silva’s depiction of a “white habitus” (2014:152), this residential segregation in Miami can create a white Hispanic habitus where whites and blacks of the same national origin can lead “parallel lives” (Nelson and Hiemstra 320-324). In a community of exiles, a “resentful nostalgia” has been formed (Wise 176), and memories are recreated with a distinct form of whitewashing the Cuban past so that pre-Castro Cuba appears to be whiter than it was, such as in events like Cuba Nostalgia (Cruz 2013). Using the standpoint of a phenomenology of whiteness, Black Cubans do not easily disappear into the “sea of whiteness” (Ahmed 2007:159) formed at events that emphasize *cubanidad* and may feel conspicuous at these events.

**d. Afro-Cubans in Florida**

The parallel lives of whites and blacks of the same national origin has been a common theme in the Cuban American community dating at least as far back as the turn of the century Cuban community established in Tampa, Florida. Susan Greenbaum’s *More than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (2002) traces the ethnogenesis of the Tampa Afro-Cuban identity through the creation of the Martí-Maceo Society at the turn of the century and the effects of legal segregation. Originally an integrated organization called the October 10 Club, Los Libres Pensadores de Martí y Maceo was founded on October 26, 1900, by 24 Afro-Cubans as a separate organization for Black Cubans, which ultimately became the Martí-Maceo Society (104-107). Greenbaum follows the evolution of this identity over the span of 100 years.

Beyond the era of Jim Crow and de jure segregation, de facto segregation is still operational in cities like Miami, Florida, and bifurcates the Cuban American community along racial lines. One hundred years after the creation of the Marti-Maceo Society, Mirta Ojito's article "Best of Friends, Worlds Apart" (2000) describes a similar pattern of parallel lives. She brilliantly characterizes the plight of Afro-Cubans in Miami as she details the journeys of Achmed (white Cuban) and Joel (Black Cuban) to Miami and their integration into Miami's historically segregated society. This article demonstrates how this selective amnesia – and abjection of Afro-Cubans – is lived out. While Joel and Achmed were best friends and grew up in the same neighborhood in Cuba, in 4 short years, their lives are "worlds apart." Joel, the Afro-Cuban, faces the estrangement of his once best friend, exclusion from the greater Cuban community, discrimination, harrowing micro-aggressions, and residential segregation. This "worlds apart" trajectory is not an isolated instance but the norm of Afro-Cubans in the United States, and it has been present in every wave of U.S. Cuban migration.

There are also documented trends of marital incorporation of Afro-Cubans with other communities and marital segregation within the Cuban community. Greenbaum notes that while marriages with African Americans make up only 10% of Ybor City marriages recorded in the 1900s, by 1930, they constituted the majority of the marriages to Afro-Cubans, and from 1946-1960, 84% of the legal marriages to Afro-Cubans were with African Americans (83, 239, 261). Even after anti-miscegenation laws were declared unconstitutional with the Loving vs. Virginia case of 1967, marital segregation has been evident in the Miami Cuban community. During the era of Dixon's study, 80% of the Hispanic population in Miami-Dade was of Cuban origin, so by looking at the

marriage certificates awarded, he could discern assimilation and integration patterns: “15% of all marriages were between Spanish-surnamed whites and non-Spanish surnamed whites, 8% between Spanish-surnamed blacks and non-Spanish surnamed blacks, and only 4% between Spanish-surnamed whites and Spanish-surnamed blacks” (1988: 235-6). Therefore, the author concludes that Cubans (which were the overwhelming majority of Hispanics at that time) were four times more likely to marry a non-Hispanic white than a co-ethnic who is black (1988: 236).

More recent studies have begun to document the disparate socio-economic outcomes of Afro-Cubans and their white co-ethnics. For example, Hay shows that Black Cubans living in Florida fare significantly worse than White Cuban Floridians in the percent living below the poverty line (36% vs. 15.2%), median family income (\$21,800 vs. \$41,500), and rates of home ownership (36.7% vs. 53.3%) as well as the value of their properties (\$95,000 vs. \$137,500) (2006: 149-151). Black Cubans New Yorkers, however, have achieved parity with their White Cuban New Yorkers in terms of median family income (\$52,115 vs. \$54,000), property values (\$187,500 vs. \$187,500), rates of home ownership (42.1% vs. 44.8%), but still are more prone to live below the poverty line (31.4% vs. 11.6%). In all indicators, Black Cubans in New York and Florida are faring worse than their Black American counterparts nationwide (2006: 148-152).

Alan A. Aja’s work titled *Miami’s Forgotten Cubans: Race, Racialization and the Miami Afro-Cuban Experience* (2016) continues the discussion found in Hay’s dissertation but is focused on Miami. A strength of this study is the quantitative research comparing Afro-Cubans with their white co-ethnics over various decennial census

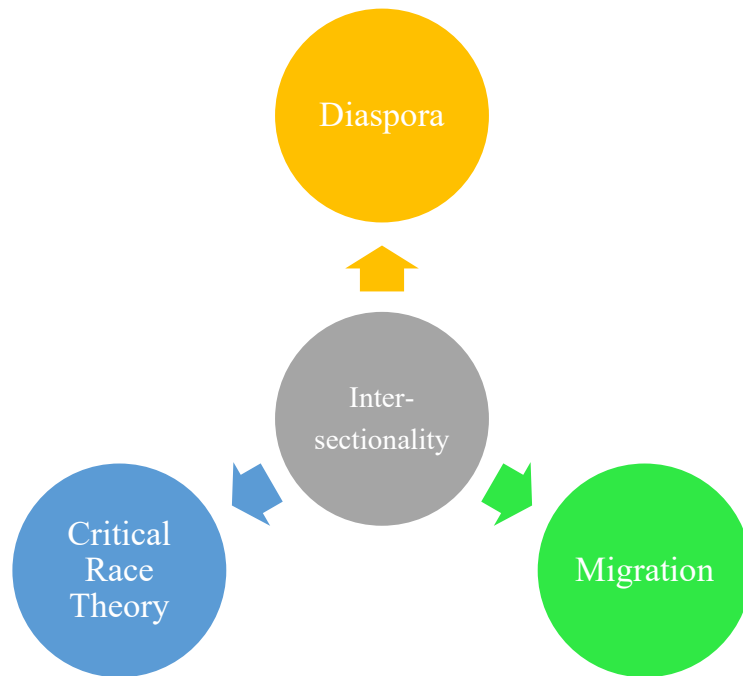
surveys (from 1980 - 2010) which documents the economic disparity between the two groups and situates Afro-Cubans economically with other Miami Blacks.

In the *Racial Politics of Division: Interethnic Struggles for Legitimacy in Multicultural Miami* (2019), Monica Gosin provides a revealing study of the Mariel and Balsero crises through her textual analysis of the *Miami Herald*, *El (Nuevo) Herald*, and *The Miami Times*. These migration waves were noticeably darker than the historic exiles, and Gosin uncovers persistent binaries of black/white, good/bad immigrants, and natives/foreigners. She explores how Afro-Cubans living in both Miami and California negotiate and disrupt these binaries. Corinna Moebius' ethno-historical dissertation "Commemorative Bodies: (Un)Making Racial Order and Cuban White Supremacy In Little Havana's Heritage District" focuses how Cuban American-Anglo alliances have been forged to police and protect the image of Little Havana as a site of tourism to the exclusion of other Latinos living in the area, including Afro-Cubans (2019).

### **C. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK (brief)**

This project engages in three overarching theoretical frameworks to elucidate the experiences of Afro-Cubans in South Florida: African Diaspora theory, Critical Race Theory, and theories grouped under migration studies. Intersectionality becomes the focal point which connects the theoretical paradigms.





**Figure 1: Intersectional Theoretical Framework**

The crux of being Afro-Cuban is having an intersectional identity that engages both being Black *and* Cuban as well as other indices of identity (gender, age, educational level, wave of arrival, etc.). While Kimberlé Crenshaw’s initial formulation of intersectionality (1989, 1991) dealt with the compounding effect of race and gender as it related to workplace legal cases and to sexual violence against women of color, intersectionality as a theory has been broadened to embrace multiple aspects of identity and fields of study (Walby et al 2012; Bauer 2014; Hancock 2016). It is not simply a matter of counting the aspects of a person’s identity; it is the intersection of these identities that is subject to oppression in ways that cannot be fully appreciated by analyzing them separately.

Having established that Afro-Cubans have an intersectional identity, are Afro-Cubans living in the United States diasporic subjects? If “diasporic identity is a stand

taken by those who are excluded from the modern space on racial grounds, in making claims of belonging by tracing their acquisition of modern attributes to originary, and racially defined, homelands” (Hintzen, “Race and Diasporic Imaginings” 2010: 53-54), Afro-Cubans are definitely diasporic subjects. Several scholars of diaspora have sought to define its key elements (Safran 1991; Butler 2001) and challenge the primacy of the Jewish diaspora as exemplar (Clifford 1994). Moreover, scholars of the African and Caribbean diasporas have envisioned diasporic identity as a strategic positioning (Hall 1998); combating abjection and misrecognition with revelation and self-recognition (Hintzen 2010; Hintzen and Rahier 2010); and eliciting diasporic resources to affirm a Black identity (Brown 2005) and solicit aid from abroad (Queeley 2015). Introducing the concept of double diaspora (Schwartz 2012; Jeffers 2016) in its application to the African and Cuban diasporas, this study situates the Afro-Cuban American experience in relation to other double diasporic populations. Afro-Cubans are seen as double diasporic subjects with agency and the ability to use their intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991; Cho et al 2013) to form diasporic alliances with other South Florida communities.

Critical Race Theory is also central to this study. Delgado and Stephancic (2017, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition) describe the premises of Critical Race Theory which originated in legal studies but has spread throughout a wide variety of disciplines. They assert that 1) “racism is ordinary, not aberrational”; 2) there is “interest convergence” by whites of all socio-economic strata to keep racism alive; 3) races are socially constructed, further highlighting “differential racialization” and intersectionality as central concepts; and 4) the “voice[s] of color” should be allowed to speak for themselves and challenge master narratives (2017). Theories of microaggressions have expanded upon the premises of

CRT (Torino et al 2018; Wing Sue et al 2019) and include intersectional microaggressions (Nadal et al 2015) which can be applied to studying Afro-Cubans in South Florida.

This project also engages migration studies, especially as it pertains to the racialized incorporation (Chaudhary 2015) of immigrant groups such as Miami Afro-Cubans. While the segmented assimilation theory has been dominant in migration studies (Portes and Zhou 1993), it has been critiqued in its assumption that associating with the urban underclass (largely populated by Black Americans) leads to downward assimilation (Greebaum 2002; Hay 2006). Afro-Cubans will be examined in relation to the larger story of black immigrants in the United States to discern other trajectories of incorporation (Arthur 2000; Hintzen and Rahier 2010; Malcolm and Mendoza 2014; Nyemba and Vaughn 2017; Kolawole 2017). Critical to understanding the incorporation of Afro-Cubans into South Florida is to recognize Miami as a city of super-diversity. Super-diverse locations are ones where there is a majority-minority context and in which no one ethnic group has the numeric majority (Crul 2016). One-third of Miami today is of Cuban ancestry, one-third is of another Hispanic origin, and the remaining third is comprised of Blacks, whites, and other non-Hispanic groups. As originally theorized by Vertovec (2007) and elaborated by Crul (2016), super-diversity engages intersectionality and the multiple axes of difference within ethnic groups.

#### **D. METHODS and RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study's central research question is as follows: How have Afro-Cubans as double diasporic subjects been incorporated into the socio-cultural landscape of South Florida, and relationship between these methods of incorporation and their ethno-racial

identity? This dissertation is the product of 21 months of research conducted over an 11-year period (2011-2022). The overarching research question was subdivided into 4 component questions to guide Phase I and Phase II of the research.

### **a. Phase I**

**Research Question 1:** What is the Cuban migration story if retold by foregrounding the presence of Afro-Cubans? How have Afro-Cubans of each wave of Cuban migration been incorporated into Miami's changing racial landscape?

#### **i. Archival Records/Census Data**

Archival records were used to contextualize the U.S. Census data in order to recover the Afro-Cuban presence in the Cuban migration story. Specifically, the Cuban Refugee Center program records housed at the UM Cuban Heritage Collection, contain detailed records up to 1980 documenting program statistics, financial assistance, medical care, and resettlement efforts among many other contributions of the Center. Governmental records and other sources document the era post-Mariel to the present. The archival, census, and historical records and articles in the widely-circulated *Miami Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald* were examined using Critical Discourse Analysis and complemented by narratives from Afro-Cubans spanning the major waves of Cuban migration to the United States.

**Research Question 2:** What is the role of race and racism in shaping the socio-economic incorporation of Afro-Cubans in South Florida? Is the role of race compounded or refracted through other intersecting identities and methods of incorporation?

## **ii. Official government records (archival and contemporary)**

The most recent American Communities Surveys and Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS survey) were used to research socio-economic indicators and residential patterns of Afro-Cubans in South Florida and in comparison to their co-ethnics that do not identify as Afro-descendants.

Archival records were used to investigate other factors including SES before in Cuba and now in the US, arrival to the U.S. alone or with family, wave of migration, age at the time of arrival, rates of entrepreneurship, and English proficiency. While many of these factors were researched through federal sources, such as the Census and Immigration records, and state and local records, this question was complemented by the interviews conducted in Phase II of the proposed research to identify additional methods of incorporation (political and religious affiliation).

Research Question 3: In what ways do Afro-Cubans use their double diasporic positioning to form diasporic alliances? Can these alliances be discerned through patterns of residential incorporation of Afro-Cubans in South Florida?

## **iii. Census Data**

Census data was used to investigate residential incorporation patterns into Miami-Dade County at large and into select neighborhoods in Miami-Dade County - Opa-Locka, Carol City, and Allapattah, among others. Microgeographies were also identified and participants were recruited from these areas to complement the Census data with their lived experience.

**b. PHASE II**

Overarching Research Question: What impact has migration and incorporation had on Afro-Cubans' ethno-racial identity?

**i. Participatory Approach – Interviews and Participant Observation**

While several of the listed methods aided in answering the main research question, participatory research is at the heart of this project and was used to capture multiple Afro-Cuban voices and document their methods of incorporation into South Florida. Because the Afro-Cuban population is small, snowball sampling was used to identify and expand the pool of participants willing to take part in the study. Social media was also used to identify participants.

Forty Afro-Cubans living in Miami (or adjacent South Florida cities in Broward or Palm Beach counties) were identified to participate in the study. One Afro-Cuban American was also interviewed for the purposes of identifying future research directions and discussed in the conclusion. The following participatory methodologies were used in the field research. Through structured and open-ended interviews, the extent to which these methods of incorporation have impacted the identity of the research subjects were investigated. Of the interviewed group of 40, a subset diverse in age, gender, and wave of migration (8) were identified for life history interviews. Interviews transitioned from being conducted in-person to being conducted through Zoom, especially during the Delta surge of the pandemic.

Participant observation was conducted at Cuban-themed events where *cubanidad* is projected to see if these were inclusive of Afro-Cubans. Some of this participant research was conducted prior to the advent of COVID-19. However, during the COVID-19

pandemic, participant research went virtual (such as attending the CANDELA virtual book club sessions and MoCAAD's four-part series highlighting Afro-Latinx populations) and or adhered to strict protocols and events with limited numbers, such as visitations to the Cuban Museum, la Ermita de la Caridad, la Ermita de Regla.

**ii. Data Analysis**

MaxQDA served as the principal data analysis tool to collect, code, and analyze the aforementioned data. Furthermore, a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1997) was used to allow for themes to emanate from the data (Ryan and Bernard 2003).

**c. Self-Ethnography and Positionality as a Researcher:**

As a Cuban-American female of both African and Spanish ancestry and a lifelong resident of Miami, I recognize that there are strengths and limitations of my positionality as a researcher. It is not often that the scholarly works about Afro-Cubans (especially in the U.S.) are written *by* Afro-Cubans. My background is a strength that makes me keenly aware of the issue of inclusion and exclusion because I have had experiences on both sides of the pendulum. My family arrived to the United States during the era of the historic exiles, and when I was born, the Camarioca flights were still taking place. I lived in Miami during Mariel, the Balsero Crisis, Elian and every other noteworthy event in Cuban community and experienced these events through my distinctive Afro-Cuban identity which sometimes put me at odds with my white co-ethnics. I was also disappointed when the national leaders of the BLM movement blamed the embargo for the anti-Cuban government protests of July 2021 and ignored the cries for liberty by protesters, many of whom were Afro-Cuban. I am not a researcher who arrived at a

location, immersed herself in the culture, and then left. I live this out every day, and I have a lifetime's worth of participant observation from which to draw upon. Where appropriate, self-ethnography (Flaherty and Ellis, 1992; Reed-Danahay 2007, Venkatesh 2013) was used to illustrate Afro-Cuban American perspective, reflect critically on the role of race and intersectionality in my socio-economic positioning, and articulate my use of diasporic alliances as a double diasporic subject.

I grew up with Martí's ideology held up as Cuba's highest expression of *cubanidad*, but I had a rude awakening when the transcendent discourse frequently did not fit the behavior of my fellow Miami Cubans. I am also keenly aware that the Cuban Success Story is not just a fable invented by journalists to sell papers but a powerful discourse that sets the aspirations for success and inspires pride in the Cuban American community of all colors (Dowling and Newby 2010: 189). It can also lead to exceptionalism and exclusion. My intersectional identity drives me to research the role of race and racism in the socio-economic incorporation of Afro-Cubans in South Florida as well as how race interacts with other intersectional identities.

#### **E. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research project investigates how Afro-Cubans as diasporic subjects have been incorporated into South Florida and relationship between these methods of incorporation and the evolution of their identity and *cubanidad*. The study foregrounds the Afro-Cuban presence in the Cuban migration story and the impact of race on the socio-economic adjustment of Afro-Cubans. While there is significant scholarly attention to Afro-Cubans in Cuba, Afro-Cubans in the United States in general and



Miami in particular are an understudied population, and this research hopes to fill in this gap. Overall, it is my aspiration that this research makes a noteworthy contribution to the dialogue on *cubanidad* in exile and contributes to understanding the impact of narratives of inclusion and exclusion on the identity and the success of other Afro-Latinx and black immigrant populations in the United States.

#### **F. Delimitations**

This study focuses on Afro-Cubans of the five waves of Cuban migration. Except for identifying future trends in the conclusion, it did not include second or third generation Cuban-Americans nor those who arrived prior to 1959. Participants recognized themselves as Afro-descendants and lived in Cuba long enough to be able to compare race relations in Cuba to the United States. While almost all of participants live in Miami-Dade county, some live in neighboring Broward and Palm Beach counties while spending a significant portion of their time in Miami (either because of work, school, or family). Miami is the epicenter of *cubanidad* that reverberates across South Florida's tri-county area. Therefore, the study did not include anyone currently living outside of South Florida.

#### **G. Conceptual and Operational Definitions**

Why do I use the term “Afro-Cuban” to describe Cubans of discernable African ancestry? While some feel that the term is divisive and is clumsily borrowed from an American frame of reference (American vs. African-American), the term has its roots in the Afrocubanismo movement which had its heyday in the 1940s and ‘50s, but was based on the earlier negrismo movement. A precursor to *négritude*, *negrismo* was created in Cuba in the late 1920s. It explored a black linguistic vernacular and black themes in

poetry, prose, and the arts. Its principal proponents were poets Nicolás Guillén, Ramón Guirao, and Emilio Ballagas in Cuba as well as Luis Pales Matos in Puerto Rico (Branche 2006: 162, 167). The ideas of *negrismo* would eventually become part of the larger *Afrocubanismo* movement which sought to integrate African traditions into the center of *cubanidad*, or Cuban identity. The *Afrocubanismo* movement's major proponents were anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, author Lydia Cabrera, poet Nicolás Guillén, journalist Gustavo Urrutia (Laremont and Yun 1999: 23-24) and novelist Alejo Carpentier (R. Moore 2), among others.

*Afro-Cuban* is often applied to art, religion, and music – the cultural products of the people. It is mainly an anthropological term and is not one widely used by afro-descendent Cubans to describe themselves. Nadine Fernandez came to a similar conclusion in her use of the term (2010). Michelle Hay created a theoretical construct where she used three terms – Cuban Black, Black Cuban, and Afro-Cuban – to distinguish positionalities yet she also uses Afro-Cuban most widely throughout her study (2009). While I also use the term Black Cuban interchangeably with Afro-Cuban, there is also a color continuum in Cuba ranging from *blanconazo* to *negro azul* (Roland 2010) that may not be fully captured by the use of term Black Cuban. I did not impose a term on the participants of my study as I let them describe themselves. Ultimately, Afro-Cuban is the most satisfactory term for me because of its anthropological roots and because it points to two places of origin, the double diaspora.

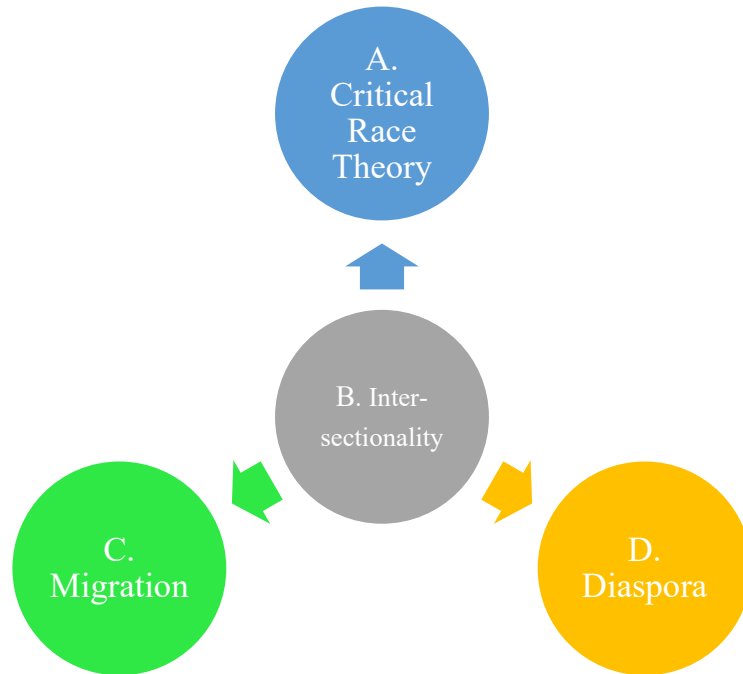
## **H. Chapter Overview**

This chapter serves to introduce the study and its significance. Chapter two presents a fuller discussion of the theoretical paradigms that anchor the project:

intersectionality becomes the centrifugal force that pulls together the scholarship on critical race theory, diaspora studies, and migration studies. Chapters three through five present ethnographic material interpreted through these paradigms. Chapter three foregrounds Afro-Cubans within the five waves of Cuban migration and presents two competing and overlapping paradigms to describe Miami – superdiversity or a Latino supermajority. Chapter four introduces the concept of double diaspora to describe Afro-Cubans and gives examples of the double diaspora in action. It also gives a historical overview to cubanidad and its current whitewashing in today’s Miami exile community. Chapter five presents race and the socio-economic incorporation of Afro-Cubans in South Florida through the lens of self-ethnography and an ethnographic case study. Chapter six provides a discussion of the research findings and points toward directions for future research.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This project engages in three overarching theoretical frameworks to elucidate the experiences of Afro-Cubans in South Florida: Critical Race Theory, theories grouped under migration studies, and African Diaspora theory. Intersectionality becomes the focal point which connects the theoretical paradigms.



**Figure 2: Intersectional Theoretical Framework (with lettered subheadings)**

The following chapter is an overview of the theoretical paradigms as they relate to this project on South Florida Afro-Cubans.

### A. Critical Race Theory

#### a. Using CRT in the era of “Fake News”

The backlash against the calls to conscience that occurred after the death of George Floyd took many forms, including the vicious attack on Critical Race Theory by conservative media. On September 1, 2020, a Fox News commentator, Christopher

Rufo, discussed what he felt were the dangers of CRT, which prompted Trump to send a memo to federal agencies warning against CRT as anti-American (Borter 2021). On September 22, 2020, this was ratified in Executive Order 13950 that prohibited federal funds from being used to conduct training that acknowledges systemic racism or sexism (Fortin 2021; United States, Executive Order of the President [Donald Trump]).

Although President Biden has since reversed this order (Borter 2021), the spirit of this decree has been replicated in numerous state prohibitions of CRT, including in Florida (AAFP 2021). Critical Race Theory was mentioned 1,300 times by Fox News over a four-month period in 2021 alone (Ray and Gibbons 2021). What is so controversial about CRT, and why use it in this dissertation?

#### b. History of CRT

This theory evolved from Critical Legal Studies and has its roots in the 1970s in the work of legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Alan Freeman. Its genesis in 1981 is traced to a group of activist law students, including Kimberle Crenshaw who is credited with coining the term (Crenshaw et al 1995; Martinez 2014). When a Harvard Law School administrator let these vocal students know that Derrick Bell's course on Constitutional Law and Minorities would no longer be taught after he left nor would he be replaced with another black professor, the administrator admonished them: "Wouldn't an excellent white professor be better than a mediocre black one?" (Crenshaw 2021). This flippant remark led to the students creating their own class; eventually, a watershed Critical Race Theory workshop was organized in 1989 (Crenshaw 2021) and convened yearly until the mid-1990s. Critical Race Theory also

has spawned theories, including LatCrit, OutCrit, BlackCrit, and intersectionality (Valdes and Bender 2021; Crenshaw 2021).

c. Description of CRT and its application to this project

This project is anchored in the principal tenets of Critical Race Theory: 1) “racism is ordinary, not aberrational”; 2) there is “interest convergence” by whites of all socio-economic strata to keep racism alive; 3) races are socially constructed, further highlighting “differential racialization” and intersectionality as central concepts; and 4) the “voice[s] of color” should be allowed to speak for themselves and challenge master narratives (2017). Popular criticism of the theory mainly stems from tenets 1, 2 and 4.

i. Racism is commonplace, “ordinary, not aberrational”

Critics of CRT see racism as an individual flaw and scorn the idea that American institutions such as the criminal justice system, “colorblind” laws, educational institutions, and political systems are flawed and systemically racist. Instead of placing an emphasis on psychological dispositions, however, scholars such as Bonilla-Silva focus on racism as a structure and betray a “materialist interpretation of racial matters and thus sees the view of actors as corresponding to their systemic location” (2014: 7). Moreover, in *Racism without Racists* (2014), Bonilla-Silva uses mixed methods research to demonstrate the pervasiveness of a color-blind racism that uses rhetorical frames which appear to be race-neutral. CRT scholars see both the everyday forms of individual racism often perpetrated by unaware actors as well as the larger scale institutional issues that impact the lives of people of color in the United States. An example of a larger scale application of systemic racism would be the construction of major highways through black communities which happened across the United States, including Miami’s I-95.

The explosion of interest in microaggression theory over the past 10 years is a testament to its explanatory power in revealing the everyday, ubiquitous nature of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and many other forms of oppression perpetrated by individual actors. Moreover, the authors of *Microaggression Theory: Influence and Implications* describe three types of microaggressions: microassault (overt, intentional discriminatory or biased expressions or actions), microinsult (unintentional comments or actions that belittle someone's race and/or identity), and microinvalidations (unintentional expressions or actions that disregard the experiences of members of oppressed groups) (Torino et al 2019). The pervasiveness of racial jokes and expressions in Spanish that denigrate blackness (a microinsult) is just one example of many everyday occurrences that Black Latinos including Black Cubans experience in Miami. The racist Spanish language jokes and expressions are also examples of intersectional microaggressions (Nadal et al 2015). Research indicates that the cumulation of microaggressions has deleterious psychological and health repercussions for minoritized populations (Owen et al 2019).

ii. "Interest convergence"

In Derrick Bell's brilliant analysis of *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, he described the interest convergence that led to the resulting landmark decision to desegregate schools. The idea that this famous decision in American jurisprudence was made possible by interest convergence would also be dissonant to those who favor a triumphalist version of American history. For Bell, it was only when the interests of Black Americans (to eliminate separate and unequal schooling) converged with the following interests of White Americans that this verdict was feasible: to improve the

image of the United States in the Cold War where the hypocrisy of espousing democracy was belied by the unequal treatment of Blacks; to address the issue of skeptical Black veterans who saw that they fought for liberty abroad while being segregated at home; and to aid in the industrialization of the rural South (Bell 1995: 22-23). Bonilla-Silva also describes how interest convergence can inform the ideology of color blind racism in order to not lose the benefits of white dominance (2014). This interest convergence also took place when the largely white historic exile community received instant favorable legal immigratory status and close to \$1 billion in support during the height of the Cold War. There was less incentive to extend this welcome mat to the Mariel wave of migration post the stinging U.S. defeat in the Vietnam War and still less incentive to bestow these benefits to the post-Cold War waves of Cuban migration.

**iii.** Race is a sociological creation, not a biological one.

This well-known scientific fact confirmed by the Human Genome project (National Human Genome Research Institute) does not negate the social consequences of race and its subsequent differential life chances. Given the pervasiveness of Martí's raceless ideology (Martí 1893 "My Race"; 1892 "My America") in the narrative of Cuban-American identity, Critical Race Theory is the perfect tool to counter the silencing of race in the Cuban-American community. A raceless cubanidad has been used both in Cuba and the United States to ignore or deny the differential racialization of Afro-Cubans and thus create a microinvalidation of their experiences. The intersectionality of the Afro-Cuban identity is erased in this version of cubanidad and is central to this project. Intersectionality will be elaborated upon in the next section.



iv. Capturing the unique “voice(s) of color”

From the CRT perspective, documenting the unique “voice(s) of color” can be an enlightening way to challenge the “master narrative(s).” Richard Delgado describes the benefits of storytelling to the outgroup whose voices have been marginalized – for “psychic self-preservation” and as a way to challenge their subordinated status - and explains why the dominant in-group should listen (1989: 2436-2439). Currently, the anti-CRT bills in some states also specify a refusal to teach the 1619 Project that puts the experiences of African Americans at the center of American History (Rodriguez 2021). These alternative and counter-narratives can present a forceful challenge to the beliefs that maintain the status quo (Delgado 1989: 2413). For this project, recording Afro-Cuban voices gives life to an invisibilized population and challenges the master narrative of cubanidad in exile.

**B. Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is the fulcrum that unifies the other components of the theoretical construct: CRT, diaspora studies, and migration studies. The main assumption of intersectionality is the combination of axes of difference is greater than the sum of its parts. It uncovers subordination and oppression not discernable by looking at these aspects separately.

a. History of Intersectionality

Crenshaw in a recent plenary address described intersectionality as an offshoot of Critical Race Theory. She cited a 1976 court case in which Black women employees sued General Motors on the basis of compound discrimination. They could neither fill machine operator roles deemed appropriate for men nor could they fill clerical or office

staff positions that were traditionally held by white women (Crenshaw 2021). They were doubly discriminated against although the court maintained that they could not receive special treatment for this compound discrimination. They could file a discrimination case on the basis of race or gender but not both (*DeGraffenreid v. General Motors*, 1976). Since they could not present a combined discrimination case, the court did not acknowledge their claim that gender discrimination barred them from seniority because General Motors did hire women before 1964, just not Black women (Crenshaw 1989: 142). Crenshaw criticized the privileging of the white woman in feminist movement and the Black male in the antiracism movement, which rendered the experiences of Black women invisible (140). Originating from this lack of recognition of Black women as occupying compounded area of difference, intersectionality theory extended beyond the legal arena and includes multiple fields of study and areas of difference including sexual orientation, ableism, classism and many more (Walby et al 2012; Bauer 2014; Hancock 2016).

#### b. Critics of Intersectionality

Critics of intersectionality deem class analysis to be the superior analytical framework (Foley 2019); that the original subject of intersectionality (Black American females) has been usurped by white European feminists (Davis 2020) and re-centered whiteness in the process (Salskov 2020) and that sexuality was marginalized both with intersectionality and with CRT (Cho 2013). These are noteworthy critiques of intersectionality. However, a truly intersectional approach can incorporate multiple areas of difference without losing its explanatory power. It is not simply

“multidimensionality” (Hutchinson 2004) but the compounding of various axes of difference that has made intersectionality so compelling.

c. Intersectionality and its application to this project

For the purposes of this project, intersectionality challenges the privileging of Cuban exceptionalism and the historic exiles as the master narrative of Cuban American identity erases and subordinates the experiences of Cubans who do not fit this narrative. Intersectionality acknowledges multiple axes of difference that combine to create outcomes that cannot be explained on the basis of one prism of difference. The Afro-Cuban identity is emphatically an intersectional one that often perceived as being too Black to be Cuban, too Cuban to be Black. When wave of migration is accounted for as an area of difference, intersectionality acknowledges that the experiences of a Black Pedro Pan may differ significantly from a Black Mariel migrant or a Black Balsero for that matter. This leads to the next arm of this theoretical model, migration studies.

**C. Migration Studies**

This project also engages migration studies, especially as it pertains to the racialized incorporation (Chaudhary 2015) of immigrant groups such as Miami Afro-Cubans. It moves beyond the segmented assimilation theory of Portes and Zhou (1993) to find other models that better explain the migration and incorporation experiences of Afro Cubans. Since the segmented assimilation model is so dominant, it will be helpful to assess this theory and its limitations as it pertains to Afro-Cuban immigrants.

a. Segmented Assimilation and its Opponents

Certainly, segmented assimilation was an advance beyond the classic assimilation theory of the melting pot yet it reifies the disadvantage of lower SES groups, including

Blacks. Segmented assimilation portrays three main trajectories of immigrant incorporation: 1) into the mainstream white American middle class; 2) into the perpetual poverty of the urban underclass; or 3) into a rapidly rising immigrant group that maintains their ethnicity and values (1993). Accordingly, immigrants who incorporate into the urban underclass, largely populated by African Americans, will suffer from “downward assimilation” (1993). The authors go on to say that Cuban-American children in South Florida have the advantage of being shielded from racism and having little contact with stigmatized minorities, almost advocating for Cuban self-segregation (1993). This is a flat one-dimensional reading of immigrant incorporation which erases the intersectional identity of Afro-Cubans who often live among African Americans and have not been shielded from racism.

Racialized incorporation (Chaudhary 2015) recognizes the role of race and systemic racism in determining the socioeconomic outcomes of non-white immigrants and their progeny while documenting generational differences and incorporation trends over time that can go upward, downward, or remain constant. In Chaudhary’s study, most second-generation groups and beyond did show lower levels of self-employment, which conforms to an assimilationist paradigm, but the types of self-employment and levels of prestige associated with these opportunities were racially stratified (205).

Black immigrants do not conform to such reductionist renderings of their socio-location. Unlike Portes and Zhou who view the educational and professional achievements of Jamaican immigrants as being nullified because of their placement with African Americans in South Florida (1993), other authors complicate the relationship between black immigrants and Black Americans. For example, Hintzen asserts that the

West Indian community on the West Coast negotiates its identity through the prisms of foreignness and blackness (2010: 51). The community's members have taken on the "model minority" status ascribed to Asians and are seen as achievement-oriented and success-driven (52) because the area is able to attract highly-qualified and well-educated West Indians, whereas the West Indians living in the East Coast primarily work in the service sector (52-3). Furthermore, West Indians are able to build on the political capital earned by African Americans who reside there because of their shared racial identity (53). The volume titled *Problematizing Blackness* seeks to destabilize and deconstruct Blackness through the ethnographic contributions of black immigrant scholars whose very presence in the academy is an anomaly in traditionally white institutions and whose complex identities and histories defy the one-way ticket into the urban underclass (2003). Louis et al also described the invisibility of black immigrant faculty in higher education (2017) while Kolawole warned of the dangers that invisibility portends for African immigrants who are not part of immigration discussions but are affected by adverse immigration policies (2017). While Black immigrants resist homogenization of their identity with African Americans (Malcolm and Mendoza 2014) and Black Latino immigrants resist racialization (Bailey 2001), Greenbaum (2002), Hay (2006), and Grillo (2000) all note advantageous affiliations between Afro-Cubans and African Americans.

b. Super-diversity and its application to this project

Super-diversity as a theory is a better and more nuanced way to understand Afro-Cubans incorporation into South Florida. Super-diverse cities are ones in which there is no ethno-national group that can claim it is the majority and where the proliferation of nationalities is substantial. Immigrants are not incorporating into a white national

majority that has lost its numerical dominance in these cities (Crul 2016). These are cities that have received numerous waves of migration over time with differing immigration statuses (Vertovec 2007). Super-diversity incorporates intersectionality and can better explain the reception of Black Cubans over time and not erase them with statements like Cubans don't experience racism in South Florida. By unpacking the pan-Hispanic label and recognizing national, generational, racial, legal status and other areas of difference, Miami today is a super-diverse city. Furthermore, by taking multiple intersectional factors into account, super-diversity can describe why a Protestant Panamanian may incorporate into Miami very differently than a Jewish Argentinian or why an Afro-Cuban's trajectory may differ from her white co-ethnics or from other Afro-Cubans from a different wave of migration.

#### **D. African Diaspora theories**

##### **a. Relevant diaspora concepts and theoretical frameworks**

Diaspora has been the subject of intense scholarly interests over the past four decades extending well beyond the original application to the Jewish diaspora (Butler 2001). This section will focus on the concepts and theoretical frameworks that best fit the study of South Florida Afro-Cubans.

What is diaspora specifically as it relates to afro-descendants? Hintzen and Rahier describe it accordingly: "Diaspora, therefore, is the space of mutual recognition of a solidarity consciousness across fragmented geographies ... As ideology, it is a struggle against misrecognition that positions black subjectivity firmly within the space of modernity" (2010: xviii). For Afro-Cubans in the United States, this misrecognition and exclusion from modernity occurred well before setting foot in the United States; it has

been a dominant theme throughout the history of Cuba. The 1912 massacre of 6,000 Afro-Cuban men, women, and children (Helg 1995) is but one glaring example of this desire to extinguish the Afro-Cuban political voice and claims to full participation in the fledgling republic. Moreover, this misrecognition stems from white supremacy that is the source behind “black abjection, exclusion, and erasure” (Hintzen and Rahier 2010: x). Diaspora serves to create spaces for “self-recognition for black subjects in and across different national territories through originary claims to Africa” (xii).

Hintzen and Rahier’s description of diaspora is consistent with Gilroy’s Black Atlantic, the preeminent paradigm of African diaspora studies. For Gilroy, the ideology of the Black Atlantic embodies a “transnational and intercultural perspective” that serves as a counter-culture to a modernity that shorn the Black subject of her humanity (1993). The Black Atlantic seeks to unite the various black cultures on both sides of the Atlantic with understanding that cultural interactions between the old world and new came in both directions, crisscrossing the Atlantic. He uses the ship as the chronotype to symbolize these journeys over sea, over time, and space (Gilroy 1993: 40). Moreover, he sees music as the ultimate connector between Africa and Africans in diaspora, for sound crosses space and time and doesn’t need translation to be understood (72). The ship as chronotype is a powerful symbol, for the transatlantic voyage was one of the principal routes that transformed continental Africans into diasporic subjects around the world, and it is the contemporary voyage traversed by music that continues to make multiple connections between Africa and its diaspora as well as connections within the diaspora. Music emerges as a powerful artform which can say the “unsayable,” speak against oppression and project a vision of a utopian future that makes the present livable.

Observe the manifesto encapsulated in “Patria y Vida” (2021), a song protesting the Cuban government and performed by Afro-Cubans residing in Cuba, Miami, and Madrid. This brave song criticizes the 60-years of deadlock position of the Cuban government, declares an end to the communist regime, and portrays a future where Cuba is for all of its people, not just those in power. The unusual foregrounding of Afro-Cuban artists representing the cries for liberty and subsequent protests of a population with a significant Afro-Cuban presence is an affront to the white nation-state represented in the government of Diaz-Canal.

Although she was writing against the grain of the Black Atlantic, Jacqueline Nassy Brown’s *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* largely confirms many of the elements of this paradigm while demonstrating the role of diasporic resources for Blacks in Liverpool. The sailing metaphor in the title of her book and the prominence of African seaman in the story of Black Liverpool completely align with Gilroy’s ship as the chronotype of the Black Atlantic. Instead of diasporic subjects making connections to an African homeland, Brown demonstrates how the local is used politically by the Black Liverpudlians to affirm their place in the nation-state while using “diaspora’s resources” to create an affirmative Black identity (37, 42, 72). Moreover, biracial Liverpudlians used Black America as a diasporic resource to forge a strong, unapologetically Black political identity and displaced the damning “half caste” racial slur that was circulated with the influential *Fletcher Report* (36-37). Black America, not Africa, is seen as a homeland. This still fits within the Black Atlantic framework of “roots and routes” (1993: 134) – African roots through their seaman fathers and a Black Identity mediated through the route of Black America. Similarly, the use of diasporic



resources is also a viable tool for South Florida's Afro-Cubans to create an affirmative identity outside of the raceless *cubanidad* ideology.

b. Critics of the Black Atlantic

The Black Atlantic has not been without its detractors. Hence, it is helpful to understand the critiques of this influential theoretical construct and its applicability to this project. Gordon and Anderson (1999) advocate for deploying ethnographic attention to the process of diasporization (284). They underscore the political nature of the African Diaspora as a concept (285). Their main critique of Gilroy is that he doesn't distinguish diaspora as a "conceptual tool" versus a tool for "identity formation," and he favors "aspects of diasporic practice and identification that support his political project against nationalism and ethnic absolutism" (289). Afrocentrism, seen as essentialist and participating in ethnic absolutism, is not a viable diasporic strategy for Gilroy (289). Chivallon (2002) dedicates an entire article to dismantling the Black Atlantic – and to a lesser extent critiquing Stuart Hall as another proponent of a hybrid diaspora (359). She also discerns Gilroy's distaste with Afrocentrism and asserts that he did not address the flaws of Afrocentrism head on (362) but creates two worlds – the Black Atlantic and Afrocentrism (367). Moreover, she believes that Gilroy confuses "two levels of reflection ... *The nationalism that is rejected as a social theory* (with which I agree) *is also rejected as an ideological reality*" (364 emphasis in the original). In other words, exclusionary nationalism (for example, where Englishness is synonymous with whiteness) should be rejected but it does not deny its ideological reality (for Blacks living in Great Britain). Gilroy also decenters Africa in favor of the Middle Passage being central to the Black Atlantic (367) and his epistemological position is unclear (374).

While Clifford (1994) does seem to find more redeeming qualities in Gilroy, he also expressed concerns about his theory. He recognizes Gilroy's syncretic time as using a musical metaphor to defy linearity in the diasporic experience (318). He acknowledges the centrality of the Middle Passage as a defining characteristic of the Black Atlantic (318). Yet he believes that Gilroy has steered Black British people across the Atlantic to the Caribbean to define themselves, privileges travel and other activities that were not traditionally open to women, doesn't completely decenter African Americans as the subject of the African diaspora, and does not include Afro-Latinos in his theoretical project (319-320).

Edwards (2001) is concerned that the Black Atlantic has displaced the diaspora in places where the broader term diaspora should be used (61). Moreover, he quotes an interview given by Gilroy where he explicitly chose not to use diaspora in the title of the book (63). Tellingly, Edwards rejects an "oceanic" concept as a way to conceptualize diaspora (63). Instead, he presents "decalage" (the gap, wedge, that which escapes translation) as a better way to describe diaspora, which borrows from Hall's articulations of diaspora but is read against Senghor's use of "decalage" to describe the difference between African Americans and continental Africans (64-66).

As a concept, the Black Atlantic has undeniable appeal in its ability to synthesize the experiences of diasporic Blacks into a singular concept. It is anchored in the centrality of the Middle Passage but not tied to an ahistorical African past nor is it alluding to a return to Africa. The constant feature of movement – whether in the chronotope of the ship or of music – gives a dynamic feature to the cultures of diaspora

peoples. The idea of moving beyond the nation-state and beyond ethno-absolutism to a concept that unites us yet recognizes our differences is attractive as well. This is why the text rapidly achieved “canonical” status in cultural studies (Hayes 45).

The critiques are justifiable but need further exploration. There is a wordiness in Gilroy’s prose which is read by some being unclear (Chivallon). While Gordon and Anderson believe that Gilroy did not clarify his uses of the term diaspora (conceptual vs. identity formation), Hayes reminds us that Gilroy intended for the Black Atlantic to be a “provisional or heuristic term of analysis” (61). It is true that Gilroy did not fully address Afrocentrism directly and even excluded it from the Black Atlantic, yet some of these same authors betray a similar distaste with hybridity (Chivallon) which is an element included in Gilroy’s counterculture to modernity. I disagree that most Afro-Latinos cannot be accommodated into the concept of the Black Atlantic. While the slave trade routes of some Afro-Latinos in South America (such as Afro-Peruvians) began in the Atlantic but crossed the Pacific Ocean as well, for many Afro-Latinos, the theoretical concept is applicable.

The Black Atlantic has much to contribute to this study of Afro-Cubans in South Florida. Using DuBois’ work, he identifies a double consciousness of the inhabitants of the Black Atlantic that allow persons like himself to be both Black and European (British) and that these categories are not seen as mutually exclusive (1993: 1). It includes elements of theories of “creolization, metissage, mestizaje, and hybridity” (1993: 2) but is transcendent of them as well. Presumably then, this model of the Black Atlantic would allow for intersectional individuals to be both Black and Cuban or Black

and White and Cuban without there being a contradiction, and yet moving beyond the nation-state. Cuban music is emblematic of the Black Atlantic – derived from African rhythms, reformulated in Cuba (as son) and New York (salsa), and returning to Africa as salsa that was then exported back to the world as African salsa (see the Senegalese group Africando among others). Moreover, the embrace of hybridity and the ability to incorporate multiple diasporic locations across the Black Atlantic is the perfect setting for the concept of Double Diaspora as it is applied to U.S. Afro-Cubans.

c. Double Diaspora and its application to this project

The concept of Double Diaspora encapsulates the trajectory of Afro-Cubans from Africa to Cuba and from Cuba to the United States. The concept has been most fully articulated and applied to the Jewish and Indian diasporas, but it also resonates with the African diaspora. Below are some criteria for a population to be considered double diasporic which combines key elements of diaspora and double diaspora:

- 1) There are three locations or nation/states and two dispersals:
  - A. Ancestral location
  - B. Diaspora (1<sup>st</sup> dispersal; more recent transplantation to a different nation/state)
  - C. Double Diaspora (2<sup>nd</sup> dispersal; move to another nation/state; present hostland)
- 2) Navigate vastly different political and social conditions in each state which creates a shift in diasporic culture (Jeffers 2016)
- 3) Abjection in each diasporic location, othering (Hintzen and Rahier 2010)
- 4) Contradiction between the two diasporic identities resulting in an identity quandary (Schwartz 2010)
- 5) Group identity and self-awareness (Butler 2001)
- 6) Existence over at least two generations (Butler 2001)

This list is inclusive of the first three of Safran's six characteristics of diaspora which should be met at each diasporic location (dispersed to at least two locations, maintain memory or vision or myth of homeland, not accepted by the host country) (1991: 83-84). More details about this framework will be given in chapter 4.

The following descriptions of double diaspora give the essence of the concept. Wacks focuses on Sephardic Jews, Schwartz is writing about Arab Jews, while Jeffers is applying the concept to the Indian diaspora. There is great consistency with each of the authors yet there are nuances that are explained using the double diaspora framework above.

In simple terms, double diaspora means exactly that: the Sepharadim living on the Iberian Peninsula were in diaspora; they imagined themselves as having come originally from Zion and eventually settled on the peninsula. Then, after 1492 they lived in a second diaspora, one from the Sephardic homeland, the Iberian Peninsula, Sefarad. When we think about diaspora and its relationship to Sephardic cultural production, we are dealing with a multilayered phenomenon, a double diaspora (Wacks 2015).

Jews of the Iberian Peninsula traced their origins to Jerusalem, a first dispersion; the second occurred after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. It is the intersection of these two diasporic identities that resonate within the culture of the Sephardi, of which the Ladino language is only one manifestation.

Schwartz has a similar definition of double diaspora, yet she foregrounds the identity quandary experienced by the group that she is writing about, the Iraqi Jews living in Canada:

Double diaspora ... is the sense of being caught between sets of discrepancies between homeland and hostland that contradict each other; a double-diasporic person is caught between two contradictory relationships of belonging. Double-diasporic peoples have been deterritorialized twice, literally or imaginatively (Schwartz 2010).

Schwartz is foregrounding the intersectional paradox of two warring identities thought to be mutually exclusive. Ironically, the creation of the state of Israel which was thought to end the Jewish diaspora created another one for Arab Jews (Schwartz 2010). Note that in both of these definitions, there is an imagined community of an original homeland (Anderson 2016 [1983]).

Jeffers describes the double diaspora from subcontinent of India to East Africa or Trinidad and then to Canada:

The term "double diaspora" refers to those communities for which a second significant migration took place, shifting a diasporic culture, forged in a unique and complex political, cultural, and spatial context, to yet another place where a new set of factors contribute to a reformation of communities and identities (Jeffers 2016).

Although they are both double diasporic populations, the Indo-East Africans bring a different set of experiences to Canada than do the Indo-Trinidadians. Jeffers foregrounds the socio-political contexts of these diasporic shifts. The distinctions between these two populations cannot be summarized by simply referring to them as members of the Indian diaspora or the African and Caribbean diasporas, but like Afro-Cubans they are more aptly described as being double diasporic.

This chapter expanded upon the theoretical framework that ungirds this study. Intersectionality is the centrifugal force that pulls together three separate yet interrelated bodies of literature: Critical Race Theory, migration studies, and African Diaspora studies. Critical Race Theory and superdiversity migration theory overtly incorporate intersectionality, while the double diasporic subject is an intersectional identity. For CRT, the conservative media onslaught against the theory had to be addressed before

assessing its history, what are its major premises, and how they apply to this project. Migration studies is a large umbrella that includes many strands, including the dominant segmented assimilation paradigm. Segmented assimilation was developed using empirical research, yet it betrays a bias against the urban underclass which is largely populated by Black people in a location such as Miami. Super-diversity emerges as a more nuanced way to address the multilayered Afro-Cuban migration over time. There are also plenty of theories that fall under the African Diaspora umbrella, including the Black Atlantic. The Black Atlantic is reviewed for the applicability of its concepts to this project as well as its detractors. This dissertation introduces the concept of double diaspora as applied to South Florida Afro-Cubans. The subsequent chapters present ethnographic material interpreted through these three major theoretical paradigms, starting with migration studies.

### **III. SUPER-DIVERSITY OR LATINO SUPER-MAJORITY? CUBAN MIGRATION TO MIAMI FROM 1959 – PRESENT**

Miami has earned many monikers and characterizations over the years, including the Magic City, the Capital of Latin America, Paradise Lost (Croucher 1997), a “new, global city” (Sassen and Portes 1993), the Gateway to the Americas (Shell-Weiss 2009), and a paradigmatic, “post-industrial” city (Nijman 2000: 137). It has been called a “city on the edge” impacted by continuous waves of immigration with “no Anglo mainstream” (Portes and Stepick 1993: 4-6). Each additional wave of immigration has challenged simplistic ways of viewing ethnic relations from a black, white, Hispanic (Bowie and Stepick 1998) or a black, white, Cuban (Grenier and Perez 2003) framework, and groups such as Afro-Cubans cross these categories. Is Miami a city of super-diversity or a city dominated by a white-Latino super-majority? This chapter will explore both concepts in relation to Cuban migration from 1959 to the present with an emphasis on the Afro-Cuban presence. The intersectional identity of Afro-Cubans allows them to navigate the paradox of both simultaneous realities.

#### **A. Miami Today – Super-Diversity**

What is super-diversity? Coined by Vertovec (2007) and elaborated by Crul (2016), super-diverse locations are ones where there is a majority-minority context and in which no one ethnic group has the numeric majority (Crul 2016). In super-diverse cities, immigrants are not assimilating into a white native majority (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore 2018) but into cities with multiple groups that themselves are differentiated by time of migration, age, and other factors.



About one-third of Miami today is of Cuban ancestry, one-third is of another Hispanic origin, and the remaining third is comprised of non-Hispanic Blacks, non-Hispanic whites, and other non-Hispanic groups. Of the Hispanic origin, a little over half (52.3%) are of Cuban ancestry. The other half of the remaining Hispanics are comprised of 39.2% South Americans (Colombians and Venezuelans being the largest groups at 139,104 and 105,625 respectively); 29.4% Central Americans (Nicaraguans being the largest group by far at 116,948), and the remaining 31.41% are from other Hispanic origins including Puerto Rico (98,436), the Dominican Republic (70,052), Mexico (58,415), and Spain (20,727) (U.S. Census ACS 2019). An estimated 127,189 Haitians also live in Miami-Dade County (Man 2017).

<b>Table 1: Hispanics in Miami-Dade County - Origin</b>		
<b>Group</b>	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cuban	986,926	
South American	352,604	
Central American	264,355	
All other Hispanic/Latinos	282,479	
Total Hispanic/Latinos		1,886,364
White non-Hispanic	347,010	
Black non-Hispanic	416,126	
Other non-Hispanic	67,440	
Total non-Hispanic		830,576
Total Miami Dade		2,716,940
Source: U.S. Census ACS 2019 1-year estimates		

Super-diversity engages intersectionality and the multiple axes of difference within ethnic groups (Vertovec 2007; Crul 2016). In Vertovec’s watershed article of 2007, he coined the term superdiversity to describe the phenomenon occurring in Britain that included other variables beyond ethnicity. These variables “include differential

immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restrictions of rights, divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents.” (1025). Both Brexit and the election of Donald Trump were seen as a backlash to this global proliferation of diversity (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore 2018: 84).

Crul, Sneider, and Lelie (2013) lists majority-minority cities of superdiversity including “Amsterdam ... New York, Sao Paulo, Toronto, and Sydney” (12). Native whites have long since lost their numerical majority in Miami, and by 1980, Miami-Dade county had reached its “tipping point” (Crul 2016: 57) and no longer had a majority group but instead was characterized by three groups: non-Hispanic whites, Hispanics, and Blacks (“Demographic Profile” Miami-Dade County Department of Planning and Zoning 2003) with Cubans representing 80% of the Hispanic population at that time (Dixon 1988). Moreover, the authors point to the appearance of superdiverse classrooms (15). Miami-Dade County Public Schools boasts 345,000 students speaking 56 languages, from 160 countries (<http://dadeschools.net/#>).

Crul (2016) gives criterion for using the superdiversity label: 1) there is no longer an ethnic majority and 2) the number and size of different ethnic groups (55). Miami certainly fits the first criteria, but it also fulfills the second. He asserts that superdiversity is a better term to describe the migration phenomenon than segmented assimilation (Portes, see chapter 2) and the new assimilation theory (Alba) (56). He complements superdiversity with intersectionality and integration context theory.

In “Rethinking Integration,” Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore (2018) assert that superdiversity goes beyond multiculturalism to “study not only new migrants but the

mix of individuals in a place: ‘old’ and ‘new’ international migrants, native established populations and resident minorities” (183). With five waves of Cuban migration as well as other migratory flows into Miami and its effect on the resident Black and white populations, this is a better model to describe migration in Miami than the traditional assimilation model. The authors also include changing migratory statuses as a factor to consider (183) which is pertinent to the various policies affecting each wave of Cuban migration as well as to the other immigrant groups in Miami.

Chimienti and van Limpt (2015) describe how ethnic enclaves fit into the superdiversity model (22) in their study of Somali immigrants who first settled in the Netherlands before living in London. Of the 33 interviews that were conducted, the authors chose three case studies to highlight both the advantages and challenges of homogeneity within diversity and include “social inequality and exclusion” as part of their discussion (30). They found that not every immigrant interviewed was able to take advantage of the opportunities of a superdiverse city due to “intersecting and multi-level factors of vulnerability” (29-30). The study is particularly relevant because this group is also double diasporic (Somalia – the Netherlands – London). A discussion of superdiversity that includes inequality and exclusion could better explain why the Cuban enclave that embraced pre-1980 Cubans did not provide the same opportunities for Mariel exiles and Afro-Cubans.

### **B. Miami Today – white Latino Supermajority**

However, the growth of the Hispanic population has led to another simultaneous phenomenon. Miami today is also dominated by a “white Latino supermajority”

(Alvarez 2020) that is largely Cuban-led. The table below includes race into the Miami Hispanic population.

<b>Table 2: Hispanics in Miami-Dade County by Race</b>		
<b>Racial breakdown</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
White-Hispanic	1,706,017	90.44%
Black-Hispanic	40,063	2.12%
Native-Hispanic	2,571	0.14%
Asian-Hispanic	2,573	0.14%
Some other race	99,599	5.28%
Two or more races	35,541	1.88%
Total Hispanics/Latino	1,886,364	100.00%
Source: U.S. Census ACS 2019 1-year estimates		

While non-Hispanic whites still represent 12.9% of the population of Miami-Dade County, this is down from 24% in the year 2000. The Hispanic population has gone up from 57% in 2000 to 69.4%. The Black non-Hispanic population has gone down from 19% to 15.3% (“Demographic Profile” Miami Dade County Department of Planning and Zoning 2003) (U.S. Census ACS 2019 1 year estimates). While white flight out of Miami has been happening since the 1960s and was significant after Hurricane Andrew, articles like “A White Migration North from Miami” captured the bitter sentiments of a population fleeing to Broward to hear English regularly spoken (Boothe 1998). Now a black flight is occurring where non-Hispanic Blacks with means are also leaving Miami to live in Broward or out of state. There is a sense among Blacks that in Broward they are welcomed whereas in Miami-Dade they are unwelcome. Some are working to stem a brain-drain of Black professionals from the area (Viglucchi et al 2020).

How many Black Cubans are represented in the 40,000 Black Hispanics in Miami-Dade County? Using the ACS 2014-18 5-year estimates cited in the 2020 FIU

Cuba Poll, only 1.9% of Cubans in Miami-Dade County identified their race as Black, or 18,752 people. However, that does not include those who identify more than one race or those who chose “other” to elide the race question altogether. It is striking how the Cuba Poll in every other way is representative of the Cuban population in Miami-Dade County but differs significantly when it comes to race:

<b>Table 3: Race in the Cuban-American Community of Miami-Dade County</b>		
Race	ACS 2014-18	Cuba Poll 2020
White	95.4%	80.0%
Black	1.9%	3.6%
Other	2.8%	16.5%
Source: The FIU 2020 Cuba Poll (Grenier and Lai 2020)		

Participants of the Cuba Poll were allowed to self-identify their race beyond the traditional categories defined in the U.S. Census. Nationally, while a quarter of the Hispanic population identify as Afro-Latino, 39% of Afro-Latinos report their race as white, 24% as Hispanic, 18% as Black, 9% as two or more races, and 4% as American Indian (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera 2016). If 39% of U.S. Afro-Latinos are counted as white, it is also likely that some Afro-Cubans in South Florida also report their race as white either because of phenotype or from being discouraged to identifying as Black. Anti-black prejudice has long been a part of Cuban history (De la Fuente; Helg; Bronfman, Welsh); these racial attitudes were brought with Cuban exiles only to be compounded with U.S. racism. I estimate that actual number of Afro-Cubans in Miami-Dade County is at least double the Census number when taking into account those who chose more than one race and those who chose other.

Still, the Cuban population in Miami-Dade County is overwhelmingly white as is the overall Hispanic population in Miami-Dade County. The effect of this numerical

dominance is that white Latinos are the norm and the only people of color in Miami are Black people. While the earliest exiles were subject to discrimination by white Americans, white flight has allowed for Cubans to fill a void in the power structure that was originally populated by non-Hispanic whites. Cubans have become racialized as white, especially within the context of Miami, and other Latinos that are racialized as brown outside of Miami also become white. Groups such as Hispanics of indigenous ancestry, Middle Easterners, and Asians become honorary whites in Miami. While 5% of Hispanics in Miami choose “some other race” to describe themselves, 25.6% of Hispanics in the United States choose “other.” (U.S. Census, ACS 2019, 1 year estimates). Either whiter Latino populations choose to live in Miami or Latinos become white in Miami – or both. Moreover, this can lead to a white racial viscosity where white bodies are seen as normal and black bodies are seen as marked (Price 2012b:582). This is an example of how place can make race “sticky” and “viscous” (Price 2012a:807). Bonilla-Silva defines a “white *habitus*” as “a racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that *conditions* and *creates* whites’ racial taste, perception, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters” (2014: 152). Expanding on Bonilla-Silva’s depiction of a “white *habitus*” (2014:152), there is a white Hispanic habitus in Miami enabled by the residential segregation of whites and white Hispanics from blacks.

This residential segregation was documented as early as 1979 (Massey) and continues to be characteristic of Miami: whites and Hispanics do not live where Blacks live for the most part (see maps in Appendix A based on 2010 Census data). When Miami Hispanics are grouped together (irrespective of race or nationality), the multiculturalism of Miami-Dade County Public Schools – and its corresponding

neighborhoods - is questioned. A 2014 article described close to half of schools in Miami-Dade County Public Schools as being “isolated” where more than 85% of the student population is from one race or ethnicity (Gamio 2014). As a white-Cuban Miami native recently put it, “Miami-Dade’s climate has let us live without ever questioning our privilege. Our communities are so segregated, you can graduate high school and count the number of Black classmates you ever had on one hand” (Gorotiza 2020).

This numerical dominance, as well as the political power accrued by Cuban Americans in Miami, has engendered a white Latino privilege where white Latino racism against Black people is commonplace and there is little empathy for the plight of Black people. The Cuban-American community was noticeably distant from the Black Lives Matter protests that erupted this summer after the tragic murder of George Floyd (Gorotiza 2020) which differed from the solidarity seen between Blacks and Latinos in other major U.S. cities (Acevedo 2020). For example, there was a combined Black Lives Matter-Support Cuba rally in Albany, NY that would be unheard of in South Florida (Karlin 2020). White Hispanics comprised the majority of those who participated in the Miami counter protests to the Black Lives Matter movement (Santiago 2020). Some Miami Hispanics were outraged at the defacing of the sculptures of Cristopher Columbus and Ponce de Leon by Black Lives Matter protesters (Santiago 2020).

Reactions in the Miami Cuban American community ranged from disinterested to outright antipathy (Alvarez 2020). Gamez Torres notes that “many conservative Cuban Americans believe that the #BlackLivesMatter movement and mainstream media exaggerate police excesses and racial discrimination to push a ‘leftist’ agenda” (2020). Gamez Torres gathered responses through social media, which ranged from Cuban

American youtuber Alexander Otaola condemning the death of George Floyd yet affirming that All Lives Matter and pondering that Floyd may have participated in the looting if he were alive, given his police record, to Cuban human rights dissenter Eliecer Avila decrying the overemphasis of Black deaths by police in the media. There were also plenty of reactions against these characterizations betraying a Cuban-American community divided concerning issues of racial justice. Gamez Torres further describes the disappointment of Afro-Cubans in these out-of-touch reactions (2020).

This white Latino Supermajority is not an undifferentiated group but one in which layers of hierarchy dictate the socio-location of each group within superdiverse Miami. Groups that are perceived to be whiter and wealthier (Cubans, Venezuelans and other South Americans) have more social prestige than darker, lower income groups, such as Central Americans. Feldman and Jolivet (2014) describe how pastoral leadership of Cuban American elites is wielded in a paternalistic fashion over darker Central American inhabitants of Little Havana.<sup>7</sup> This statement by an employee of a catholic church in Little Havana is emblematic of how other Hispanics are folded into the largely Cuban-led white Latino Supermajority: “We Cubans are a major part of Miami, so even if they [Nicaraguans and other Latin Americans] don’t want to, *they have to learn our ways*. I think it is just part of their being here, especially in this area [Little Havana].” (Feldman and Jolivet 2014: 1281, emphasis mine). While Venezuelans constitute 29% of the

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<sup>7</sup> How is it that there are 264,355 Central Americans in Miami-Dade County, which includes 116,948 Nicaraguans and 58,415 Mexicans, but only 2,571 people who consider themselves Native-Hispanic? I am not even including Peruvians and other South American countries with significant indigenous populations. This is how darker but non-Black Hispanics get folded into the white Latino supermajority: through teaching them “our ways” as stated in Feldman and Jolivet’s article (2014) and by most of them being represented as white Hispanics. While many would probably be considered mestizos (a mix of white and indigenous) in their countries, the mestizo in Miami is considered a white Hispanic. However, they are treated as a lower tier, honorary whites or even off-white.



population in the affluent city of Doral in Miami-Dade (Marcus 2017), the city's founding and current mayor is the Cuban-born J.C. Bermudez. Whereas Aranda, Chang and Sabogal (2016) warned that Venezuelans could unseat Cubans as the "Golden Exiles" (158), so far that has not been the case. The following sections discuss Cuban whiteness and situate the Afro-Cuban presence in the waves of Cuban migration to Miami and the emergence of a county that is both superdiverse and has a supermajority.

### **C. Cuban Whiteness**

Whiteness has historically been the most privileged component of national Cuban identity – capable of summoning the importation of 900,000 Spaniards to counterbalance the growing African descent population, being defended in the Race War of 1912 where Cubans wanted to show their American neighbors that they were white enough to govern the nation (Helg 1995), and Cuba continues to see itself as a majority white nation no matter when its census was taken (whether in Republican Cuba or the most recent census), regardless of observations to the contrary. Whiteness has also been a distinctive component of Cuban American identity (Greenbaum 2002; Mirabal 2003), despite significant numbers of non-white Cubans in Cuba and their presence in every wave of Cuban migration to United States. How did Cubans retain their own self-concept of whiteness when they migrated to the United States while other Hispanic groups have been racialized as brown? Did Cuban Americans become their own ethnicizers? What are the limits of this characterization of whiteness?

The U.S. government played most significant role in the lasting characterization of Cuban exiles as white. Like earlier Jewish and Hungarian immigrations fleeing fascism and communism, Cubans needed to be characterized as worthy of assistance with

qualities that would facilitate their assimilation into the American white mainstream (Brewer Current 2008: 45). In its effort to win the Cold War, Cuban refugees were characterized as “good immigrants” – white, middle to upper class, well-educated, and staunchly anti-communist “freedom fighters” in the publications of the Cuban Refugee Program (CRP) (Brewer Current 2008: 43). Those that fit these demographics in the first wave were highlighted, and pictures were selected to represent Cubans as racially similar to white Americans. In one publication, for example, all of the children on one of its pages were blond (Brewer Current 2008: 53 figure 1). Both Brewer Current (2008) and Benson (2016) found only one Black Cuban family in their reviews of all available CRP publications. Media outlets followed suit and published many positive profiles on Cuban exiles, with only Black Cuban appearing in *Ebony*, a Black magazine (Brewer Current 2008: 54).

The first waves of Cuban immigrants in Miami also benefitted from local authorities and companies who preferred them to local Blacks and who originally paid them less than what Americans were willing to work for (Shell-Weiss 2009). Not everyone was in favor of this mass migration, yet this also benefitted Cuban claims to whiteness. As the number of white Americans living in Miami has dropped significantly due to white flight, there are less people who can challenge Cuban claims to whiteness. Moreover, White Cubans have filled in the vacuum left from their departure in all aspects of city and county leadership positions. For Guinier and Torres (2004), Cubans have also accepted the racial bribe offered to other white immigrants which affords them an honorary white status as long as they stay as far away from blackness as possible (413).

Cuban whiteness which seems normative in Miami becomes more open to challenge outside of South Florida where white Americans are the numerical majority.

#### **D. Afro-Cuban Migration to South Florida**

##### **a. “Golden Exiles” (1959-1962)**

While Cubans have been entering the United States since the late 1800s (Duany 1999), the five main waves of Cuban migration into the United States took place after Fidel Castro took power in 1959. Cubans who arrived in the first wave are called the “golden exiles” and came between 1959 and 1962. Approximately 280,000 Cubans fled the island to the United States during that period. They were estimated at 94% white, mostly middle-aged, and well-educated. Within this wave were Batista officials and members of the military, Batista supporters, and some who initially supported the Revolution but rejected it once it became known that it was communist. The first wave entered a Jim Crow Miami with an Anglo white majority. The few Afro-Cubans that came during that time would have been largely subjected to attending segregated schools and living in segregated neighborhoods. Although speaking Spanish did accord some pre-Castro Afro-Cuban visitors with privileges (Rose 2012: 743), their daily existence as residents at this time would have been dominated by the color line. The Catholic Welfare Bureau oversaw Operation Pedro Pan in which over 14,000 unaccompanied minors were sent to the United States between 1960-1962 to avoid communist indoctrination (Operation Pedro Pan Group 2021). One of the few Blacks in the Pedro Pan cohort, Gonzalez Zayas remembers not only being sent to the back of the bus in the 1960s but

also the experiences of racism from his white co-ethnics when he attended a prestigious Catholic high school in a prosperous Miami neighborhood (2020).

**b. “Freedom Flights” (1965-1973)**

The second wave departed between 1965-1973 in the Camarioca boatlift and historic “Freedom Flights” initiated by Lyndon B. Johnson’s administration. Seventy-six percent were white, and the remaining 24% were black, mulatto, and Asian. While there was still an exodus of professionals in the second wave, working class people were also among the 273,000 Cuban exiles (Dixon 1988: 230-1). Miami gained over “18,000 lawyers, 2,500 doctors, 1,600 teachers, and 4,600 carpenters, masons and bricklayers” during the second wave (231). The Freedom Flight cohort’s racial composition was more representative of Cuba before 1959. These two groups are considered the “exilio histórico” or the Historic Exiles. Oftentimes, the diversity of the second wave gets masked under this combined grouping.

The most significant legislation passed during this time which still stands today is the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 which allows for Cubans to become permanent residents who have resided in the United States for at least 1 year (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2022) which differs considerably from the treatment given to other immigrants. This special treatment allowed for the Cuban community to flourish, and as early as 1973, the Cuban community in Miami was described as an “economic force” with “many Cuban-owned businesses, an all Spanish television station, three Spanish-speaking radio stations, one daily newspaper, and at least a dozen weekly and bi-weekly Cuban publications” (Bender 1973: 275). Shell-Weiss notes that there was a “lost opportunity” during this time to forge an alliance between Cubans and Blacks (2009:

181). Just as the Civil Rights Movement culminated in gains for Black Americans across the nation, in Miami, Cubans as minorities were able to capitalize on affirmative action legislation and loans for minority businesses, leaving Black Miamians on the outside looking in. Black Cubans would have been caught between these two realities – subject to housing and employer discrimination because of their skin color yet benefiting from the Cuban Refugee Program and other assistance given to Cubans.

As more Cuban-owned businesses emerged during the 1960s and 70s, the Cuban enclave was created. According to the enclave theory (Portes 1987, 2006), Cubans have been more successful than other immigrant groups because they were able to live and work in the Miami enclave. This allowed for Cubans who arrived earliest and were established to offer jobs to other Cubans and to circulate resources within the enclave. The enclave allows for the retention of ethnic identity while propelling rapid economic advancement - the third option of segmented assimilation (the first being assimilation into the white American middle-class mainstream; the second, entering the urban, largely Black, underclass) (Portes and Zhou 1993). Grenier and Perez (2003) describe “three forms of capital – social, economic, and political” as the basis for the ethnic camaraderie of Cubans in Miami (48). Moreover, economic adjustment of Cubans in the U.S. was based on family structures with a high participation of women in the workforce, low fertility rates, and multigenerational households (58-65).

When asked why Afro-Cubans are not represented in the politics of Miami and why their political views may differ from white Cubans, an Afro-Cuban who arrived in 1965 on one of Freedom Flights responded accordingly: “Well, it’s because the Cuban people of black origin [that] have come here ... are very quiet, not problematic, they are

into their work to do what they have come here for and nothing else. They are not in the ambition of political power to draw attention [to themselves]. The thing is, [Black Cuban] people don't want prominence because white Cubans wanted Blacks not to come here, they've stayed out. I know a lot of people who have had everything a white Cuban can have, yet they don't open [their] mouth because it's a matter of honor" (Cruz 2011). By internalizing that they were not wanted here by the established white Cubans of the first wave, some Black Cubans of the second wave have contributed to their own invisibility. This theme of not wanting to stand out emerges not only from interviews with Freedom Flight Afro-Cubans but goes beyond this cohort.

#### **i. Allapattah: An Afro-Cuban enclave**

How did Afro-Cubans survive Jim Crow racism from Anglo-Americans, resentment from African Americans, and racial segregation and discrimination from white Cubans? Before Allapattah was dubbed "Little Santo Domingo" in 2003 (Dade Heritage Trust 2022; Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau 2022), there was a group of Black Cuban families that had settled in the Allapattah area by the late 1960s – an intersectional area between largely Black American Liberty City and increasingly Cuban Little Havana (Gonzalez Zayas 2020: 89). "The families were close-knit, undoubtedly aware of the role race played in their new country. They had found a space when they could openly share their life's experiences with folks that, because of their skin color, faced similar circumstances" (89). This group was led by Adán Jimeno, a member of Batista's government who left Cuba in 1958 (Benson 2016: 151). Gonzalez Zayas was a member of this group and married the daughter of Adán Jimeno (Gonzalez Zayas 2020). By 1970, Allapattah was 68% Cuban, 25% White American, and 6%

Black<sup>8</sup> (Sandoval and Tozo 1975). Sandoval and Tozo's account of Cuban Allapattah is less of a fond group of families and more about Cuban distancing from Black Americans: "The Cubans in Allapattah do not patronize its high school, which is attended primarily by blacks from the Model Cities area to the north. The school is seen by Cubans as black and dangerous, and Cuban parents would rather send their children either to Cuban private schools, which they can barely afford, or to public schools in Little Havana, which offer bilingual programs to children regardless of their residence" (Sandoval and Tozo 1975: 60). In Sandoval's 1979 article titled "Santeria as a Mental Healthcare System," she describes her visits to "casas de santo (cult houses within the homes of santeros)" which included "Three cult houses led by black Cuban santeros in Allapattah, a lower-middle and lower-socio-economic neighborhood where most of the black Cubans in Dade County reside alongside white Cubans and English-speaking whites and blacks. These santeros cater to a primarily black Cuban following with some white Cubans and black Americans." (148). An Afro-Cuban Lucumi Association, led by the late Rigoberto Zamora, frequently advertised its services in the want ads of *El Miami Herald* in the early 1980s, and most of the addresses associated with this organization in the 80s were in the Allapattah area. Allapattah was also at one time home to Afro-Cuban politician Henry Crespo and his family when they relocated from New York in the 1980s (Aja 2016).

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<sup>8</sup> The source did not specify Black Cubans in this demographic description of the residents of Allapattah.

### c. Mariel Boatlift of 1980

In 1980, the Mariel boatlift crisis brought another 125,000 Cubans to the shores of the United States. However, this group consisted of many more unskilled laborers who were predominantly male and single (Dixon 1988: 231), and they were stigmatized as being criminals, homosexuals, and outcasts of the Castro regime. Castro did release approximately 2,700 incarcerated individuals into the Mariel group (Shanty and Mishra 2007), but this stigma was cast upon the entire group. The term *escoria* (scum) was hurled at the Mariel exodus by the Castro regime and was applied to the “Marielitos” by Cubans on both sides of the Florida straits, associating racial darkness and difference with “filth” (“El efecto Mariel” 2020). Mariel prompted a change in immigration law with the creation of “entrants, status pending” designation (Creedon 1981) instead of the welcome mat extended to the Historic Exiles (Masud-Piloto 1996). This group was noticeably darker than the previous waves and received a caustic reception from the press and Miami Cubans (Fulger 2012; Mirabal 2003). Approximately 30% of this ostracized cohort were Afro-Cuban (Clark et al, 1981; Poyo and Diaz-Miranda 1994: 317). Master drummer Ezequiel Torres’ experience of being the one of the last to get sponsorship to leave the refugee camps was a common occurrence for Afro-Cuban Mariel refugees (“El efecto Mariel” 2020). Afro-Cubans had a particularly difficult time getting sponsorship to leave the detention camps (Nordheimer 1987), and three out of four Mariel immigrants surveyed felt that they were discriminated by the established Cuban community (Fernandez 2007: 607). An older Afro-Cuban man who described himself as humble and hardworking expressed his exasperation upon leaving communist Cuba in the Mariel boatlift: “*Veintiún años enterrada en vida y ahora pudimos salir de ella para vivir feliz*”



(Twenty-one years buried alive and now we were able to leave in order to be happy) (C-Span 1980). Apart from the difficulties adjusting to a new country, Black Mariel refugees also had difficulty in being assimilated into the established Cuban community and received antipathy by some Black Americans as well (Nordheimer 1987).

Nineteen-eighty was a watershed year in many aspects. Not only was it the year of the Mariel exodus, it was also the year of a significant influx of Haitian refugees, the year of the McDuffie riots, and the year in which there was no longer an Anglo majority in Miami or any majority group for that matter, the first requisite of superdiversity. Nineteen-eighty was the year of the passage of the English Only ordinance in Miami Dade County by a majority white Dade County Commission and repealed in 1993 by a majority Hispanic Dade County Commission (The Associated Press 1993). Miami had not yet seen the apex of Nicaraguan refugees arriving in the late 1980s, the Colombian migration, or the more recent exodus of Venezuelans.

When Portes and Shafter (2006) revisited the enclave hypothesis 25 years later, Mariel Cubans and latter arrivals had significantly lower incomes than their pre-1980 compatriots and their U.S. born children (168). Moreover, 1980 and later arriving Cubans had the worst economic performance of all South Florida entrepreneurs, including African-Americans (170). The effect of the Mariel stigma seems to have been long-lasting. Although Mariel immigrants were not found to be more crime-prone or violent than the established Cuban population (Martinez, Nielsen and Lee 2003), Mariel immigrants were three times as likely to be institutionalized than non-Mariel Cuban immigrants in the year 2000, and non-White Mariel males were 10 times as likely to be

incarcerated as White non-Mariel males even when controlling for factors that would typically mitigate institutionalization (Fernandez 2007: 618).

In comparing the 1973 group (the last year of the Freedom Flights) to the 1980 group, Portes, Clark, and Manning (1983) show that the Mariel migrants were four times as likely to be Black than the 1973 migrants (12.6% versus 3.1%). The 1973 refugees also had the distinct advantage of having more family in the United States (10.2 versus 3.1 in 1980), which speaks volumes about the increased difficulties of the Mariel cohort (in comparison to their predecessors) to integrate into the United States with limited familial support. The Mariel refugees were also less proficient in English (57.4% professed no knowledge of English compared to only 44.8% of the 1973 cohort). Even more telling is the rate of joblessness both in Cuba (23.3% vs. 0.7%) and in the United States (42% vs. 14%) for the Mariel immigrants as compared to the 1973 cohort. More of the Marielitos were self-employed in Cuba (13.2 vs. 11.6% 1973) and self-employed in the United States (13.2 vs. 8) when compared to the 1973 Cuban immigrants. Finally, this distinct economic disadvantage is also reflected in the median earnings for the 1980 entrants (\$523 per month) compared to the 1973 entrants (\$765 per month) and in homeownership rates (5.8% vs. 14.4%). Using 1990 and 2000 census data, Woltman and Newbold's study (2009) still showed that Mariel entrants lagged behind their Freedom Flight counterparts but non-White Cubans in both waves of Cuban migration had higher poverty rates, were more likely to work in blue collar jobs, be less educated, and have lower homeownership rates than their white co-ethnics and Black Americans (78).

### **i. Carlos Moore and Racism in the Cuban Exile Community**

In reviewing what was written about Afro-Cubans in *The Miami Herald* and *El Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald* between 1977 - 2000, the forceful critique of Dr. Carlos Moore looms large. Cuban-born and of Jamaican ancestry, in 1958 Carlos Moore joined his father and step-mother living in New York to seek a better life (Betancourt 2010; UCLA Bunche Center 2022). Moore returned to Cuba in 1961 lured by the promise of Castro's revolution only to be disillusioned with the mistreatment of Black Cubans, which included the dismantling of the Afro-Cuban mutual aid societies and the prohibition of Afro-Cuban religions ("A Different Side" 2016). He was an outspoken critic of these policies which got him imprisoned and sent to a labor camp before escaping Cuba and eventually earning two doctorates from the University of Paris-7 ("A Different Side" 2016). He is the author of *Castro, the Blacks and Africa* (1988) and *Pichon: a memoir: race and revolution in Castro's Cuba* (2008) among several other publications.

Moore was highlighted as being part of the historic Negritude conference of 1987 at Florida International University (Lee 1987) which included such luminaries as Maya Angelou and Abdias do Nascimento. Although I was a junior high school student at the time of the conference, the impact of this elevated discussion of negritude was enormous and formative in my own racial consciousness. At that time, Moore was a visiting professor at FIU, but his uncensored critique of racism in the Cuban exile community as well as in Cuba provoked threats to his personal safety and encouraged his departure from that position (Meluza 1986; Chardy 1990b). Moore sparked plenty of controversy and had authors countering his position about racism in Cuba and in the United States,

including Alejandro Armengol (1998), Roberto Luque Escalona (1998), and Luis Aguilar Leon (1995). His incisive comments are still relevant and applicable today. In a 1990 article written by Dora Amador, for example, Moore noted that Afro-Cubans "*se hacen invisible para no atraer atención*" (Afro-Cubans make themselves invisible to not attract attention), and he criticized Miami Afro-Cubans for not taking a firmer stand against the shunning of Nelson Mandela by the Miami exile community.<sup>9</sup> He also described racism in Cuba as a "*racismo de convivencia*" (racism of living together) whereas U.S. racism in the Cuban community is a racism of living apart. He observed how Cuban community links communism to anti-racism which is still happening today.

Much of the anti-Moore criticism exhibits the raceless cubanidad argument.

Between 1990-1992, Moore attempted to dethrone Marti and Carlos Manuel de Cespedes in their racial ideologies in the English version of the newspaper (see Chardy 1990a and 1990b as prominent examples). This was vigorously countered by offended Cubans, including a descendent of Maximo Gomez (Gomez 1990). Moore was against the Torricelli Law which attempted to tighten the U.S. embargo against Cuba and in favor of a dialogue with Cuba, which would not ingratiate him with the Miami Cuban exile community. Armengol criticized Moore and Robert Steinback, an African American journalist, for their opinions about race and racism (1998), and Escalona called Moore "*el más racista de los racistas cubanos.*" (The most racist of all Cuban racists.) (1998). Few

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<sup>9</sup> The shunning of soon-to-be president of South Africa by the Cuban exile community in 1990 was one of many moments in which the Cuban American community in Miami seemed to be on the wrong side of history. Because of Mandela's friendship with Castro, five Cuban American majors of Miami municipalities denied him the keys to their cities. This spurred a successful boycott by African Americans who were outraged by this blatant disrespect of an admired world leader and of the Black community. The boycott ended in 1993 but not after the Miami area lost millions of dollars in revenue from conferences and tourism (Rabin 2013).

white Cuban writers sympathized with any mention of racism in the Cuban American community (notably Daniel Morcate 1991 and Max Castro 1998).

#### **d. Balsero Crisis of 1994 through 2008**

The fourth wave began with the balsero (rafter) crisis of 1994. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the departure of Soviet aid in Cuba inaugurated a period of austerity measures in Cuba named the “Special Period.” While Cuban rafters have been present in all waves of post 1959 migration, the early ‘90s saw an exponential increase in the number of Cubans willing to risk their lives to enter the United States through makeshift rafts over the dangerous Florida straits (“The Cuban Rafter Phenomenon” 2014).

Between 1991 and 1993, about 15,000 balseros were intercepted by the U.S Coast Guard, culminating in the balsero crisis of 1994 where approximately 34,000 attempted to enter the United States by sea (Ackerman 1996; Campisi 2005). Since race was not recorded in the resettlement case files, Ackerman used agency staff to determine that 8% of the 400 cases she reviewed were Black or mulatto balseros (1996). Fernandez also reports that there were less non-White migrants in the 1991-2000 group (11.6%) than the conservative estimate reported for the Mariel exodus (18%) but not as low as the Historic Exiles (6.4%-9.9%) (2007: 612). However, this does not concur with the images circulated in the media at that time where there seemed to a greater representation of Afro-descendants among the rafters and at Guantanamo. Blacks were present in the balsero generation perhaps more than these numbers indicate although less than Mariel. Although no Black Balseros were interviewed in the brief Miami documentary titled *Cuban Rafters: 20 Years after the Crisis*, the visual testimony certainly surpassed 8% Afro-Cuban (San Martin et al 2014). An article in *The Atlantic* commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup>

anniversary featured some Black Balseros, including Moraima Alfonso, who was working as a makeup artist in Miami for America TV. She was 31 years old in 1994 and spent almost two weeks at sea before she was picked up by the Coast Guard (Taylor 2014). Mirta Ojito characterizes the divergent life paths of two balsero-era Cubans – Joel (Black) and Achmed (white) – who attempted to leave Cuba during the balsero crisis before being redirected to Guantanamo and eventually emigrating to the United States (2000). Similar to Afro-Cubans of all migration waves, Joel arrived to the United States to face the estrangement of his once best friend, exclusion from the greater Cuban community, discrimination, harrowing micro-aggressions, and residential segregation. Balseros were not the only ones to come during the 1990s. Afro-Cuban intellectual Enrique Patterson came to the United States in the 1990s after being forced into exile by the Cuban government (Estorino 2011).

Portes and Puhrmann (2015) conclude that the Historic Exiles closed the enclave to the more recent waves of Cuban migrants, thereby creating a bifurcated enclave with both the Mariel and the balsero waves of Cuban migrations performing far worse than the Historic Exiles and their children. This is not limited to economic but also social incorporation with the children of the Historic Exiles attending private schools and having divergent life trajectories than Cubans attending public schools (2015). It seems contradictory to call the enclave both closed and bifurcated at the same time. Perhaps the closure occurred with the Mariel exodus but the bifurcation occurred with the incorporation of the numerically dominant fourth and fifth waves. When viewed through the lens of superdiversity theory, the Cuban enclave and community are not simply bifurcated into two parts (pre-Mariel, post-Mariel); superdiversity takes into account each

wave's racial, gender, labor, educational diversity as well as the immigratory laws pertinent to each group.

Although their numbers were much smaller after 1994, *balseros* continued to make this risky trip even until the present day (Penton and Guillen 2020). The *balsero* "crisis" inspired a shift in U.S. policy that defined their arrival until 2017. The so-called "wet foot, dry foot" rule allowed Cubans to stay if they make it to land; however, if they were caught at sea, they would be sent back to Cuba. In 1994, President Clinton then authorized the 1994 U.S. Cuba Migration Accord which established a minimum threshold of 20,000 Cubans per year. Almost every year between 2001-2008 has exceeded this yearly minimum threshold. All told, some 389,048 Cubans obtained U.S. legal permanent status in the fifteen years between 1994-2008 (Díaz-Briquets 2010: 52-3), exceeding the number of Cubans who arrived in the first wave and almost equaling the historical exiles in terms of numbers. This continuous migration from Cuba to the United States along with an increase in Central and South American migration made Miami-Dade county a majority Hispanic county by the year 2000 (57%), thus producing the dawn of a white Latino supermajority ("Demographic Profile" Miami Dade County Department of Planning and Zoning 2003). While the Hispanic population was documented as being 50% Cuban at that time, Boswell contends that other Hispanic populations in the county were up to 50% underreported in the 2000 Census (2002).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cubans are more likely to describe themselves as white within the first generation of being in the United States in comparison to other Latinos (Rothe and Pumariega 2008: 256). Central and South Americans in Miami also describe themselves as white whereas that may not be the case in their native countries or if the same person is living in another area of the United States with a larger Anglo population to police the boundaries of whiteness. Note how 25.6%% of Hispanics nationally consider themselves as some other race (other than white, black, etc.), while in Miami only 5.28% of Hispanics choose other (U.S. Census, ACS 2019, 1 year estimates).

Cubans were likely not the majority of Hispanics in Miami-Dade county in the 2000, though this numerical dominance was regained in future waves of Cuban migration.

**e. 2009 - present**

The election of President Obama in 2008 saw the beginnings of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba as well as the end of the “wet foot, dry foot” policy. From 2009 – 2019, 519,866 Cubans obtained U.S. legal permanent residence (United States Department of Homeland Security 2019), which quadruples the number of Cubans who arrived in the Mariel boatlift. This “no name” 5<sup>th</sup> wave of Cuban migration, responsible for the “re-Cubanization of Miami” (Caputo and Tamayo 2014), is the largest of them all. In the 2015 fiscal year (October 2014 – September 2015), 43,157 Cubans entered the United States according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (Krogstad 2015). Non-traditional gateway cities, such as Laredo, Texas, saw a spike in the number of Cubans attempting to enter the United States in 2015 (Aguilar 2015). This was in anticipation of an expected change in U.S. policy (Duany 2017). On January 12, 2017, President Obama ended “wet foot, dry foot” which effectively ended the special status of Cubans immigrants. Former President Trump did not overturned this decision but has pulled back on some aspects of the normalization of relations between the two countries. By the end of 2017, irregular immigration of Cubans had decreased by 64% while over 37,000 Cubans were subject to deportation (Gamez Torres 2017). Yet the agreement to accept 20,000 Cubans a year is still valid as is the Cuban Adjustment Act that allows Cubans to apply for permanent legal residence after residing in the country for a year (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2017). Moreover, 114,739 Cubans obtained permanent legal residence between 2018-2019. The



end of “wet foot, dry foot” has not ended the fifth wave of Cuban migration to the United States.

In the 2010 Census, 88.7% of the 1.7 million Cubans in the United States identified themselves as white, versus only 4.79% were listed as black, and 6.02% described themselves as some “other” race. Some 3.7% acknowledged being of 2 or more races. In the 2020 Census, 5.65% of the 2.3 million Cubans in the United States described themselves as Black (alone or in combination with another race). This is in stark contrast to the diversity of the Cuban population both before 1959 and after.<sup>11</sup> However, the Census data does not tell the whole story because of the fluidity of racial identifiers in Cuba versus the rigidity of the black-white U.S. racial dichotomy. It also doesn’t take into account the percent of Afro-Cubans who elide the selection of a race by choosing other because discussions around race are considered uncouth, even unpatriotic.

Currently, Miami-Dade is 69.4% Hispanic with no signs of a decline in this upward trend of the past four decades. Just as the Mariel refugees brought a different way of being Cuban (new slang words, a revitalization of the arts and of the Afro-Cuban religion) to the United States (“El efecto Mariel” 2020), these newer waves bring the recency of their connection with Cuba to the Cuban community. All the while, they are being socialized as to what is the “Real Cuba” of the Miami Cuban exiles (Guerra 2007), even if this “Real Cuba” is less diverse than Cuba ever was.

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<sup>11</sup> The official figure from the 2012 census is 35.9% combined Black and mulatto (Cuban Demographics Profile 2018), but most observers outside of Cuba agree that the real percentage is closer to 60% or the majority of the Cuban population.

## **E. Afro-Cubans Today**

### **a. Media**

There is a greater representation of Afro-Cubans in the media today than even 10 years ago but highlighting two examples reveals the challenges that are still faced. Gente de Zona led the Cuban takeover of reggaeton which is now its own subgenre, cubaton. These two Afro-Cuban artists are now spokespersons for Gallardo law firm which specializes in personal injury law. In 2022, their images are prominently displayed on a billboard visible to the right when going south on the 826 Palmetto Expressway. The representations are whimsical, and often one of the artists has fallen to the floor while the other is helping him up. To the left on the same expressway going south, you have Bonco Quiñongo, also a musical artist, wearing a Zoot suit, advertising a second opinion for Obamacare. Not subtle, Obama the black former president and his healthcare plan is tied racially to a Black Cuban. The Zoot suit is his costume for the show *El Jelengue* on Mega TV. It is a caricature of the *chuchero cubano*, a hustler, and while he is not shucking and jiving for the master on this show, this representation is very stereotypical, even coon-like. When he is not in his Zoot suit, he is wearing an exaggerated rapero outfit three decades too late. Gente de Zona seems to avoid these stereotypes, while Bonco Quiñongo falls right into them.

### **b. At the intersection**

The crux of being Afro-Cuban is having an intersectional identity that engages both being Black *and* Cuban as well as other indices of identity (gender, age, educational level, wave of arrival, etc.). While Kimberlé Crenshaw's initial formulation of intersectionality (1989, 1991) dealt with the compounding effect of race and gender as it

related to workplace legal cases and to sexual violence against women of color, intersectionality as a theory has been broadened to embrace multiple aspects of identity and fields of study (Walby et al 2012; Bauer 2014; Hancock 2016). It is not simply a matter of counting the aspects of a person's identity; it is the intersection of these identities that is subject to oppression in ways that cannot be fully appreciated by analyzing them separately.

Afro-Cubans live both realities of Miami today. National origin is shared with the largest ethnic group in Miami (one in three people in Miami are of Cuban origin) and the Spanish language is shared with the Latino Supermajority, yet their blackness largely prohibits them from being fully embraced by either group. Blackness alone does not guarantee incorporation into the Black community either. The intersectional identity of Afro-Cubans gives a protean-like character that allows for Afro-Cubans to fit in everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Afro-Cubans inhabit the interstices of multiple Miami communities – Cuban, African American, Latin American, and Caribbean. Using the framework of superdiversity in studying Afro-Cubans would include the diversity within this diversity – Anglophone, African, Haitian (Queeley 2015) – as well as phenotype, age of arrival, gender, cohort of migration, familial support, SES and educational status both in Cuba and in the United States – to understand the incorporation of Afro-Cubans into the greater Miami community.

### **c. Ethnographic Material: Beyond What the Census Tells Us**

#### **i. Place**

Place was a determining factor in evolution of ethno-racial identity among the participants of this study. Those who arrived as minors saw their neighborhoods and

schools as formative sites in the development of their identities. Predominately black neighborhoods, such as Allapattah and Opa-Locka (more on these neighborhoods in chapter 5), gave insights into African American culture that could not be gained by those who were socialized in predominately white Hispanic schools. On the other hand, the participants who grew up in Hialeah or Little Havana felt that they had access to a cubanidad not available to those who did not grow up there. Hialeah was described as “Cuba con comida” – as close to Cuba as you could get but with food,<sup>12</sup> while for others “there is nothing like Calle Ocho and Viernes Culturales.”<sup>13</sup> Participants who grew up in areas that were dominated numerically by another Hispanic group often had to content with envy against the privileged immigration status of Cubans. Yocelin does not have fond memories of growing up in Sweetwater; the first time that she heard the word “¡¡¡¡Negra!!!!” in a pejorative sense was from a Nicaraguan classmate.<sup>14</sup> Yusleydis, who lives in Homestead, remembers the glee of a group of Mexican classmates who heard that a Cuban plane had crashed killing all of the passengers on board.<sup>15</sup> In Yocelin’s case, her mom used it as a teachable moment, and it reinforced her pride in being both Black and Cuban. In Yusleydis case, she learned how hated Cubans are by some Hispanics, but this just reinforced her cubanness.

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<sup>12</sup> Luisa, interview with author, June 30, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Yasiel, interview with author, August 21, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Yocelin, interview with author, July 31, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Yusleydis, interview with author, October 1, 2021

Those who arrived as adults saw their neighborhoods and workplaces as places where their ethno-racial identities were contested and negotiated (“A Tale of Two Entrepreneurs” in this chapter shows the workplace as sites for ethno-racial negotiation). Place is also a marked socioeconomically. Those with more disposable income have more opportunities to work further away from home and travel to compare how their identity is experienced in other places outside of South Florida. For example, Concepción was pleasantly surprised to find that Tampa Cubans think like her, which seems so outside of Miami cubanness.<sup>16</sup> According to the 2020 American Community Survey (5 year estimates), there are 22,526 Afro-Cubans in Miami-Dade (those that Black alone or in combination with another race(s)); 4,105 Afro-Cubans in Broward, and 1,337 in Palm Beach. The three areas with the highest population of Afro-Cubans in Miami-Dade County are Opa-Locka/Westview/West Little River area, Homestead and Florida City, and the City of Miami (Downtown area inclusive of the Allapattah area). These are places with lower than average incomes and higher than average poverty rates which can limit their exposure to how Afro-Cuban identity is lived in other places.

## **ii.Undercounting**

My research study participants ranged from college students in their late teens to octogenarians, from the historic exiles until the most recent waves. I was able to get four of the five waves of Cuban migration (from the second wave onward), and the average age of the participants is 51.2. Sixty percent were female and forty percent, male. In terms of skin tone, most of the participants were either light-skinned or dark, with few

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<sup>16</sup> Concepcion, interview with author, March 19, 2022.

people in between. While the most recent census data when I was conducted the interviews (ACS 2019) revealed that 95% of the Miami Cuban population is white, none of the participants believe that only 5% are non-white. Some believe that a process of deracination has occurred when Cubans migrated to the United States.

*No no no. No están subestimados lo que pasa que la mayoría de la gente aquí se ha quitado el color. Porque la mayoría de los cubanos en Miami tienen de negro. Como decimos los cubanos ... el que no tiene de Congo, tiene de Carabalí. O sea que la mayoría de la gente de aquí tiene un cacho de negro detrás de las orejas como decimos ... Somos cubanos, somos hispanos para no decir nada de la raza. (No, no, no. They are not underestimated what happens is that most people here have taken off their color. Because most Cubans in Miami are black. As we Cubans say ... “the one who does not have Congo, has Carabalí.” So, most people here are “black behind their ears” as we say... We are Cubans, we are Hispanics to say nothing about race.)<sup>17</sup>*

**Maria**<sup>18</sup> is an octogenarian and a historic exile who came to the United States on one of the first Freedom Flights in 1965. She came by herself and was claimed by a white relative who lived in Boston, which required some explanation in the ‘60s as to how these two people could be related. Maria comes from a very mixed, large extended family, with godparents and relatives that spanned the racial gamut of white, mestizo/mulatto, and black. She has always been very proud of her dark skin color, which she describes as the color of a toasted tobacco leaf, so the idea of the Cuban people

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<sup>17</sup> Maria, interview with the author, March 22, 2021.

<sup>18</sup> All participants have been given pseudonyms unless otherwise stated.

abandoning their African roots is absurd. She describes herself as “Hispano Yoruba” which is more specific than being a Black Hispanic – it points to the origin of her African ancestry. Maria asserts that most Cubans have some African ancestry and that Cubans have removed their color in the United States. However, if a Cuban with some African ancestry is trying to be whiter-than-white around her, they are in for a treat. She will examine their knuckles and discern their African heritage. She was history teacher in Cuba and well-versed in the demographic profile of the provinces, so she will ask where in Cuba they are from; oftentimes, the person pontificating about their whiteness is from the blackest cities and provinces. She repeats the oft cited saying about Cubans having some African ancestry whether near or distant. The “Yoruba, Congo, Abakuá (Carabalí), Wolof, Ewe-Fon (Arará), Mina, Mandinga (Fula), Hausa, Ashanti, and Ngola” are just a few of the African groups in the 700,000 – 1,000,000 slaves that were brought to Cuba (West-Durán 2004: 7; Ortiz 1916), so this is not a baseless assertion. Some Cubans only speak of ethnicity or even more often nationality to avoid race altogether. This is consistent with the raceless cubanidad of Jose Martí who proclaimed that there are no races.

Unlike Maria who came to the United States as a young adult and is a historic exile, **Bárbara** came to the United States in her fifties after leaving Cuba and living in Spain for over a decade. Not too far in age from Maria, this energetic septuagenarian hairdresser is still working full tilt with a devoted clientele that will not let her retire. Very fair in complexion, Bárbara has a strong sense of racial identity as an afrodescendant and scoffs at the absurdity of those who try to avoid their blackness. This

is her advice to those who want to avoid being black: *Mientras más le huye la raza, más rápida te coje*. “The more you try to escape the race, the faster it overtakes you.”<sup>19</sup>

For some it is a conscious decision to embrace a white identity, a reassignment of racial identity, even though they have obvious African ancestry as Bárbara describes of her daughter’s brother, **Juan**:

*¡¡¡Hay no mi’ja no!!! ¿¿¿Quién dijo eso?? Son blancos nada más que en sueño. [Carcajadas.] Se caen a mentira uno a los otros. Mira Juan el hermanito de hija, que prácticamente se crio en mi casa sin ser hijo mío ... cuando él fue y se hizo todos sus papeles para estar legal, yo dije, “deja ver lo que te hicieron.” Cuando miro, “raza blanca.”*

*B: “Y entonces tu dijiste que eres blanco??” [Risotadas]*

*J: “Bueno, blanco soy yo.”*

*B: “¿¿¿Pero de dónde?? ¿¿¿De dónde tu eres blanco?? ¿¿¿De la Habana vieja de Povolote de Cuba de donde tu eres blanco???”*

*J: “Bueno, así me vieron.”*

*B: “Así te vieron y tú lo aceptaste.”*

*J: “Claro, porque me cuadra.”*

*B: “Ahh, así tu eres blanco. ¡¡¡Deje que tu papá te oiga diciendo que tú eres blanco!!!” Le cuadra.*

(There's no way!!! No!!! Who said that?? They are white only in their dreams.

[Laughs.] They lie to each other. Look at Juan, the little brother of my daughter,

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<sup>19</sup> Barbara, interview with the author, November 13, 2021.



who practically grew up in my house without being my son ... when he did his papers to be legal, I said, "Let me see what they did to you." When I look, "race: white."

B: "And you said you are white??" [Laughs]

J: "Well, I am white."

B: "But from where??? Where are you from??? Of the old Havana of Povolote de Cuba, where you are white???"

J: "Well, that's how they saw me."

B: "That's how they saw you and you accepted it."

J: "Of course, because it benefits me."

B: "Ah, that's how you're white. Let your dad hear you saying you're white!!!" It suits him.)<sup>20</sup>

In this case, the government official filling out the paperwork described Juan, the new immigrant as white, and he chose to go with it, as it benefitted him, even though his Black Cuban father would say otherwise. Just like him, there are plenty of others that may not have identified as white in Cuba but either choose or are assigned this identity in the United States. This concurs with the 39% of Afro-Latinos nationally that choose white as their race (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera 2016).

On the opposite side of the age spectrum is **Dialys**, a college student in her early 20s who came to the United States as an elementary school student. Very determined to succeed, Dialys was described by one of her math professors as "one of the best students

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<sup>20</sup> Bárbara, interview with the author, November 13, 2021.

I ever had.” Unlike Maria and Barbara who came to the United States as adults and with a firm sense of their racial identities, Dialys’ ethno-racial identity has evolved as she has grown up in the U.S. Dialys does not remember thinking too much about her race in Cuba as she does here.

Dialys at one point realized that all of her documents have her as white, even though that is not how she identifies herself: *It's a very different here, like the race categories, basically. I'm not considered like white or black, I'm like morena or mulata. [Yes.] So here on every single paper that I started realizing after like I had to like, sign up for stuff and things, and they kept asking my race. I realized that in every single paper when I got here, they put me as white. So, like statistically, everything that I have is white, like every single paper, you just see white like now that I understand, like my own race, I'm like, "You can't just tell me I'm white," I'm like, I don't even identify as that, and I don't think I'm just like white. Like, I'm very much mixed. Black, white or Asian. And it's like a lot of times I used to put white because it's like what everything told me, but it's so different for when you go to Cuba and stuff. So I think that it is undercounted, and I think that might be the reason why because mainly we're just like mixed. But a lot of times they just put papers down and it's like you're just counted as white (emphasis mine).<sup>21</sup>*

Unlike Juan, who allowed himself to be rebranded as white, Dialys at one point realized that she was being considered white on all of her paperwork. Since she emigrated as a child, her initial documents were not filled out by her but by either government officials or her parents (her father is white Cuban and her mother is a Black

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<sup>21</sup> Dialys, interview with the author, November 10, 2021.

Cuban). Since she now has an understanding of her own race which includes an acknowledgement of her African ancestry as a part of her identity, she questions the default assignment of white as her designated race. For biracial and multiracial people, the categories are challenging to begin with, and add to that emigrating from a country with different and more fluid racial identifiers.

Also a talented and determined college student, **Yusleydis** is among the most recently arrived Cubans of the fifth wave of Cuban migration and her English is marked by a thick Cuban accent. Yusleydis who arrived in the United States in the early 2010s with her mother and sister is a biracial young person and is perplexed with the labels that change from form to form, so she often chooses Hispanic. She would like for Afro-Cuban to be its own category. She looks up to Zendaya, the biracial actress/model of Disney and Spiderman fame, because of her advocacy for diversity in the entertainment industry. She also shares with Zendaya that her mother is white while her father is Black. Yusleydis has gone to the beautician only three times in her life (twice in Cuba, once here) to get her natural hair blown dry or flat ironed for a special occasion and has been assertive enough to say “NO tijeras!” (NO scissors!); as a result, she has waist-length curly/wavy hair. Dialys and Yusleydis are examples of people who disappear in the official count of Afro-Cubans even though they acknowledge their African ancestry.

Some Afro-Cubans are discouraged from professing a black identity, and this often comes from other Afro-Cubans or Latinos from countries with their own histories of anti-black prejudice. Sometimes it comes from a darker-skinned person who doesn't believe that the lighter-skinned person should be considered black. Other times, it comes from a light-skinned person who is trying to escape being called black and discourages

others from doing so. The following interchange between **Bárbara, Teresa**, a frequent flyer of the salon she worked at, and **Alejandra**, a co-worker gives insight into this process of social identity formation.

*B: Donde yo trabajaba antes había una cubana.*

*T: “Cada vez que le oigo diciendo que nosotros los negros. Ud. no es negra.”*

*B: ¿Digo, “entonces de donde sale el negro?”*

*T: “¡¡¡UD. NO ES NEGRA!!!!”*

*B: Digo, ah, “yo soy de chocolate.” [Carcajadas.] “De la raza de chocolate. ¿Yo quiero saber de qué categoría de raza Ud. me pone?” Ella se quedaba lívida.*

*B: ¿Digo, “si yo no soy negra, a que raza yo pertenezco? ¿A la blanca?”*

*T: “Bueno no precisamente ...”*

*B: “¡A la china, entonces!” [Mas carcajadas] “¿Entonces a que raza yo pertenezco?”*

*T: “Bueno, Ud. es latina.”*

*B: “Latina pero negra, señora. ¡Latina per negra!”*

*Yo no vivo tapando la realidad. Pero, la que me lo estaba diciendo es una jaba'a. Pero esa jaba'a catirra se las que habían en Cuba. ¡Jabá, Jabá, Jabá! De pelo malo malo malo. Y entonces como ella es clara ella se cree que blanca. Y entonces digole yo, pero ella no los traía. Y un día iba de viaje de vacaciones a no se lado. Y le dijo a mi compañera de trabajo – de las más chismosas – “déjame la cartera aquí que voy a ir hasta Publix a buscar algo de comer.” Y mi compañera, Alejandra, se aprovechó, fue hasta afuera para ver que se había ido,*

*mira muchacha, y en la bolsa tenía el pasaporte y sus documentos de identificación.*

A: Dijo “vamos a saber la verdad si ella es negra o no es negra.”

B: ¡Yo le dije, “deja eso! Si esa mujer entra ...”

A: Cuando lo agarro, dijo “¡¡¡¡mira lo que dice!!!! ¡¡¡¡ El papá, HAITIANO, y la mamá, cubana!!!!”

(Where I used to work, there was a Cuban woman.

T: "Every time I hear you say ‘we blacks.’ You are not black."

B: I would say, "then where does my black come from?"

T: "YOU ARE NOT BLACK!!!!"

B: I said, ah, "I'm chocolate." [Laughs.] "From the chocolate breed. I want to know what category of race you would put me in?" She was livid. I would say, "If I'm not black, what race do I belong to? White?"

T: “Well not exactly...”

B: "Chinese, then?!" [More laughs] "So what race do I belong to?"

T: "Well, you're Latina."

B: "Latina but black, ma'am. *Latina pero negra!*"

I don't live by covering up reality. But, the one who was telling me is a *jaba'a*.

But that *jaba'a catirra* like the ones that were in Cuba. *Jaba, Jaba, Jaba!* Bad,

bad hair. And since she is light-skinned, she thinks she is white. And one day she was going on a vacation to I don't know where. And she told my co-worker – one of the most gossipy – "leave my purse here; I'm going to go to Publix to get something to eat." And my coworker took advantage of the situation, she went

outside to see that this lady had left, grrrrrrlllll, and in the bag, she had her passport and her identification documents.

A: She said "let's know the truth if she is black or not."

B: I said, "Stop that! If that woman comes in..."

A: When she grabbed her documents, she said "look at what it says!!!! The father, HAITIAN, and the mother, Cuban!!!!")<sup>22</sup>

This is how many lighter-skinned Afro-Cubans get discouraged from professing a Black identity. Almost every lighter-skinned participant heard comments like *tu no tienes porque decir eso* (you don't have to say that you are Black) which conflicted with their evolving understanding of their race and the racial socialization that they were receiving at school and other places. Roland (2010) discusses the hierarchy of skin color in Cuba and includes in her list from lightest to darkest the various names for people of African ancestry in Cuba, including *jabao* (also written as *jaba*, *jabado*, or *jaba'o*) which describes a light-skinned person with light eye color and sometimes lighter brown or blonde hair with identifiable African facial features and hair textures. For Bárbara, it was particularly galling that this lady, who religiously got keratin treatments to straighten her kinky hair, of Haitian-Cuban ancestry, would be deracinating her. Queeley describes a hierarchy of Afro-Cubans in Cuba where those of Haitian ancestry were at the bottom of the social hierarchy (2015). A hundred years earlier, Fernando Ortiz also put Afro-Cubans of Haitian ancestry at the bottom of the hierarchy of African descendants in Cuba as well

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<sup>22</sup> Bárbara, interview with the author, November 13, 2021.

(1995 [1906]). By Bárbara embracing her Black heritage, it blackened Teresa who was light-skinned but of obvious African features.

Hintzen and Rahier (2010) describes the act of diaspora as self-recognition which is what Bárbara was doing when she would say “we Blacks” as if to self-recognize her Africanness and recognize the diaspora in her friend. Bárbara has a strong sense of her identity, so she did not allow herself to be steered away from professing a Black identity, but another person may have caved under that deracinating rebuke: “¡¡¡UD. NO ES NEGRA!!!” By reproaching Bárbara, Teresa was also rejecting her inclusion into the African diaspora, passing for white, and above all trying to distance herself from a Haitian past.

### **iii. Political Invisibility**

An intractable area of invisibility for Miami Afro-Cubans is in the political arena. One of the hallmarks of the Cuban exile community is its political engagement, and there have been numerous prominent Cuban American politicians in South Florida, not only as local mayors and commissioners but in the state legislature and the U.S. Congress. However, you will be hard pressed to find any politicians of note who are Afro-Cuban. Henry Crespo may be the only South Florida Afro-Cuban American to have served in a statewide political role as the President of the Black Democratic Caucus 2013-2015 (Aja 2016), but this one instance cannot undo over 60 years of political invisibility. Why are there no prominent Afro-Cuban politicians in South Florida? The same interest and passion for politics should be found in Cubans of all races. If one in ten Cubans are Afro-Cubans, then the same proportion should be found in the political arena. I have asked this question for the past ten years, both formally and informally. In 2022, Sheila

Cherfilus McCormick became the first Haitian American U.S. Representative sent from South Florida (representing congressional district 20 which includes portions of Broward and Palm Beach counties) (Lowry 2022). It is not outside of the realm of possibility that Black immigrants can be elected. The following are some responses from my research participants that shed light on the issue of political invisibility.

Forty-five percent of my research participants Democrats, 35% were Republicans, and 20% were Independents or not affiliated with any party. No Republicans claimed former President Donald J. Trump. They do not vote strictly along party lines but choose depending on the ideas and platform of the candidates. Many expressed engagement and solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. All expressed deep interest in the Patria y Vida/San Isidro movement as most still have family in Cuba. Their responses ranged from avoidance and disengagement with politics to their lack of preparation for these roles to not being what the South Florida Cuban American community wants to see in a leader.

For **Dialys**, there is a strong push away from politics due to traumatic experiences in Cuba. *Ok, so in Cuba, you're basically taught "don't mess with the government." It's like, don't mess with the government. And when you get here, you still have that mentality of "I can't do anything", like you don't have the power to make a change or like if you don't like a law, you don't you can't fight against it. It's like you don't have a voice. And a lot of that comes from our parents because even like my mom, she doesn't speak up on it. She's not very open about that. My dad, he actually like when he got here. He had his fun, like he just watches as many documentaries as possible, and he still continues to watch videos on politics and like got enough information to know like*



*he understands like a lot of what he believes in now and knows that he can do something about it. But I just think a lot of people, like when they come here, they just don't think that they have the power to do that. And also when you come here, you don't think about like the government or anything like that. You think about how to get your life started and how to move forward because you're basically when we came here, we came with nothing. So, it's like you've got to build your life up. And during that time, you just don't think of like, Oh, I got to go or anything like that. So it's like it's put to a back burner. So, I don't think a lot of Cubans do stuff like that because it's like, maybe those reasons.*<sup>23</sup>

Some of the over 1,300 people who protested against the Cuban government in July 2021 face 30-year sentences (Associated Press 2022). Negative experiences with the totalitarian Cuban government can certainly dampen one's desire to be politically active, but Dialys' father (a white Cuban, republican) was able to go beyond these incidents and embrace the opportunity to be politically engaged in the U.S. while her mother (an Afro-Cuban, democrat) prefers not to speak up about these matters.

**Mario**'s harrowing escape from Cuba via the sea is a case in point of how adverse occurrences of the past can inform the present. Not only does he not want to have anything to do with running for office or politics, his negative experiences in Cuba have also left him traumatized to the point that he mistrusts and limits his contact with the exile community as well. While still in South Florida, he has chosen to live as far away from “*el solar de Miami*” (the Miami ghetto) as possible.<sup>24</sup> Apparently, it is not far away

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<sup>23</sup> Dialys, interview with author, November 11, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Mario, interview with author, August 20, 2021.

enough, and he is still bumping heads with white Latinos and white Cubans who dislike the very idea of someone like him having professional autonomy and accolades. He has been called a “*negrito equivocado*” (a mistaken “little” black) because he has his own standards of professional excellence and runs his own race.<sup>25</sup> As a result, he lives a socially isolated, almost hermetic existence. He works, comes home; works some more, comes home, works a double shift, comes home. This social isolation was a prominent theme with several of the middle-aged male participants who lived to work rather than work to live.

The idea that Black Cubans are more focused on getting on with their lives and making a way for themselves than politics was echoed by several participants. The increasing cost of living and inflation were cited as reasons why it is difficult to focus on other things than getting an economic foothold in society. The cost of rent in Miami has gone up 52.4% from January 2021 to January 2022, higher than anywhere else in the nation (CBSMiami.com Team 2022), and the median price for a home is three times higher than it was ten years ago with stagnant wages (ATTOM 2022). In addition to these pragmatic concerns, Maria’s believes that the disenfranchisement of Black Americans and the racial restrictions present here when she arrived discouraged people of her generation to run for office and is still a lingering issue.

Others felt that Black Cubans were either not prepared enough or had other distracting interests which unwittingly reifies stereotypes even if it doesn’t apply to them or their immediate family. **Yusleydis** mentioned that her generation is concerned with

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

either partying or social media or being on the streets, but she wants to learn more about political issues and is in a leadership position at her campus. She consequently doesn't have much in common with the latest arrivals from Cuba.

Short-lived pasttimes also figured in **Bárbara**'s account. *No se valoran. No se valoran ni hacen – ni hacen! – te estoy hablando en términos generales. Ni hacen lo posible por elevar el nivel de estudio profesional que pueda tener un momento dado. No. Porque al negro le gusta vivir bien. Gozar de bastante billete. Pero no trabajar tanto. Desgraciadamente. Y si se puede mesclar con una blanquita [o si] o prostituta ... pero no son personas de estudios. Tú sabes que las carreras duras son carreras de años. El negro busca la carrera rápida. Para terminar rápido porque ellos no son de ... para que tu vea un negro - negro negro - profesional hay que meterse en la vida de ellos, y el que no lo es, dice "ese es un negrito ..." "¿Qué se cree?" ¡No es valorado! ¡No lo valoran! Y otros que se hacen médicos, pero carrera política, no. ¡Porque saben que los blancos le van a caer arriba como si fuese una cucaracha!* (They are not valued. They are not valued or nor do they do! – I'm talking to you in general terms. Nor do they do their best to raise their level of professional study that they can have at a given time. No. Because the black man likes to live well. Enjoy enough money. But [they] don't work that hard. Unfortunately. And if they can mess with a white woman or a prostitute ... but they are not people of studies. You know that hard careers take years of study. Blacks seek careers with short-term training. To finish quickly because they are not from ... for you to see a black - black black - professional you have to get into their life, and the one who is not, says "that's a negrito ..." "Who does he think he is?" They are not valued! They

don't value him! And others become doctors, but a political career, no. Because they know that the whites are going to fall on top of him as if he were a cockroach!)<sup>26</sup>

“They are not valued.” By whom? The South Florida Cuban American community is no doubt one source of this underestimation. But then Bárbara goes on to speculate that black men, in particular, like to live well, not work hard, squander their time with women, and seek careers with easier, short-term training. All the while, her father in Cuba was a really hard worker, she is one of the most industrious people I have ever met, her son is an extremely hard worker, has a college degree in the healthcare field and was commended by the U.S. government for his hard work during the COVID-19 crisis. And if they do become a professional, they will get the commentary “who does *he* think he is?” It’s like the Black male Cuban, in particular, is outside of his station in life if he seeks to advance himself professionally. But the real reason behind the invisibility of Black Cubans in the South Florida political arena may be the last comment: that whites (Cubans especially) will fall upon him and squash him like a roach!

Black Cubans were also described as not what people look for when they envision a leader. This is astounding when you consider that Fulgencio Batista, former president of Cuba, was of mixed racial ancestry, and there were black senators in Republican Cuba. The U.S. had a black president for eight years. How can this be? *In politics? I think that it's not eye candy. It's not what is going to convince the people when they look at a leader. They look at a leader as being white or light skinned. You can have all of the education in the world and that's the first thing that they go to. This person is not*

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<sup>26</sup> Bárbara, interview with author, November 13, 2021.

*educated enough.*<sup>27</sup> This was the assessment of **Yocelin**, a social media influencer in her 40s. Something is found to disqualify the candidate, but the real reason is they don't have the "look" or the skin tone of a leader. For Mario Baeza whose nomination was withdrawn for a high-ranking post in the Clinton Administration in the 1990s, it was likely his race that was the dominant factor in addition to the fact he was not from the Miami Cuban enclave (NJ) and not perceived to be as radical of an anti-communist as the influential Miami Cubans who did not support his nomination (Cohen 1993).

**Dr. Edwards** comes from an anglophone Afro-Cuban background and is a successful medical doctor in South Florida with his own practice. He came to the United States at age 12 in the year that Martin Luther King was assassinated and was raised in the Black neighborhood of Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, New York. He went to a predominately Black junior high school, a mixed high school, then undergrad at a university in New York before graduating from medical school in Puerto Rico. He was raised in an environment where Civil Rights and social justice permeated the atmosphere, so he has a strong affinity with Black Americans while maintaining a strong sense of his Cuban identity. He describes his father's strong influence on his racial and political identity: *"My father he passed away in 2019. And he was. I mean, he's one of these persons that would listen to, you probably don't know ahead of your time. It's back way back there. He would listen to Farrakhan, and I forgot the Black writer. West West, [Cornel West] West. Yes. Yes. And the fact that we still have the books at home. So he*

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<sup>27</sup> Yocelin, interview with author, July 31, 2021.

*was very Afrocentric. Very, very, very Afrocentric. So. So we were we were brought up that way. You know, in a very Afrocentric home, very.*"<sup>28</sup>

**Dr. Edwards** is very politically engaged and has been affiliated and registered with the Democratic party since the 1970s. Why couldn't Dr. Edwards run for office? He is certainly well-educated. *Listen. Well, I could talk Miami now I'm living here. In New York, no, because it's a big metropolitan area and there aren't that many Cuban Afro Cubans, even though when I was growing up, there were many. Now a lot of those people have migrated down here. And the only place where there were a large concentration was in Elizabeth, New Jersey, where there's a lot of Guantanameros living there. And I think they did have commissioners there that were black Cubans. But the question is, why don't you see them here? Let me tell you something, I'm like, at this age, I'm not scared to speak. I think, no, there's a political machinery here, and that political machine decides who is going to be. [OK.] For example, if tomorrow I decide to be a politician, I have to be very selective where I'm going to run as a politician. Yes, I might be able to run here in Homestead. Or maybe I might be able to run up there in Opa-Locka. Yes, but I won't be able to do it in Hialeah, right next door. I won't be able to do it in Kendall as a black politician.*<sup>29</sup> His intuition is correct. He wouldn't be able to win in white Latino supermajority areas. It would have to be in black areas as a black politician. Without knowing his story, Edwards echoes the experiences of Henry Crespo, a Black Cuban American, who in the 1990s ran for a commissioner seat emphasizing both his Black and Cuban identity which was rejected by both voting blocs (Navarro 1997). His

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<sup>28</sup> Dr. Edwards, interview with author, December 17, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> Dr. Edwards, interview with author, December 17, 2021.

presentation of an intersectional identity was denied in 1990s. When he did serve in a statewide position, it was for the Democratic Black Caucus of Florida as a black politician.<sup>30</sup> So in the face of these prospects, some Afro-Cubans reduce their experiences of abjection by not going into fields where they are sure to experience rejection. The participants had mixed responses as to whether there would not be an Afro-Cuban political leader in a prominent position in five years. Most of the older participants were skeptical that this would happen, but the younger participants felt that they would be the generation to pave the way for progress.

#### **iv. Residential segregation and the Cuban enclave: a Tale of Two Entrepreneurs**

*“It’s like apartheid.”* **Dr. Edwards** does not mince words when describing the segregated Miami neighborhoods. With dark, lineless skin, only the crown of grey hair hints that he is in his 60s. He has lived in Miami for six years, owns his own medical practice with two locations (one in the heart of Miami, the other in South Dade), has traveled all over the world, and has never experienced the racial animosity that he has felt living here. This animosity has had financial repercussions because many white Latinos including white Cubans do not want to be seen by a black doctor. I asked what he meant when he said that *he* is the reason why his practice in the city of Miami is not thriving: *Yes, I could explain it. Today, for example, the reason why I’m able to speak with you is right. Right now, there are four people waiting out there, but they’re not for me. They’re for her [a white Latina physician]. So. I mean, it’s what they are saying in Spanish,*

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<sup>30</sup> In a scathing critique of his tenure in that position, Dr. Mae Christian described him as pretending to be a black person when he was really a Cuban dictator. <https://www.communitysteeple.com/politics/647-is-the-president-of-florida-s-democratic-black-caucus-henry-crespo-pretending-to-be-black.html>

*whatever. You never ask what you can see or you can palpate, so it's very obvious here in Miami. I don't like to throw this out there is loosely, but there is discrimination here. Yes, there is. People see you and the way they see you, they judge you. I'm talking about skin color. [Oh yeah.] Skin color. So and it's a fact. And there's no one that's going to convince me telling me that it's not. But it is, you know? Yeah, she is. They are now. She's busy. She's seen, I've seen, like less patients than her. You know, that's a fact. In my own practice.<sup>31</sup>*

In *Black Man in a White Coat*, Tweedy remembers his abrupt transition into medical residency in the early 2000s with the words “I don’t want no nigger doctor” (2016: 106). These racial insults are more common than one would believe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The twist here is that the source is not Anglo Americans but white Latinos, especially white Cubans. It is part of a white-washing that occurs when some Cubans leave Cuba and come to the United States. **Dr. Edwards** points out the following: *If you look at the Facebook of someone in Cuba, you will see that Facebook, that person living in Cuba, has a lot of black friends. Look at the look at their profile, their friends. But once that same person comes here and is living here, you notice that they don't have one single black friend living in Miami .... So. In Cuba, if you look at the people are actually [running] Cuba right now. There's only one or two token blacks. So, there is racism there also. Yeah. When especially when 70 percent of the population is black. Now here in Miami, those same Cubans that would have gone to me as a doctor in Cuba, they wouldn't see me today here in Miami if they had a choice.* The white Latino habitus that

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<sup>31</sup> Dr. Edwards, interview with author, December 17, 2021.



permeates Miami is such that in short order, these same Cubans forget that there were Black people in Cuba who were their friends, their doctors, and express disbelief in seeing a Black person speak Spanish. Their preference for whiteness is such that they would rather wait hours to be seen by the one white doctor than be attended to immediately by a black doctor of the same specialty.

The anti-black prejudice is not only evident in with doctors, but with other fields as well. **Bárbara** describes this as a common occurrence in her work as a beautician. *Peinado de moño? Eso nadie lo hace. Ahora cuando llegaba una quinceañera, una boda, “¿quien hace estilo con moño?” Y si eran blancas. “Usted hace el estilo de boda?”* [con voz desilusionada]. *“Si, yo misma.” Y me miraban de pies a cabeza. Hay veces, venían, hay veces no venían.* (Bun hairstyle? Nobody does that. Now when a quinceañera or a wedding hairstyle request would come, they would ask "who does the style with a bun?" And if they were white. "You do the wedding style?" [with a disillusioned voice] "Yes, myself." And they looked at me from head to toe. There are times, they came, there are times they didn't come.)<sup>32</sup>

A well-trained stylist like Bárbara does all types of hair textures – straight, curly, kinky. It is also telling that Bárbara has a tan complexion, hair texture that is more wavy than curly, and sports a hairstyle that could be seen on a wide variety of ethnicities. So, for these potential clients, mostly white Cubans, to take one look at her, do an about face, and go somewhere else for their special style speaks to the predominance of the white Latino supermajority where there are many other salons to choose from without black

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<sup>32</sup> Bárbara, interview with the author, November 13, 2021.

stylists. These are people who would also have not been so offended by Bárbara if she were their beautician in Cuba.

Given his success in other locations, I asked **Dr. Edwards** why he came to Miami. *That's a very good question. That's a very good question. And you want to know the truth, I regret it. [Oh no.] No, no, no, no, no ... I regret it because after two years, I've been here six. After two years, I realized. I know my third or fourth year said, you know what? So, what brought me to Miami? I was living, I went from New York to live in Puerto Rico in 2012, and I was living very well in Puerto Rico. No problems, but Cubans. And I'm talking about White Cubans, "Man, what are you doing here? What are you doing here, man? You have a license. You have a license, you have a Florida license."* Let me tell you something that has to do with this interview. All I can remember, two people that live here now. And, you know, they are going to open a practice? I didn't know what Florida was. They were all from Miami Dade. You know where they put me? In Florida City. "You should open a practice in Florida City," but I didn't know why they told me that.<sup>33</sup>

*"You should open a practice in Homestead." But I didn't know why. Well today. [I point to my skin color.] Exactly. But today. One of them, his wife is a dentist there in Flagler and Flagler, and 50 something she. But they don't think about opening up practice down here. Oh no. The other one has a practice his wife has a practice on Coral Way on 70 something, but none of them open a practice down here. But once I was here, I realized why they told me to come down to Florida City or Homestead. I didn't know*

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<sup>33</sup> Dr. Edwards, interview with the author, December 17, 2021.

*what Florida City was. I didn't know what Homestead was. So how did I come here? I said, you know what, if I come to Florida, I probably I don't want to work for nobody else. I'll open a practice, so I opened up a practice. I opened this practice from scratch. You know, on. Because people were telling me and I I wasn't doing bad in Puerto Rico, I was doing well, but you know, I said, you know, these people are telling me, maybe they're right. And if I don't do it now, I might regret not doing it. And that's why I did it. And now I'm going back. I'm going back to Puerto Rico. I'm going to travel back and forth, back and forth.*<sup>34</sup>

So, at the behest of members of the professional Cuban American enclave in Puerto Rico, he was encouraged to leave Puerto Rico and start a practice in South Dade, namely Homestead and Florida City. Why? It was because of his skin color. His white co-ethnics facilitated his racialized incorporation into South Florida. This was done without ever mentioning race or any demographic characteristics of these South Dade cities. Homestead is 20.6% Black or African American, while Florida City is 53.6% Black or African American. Unfortunately, both cities are well-known for their crime rates, and Homestead has a crime rate index of 14 while Florida City has a crime rate index of 0 (with 100 being the safest and 0 being the un-safest) (U.S. Census Quick Facts 2021; Neighborhoodscout.com). Unbelievably, Florida City is rated more unsafe than Compton, California which has a crime rate index of 10 (Neighborhoodscout.com). There are also higher poverty rates in these cities compared to Miami-Dade County as a whole (23.8% Homestead and 40% Florida City vs. 15% Miami-Dade), lower per capita

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<sup>34</sup> Dr. Edwards, interview with the author, December 17, 2021.

income (\$19,299 Homestead and \$10,640 Florida City vs. \$28,244 Miami-Dade), and a higher percentage of the population under 65 without health insurance (24.2% Homestead and 25.2% Florida City vs, 19.4% Miami-Dade) (U.S. Census Quick Facts 2021).

Certainly, there are great people in South Dade that deserve quality healthcare. But why no discussion as to what made him “great” for this area? Why wasn’t he great for Puerto Rico? These same doctors that worked and lived side-by-side with him in Puerto Rico would never practice medicine in those South Dade cities. Their lives have been whitewashed in Miami; their Facebook pages lose Black friends and their medical practices lose Black colleagues. So, it’s like an apartheid style existence; they live on their side of town. He was placed outside of the enclave to the southernmost limits of Miami-Dade County. And when he tries to practice on their side of town, in the center of the Cuban American enclave in Miami, he doesn’t see patients.

“What was he doing in Puerto Rico?” they ask. Thriving. What is he doing here in Miami? Serving an underserved population, living a largely segregated existence, socially isolated, separated from those who worked side-by-side with him Puerto Rico, and not as financially successful. He was so successful in Puerto Rico that he traveled as often as he desired to New York where his family and friends are; he cannot do that here. This is an example of how the enclave works and does not work for Afro-Cubans. These connections aided his transition to Florida, but the strong encouragement to leave the enclave in Puerto Rico and set up shop in a place that they wouldn’t step foot in is questionable. Puerto Rico is not a racial paradise, but he only remembers one time being snubbed by a patient for not wanting a Black doctor, while this is his daily experience in his Central Miami office. Dr. Edwards’ decision to return to Puerto Rico while retaining

some presence in South Dade expresses his agency to live his professional and personal life on his own terms.

Bárbara made a similar decision to work for herself. After years of working in a salon where she was the only black stylist and enduring criticism because she served African Americans, men, as well as other clientele deemed secondary to Latinas, Bárbara went the entrepreneurial route. Because she had such a loyal following, they simply followed her to her new location. It is centrally located and not too far from the previous location on a main artery in West Dade. It is by referral only, so any new clients that she gets are referred from her current clients. These people are not likely to send someone to her that will look at her, do an about face, and leave because of her tan skin and her African features.

#### **F. Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have described the Cuban migration story from the perspective of Afro-Cubans and emergence of Miami as both a city of super-diversity and the rising dominance of a white Latino supermajority. I have also included ethnographic evidence which offers insights into the undercounting of Black Cubans, how they are dissuaded from choosing a Black identity, why there are no high-ranking Black Cuban politicians from South Florida, and residential segregation and the Cuban enclave.

From the perspective of superdiversity, what has allowed Bárbara to stake her claim and stay in Miami while Dr. Edwards is transitioning away from Miami? Bárbara arrived in Miami in her 50s and has lived in Miami for 22 years. A Havana native of humble class origins, Bárbara wanted to be lawyer but was not allowed to do so because her father did not want anything remotely related to politics and the government of Fidel

Castro. She studied to be a teacher in Cuba, but she followed her other passion to become a hairstylist which has been her main job throughout the years. She has also cooked, cleaned, has served as a caretaker for the elderly and has done other odd jobs. On the color continuum, she is lighter skinned and has what some people would call “good hair” which could be a factor in how she is accepted. She is also a female which may also elicit a different response than a black male. Dr. Edwards came from a middle-class family in Oriente de Cuba, arrived to the United States at age 12 in the late 1960s, settled with his family in New York, got university degrees from U.S. institutions, and lived in Puerto Rico before arriving here. He was not too much older than Bárbara when he relocated to Miami as an accomplished physician. While both had family members in the U.S. to aid their transition, Edwards has had more time in the United States and benefitted from more favorable immigration laws than those that arrived in the 2000s like Bárbara. They work in two public-facing industries, but ultimately Bárbara is able to serve a varied clientele which includes white and Black Hispanic females, African Americans and males. In order for Dr. Edwards to have a viable practice, he has to rely on mainly African American patients in an impoverished South Dade area and have limited inroads with Hispanic patients in Miami. He needs a white Hispanic physician to serve these patients under his practice. Ultimately, it doesn’t add up for him financially which is why he is seeking other horizons. The successes and challenges of Dr. Edwards and Bárbara would not be captured in a segmented assimilation analysis that where Cubans are not differentiated by race and where Cubans are discouraged from associating with stigmatized minorities, name Black Americans. It is in fact these diasporic alliances

which have created more opportunities for Afro-Cubans as double diasporic subjects, the topic of the next chapter.

#### **IV. Double Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and Cubanidad in Miami's exile community**

Are Afro-Cubans diasporic subjects in the United States? Are they part of the African Diaspora or the Cuban Diaspora? This chapter will review pertinent literature on diaspora and double diaspora, apply double diaspora theory to three ethnographies on Afro-Cubans, and give examples from participant observation as well as ethnographic evidence. Ultimately, Afro-Cubans in the United States are living in a double diaspora: dispersed from Africa to Cuba, where their contributions to religion, music and art were syncretized with Spanish influences; dispersed from Cuba to the United States where this transcultural *cubanidad* (Cuban identity) has largely been whitewashed.

##### **A. Afro-Cubans as Diasporic Subjects**

Are Afro-Cubans diasporic subjects? If “diasporic identity is a stand taken by those who are excluded from the modern space on racial grounds, in making claims of belonging by tracing their acquisition of modern attributes to originary, and racially defined, homelands” (Hintzen, “Race and Diasporic Imaginings” 2010: 53-54), I would argue that Afro-Cubans are definitely diasporic subjects. Moreover, Hintzen and Rahier’s book article “Theorizing the African Diaspora: Metaphor, Miscognition, and Self-Recognition” places blackness, race and racism front and center in the theorization of the African Diaspora. In describing the misrecognition of Black people in the African Diaspora, they comment: “Such distortion, as it pertains to blackness, derives from the ruling ideology of white supremacy that we consider to be the central force in the process of black abjection, exclusion, and erasure” (2010: x). Furthermore, this exclusion from



the modern space occurred way before the 1959 revolution forced millions of Cubans into exile in the United States.

Paul Gilroy's seminal theoretical text introduces the Black Atlantic as one single complex unit of analysis in discussions of the modern world to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective of Black culture. The Black Atlantic is a "deterritorialized multiplex of anti-national basis for the affinity or 'identity of passions between diverse black populations." (Gilroy 1996: 18). This is a global perspective against ethnic absolutism, cultural insiderism, crypto-nationalism, and ethnic particularism that does not privilege the nation-state.

His theoretical construct, the Black Atlantic, seeks to unite the various black cultures on both sides of the Atlantic with understanding that cultural interactions between the old world and new came in both directions, criss-crossing the Atlantic. He uses the ship as a chronotype to symbolize these journeys over sea, over time, and space (Gilroy 2003:4). Moreover, he sees music as the ultimate connector between Africa and Africans in diaspora, for sound crosses space and time and doesn't need translation to be understood (36). Afro Cuban music and religion are just two examples of cultural products that have crisscrossed the Black Atlantic. Music plays a critical role in the counterculture to modernity as black music (ex: Negro spirituals) has projected a utopian future to counteract the violence of the present (36-37).

Using DuBois' work, he identifies a double consciousness of the inhabitants of the Black Atlantic that allow persons like himself to be both Black and European (British) and that these categories are not seen as mutually exclusive categories (1993: 1). As counterculture to modernity, it includes elements of theories of "creolization,

metissage, mestizaje, and hybridity” (1993: 2) but is transcendent of them as well.

Presumably then, this model of the Black Atlantic would allow for individuals to be both Black and Cuban or Black and White and Cuban without there being a contradiction.

Gilroy decouples the persistent association between race and national identity not only to escape the “dazzle of whiteness” but also to critique the essentialism of Afrocentrism (9, 33).

Other authors augment and add to Rahier and Hitzen’s encompassing description of the African diaspora and Gilroy’s Black Atlantic. In his comparison of the African and Jewish articulations of diaspora, Clifford emphasizes the concept of nation/state borders is described as critical to diaspora as well as the utopian projection to a homeland un-littered by the dystopian present (1994: 317, 321-325). He reviews Safran’s six elements of diaspora but finds them too limiting: 1) dispersion from an initial location “to at least two ‘peripheral’ places” 2) “memory, vision or myth” of the “homeland,” 3) not being “fully accepted by their host country,” 4) desiring a return to the homeland, 5) dedicated to preserving or rebuilding the homeland, and 6) having “group consciousness” stemming from the “relationship to the homeland” (304-5). He is also wary of using the Jewish diaspora as an ideal type (306). Like Gilroy, he also summons DuBois’ “double consciousness” as being applicable to diaspora (311).

Kim Butler makes the case for a more nuanced approach to studying diaspora given the rise in the usage of the term (190). She argues for the shift away from an ethnographic group approach to a comparative historical diaspora approach where key characteristics can be found across diasporas (193-4). While she agrees with three of Safran’s six defining characteristics of diaspora, she adds a fourth:

- 1) Dispersal to at least two destinations
- 2) Connection to a homeland (real or imagined)
- 3) Self-awareness of the group's identity
- 4) The group's presence over 2+ generations (192).

She defines five dimensions of research about diaspora (195) and believes that there are micro and macro diasporas depending on the scale of the movement of people (196). She also discusses Cohen's five categories of diaspora - "victim, labor, trade, imperial, and cultural" - and describes its limitations (197-8). She gives the example of a Jamaican émigré to England and a person can belong to more than one diaspora (193) which is parallel to the double diaspora experience of Afro-Cubans to the United States.

Stuart Hall's work illuminates how the Afro-Cuban identity can be seen as a strategic positioning. Hall describes identity as a "production" where "what we say is always 'in context,' *positioned*" (222), harkening Gramsci's war of position. Hall points out two ways of thinking about cultural identity: 1) "one, shared culture," "one people" and 2) recognized points of significant differences as well as similarity. The first definition summons the restorative position of *négritude* as well those who describe "Caribbean-ness" and the "Black experience" (223). This is where we are from, which in using the term of enunciation would be a "*re-telling* of the past" of Africa (224). The second definition understands that experiences of colonization and diaspora have created "ruptures and discontinuities" from the past invoked in the former definition (225). This is "what we have become" and where we are going (225). While both definitions are important, the tragic aftermath of colonization is only intelligible with the second definition (225). Cultural identity is "not an essence but a *positioning*" (226).

## **B. Double Diaspora – literature review and theoretical framework**

Are Afro-Cubans double diasporic subjects? The literature for the term “double diaspora” clusters around China, India, and the Jewish Diaspora – not the African Diaspora. The literature on double diaspora is varied and covers an array of methods, from literary analysis of fictional works (short stories, novels, film) to inclusion of memoirs and documentaries to social science studies (qualitative, mixed methods). The articles presented here from the Chinese diaspora were all social science studies, while most of the works concerning the Indian and all of the Jewish diaspora pieces focused on literary works.

Guo (2016) describes the pattern of Chinese migration from China to Canada and back to Beijing as being a double diaspora, a phenomenon that Guo describes as “a hybrid experience that transcends the boundaries of ethnicity and nationalism” (154). The Chinese Canadian diaspora began in the mid-1800s and currently totals more than 1.3 million people (154). The author employed a mixed-methods design (10 interviews, 76 questionnaires) to ascertain both the reasons for emigration to Canada and the decision to return to China. Guo found that while finding employment opportunities was one of the highest reasons to move to Canada (second only to the environment), their education and expertise were not valued there, which prompted a return to China (159). There was perceived to be a “glass gate,” “glass door,” and “glass ceiling” which prevented qualified immigrants from obtaining the same positions as white Canadian nationals (160). Despite believing that their job prospects in Canada were limited due to discrimination, almost all of the respondents missed Canada, especially the landscape (167).

Kwangho and Jinah (2014) discussed the journey of Chinese of Korean descent who settled in Northeast China and then relocated to either Shanghai or Tokyo as also being a double diaspora. The first migration occurred at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the second migration is more recent (21). Certainly, the pattern of migration from Korea to China to Tokyo (three different countries) would be a double diaspora. Does relocating to a second city in China count as a double diaspora? The minority policy in China allowed for the Korean Chinese of Northeast China to maintain the Korean language and culture by attending ethnic schools and by consuming ethnic media. While there are currently 1.8 million Korean Chinese in China residing mostly in Northeast China, there has been a return migration to Korea and movement to cosmopolitan Shanghai for economic and educational advancement (21). Kwangho and Jinah describe double diaspora as having “moved and detached from their original diasporic communities” (22). Approximately 22,000 Korean Chinese live in Shanghai while 53,000 live in Japan (22).

Kwangho and Jinah’s study focuses on the role of media in the diaspora experience for the Korean Chinese. The authors conducted 10 in-depth interviews with 2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> generation Korean Chinese either living in Shanghai or Tokyo. Through the consumption of ethnic media, Korean Chinese maintain cultural proximity and connection with Korea (23-24). It was a common theme that Korean TV is superior to Chinese programming and the ability to understand Korean programs was desirable, even “cool” (29). While this cultural connection was important to many of the participants, some that had a chance to visit or live in South Korea were disheartened by the negative attitudes of South Koreans toward Korean Chinese (25). Others felt completely at home

in Korea due to their superior linguistic skills. While almost all of the participants viewed Korea as the motherland, they also viewed their nationality as Chinese (34).

The Hmong Chinese were described by Hein (2013) as being double diasporic. While they have been dispersed four times - from China to Vietnam (1750-1850) to Laos (1890-1975) and Thailand, and lastly to the United States (1975) - only China (as an ancestral land) and Laos figure prominently in the discourse of the participants in the study which is why the author describes the Hmong Chinese as double diasporic. Vietnam (the second leg of this diaspora journey) is not foregrounded, and Thailand was a place for refugee camps up until the early 1990s after the rise of communism in Laos in 1975. Laos was in the lived historical memory of those interviewed. The Hmong Chinese experienced brutalization and annihilation from Chinese dynasties where they fled to the mountains in the 1600s, and discrimination in Laos, where they were forced to live in the highlands, had limited educational opportunities, and were seen in a pejorative light because of their different religious practices (213).

The authors conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with Hmong Chinese living in Wisconsin (213). All of the Hmong Chinese interviewed were educated by their parents or grandparents about the migration of Hmong Chinese out of China (214-215). Unlike the Korean Chinese's fascination with Korean media, many U.S. Hmong did not express interest in the Hmong in China although they consider themselves culturally Hmong. Others did feel a connection to the Hmong in China and wished to visit China or to visit Laos to learn about their Chinese ancestors who lived there. It is also important to note that the Hmong have an oral language but do not have a written language (215), which is a tool that the Korean Chinese have used to keep their culture strong in China.

For this group, their identity is Hmong originating from China and mediated through their negative lived experience of Laos to flee to the United States as refugees.

The theme of double diaspora also figures in the literature of the Indian diaspora as well. Parmar (2013a, 2013b) describes the movement of Gujarati Indians to Uganda or Kenya and then to England. The first migration – forced and voluntary - to Africa took place under British colonial rule around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After decolonization of Africa in the 1960s and 70s, the Gujarati left East Africa and many settled in Great Britain, including those that were expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin. Parmar explores the theme of double diaspora through examining a culinary memoir and through participant observation of dance rituals (2013b: 139).

Jeffers (2016) uncovers the theme of double diaspora - the movement of Indians to East Africa and then to Canada – in the literary works of Vassanji and Espinet. Jeffers describes the double diaspora as “those communities for which a second significant migration took place, shifting a diasporic culture, forged in a unique and complex political, cultural, and spatial context, to yet another place where a new set of factors contribute to a reformation of communities and identities” (31). While Indians were able to maintain their cultural distinctiveness in Africa due to British segregation policies and cultural and religious practices, the second displacement to Canada created a more ambiguous societal positioning where they were also in contact with Caribbean people of African and Indian descent as well as Indians from India (31-32). They experience abjection in Canada in relation to the white construction of Canadian identity (32). Jeffers also notes that the collective identifier of “South Asian” is a weak one with no

political clout in contrast to the term “Black” and how Indianness is diluted in South Asian Canadian literature (33).

Gabriel (2014) delineates another double diasporic trajectory – from Persia (Parsi) to India to Canada – through the literary writings of Rohinton Mistry. Around the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Parsi fled Persia (modern day Iran) to India to escape forceable conversion to Islam. Of the Zoroastrian religion, they are considered “outside of the (Hindu) nationalist narrative” and diasporic within India (28). Moving from India to Canada, then, represents another diasporic experience. For Gabriel, double diaspora “points to the existence of more than one homeland” (28). Yet if one of these homelands no longer exists (Persia) and they are the extreme minority in the other (only 0.007% of India) (28), where is home for the Parsi?

Gupta et al (2007) describe a host of other trajectories of the Indian diaspora, including the double diasporic journey from India to Fiji to Australia as portrayed in Lal’s “Kumkum: Maya’s Story” (136). They problematize “South Asian” as a term not used in the region but popular in American academia and yet seek to shift the attention away from India to the marginalized Global South to places such as Trinidad and Fiji (126, 129). The contributions to this issue concerning Indo-Fijians, for example, focus on “the connections between interpersonal violence, ethnic nationalism, White racism, and the structural violence of development inflicted in Fiji by Australia and New Zealand” (131).

Hundt (2013) describes the trajectory from India to Fiji to New Zealand. This is an unusual diasporic situation because at one time in history, Indians were the majority ethnic group in Fiji and their secondary diaspora location (New Zealand) is largely



homogeneous and far less populated than the United States or Canada (125). The migration to Fiji occurred at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite being in Fiji for a century, many Indo-Fijians never felt at home and thus prompting the outmigration to other destinations including New Zealand (127). Indo-Fijians went from 14% of the Indian residents in New Zealand in 1981 to 31% in 2001 (128). For this study, 23 interviews were conducted and the researchers used a “hermeneutic-abductive approach” to ascertain information concerning the construction of identity (130). The study sought to interrogate the concept of home whether it be ancestral, birthplace or current place of residence. The responses varied. Some were determined to make New Zealand home, despite not being viewed as sufficiently “Kiwi” because they are not white (135). Others felt an obligation to Fiji because they still have family there even though they felt abjection there (133). A few mentioned India as being the true homeland though other participants felt “othered” in India (131-132). This also happened in New Zealand where Indians from the subcontinent did not view Fiji-Indians as completely Indian (135).

Double diaspora is also a concept used by scholars of the Jewish diaspora. Wacks’ text *Double Diaspora in Sephardic Literature* (2015) describes the journey of Jews from the Middle East to settling in Iberia in 70 A.D. and then their expulsion from Spain in 1492. Wacks further describes how this expulsion from Spain to “North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, or Western Europe” turned their native tongue, Spanish, into a “diasporic Jewish language,” and that these “two diasporas” – from the Holy Land and then from the Iberian peninsula – reverberate in Sephardic literature (2016: 1).

Schwartz (2010, 2012) also appropriates the concept of double diaspora to describe Arab Jews. Schwartz describes a double diasporic individual as being “caught

between two contradictory relationships of belonging. Double-diasporic peoples have been deterritorialized twice, literally or imaginatively, yet can never really reterritorialize completely because of the tension of having been displaced from two homelands and living in a third” (2010: 93). She gives the example of Iraqi Jews who now live in Canada as being double diasporic (93). She also asserts that the creation of the state of Israel created other diasporas for Palestinians and Arab Jews who “found themselves as outsiders to the modern Jewish nation-state” (94). Schwartz uses the literary works of Iraqi-Jewish writers Sami Michael (novel) and Naim Kattan (memoir) to explore the theme of double diaspora (2010), and in her dissertation, she expands her analysis to the genres of film and documentary (2012).

There are several themes that emerge from this literature review which resonate with African diaspora studies and relate specifically to Afro-Cubans. Are Afro-Cubans double diasporic subjects? A resounding yes. Several of the authors give a definition of double diaspora – being deterritorialized twice, having to adapt one’s identity to each new setting. It should not matter that the first diaspora – the African diaspora - occurred between the 1600-1800’s. The Parsi have been maintaining their distinctive identity since their first diaspora in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, and the original Jewish diaspora occurred in the first century AD.

The major themes emerging from African diaspora studies are also event in the double diaspora. The themes of abjection and exclusion from the modern space are very prominent. This abjection ranged from discrimination to segregation to expulsion, religious and political persecution, and even annihilation. They were almost all “othered” by their present locations, especially if the national identity of the hostland is strongly

associated with whiteness. They were also discriminated in their place of birth. Only the Korean-Chinese seemed to have a more positive relationship with their hostland, but one could argue that they were also segregated in culturally autonomous prefectures in Northeast China. Interestingly, double diaspora people also faced othering by people from their ancestral homeland who do not view them as authentic. The double diasporic groups use language, religion, dance, vestments, and culinary traditions to maintain their distinctive culture which had to adapt to each leg of their diaspora journey.

The identity quandary of double diasporic people is also pronounced. Schwartz gives the impossible dilemma faced by Arab Jews - “*really* you are Jewish, but still you *are* Arab” – as the Jewish state was created to eliminate Arab claims to the area (2010: 94). Do Arab Jews in Canada simply become Canadian? Would that really be allowed in a place with a national identity predicated on whiteness? Will Fiji-Indians ever become “Kiwis” or will they always be seen as foreigners in New Zealand?

### **C. Double Diaspora theory**

Borrowing from African diaspora theory and the literature on double diaspora, the following are characteristics of a double diaspora:

- 1) There are three locations or nation/states and two dispersals:
  - A. Ancestral location
  - B. Diaspora (1<sup>st</sup> dispersal; more recent transplantation to a different nation/state)
  - C. Double Diaspora (2<sup>nd</sup> dispersal; move to another nation/state; present hostland)
- 2) Navigate vastly different political and social conditions in each state which creates a shift in diasporic culture (Jeffers)
- 3) Abjection in each diasporic location, othering (Hintzen and Rahier)

- 4) Contradiction between the two diasporic identities resulting in an identity quandary (Schwartz)
- 5) Group identity and self-awareness (Butler)
- 6) Existence over at least two generations (Butler)

This list is inclusive of the first three of Safran's six characteristics of diaspora which should be met at each diasporic location (dispersed to at least two locations, maintain memory or vision or myth of homeland, not accepted by the host country) (1991: 83-84). It further incorporates Butler's group identity and generational components. It is important to note that the homeland for double diasporic people can be the ancestral homeland, the first diasporic location, or even a third that is an imagined homeland where they have never resided. The concept of double diaspora is not intended to displace other terms such as "overlapping diasporas" or "multiple diasporas" but to capture the experience of a group that has been transplanted to two diasporic locations.

Using this framework can clarify what constitutes as a double diaspora. Double diaspora occurs where there are three distinct locations (A-B-C) crossing boundaries of different nation-states. Upon closer examination, Guo's example (A-B-A) would not count as a double diaspora nor would Kwangho and Jinah's participants that went from Korea to NE China to Shanghai (A-B-B) be considered double diasporic. Although the autonomous Korean prefectures of NE China versus cosmopolitan Shanghai may be so distinct that they seem like different countries, they are mediating with the same nation-state (China). Kwangho and Jinah's Korean Chinese participants that went to Toyko would qualify using this framework as do the Hmong Chinese and all of the Indian and Jewish examples presented in the literature review.

#### **D. Afro-Cubans as Double Diasporic Subjects**

The following ethnographies represent unique contributions to the study of Afro-Cubans and can be discussed using the theory of double diaspora. In *Rescuing Our Roots*, Andrea Queeley describes the creation of a diasporic Afro-Anglo Caribbean subjectivity in Cuba (2015:3), and this group can be considered double diasporic. From 1902 to 1935, 311,216 Caribbean Blacks from Haiti, Jamaica, and other smaller Caribbean islands entered Cuba to work in the agricultural industry (42). Santiago, Cuba received approximately 130,000 Anglophone Caribbean Blacks during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone (20). This group became Anglophone Afro-Cubans, and they meet the first criterion: they have originary African ancestry and came to Jamaica and other English-speaking Caribbean islands through the Transatlantic Slave Trade between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. They then migrated to Cuba for economic opportunities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and have stayed until the present day, also fulfilling the sixth criterion of multiple generations in diaspora. Moreover, they also meet the second criterion as the English-speaking islands and Cuba have different languages, different colonial histories, and they had to adapt to unique social and political conditions in each location. In Jamaica, where the majority of the Anglophone Afro-Cubans are from, they were the overwhelming racial majority. Pre-Castro Cuba population figures are 27% Afro-Cuban, making Afro-Cubans the racial minority during the time of the second diaspora migration (Poyo and Díaz-Miranda 1994: 316).

While being the racial majority in Jamaica, Jamaicans were still until British colonial rule until 1962 and experienced the detrimental effects of colonization. In Cuba, they also experienced abjection and removal from the modern imaginary and thus fulfill

the third criterion. Black Caribbean populations were accused of causing the economic downturn that took place in Cuba in the 1920s and 1930s (Queeley 2015: 49). The early years of the Cuban republic were fraught with anti-Black sentiment from the white upper class in Cuba and the importing of U.S. prejudices against Blacks with the numerous occupations of Cuba in first decades of the century. Despite Afro-Cubans performing admirably in the independence wars against Spain and constituting 75% of the insurgent army (Ferrer 1999b), the fear that Cuba would become another Black republic like Haiti coalesced with U.S. interventionism and culminated in the 1912 Race War in which approximately 6,000 men, women and children were killed for attempting to reinstate the Partido Independiente de Color, a Black political party (Helg 1995, De la Fuente 1999). Add to that the desire of the Cuban state to whiten the population with the migration of 900,000 Spaniards to counterbalance an equal amount of slaves that were imported into Cuba during the slave trade (Helg 1995). Furthermore, the eugenics movement had proponents in Cuba which also coincided with the *brujería* scares of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century where heinous crimes were attributed to Afro-Cubans religious practitioners (Bronfman 2004). It is within this racially charged context that Anglophone Afro-Caribbeans chose to create a subjectivity based on a respectable blackness that distinguished them from the other Afro-Cubans and Haitians.

This Anglophone Afro-Cuban subjectivity could be seen as a way to resolve their double diasporic identities (criterion 4) in a hostland hostile to all things Black by shifting their ancestral homeland to their colonial homeland. Not only did this diasporic identity as a “*negro fino*” (refined black) (Queeley 2015:143) eventually earn them a place in the Cuban stew of national identity (*ajiaco*), this respectable blackness became associated

Britishness. Great Britain is considered whiter than Cuba and higher on the cultural/racial hierarchy of nations (see Roland's [2010] discussion of Cuba's aspirations to climb this hierarchy, p. 40). While it is true that Blacks were being excluded from the modern space in Cuba, Queeley notes that Anglophone Cubans claimed their respective Caribbean nations as a homeland and England – not Africa – as a motherland (39, 66). Indeed the attributes of respectability stem from a Victorian sensibility (7).

This group also exhibited group identity and self-awareness (criterion 5) which manifested in numerous ways – through the maintenance of the English language and the Protestant religion through schools and churches as well as the creation of cultural organizations to preserve their cultural distinctiveness as well as serve as diasporic resources in the Special Period. While the Revolution in Cuba expanded opportunities in education which benefitted both white and Black Cubans, it severely narrowed the space for any discussion on racism and eliminated many of the Afro-Cuban mutual aid societies where an Anglophone Caribbean identity was fostered. Moreover, there was thought to be no need for hyphenated Cubans if all were united in a revolutionary cause (Queeley 2015:11). The anti-American sentiment of the regime also decreased the utility of knowing English, which diminished the desire of many of the descendants of Anglophone Caribbeans to learn English (94). This retrenchment of an Anglophone Caribbean identity, however, was followed by a desire to “rescue” their roots in the harsh economic environment of the Special Period of the 1990s and 2000s. The deployment of this diasporic identity was to combat the intensification of racism due to the dual economy and the return of tourism, both of which put Afro-Cubans at a distinct disadvantage (10-11). The discourse of respectability was instrumental in affirming self-

worth in an environment where many Afro-Cubans were forced to participate in illegal and immoral activities in order to survive. The Anglophone descendants also sought to create a diasporic lifeline for English speaking Caribbeans to help their Anglophone Cuban brothers and sisters during this time of economic and moral distress (113).

A diasporic identity allowed for descendants to look outside of Cuba for a positive identity so as not to be “misrecognized” and treated as abject (Hintzen and Rahier 2010: x). It should be noted that while the deployment of this diasporic identity created a sense of value and belonging for the descendants, it also was the basis of exclusion and essentialism as to who qualified as a descendant. In one new organization that was created during the Special Period, fourth generation descendants were excluded, as well as whites, gays, and others of dubious moral character (Queeley 2015:133). Consistent with Gilroy’s Black Atlantic, this was not an African essentialism, but a hybrid Black British one, which inhabits the middle of the African diaspora continuum where African essentialism it at one extreme and cosmopolitanism is emphasized at the other.

Another ethnography that the double diasporic positioning of Afro-Cubans is *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* which describes the ethnogenesis of Afro-Cuban identity in Tampa, Florida. Ethnogenesis is defined in text as “the unfolding process of group identification” (Greenbaum 2002: 8) which certainly fulfills the fifth criterion of double diaspora (group identity and self-awareness). The author, Susan Greenbaum, is an anthropologist and professor emerita of the University of South Florida in Tampa who had the privilege of working with the centenary Martí-Maceo Society that became the hallmark of Tampa Afro-Cuban identity. Greenbaum considers herself an



activist anthropologist who was marshalled to the cause when a group of Afro-Cuban guest speakers for her class recruited her assistance. They were fighting to include the Martí-Maceo Society as part of the historic centennial celebration of Ybor City in 1986 (2-3). Founded by Vicente Martínez Ybor, a Cuban cigar manufacturer of Spanish birth (59), Ybor City initially served as a settlement for tobacco-makers. The city was annexed to Tampa in the late 19th century. For the centennial, a monograph was produced highlighting the history of the Martí-Maceo Society and the contributions of Afro-Cubans in Ybor City (307). The existence of this group for a century meets the sixth criterion of existing over at least generations.

Greenbaum traces their identity from the Africans in 19<sup>th</sup> century Cuba, then documents their arrival as Cuban exiles in the original integrated Tampa organization at the turn of the century (104). This trajectory – from Africa to Cuba through the Transatlantic Slave Trade, then from Cuba to Tampa, Florida – is double diasporic demonstrating three distinct locations (criterion 1) representing diverse social and political conditions in each state (criterion 2). This group quickly became Afro-Cubans in their separate organization (Martí-Maceo) and then evolved, over time, into Afro-Cuban Americans. Greenbaum describes the ways in which Afro-Cubans sought a distinct identity apart from African Americans, but she also details how early on Afro-Cubans experienced abjection from their white Cuban counterparts which ultimately was the basis of a separate organization. This is an abjection (third criterion) transplanted from the first diasporic location (Cuba) and augmented in the second diasporic location with the concurrent phenomenon of Jim Crow laws.

The contradiction between the two diasporic identities (criterion 4) is what birthed the Martí-Maceo Society and the distinctive Tampa Afro-Cuban identity. Ethnogenesis for this group is described as a two-part process: first, with the founding of the Cuban organizations; second, with the effects of legal segregation (103, 118). Greenbaum details the split between Cuban organizations. Originally an integrated organization called the October 10 Club (representing one diaspora – the Cuban diaspora), Los Libres Pensadores de Martí y Maceo was founded on October 26, 1900, by 24 Afro-Cubans as a separate organization for Black Cubans (double diaspora), which ultimately became the Martí-Maceo Society (104-107).

One of Susan Greenbaum's students is the author of the third ethnography under review – *"I've Been Black in Two Countries": Black Cuban Views on Race in the U.S.* (2009). The very title of this book – taken from one of the participants interviewed – demonstrates the principle of double diaspora. The ancestors of the participants of this study were also brought to Cuba during the Transatlantic Slave Trade between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but then settled either in New York or in South Florida – mostly post 1959 though some before 1959 (criterion 1). Each diasporic hostland represented differing political and social conditions (criterion 2) and have existed for over two generations (criterion 6).

Hay describes the racial composition of the main waves of Cuban exiles. The early turn-of-the century Cuban exiles (including Tampa Afro-Cubans) where 20% were Afro-descendants differs greatly from the largely white racial composition of the Historic Exiles (first two waves 1959-1973) which further contrasted with the Mariel exiles, which where anywhere from 30-50% of the migrants were Afro-Cubans (26-32). Hay

furthermore details the co-ethnic racism experienced by many of her participants. Like the experience of Tampa Afro-Cubans, this racism was transplanted from Cuba and augmented in the United States. They experienced double abjection – by their co-ethnics and by majority American society (criterion 3).

Like the differentiated Afro-Cuban group described by Queeley (Anglophone, African, Haitian), Hay describes a self-aware group (criterion 5) that she classifies into three main Afro-Diasporic identities (Cuban Black, Black Cuban, Afro-Cuban) to resolve identity quandary of being double diasporic (criterion 4). This is reminiscent of Stuart Hall's identity as positioning. The Cuban Black may be closer to Martí's raceless *cubanidad* where a Cuban exile identity is dominant and race is secondary. It is as if this group fits more into the Cuban diaspora than into the African Diaspora continuum, although they do consider themselves black. Similar to the Anglophone Cubans, their identity is not anchored in Africa. However, the Black Cuban – where race comes before nationality - embraces Gilroy's version of the African diaspora. Black Cubans are depicted as seeking more alliances with African Americans and with having political affinities with them. The third group - Afro-Cuban - created a symbolic if not social distinction between themselves and African Americans (205). They see themselves as superior to African Americans and other racialized Hispanic groups (206). They are closer to Ortiz's *ajiaco*, and it is important that they remain part of the Cuban *ajiaco* for their Cubanness is seen as socially (if not materially) beneficial to them. Unlike the Cuban Black who objects to the Afro-Cuban name because it "dilutes [their] Cubanidad" (120), Afro-Cubans take pride in their Afro-Cuban ethnic identity and see exceptionalism

in it. All three groups are double diasporic – they are just using different ways to resolve the double diasporic identity quandary.

### **E. Cubanidad: A Historical Overview**

*Transcendent cubanidad* is perhaps the most noble version of cubanidad. This is Martí's definition in "My Race": "Men are more than whites, mulattos or Negroes. Cubans are more than whites, mulattos or Negroes. On the field of battle, dying for Cuba, the souls of whites and Negroes have risen together into the air" (Martí "My Race"). He furthermore states that "there can be no racial animosity because there are no races" (Martí "Our America"). Gen. Antonio Maceo also proclaims that "there were no blacks, nor whites, only Cubans" (Ferrer 1999: 20). While some people characterize this vision as naïve, that was not the case. Since the Spaniards were trying to portray the War of Independence as a race war, the mambises were trying to elevate the discourse and create a vision of a unified nation. The negative side-effect that this version of cubanidad has had is that it makes it unpatriotic to even talk about race.

Jose Antonio Saco best represents *White/Spanish cubanidad*. Sacó's version of cubanidad was one in which the white (Spanish) identity would be the central characteristic: "the only one that any sensible man would concern himself with [was] a nationality formed by the white race" (quoted in Ferrer 1999a). Though Sacó's thought represented the white middle class of his time (R. Moore 1997: 17), I contend that his definition of a *white/Spanish cubanidad* is alive and well in the Cuban exile community.

Fernando Ortiz's *transcultural cubanidad* was at its heyday between the 1930s-1950s during the Afrocubanismo movement. In contrast to the idea of assimilation, transculturation argues that each of the components that make up a Cuban identity

(cubanidad) are as important as the other. In this *ajiaco* or “ethnic stew”, the ingredients retain their identity while they influence each other (Ortiz, *Contrapunteo Cubano*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1963: 98-104).

*Afro-religious cubanidad* is best represented by Christine Ayorinde, who believes that Afro-Cuban religions are the essential element to cubanidad. She is critical of Ortiz for starting the process of turning Afro-Cuban religions into folklore (2004: 108). Referring to the dictator Fidel Castro’s famous definition of Cuba as an African-Latin nation, she asserts that “the definition of Cuba as an Afro-Latin country precludes giving space to those wanting to proclaim a separate Black identity” (141).

*Mestiza cubanidad* is best represented by Nicolas Guillen’s famous definition of Cuban color: “El espíritu de Cuba es mestizo y del espíritu hacia la piel nos vendrá el color definitivo. Algún día se dirá: Color cubano” (The Cuban spirit is mestizo and from the spirit will come a definitive color. One day we will say: Cuban color.) (Guillén qtd. in Lorenzo). The *ajiaco* is put into a blender and a Cuban color emerges that is derived from the different components, but they are no longer distinguishable. La Virgen de la Caridad is the ultimate symbol of mestiza cubanidad, and in her Ochun incarnation, she is symbolic of transcultural cubanidad. She may be the ultimate symbol cubanidad: she is also part of Afro-religious cubanidad, her Catholicism is Spanish in origen, and she was an inspiration to the mambises (transcendent cubanidad).

#### **F. First Diaspora: From Africa to Cuba**

This is the first leg of the Diaspora journey where anywhere from 700,000 to 1 million Africans were brought to Cuba in the Transatlantic Slave trade. African descendants maintained their culture through the cabildos which were organized around

the numerous African ethnic groups that were brought to Cuba. Ortiz notes that there were various African ethnic groups at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which still could be distinguishable (Ortiz, 1902). West-Durán names the Yoruba, Congo, Abakua (Carabali), Wolof, Ewe-Fon (Arara), Mina, Mandinga (Fula), Hausa, Ashanti, and Ngola as just some of the African groups brought to the Caribbean including Cuba (7). The cabildos then became influential mutual aid societies. De la Fuente notes that 100 of these Afro-Cuban organizations were operative in Cuba in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (De la Fuente, 1999: 37). Afro-Cubans also played a significant role in the War of Independence against Spain.

One of the singular achievements of the new Cuban republic was that Afro-Cuban men were allowed to vote (women followed later). De la Fuente notes that by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, 1/3 of the electorate was Afro-Cuban (1999: 37). The Negrista and Afro-Cubanismo movements highlighted significant contributions of Africans to Cubanidad. By the time Castro came into power, 27% of the population was Afro-Cuban. Today, it is estimated between 38% - 60% (Cuban Demographics Profile 2018).

### **G. Second Diaspora: From Cuba to the United States**

There are as many as five post 1959 waves of Cuban exiles arriving to the United States. The following summarizes what is known about the size and racial composition of four waves of Cuban migration.

<b>Table 4: Racial Composition of Waves of Cuban Migration to the United States</b>			
<b>Wave</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Racial Composition</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> – Golden Exiles	1959-1962	280,000	94% white
2 <sup>nd</sup> – Freedom Flights	1965-1973	273,000	76% white
3 <sup>rd</sup> – Mariel	1980	125,000	30% Afro-Cuban
4 <sup>th</sup> – Balsero	1994 – 2008	389,048	8% Afro-Cuban

5 <sup>th</sup> – Obama Era Onward	2009 – 2019	519,866	4.74% Afro-Cuban
Source: Dixon 1988; Bowie and Stepick 1998; Poyo and Diaz-Miranda 1994; Diaz-Briquets 2010; U.S. Homeland Security 2019			

While the Golden exile waves were predominately white, as many as 30% of the Mariel boatlift Cubans were of African descent. Not coincidentally, the media coverage of the Marielitos was very negative, and this group over time has been less successful than the historic exiles. Additionally, the balseros (“rafters”) of the 1990s were also seen as noticeably darker than previous generations of immigrants, and these immigrants coincided with changes in the law that were less favorable than the open-door policy for previous waves of exiles. When combined, the Marielitos, the balseros, and recent immigrants are a numerically larger group than the historic exiles, but the historic exiles and their descendants are an economically and politically hegemonic group and dominate the discourse of what it means to be Cuban in the United States. Cuban-American identity today is narrowly defined in terms of success, race, political party, and socio-economic standing, excluding many Afro-Cubans and some white Cubans as well who have not succeeded in becoming the model minority.

#### **H. Double Diaspora: The Whitewashing of Cubanidad**

During the first leg of the double diaspora journey, African cultural elements were syncretized with Spanish and other influences and incorporated into a Cuban identity. Afro-Cubans in the United States experience a double diaspora where Afro-Cuban identity is largely whitewashed. Seeing is believing so what follows are pictures from the 2013 Cuba Nostalgia exhibit, Miami, Florida. This event happens every year near the

pre-revolutionary Cuban Independence Day, 20 de Mayo (20<sup>th</sup> of May). Other pictures are derived from conspicuous landmarks and murals. All point toward the whitewashing of cubanidad and manifest the double diaspora experience for Afro-Cubans. The following slides were taken from a presentation that the author gave at the Cuban Research Institute Conference in 2013 (Cruz 2013). Disclaimer: the organizers of the exhibit are not responsible for the individual exhibiter's art, but they are responsible for their own posters, displays, etc. that they created to frame the exhibit.



Figure 3: This is the entrance of the Cuba Nostalgia exhibit 2013. Note that there are no Afro-Cubans in this collage. Photo by author.



## Original – La Virgen de la Caridad



Figure 4: This is a close-up of the original image of la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre in Cuba. Photo: Francisco Javier Arbolí<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Martinez, Rosa. 2010. "Our Lady of Charity Day Observed." 9 September. Photo attributed to Francisco Javier Arbolí (wikimedia.org) <https://havanatimes.org/opinion/our-lady-of-charity-day-observed/>

## Cuba Nostalgia - 2013



Figure 5: This was one of the many images at the Cuba Nostalgia event – very white.  
Photo by author.

## Cuba Nostalgia - 2013



Figure 6: Here is another whitened version of la Virgen de la Caridad at the exhibit.  
Photo by author.

## Cuba Nostalgia - 2013



Figure 7: Here are additional versions. Note how in the previous slide and this one the baby Jesus now has blonde hair. Photo by author.

## Cuba Nostalgia - 2013



Figure 8: This is a history of Cuba created for the exhibit. You would be hard-pressed to find any Afro-Cubans here either. Photo by author.

## Cuba Nostalgia - 2013



Figure 9: When there are images of Afro-Cubans, they are caricatures (large lips and buxom body parts). Photo by author.

## Cuba Nostalgia - 2013



Figure 10: The pictures do not do this justice. These “Celia Cruz” dolls have a strange mauve skin tone. Photo by author.

## Cuba Nostalgia - 2013



Figure 11: Further images that are not really representative. Photo by author.

## La Ermita de la Caridad Mural

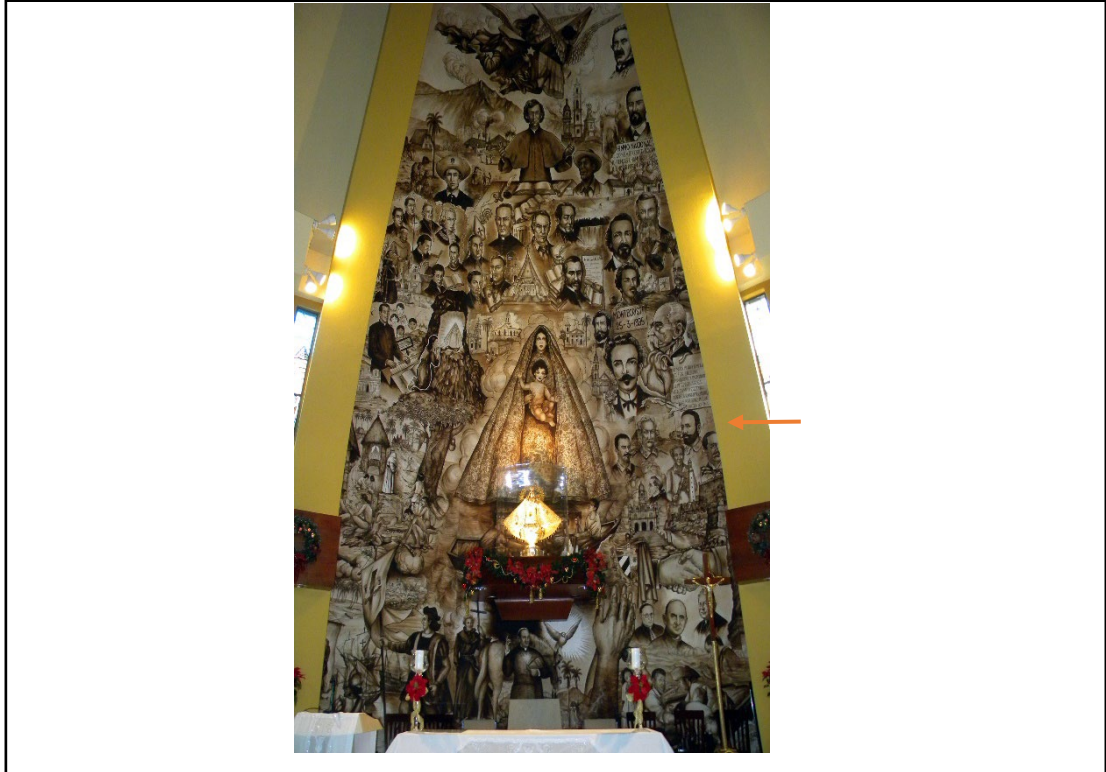


Figure 12: This is the famous mural at la Ermita de la Caridad in Miami, Florida. Maceo looks Italian. Note as well how much smaller and subordinated he is to the far bottom right. Photo: Jorge Elias, December 20, 2013, Ermita de la Caridad, Creative Commons license.

## Cuban American Mural



Figure 13: In this mural, Celia Cruz has the same skin tone as Tito Puente. Beny More, Pedro Knight, and Olga Guillot are also much lighter than their original skin tones.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> ID [134880533](#) © [Kmiragaya](#) | [Dreamstime.com](#) Purchased Editorial Stock Photo.

## Jose Marti Parade – Hialeah 2022



Figure 14: Jose Martí Parade Hialeah 2022 – no Afro-Cuban representation.  
Photo by author.



I also included a photo from the 2022 Jose Marti Parade in Hialeah. There was no Afro-Cuban representation (apart from the author who attended in the role of a researcher and her family), which doesn't live up to the Marti's version of cubanidad that is "con todos y para el bien de todos" [for all and for the good of all (Cubans)] (Marti 1891). Ultimately, Afro-Cubans are in a double diaspora. The effects of being in double diaspora in Miami is that Afro-Cubans often face an identity quandary. In order to fit into African American society, it can mean losing latinidad and cubanidad. In order to fit into Cuban American society, it can result in stomaching uncensored anti-Black rhetoric, suppressing Africanness, and having claims of cubanidad challenged, rejected, and ultimately whitewashed. Afro-Cubans can use their intersectional identity to create diasporic alliances with different South Florida communities while retaining their cultural distinctiveness and avoiding invisibility.

## **I. Ethnographic Evidence**

### **a. African Ancestry – First Diaspora**

When **Yocelin** established her social media accounts highlighting her Black Cuban identity, it was to create more awareness about Afro-Cubans and to learn about the African diaspora as it pertains to Cubans. This group awareness fulfills the fifth criterion of double diaspora. Of the Mariel migration wave, she came to the United States at age eight and did not learn much about her African ancestry growing up. *When I started my page, it was just about me trying to find out about my own heritage. Because I felt like I was lacking so much information. My mom passed away in '97. My dad; my grandmother passed away, so there is like no ... I mean there's aunts and stuff like that*

*but they vaguely give me information as far as like the real diaspora. The ancestry or information, it's almost like I feel ... okay where did it go? It's almost like lo están escondiendo. Sweep it under the rug type of thing. That's why I post anything that has to do with Afro-Cubans, I am learning myself. (emphasis mine).*<sup>37</sup> She does know that her great-great-grandmother on her mother's side was born in Africa, but she wanted to learn more. This quest for knowledge and affirmation of an Afro-Cuban identity did provoke indignation in some Cubans, even though this identity has been in existence over two generations (criterion 6). When she used the term Afro-Cuban several years ago on social media, someone responded “*what the --- is that?*”<sup>38</sup>

Most of the participants Yocelin's generation and older have more information about their African lineage than the younger generations who know that they are afro-descendants, have Afro-Cuban cultural traditions, but cannot trace back how many generations were born in Cuba.

Born in the year of the Cuban revolution, **Haydee** described her mixed racial ancestry which is representative of over three-quarters of the participants: *Conocí a mis abuelos. A mis bisabuelos [parternos], conocí una sola. Conocí a mis bisabuelos de mi mama por parte materna. Los bisabuelos míos, uno era española, y mi bisabuelo, me imagino que abra sido de raíces africanas por el color pero él no conoció a sus padres. Yo estaba bastante chica cuando ellos murieron y no pude saber un poquito más y me imagino que eran de África por el color. Por parte de mi papa, debe de ser*

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<sup>37</sup> Yocelin, interview with the author, July 30, 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

*más o menos igual*. (I met my grandparents. Of my [paternal] great-grandparents, I met only one. I met my great-grandparents from my mother's side. My great-grandparents, one was Spanish, and my great-grandfather, I assume that he was of African roots because of his color but he didn't know his parents. I was quite young when they died and I couldn't know a little more and I imagine they were from Africa because of the color. On my father's side, it must be more or less the same.)<sup>39</sup> Often, mixed race couples can be found several generations back in Cuba. In the case of Haydee's great grandparents, this was a color hypogamous union (black/mulatto male; white female) which is rarer historically than color hypergamous unions (white male; black/mulatto female) (Martínez-Alier 1989). Haydee was fortunate to have met some of her great-grand parents. It is likely that the parents of her African-descent great-grandfather that he never met were born before slavery was abolished in Cuba.

In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall explains three presences in the New World – Presence Africaine, Presence Europeene, and Presence Americain – where the African presence is the unspeakable presence that can no longer be located in its original site (Africa), the European presence is omnipresent but also creolized, and the American presence becomes the site of creolization, syncretism, and hybridity (1998: 230-6). While hybridity certainly describes most of the participants of this study, in the Cuban context hybridity can be used to decenter and/or erase African ancestry.

Bárbara has detailed information on her Spanish lineage and was able to use her paternal grandmother's Spanish nationality to leave Cuba; she traces her African ancestry

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<sup>39</sup> Haydee, interview with the author, June 29, 2021.

through her paternal and maternal grandfathers, also hypogamous unions. When someone is from Spain, it is clear; when someone is from Africa, it is assumed because of their skin color. The youngest participants described their African ancestry in a similar fashion. **Yusleydis** describes her father and his family as “*gente morena*” and their brown skin color is a signpost of her African ancestry.<sup>40</sup> However, Maria, the oldest participant in this study, knows that her African descendants are Yoruba, can count how many generations were born in Cuba and knows which ancestors were slaves (more about her in Chapter 5).

**Dr. Edwards** is also knowledgeable about his family’s history. Dr. Edwards is an anglophone Afro-Cuban from his father’s side. His paternal grandparents were born in St. Kitts but met in Bermuda at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century where *they had two daughters in Bermuda, and then my father was born in Cuba, and all the other siblings after that, they were born in Cuba ... My mother, as far as we can remember, we are. My mother was born in Cuba. My grandmother was born in Cuba. My great grandmother, they were slaves, so they were from Cuba.*<sup>41</sup> Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833 (Brain 2019), and the mobility of his grandparents suggest that they may have been emancipated or freeborn. However, the ancestors from his mother’s side were described as slaves which concurs with the late abolishment of slavery in Cuba in 1886 (Scott 1983). In the narration of his family history, there is a hierarchy where the free anglophones are above the enslaved Afro-Cubans directly from Africa which affirms the Afro-Cuban hierarchy discussed in Queeley’s work (2015).

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<sup>40</sup> Yusleydis, interview with the author, October 1, 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Edwards, interview with the author, December 17, 2021.

## **b. Migration to the U.S. – Second Diaspora**

The migration histories of my participants were fascinating. In some ways, **Dr. Edwards** had a reverse Pedro Pan experience. Instead of his parents sending him to United States by himself and joining him later, his parents when to the United States first when he was five and were reunited with him seven years later. They were opposed to the regime: *Castro goes to Guantanamo. He makes a speech and my mother heard his the speech, and she says she says to my father, “Listen, do you hear what he's saying? Do you HEAR what he's saying????” Well, make a long story short, my father asked for a leave from the Base; he used to work at the Guantanamo Base, he asked for a leave, and once he got that leave, six months later, he was in the United States as a tourist. And six months later, my mother came and that eased the way for my sister and I to leave Cuba with an aunt. So that's how I came to the United States, actually, I had to wait seven years to get out of Cuba. [Wow.] Yeah. So, I practically didn't know my mother and father, you know, because I was about five. So, by the time I got here, I was like 11 or 12. I was actually, my 12th birthday was in Mexico City. So basically, that's how we got here. You know, my mother and father, they feared communism, and they said, “You know what, we're leaving before this thing gets worse.” And that's how I ended up here.*<sup>42</sup> His parents made a difficult decision to leave their kindergarten-aged son with family in order to pave the way for their children’s migration. His parents, then, were Golden Exiles, leaving in 1961, while his migration in 1968 coincided with the second wave that came on the Freedom Flights. 1961 was also the year of the doomed Bay of Pigs invasion. No

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<sup>42</sup> Dr. Edwards, interview with the author, December 17, 2021.

doubt that the rising tensions between the United States and Cuba, culminating in the Cuban missile crisis and its aftermath, were an impediment for the reuniting of his parents with their children.

**Yocelin** left during Mariel and was transferred to Ft. Chafee; she lived in New Jersey before coming to Miami. *I came in the Mariel boatlift at 8 years old. I arrived in Miami, was sent to Arkansas, then with family in New Jersey and I settled in Miami in 1984. My grandmother's sister, her kids, they lived in New Jersey; ellos nos reclamaron. My grandmother's sister came in the '60s. We went to Arkansas, to Ft. Chafee. Some people went to the Orange Bowl. As a matter of fact, when I was doing the 40th anniversary [of Mariel], I found out so much information and I had one of the soldiers reach out. He was working there during that time, so it was nice that he reached out. He still follows me. After Arkansas, I went to New Jersey. I remember seeing old pictures ... when I saw the green cots, I was like "oh my God, I remember that." I also remember the Freedom Tower, and I was told that no there was nothing there, but I remember going into the building and looking up. It was a tall building. Maybe we had to do some paperwork there. I have that memory.*<sup>43</sup> Although not all Mariel refugees had family here and had to wait to be sponsored to leave the campus, Yocelin had family who lived in the United States who claimed her.

**Bárbara** left Cuba in the late 1980s and spent 13 years in Spain before coming to the United States in the year 2000. She appears to be triple diasporic, but I would categorize her ancestral trajectory from Africa to Cuba to Spain to the United States as

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<sup>43</sup> Yocelin, interview with the author, July 30, 2021.

A<sup>1</sup> – B – A<sup>2</sup> – C because it includes a second ancestral location (Spain). Spain was simply a means to get out of Cuba and eventually get to the United States. She doesn't really have pleasant memories of Spain, which highlights the experiences of abjection in each diasporic location. *Yo salí de Cuba a España con los papeles de mi abuela paterna que era española por supuesto, entonces, mi abuela muere en Cuba y había dejado a mi madre los papeles de una propiedad de una casa que había dejado allá en Las Palmas.* (I left Cuba for Spain with the papers of my paternal grandmother who was Spanish, of course, then, my grandmother died in Cuba and had left my mother the deed of a property of a house that she had left there in Las Palmas.)<sup>44</sup> She spent some time in Madrid, doing all sorts of odd jobs to get ahead. Because there was an anti-Cuban sentiment at the time that she lived in Spain, she would fake an exaggerated Dominican accent to not have her nationality held against her. After living in Spain for some years, she finally decided to go to Las Palmas, one of the Canary Islands. When she arrived at Las Palmas, on a boiling hot summer day, the squatters living on the property that belonged to her grandmother would not speak to her nor give her a cup of water because “*no le damos agua a los negros.*” (We don't give water to niggers).<sup>45</sup> She had already enlisted the help of a local policeman who was poised to assist her in claiming the property, but she decided to let go of the property because she did not want to live around such ignorant people. Bárbara recognizes and has experienced the racism of the Cuban American community in Miami, but she feels that the racism in Spain is worse. She arrived in

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<sup>44</sup> Bárbara, interview with the author, November 13, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Bárbara, interview with the author, August 14, 2021.

Miami after her daughter settled there. Bárbara's children have colorful migration stories as well: her daughter, Brenda, entered into a short-lived marriage of convenience, while her son, Mario, risked his life at sea to escape Cuba. For those who think that Black Cubans uncritically support the communist regime or are simply economic refugees, this does not agree with accounts of the Afro-Cuban voices recorded here.

**Brenda**, a medium-complexioned retail worker, was the first in her nuclear family to come to the United States in the 1990s. Her mother arranged for her to marry Roberto, a white Cuban friend of the family who lived on the same block and who had just gotten "*la visa del bombo*" (lottery visa).<sup>46</sup> The families had been friends for decades; Brenda's family was the only one with a telephone in that neighborhood at that time, and they frequently called their family matriarch in the U.S. before she passed away. Roberto had a temper, and he owed the Cuban government money for damages arising from a brawl between him and another patron at a government owned facility. Consequently, Brenda arrived to the United States first and settled in Miami. Roberto came months later, but he disassociated himself completely from Brenda and chose to settle in Texas instead, where he knew no one. She had no intention of living with him to create the farce of their marriage, but she did want to help him get situated and on his feet. Miami seemed to be the better place for him to acclimate given the dominance of the Cuban community. Was he pressured into this marriage? Was Brenda's race a factor in his complete disassociation from her upon arrival to the U.S.? Their families were like two peas in a pod when they lived in Cuba. Roberto was found dead three days after he

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<sup>46</sup> Brenda, interview with the author, September 3, 2021.



passed away due to alcohol intoxication because he had not reported to work; this was not even a year after he migrated. Roberto did love his daughters from a previous marriage who he left in Cuba, but his anger management issues were well known. That he was an acceptable choice, even for a fake marriage, shows what people are willing to do to leave Cuba. It also shows the “Best of Friends, Worlds Apart” pattern that Ojito described in her article where Black and White Cubans who were part of each other’s lives in Cuba become estranged upon migrating to the United States.

### c. Diasporic Alliances

Diasporic alliances were critical in the social and economic development of the participants of this study. For **Dialys**, her close social circle is now comprised of Caribbean people of African descent from Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and Haiti. This wasn’t the case when she first arrived from Cuba. *When I first got here, I remember my friends were like all Cubans. It was just literally our group was just Cubans. I didn't have any other friends, just like my Cuban friends. But slowly like growing up. I started like getting more friends like just anyone that seems interesting to me because I started opening up more to different people and I learned English, so I didn't only need to speak to people who like, spoke Spanish, so I made a lot more friends. Now, I don't have a Cuban friend at all.*<sup>47</sup> Learning English facilitating the expansion of her social circle outside of people from Cuba. Was there another impetus to not only make friends who are Afro-Caribbean but also to move away from having Cuban friends in her inner circle? *It's like when I*

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<sup>47</sup> Dialys, interview with the author, November 10, 2021.

*first got here, I would always see like black friends over here, like Cubans over there, like like the white people just sitting on a different table. It was very, very divided, and I tried to make friends with everyone and people were looking at me like, You don't belong here. So, you're in the wrong group, sis. So, they just kind of like looking at me like that. So, growing up, it was very confusing, very confusing to me. That's why I struggle so much and like why I don't have Cuban friends now because like they make a lot of racist comments, and I just don't like standing around for that. Think Cubans have the tendency to make comments about like being better than everyone else, basically. So, I just like stay away from that (emphasis mine).<sup>48</sup>* In Miami schools across educational levels (primary, secondary, post-secondary), it is not uncommon to see students cluster into ethno-racial groups during times when they are allowed to socialize (lunchtime, recess, etc.). When Dialys tried to use her intersectional and biracial identity to cross these boundaries, she would get rebuffed: “you’re in the wrong group, sis.” Staying with Cubans at first, she eventually became sensitized to racist comments, microaggressions that accumulate over time. The confusion she speaks of is the identity quandary (criterion 4 of double diaspora) the contradiction of two diasporic identities. She also rejects the Cuban exceptionalism argument which posits Cubans above every other group. It was a combination of these factors that caused her to seek diasporic alliances with other Afro-diasporic populations of the Caribbean.

Which group does **Dialys** feel most comfortable with and is most accepting of her? *It's funny, black people. Ok. Yeah, that's made me feel accepted by. It's real funny*

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<sup>48</sup> Dialys, interview with the author, November 10, 2021.

*because the only people that I basically like bring to my house are like my black friends because they're the ones that like I just automatically click with. [Yeah.] Like, I have sleepovers. And then my dad the other day is like, "Do you not have any white friends?" And I don't. No.*<sup>49</sup> This shift in her friendship circle has not gone unnoticed by her family, especially her white Cuban father. The way Dialys clicks with her black friends is the diaspora at work, the "mutual recognition over fragmented geographies" (Hintzen and Rahier 2010 xviii). This is not the case always, and there have been times where Dialys has been made to feel other by black people. *Because mainly I like have black friends and I was at a party and they brought me to another group of friends that they had. And like, they were all black and like. It was kind of like they had they were just all talking. And like, I felt like I was like put to the side. And not just like because they didn't know me, because usually like I walk into a group and it doesn't matter, like what is like, they still talk to me, but I felt like I was like pushed to the side because like I was lighter than everyone else, basically.*<sup>50</sup> Colorism is certainly a factor that can affect interactions with other afro-descendants. Yet this dilemma - too Black to be Cuban; too Cuban (and in this case too light) to be Black – also alludes to the identity quandary faced by many Afro-Cubans in Miami. However, for the most part, the mutual recognition of the African diaspora outweighs the negative encounters for Dialys.

Diasporic alliances can also aid in the economic development of Afro-Cubans, especially for entrepreneurs such as **Bárbara**. *Mira donde yo trabajaba, estoy hablando de gente cubana, la única negra que trabajaba allí era yo. Y yo trabajaba con la puerta*

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

*cerrada. Y los demás decían, “¿porque tú tienes la puerta cerrada?” Porque el contrato me exige que tenga la puerta cerrada; si ustedes no la tienen, es asunto de ustedes. Y había de todo, nicaragüense, panameños, la única negra era yo. Y siempre me estaban pidiendo que le prestara algo. Pero nunca yo iba a la puerta de nadie para pedirle algo, porque yo buscaba de qué manera de tenerlo y de prepararme precisamente para no tener que pedirlo a nadie. Entonces llegaba un momento en que me lo echaban en la cara, “¡Tú eres la única peluquera aquí que atiende a las negras afroamericanos! Tu eres la única peluquera aquí que hace alisados. Tu eres la única peluquera aquí que hace cornrows.” Y yo “¿y porque no los hacen ustedes?” “¡No, yo no hago eso! Yo no hago eso.” Con desprecio, “¡¡¡¡¡yo no hago ESO!!!!!!!!” (Look where I worked, I'm talking about Cuban people, the only black person who worked there was me. And I worked with the door closed. And the others would say, "Why do you have the door closed?" Because the contract requires me to keep the door closed; if you don't have it, it's your business. And there was everything, Nicaraguan, Panamanian, the only black one was me. And they were always asking me to lend them something. But I never went to anyone's door to ask for something, because I was looking for a way to have it and to prepare myself precisely so that I didn't have to ask anyone for anything. Then there would come a time when they would throw it to my face, "You're the only hairdresser here who caters to Black African Americans! You're the only hairdresser here who does relaxers. You're the only hairdresser here who does cornrows." And I would say, “why*

don't you do them?" "No, I don't do that! I don't do that." With contempt, "I don't do THAT!!!!!!!!")<sup>51</sup>

The diasporic alliance here is to African American women. Because Bárbara sees African Americans as people with hair worthy of styling, she was able to expand her clientele beyond white Latina women, which more than compensated for the white Latinas who did not want a black beautician, and thus increased her salary accordingly. The anti-black prejudice is deafening in this interchange. She was the only stylist that catered to African Americans with the styles and the products that they desired. It was as if to say, “without you here, we wouldn’t have to see these people and their hairstyles which we don’t like.” Yet Bárbara’s catering to her clientele, especially doing cornrows, was a shift in diasporic culture to adapt to the social conditions in the U.S. (criterion 2). After Bárbara left that salon, most likely new potential African American clients would be turned away because no one was left who would want to do their hair. And there was no effort to learn how to do these techniques because “I don’t do THAT!!!!” The repulsion to all things black is so strong that the idea of learning a black hairstyle technique is offensive because it would blacken the white Latina stylist.

This repulsion is cloaked in the language of modernity. **Bárbara** wonders why these techniques are bothersome to her coworkers: “*¿Porqué, le molesta que yo lo hago?*” “*No, no me molesta. Pero ... eso es de muchos años atrás. Han avanzado los años.*” *¿Qué hacían ellas? La queratina, la extensiones postizas, lo que más dinero daban.* “*¡Hay, modernízate! ¡Modernízate!*” “*Yo lo sé hacer, no es que no lo sé hacer.*”

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<sup>51</sup> Bárbara, interview with the author, November 13, 2021.

*Lo que pase que las clientas que tengo son de los que yo hago. Lo que ellas me pidan, eso es que yo hago. ¿Qué quieres que haga?*" ("Why does it bother you that I do [these styles]?" "No, it doesn't bother me. But... that's from many years ago. The years have advanced." What did they do? Keratin treatments, hair extensions, whatever gave them more money. "Oh, modernize yourself! Modernize!" I know how to do it [modern techniques], it's not that I don't know do it. But the clients I have are the ones I style. Whatever they ask of me, that's what I do. What do you want me to do?")<sup>52</sup> The "modern" techniques are really aligned with the idea of aspiring to whiteness with extra-long, straight hair. The "old" techniques are either unapologetically Afrocentric, black, or techniques only done on textured hair. The safety of one of the new techniques, keratin, is questionable especially the salon formulas with formaldehyde, a carcinogen (FDA 2021). Relaxers and keratin treatments both straighten hair, but the former is associated with Black people, the latter is not. The old techniques are considered primitive, abject, and placed outside of modernity along with the beauticians who continue to use them and their clients (criterion 3). Yet from the perspective of the Black Atlantic, Barbara's learning how to do cornrows is a strategic form of counterculture to what is considered modernity. This diasporic alliance allowed Bárbara to thrive even in environments hostile to Blacks, and she was able to bring this clientele to her own business.

Of a darker complexion than his mother and sister, **Mario** has used diasporic alliances to combat the racial harassment that he has experienced while pursuing his

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

education and in his workplace. He was conspicuously one of the few Afro-descendants in one of his classes, and his white American professor commented with derision “*This country is becoming full of Blacks!*!”<sup>53</sup> The only person that he could be talking about was him, the only Black immigrant in his class. He made his life miserable in that class, which could have been a stumbling block from him earning that credential. Thankfully, he was able to get help from a Black Dominican professor to intervene on his behalf (a diasporic alliance). Apart from the xenophobia, this professor’s comment (one of many that he was subjected to) is also saying that *Black* Cubans shouldn’t be allowed to come here and fill this great “white” country with their unwanted Blackness.

At Mario’s current workplace, there is a white Cuban woman who has decided to wage an open war with him.

“*¿¿¿¿HASTA CUANDO TU VAS A ESTAR AQUÍ???*!!!”

“*Mientras no me boten, voy a continuar aquí.*” *Ella no es jefa de mi unidad sino de otra unidad que llega hasta mi piso para decirme una y otra vez “¿¿¿¿HASTA CUANDO TU VAS A ESTAR AQUÍ???”* *Que ha dicho que va a llamar a la compañía que me contrate para que me quiten de aquí, porque ya es “demasiado.”*

“*¿Demasiado qué?*” *No sé a lo que se refiere, porque ni voy a donde esta ella, ni la molesto, ni nada.*

["HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO BE HERE???!"]

"As long as they don't fire me, I'm going to continue here." She is not the head of my unit but of another unit that comes to my floor to tell me again and again "HOW LONG

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<sup>53</sup> Mario, interview with the author, September 17, 2021.

ARE YOU GOING TO BE HERE????" She has said that he is going to call the company that hires me to remove me from here, because it is already "too much."

"Too much what?" I don't know what she means, because I don't go to where she is, or bother her, or anything.]<sup>54</sup>

Unlike many of his other coworkers, Mario is a contractual worker, and he has more autonomy and flexibility than they do. He is paid better, his uniform is different, and he has been commended for his work ethic and for not missing a day of work during the COVID-19 health crisis. He is a stellar employee, yet he is "too much" for them. He is paid more because he can be assigned to where the need is the greatest, whether it is at another facility or in another state. During the most perilous era of the pandemic (when there was no vaccine), he was sent to places with the highest rates of transmission, but he did so without complaint. If they want his pay and accolades, they have to be willing to relocate at the drop of a hat for months at a time (which they cannot do) and be willing to go to the areas of greatest need even risking their own health (which they will not do). He is not the only outsourced employee of that facility, but the hostility wreaked upon him by this supervisor and others is that on top of all of this he is Black and Cuban.

The reason why this supervisor from another unit has not acted on her desire to remove him from his position at their facility is that his presidential commendation was sent to the Human Resources Director, an African American woman, with the orders to coordinate a public recognition of his service. She has served as a diasporic alliance to shield him from being removed from working at that location. He could go one step

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



further and lodge a discrimination complaint, but so far, he has chosen to take the high road and try to ignore the hostility. If he were a janitor, would this supervisor be screaming at him “HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO BE HERE????” Would she be threatening his livelihood by demanding that he be removed from her presence (which she seeks just to harass him)? I don’t think so. They would be beckoning him to come and empty the trash baskets and clean the carpet. He would make sense to them in that lowly underpaid role and his blackness would be invisibilized in that subordination; in his current role, he is “too much.” Mario’s double diasporic experience in South Florida is illustrative of a **double exclusion** – exclusion from the white American mainstream and from white Cubans.

In South Dade, **Dr. Edwards** created diasporic alliances with his mostly Black American patients. *My black patients. I'm trying to reach out ... But I'll tell you this. Patients are assigned to whichever clinic makes the most money. For example, Medicaid patients are assigned to certain clinics that are really big and they're producing money to the insurance. Like most black, 90 percent of the black patients, they are assigned to those things, but they don't know that they do not know that they could actually choose who's their doctor. Well, when they find out. Those are the most loyal patients that I have, black Afro-American patients, and they're here. But once they find out there's a black doctor here, they come here and they keep calling them from all the clinics. But they actually tell me “they're calling me, but I'm not going. I'm staying here.” So, if you talk about loyalty? I stick with them and they stick with me because Latinos, they want the little bus, pastelitos de guayaba, and some toiletries, and they go to that clinic. Black*

*Americans don't go for that. They want healthcare.* (emphasis added).<sup>55</sup> This loyalty is to afro-descendants who recognize and respect his medical knowledge, and he recognizes and respects them as patients, whereas his colleagues and white co-ethnics would never set foot in that part of town and rarely see these clients in their central Miami locations. His patients also recognize that it is rare to find a Black doctor; only 5.4% of physicians practicing in Florida are Black or African American (Florida Health 2018). Dr. Edwards does not provide Cuban pastries or some of the complimentary items and services of the many clinics in Miami that cater to the Hispanic and especially Cuban population. His goal is to provide excellent healthcare and that is appreciated by his clients. It is because of this loyalty that he still wants to maintain a presence in South Dade even as he transitions to Puerto Rico.

#### **d. Natural Hair Movement as Counterculture to Modernity**

One way in which Black Cuban females in this study were able to express their African diasporic heritage was through their natural hair. Yocelin has worn her hair in locks for the past two years and explains the reactions to her hair.

*“¿¿¿¿Niña, porqué te hiciste eso????” La hermana del ex-marido mío fue la primera.*

*“¿Pero, eso se quita?”*

*No, ese es mi pelo.*

*“¿Ese es tu pelo? ¿¿¿Y porque lo tienes así????”*

*Porque eso se llama locks.*

*“¿Qué cosa es locks?”*

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<sup>55</sup> Dr. Edwards, interview with the author, December 17, 2021.

["Girl, why did you do that to yourself????"] My ex-husband's sister was the first.

"But, that can be taken off, right?"

No, that's my hair.

"That's your hair? And why do you have it like this????"

Because that's called locks.

"What are locks?"]

Yocelin describes her ex-husband's sister as *White White White White White*.<sup>56</sup>

**Yocelin** laments that no amount of explaining her hair to her white Cuban family and friends seems to further their understanding or diminish their bewilderment as to why she would don such an Afrocentric hairstyle. Some of these same people got excited when she posted a picture of herself with straight hair: *Yo puse en mi page una foto de cuando me alize el pelo. "Ay" "No, eso es TBT – Throwback Thursday. Ya yo no me alizo el pelo." "Hay niña pero tan bonita se te ve el pelo." Los dejo por incorrigible.* [I put on my page a picture of when I straighten my hair. "Oh" "No, that's TBT – Throwback Thursday. I don't straighten my hair anymore." "But your hair looks so beautiful that way." I leave them as incorrigible.]<sup>57</sup> The whole point of Throwback Thursday to highlight either a musical style or a photo from a bygone era, but some thought that she had returned to a Eurocentric hairstyle, the standard of beauty for many Latinas and Cubans. The message to conform to this beauty standard also comes from

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<sup>56</sup> Yocelin, interview with author, July 30, 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

other Afro-Cubans: *tienes que estirarse las pasitas* [You have to straighten your kinky hair.]<sup>58</sup>

The natural hair movement of the past 20 years has certainly empowered Afro-descendant women to appreciate their own beauty. **Yocelin** elaborates on her journey: *To tell you the truth, the only reason that I even had the guts to do it was with the wave of the natural hair movement and I felt comfortable enough to do it. And to think about it; it is so messed up that I have to feel that way about it, about my own hair. I'm like, are you serious? You do know it's my hair?*<sup>59</sup> **Yusleydis**, who was born and came of age in the middle of this latest era of the natural hair movement, sees it this way: *¿Para qué me voy a cambiar mi pelo si yo prefiero mi pelo rizo? Entonces yo digo que es bueno apreciar tu pelo natural si es, como yo, algo diferente, algo único el que te diferencia a otras personas.* [Why am I going to change my hair if I prefer my curly hair? So, I say it's good to appreciate your natural hair if it's, like me, something different, something unique that sets you apart from other people.]<sup>60</sup> Yusleydis likes that her hair makes her stand out. Yusleydis' curls do get a different reaction than Yocelin's locks whose texture is further away from straightness and a Eurocentric beauty standard. Yet Yusleydis' hair would have been considered controversial even a couple of years back and is still avoided by some Latinas who have her hair type.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Yusleydis, interview with author, October 1, 2021.

Dialys' hair is similar to Yusleydis, except it is halfway down her back (not to her waist). Though Dialys is also a natural, she goes from straight hair to curly at will and is more experimental in terms of haircuts and colors. When she doesn't want to leave her hair out, she occasionally wears her hair parted down the middle in two braids that closely border the perimeter of her face. While they are age peers, **Dialys** arrive a couple of years earlier to the United States than Yusleydis. She describes how she came to embrace her hair type: *In the beginning, my own mother did it. She would like do keratin treatments and stuff in my hair and like my hair would never be curly, like my hair would always be straight, and I never noticed how badly like. Like they call it whitewashing now. I'm like, I basically like, whitewashed myself in a way when I first got here, like completely like my hair was never curly. I started like a curly hair routine, like a few years ago. But before I definitely would like dress very differently. I would straighten my hair. I would like to talk like the way people around me talked. It was, yeah, I definitely like, switched around myself just to fit in.*<sup>61</sup> Dialys describes her initial adaptation to the United States as "whitewashing," an attempt to fit in by embracing a Eurocentric style, not only in her hairstyle but her clothes, her manner of speaking. Her Afro-Cuban mother was certainly part of this adaptation process, but she let a negative reaction to her curly hair when she was newly arrived to the country discourage her from wearing it that way for years. In embracing the ease with which she can go from curly to straight to braided hair, Dialys is also accepting her hybridity which is inclusive of her European and African ancestries; this hybridity is also part of Black Atlantic.

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<sup>61</sup> Dialys, interview with author, November 10, 2021.

In contrast, expressing their Afro-diasporic heritage through their hairstyle was not used by the male participants of this study. For the most part, the male participants wore their hair short and clean-cut, also to adapt to what they perceive is an employable, Euro-conforming look in South Florida and suitable for not standing out when “driving while Black.” While Yusleydis liked that her hair made her stand out, this was not the case for many of the male participants. **Yasiel**, a Generation Z male participant, tried out locks while in high school but didn’t commit to it long enough for the style to “look good.”<sup>62</sup> When I interviewed him, he had his hair half shaved low to the sides and the top half a grown-out billowy ‘fro which drove his mother crazy. He would sometimes put the top part in corn rows. She felt that he was standing out in the wrong way and could be targeted because he might look like a “*maleante*” (criminal), so he ended up cutting the top part down significantly.<sup>63</sup> **Manuel**, a middle-aged, musician who also has a 9-to-5 technical job, wears his hair very closely shorn, almost bald, with just a hint of a hairline, which works for his day job. As far as his night job goes, he is not the “front man” of the ensemble that he plays with, so he’d rather stand out for his musical abilities.<sup>64</sup> Although popular Afro-Cuban musical artists like Yotuel don locks, this was not seen as a viable male hairstyle for the participants who are mainly working and middle-class employees in industries where the middle-aged managers are often white Latinos or white Cubans. Like members of mainstream white America, some of these

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<sup>62</sup> Yasiel, interview with author, August 21, 2021.

<sup>63</sup> Yasiel, interview with author, December 11, 2021.

<sup>64</sup> Manuel, interview with author, June 9, 2021.

supervisors still harbor stereotypes that associate locks on Black males with criminality and delinquency.

**e. Black Lives Matter as Counterculture to Modernity**

For the most part, the participants of this study were in favor of the Black Lives Matter movement, demonstrating an understanding of the plight of African Americans and themselves as Afro-diasporic peoples. Yet they were very frustrated about how this cause has been characterized in the conservative news outlets and the Spanish media, along with a distorted view of what happened to George Floyd. Most felt that the protests of 2020 against the inhumane treatment of George Floyd were “necesario” (necessary)<sup>65</sup> and that this treatment was an “abuso racial” (racial abuse).<sup>66</sup>

**Dr. Edwards** best captures the frustration of the Black males in the study who are sensitive to being targeted by the police understand their precarious position in American society. *The problem with the Black Lives Matter is that I feel that the subject was hijacked and we didn't know how to defend what that meant. They let the establishment for lack of a better word, define what Black Lives Matter is. I will explain. They were able to tag life Black Lives Matter with a socialist communist organization. It's our fault because we think they blame Black Lives Matter on the riots that happened, not riots, but, you know, whatever riots, whatever happened in downtown. And we know that no one ever was able to actually define what Black Lives Matter is. I don't know what happened*

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<sup>65</sup> Wilfredo, interview with the author, August 7, 2021.

<sup>66</sup> Lazaro, interview with the author, June 26, 2021.

*there. We don't know. But I know what black ... My life matters. [Yes.] ... It's about my dignity. My rights need to be respected and accounted for. But you know, they let these other people define Black Lives Matter as a violent group, as a socialist group, everything negative. We were never able to actually define it ourselves (emphasis mine).*<sup>67</sup> Dr. Edwards takes this cause personally. It's not like Black Americans are over there and this is happening to them, but he is shielded from it. He and others were keenly aware that when they are walking down the street or driving a car, they are just another black man that can be targeted.

**Concepción**, an educator, saw the murder of George Floyd as a teachable moment to socialize the Black males in her family and their friends to the realities of living in the United States. *You have people in power here who believe that what happened to George Floyd was correct. This guy didn't do anything. So I have nephews who are either very light or very dark, and I had to sit with them and tell them when they turned a certain age. I told them, remember who and what you are and where you live. I know people are like I'm like, No. Black families, whether you have one or two that are like, we HAVE to have the conversation with our kids. And that's what really brought it home. And as they grew, I had to tell them, Remember, because you live here. Okay, where there is racial disparity and there's discrimination and you need to decide how you're going to let that guide you. So for me, all of that was just bringing home what I have taught the kids about. This is why you have to be careful. So the whole thing with George Floyd just made me sit with my kids and friends of my kids and tell them these are the*

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<sup>67</sup> Dr. Edwards, interview with author, January 17, 2022.



*realities we live (emphasis mine).*<sup>68</sup> The conversations that Concepción led about race and avoiding becoming a victim of police brutality are ones mirrored in the homes of many Black Americans and Afro-diasporic populations living in the United States. Certainly, growing up in Allapattah would have sensitized her to such issues. In Miami, white Cubans and white Latinos have been the perpetrators of police brutality in high profile cases, such as Alex Marreo, one of the four officers acquitted in 1980 for the killing of Arthur McDuffie in 1980 (Sainato 2015) or William Lozano, convicted of manslaughter but later acquitted in 1990 for the shooting of Clement Lloyd (Ovalle 2014).

BLM was already being characterized as a leftist, communist movement when the leadership issued their statement on the Cuba protests that put the blame of Cuba's economic woes squarely on the U.S. government's embargo: "This cruel and inhumane policy, instituted with the explicit intention of destabilizing the country and undermining Cuban's right to choose their own government, is at the heart of Cuba's current crisis" (Rahman 2022). The response ignored the cries of the Cuban people for liberty and an end to the regime. However, **Yocelin** feels that this response was misunderstood: *I feel like I am back in high school. With what happened with Black Lives Matter, now this. This bickering and stuff, back and forth. Not to defend or not to defend, but I don't think that they know the real issue, what they said [BLM statement on the Cuba protests], I don't think that they meant what people took it to mean. And they made such a big deal about it.*<sup>69</sup> Yocelin felt that she had to "pick a team" in high school: Team Black or

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<sup>68</sup> Concepcion, interview with author, March 19, 2022.

<sup>69</sup> Yocelin, interview with author, July 31, 2021.

Team Cuban. You couldn't be both. This statement made it harder to be pro-BLM if one is Cuban and anti-communist. Ultimately, it was a distraction from the essence of the movement against the senseless killing of Black males and Black females by the police.

A self-proclaimed “outlier” on this issue is **Dialys** who was originally in favor of the BLM movement but became disenchanted with it due to the violence attributed to it. *Honestly, I'm a little bit mixed in the beginning. I was all for them. But in the beginning, I was all for the movement, I understood what it was for because it was definitely wrong, but then slowly, as time started passing, I started noticing that there was a lot more violence involved. And it's like, I don't believe that you can fight violence with more violence. It's like. And then my dad started telling me stories of things that have happened before that were like similar, and I just started realizing like history just keeps repeating itself. So it's like the same movements, the same thing keeps happening and the problem isn't being solved. So now I'm just like, there has to be another way these movements start off peacefully and then they spiral off into violence because people are just like, so tired of like things happen like things just repeating itself. So like now, when people talk about it, I kind of like, just shut up because I know they're not going to like my opinion on it because I think like for like BlackLivesMatter, for example, I think the black community has a lot of healing that they need to do before they can keep on fighting like what they're fighting for.*<sup>70</sup> The characterization of the BLM movement as violent has stuck. Just like Concepción is taking the lead in socializing the young Black males in her family and social circle, Dialys' father, who is the most politically engaged of her parents, is also

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<sup>70</sup> Dialys, interview with author, November 10, 2021.

taking the lead in comparing this movement to other violent movements of the past. Even though Dialys' social circle is comprised of Afro-descendants, she would rather stay quiet than express an unpopular opinion amongst this circle. The characterization has overshadowed the purpose of the movement altogether. Notice the use of pronouns: she uses third person pronouns which distinguishes this cause from herself, while Dr. Edwards and Concepción use first person pronouns. The wounds of the Black community keep getting reopened with fresh incidents of another traffic stop gone wrong, such as the videotaped fatal shooting of Patrick Lyoya, a dark-skinned, Congolese immigrant who was unarmed, by a white police officer in Michigan (Smith 2022).

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I explored the concept of double diaspora and applied it to the study of Afro-Cubans. I distilled six characteristics from the literature on the African diaspora and double diaspora to further define the concept. I then used this framework to analyze three ethnographies on Afro-Cubans and demonstrate how *cubanidad* is being whitewashed in the U.S. leg of the double diaspora journey. Finally, I used ethnographic evidence to further establish Afro-Cuban Americans as double diasporic subjects, a positionality that distinguishes them from their white co-ethnics, and explored the natural hair movement and Black Lives Matter, both of which can be seen through the lens of Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993) as counterculture to a modernity that dehumanizes the Black subject, otherizes their beauty, and renders their lives as of little value. Like diasporic alliances, these movements are also stratagem used in the second diaspora for validation and self-worth. In Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* set in 1940, the protagonist, an 11-year-old African-American girl, wanted desperately for her eyes to be

blue so that she would be considered beautiful and valuable (2007 [1970]). In the same decade of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, another little girl of African ancestry in Cuba grew up being told that she had blue eyes. Her story is part of the discussion on race and racialization in the next chapter.

## **V. Race and Residential Incorporation of Afro-Cubans in South Florida: A Self-Ethnography and a Case Study**

### **A. Cubanidad as a Racial Ideology**

This section will situate *cubanidad* within the racial ideology of “advancing the race” through blaqueamento (whitening) that is dominant in Latin America. Traditional versions of *cubanidad* are aligned with Vasconcelos’ “cosmic race,” but beneath this quest of making the end product (*el cubano* or *la raza cósmica*) greater than the sum of its parts is a distinct trend to erase African and indigenous ancestry. Cuba can be seen as borrowing from both the racial democracy theories of Latin America and from aspects of U.S. conceptions of race.

In order to understand race in Cuba, it is helpful to review racial categories and pervasive ideologies of the State. The term “mulatto” is used throughout Latin America as someone of European and African ancestry. I am particularly sensitive to the pejorative racial slur that this word is derived from: with a “mule” being a cross of a donkey and a horse, the term *mulatto* describes a mule-like person, as if Blacks and whites are separate species. Furthermore, historians like Jack Forbes contend that the “invention of ‘miscegenation’ terms such as *mulat(t)o*, *mestizo*, and *mulâtre* ... were used to extend the regime of exclusion and to control the access to civil rights and privileges” (Edwards 2003: 27). However, this term is used in this project because of the following reasons: 1) it is the preferred term among Latin Americans to describe people of African and European ancestry, and 2) Afro-Cubans in particular use this term usually without the derogatory connotation, even though among some Latinos it may still retain the former origin.

Deracination – the erasure of black or indigenous ancestry in favor of European ancestry – and miscegenation – the dilution of racial identity through interracial unions and progeny – are all tied to the pervasive concept of *blanqueamiento* or whitening in Latin America (or *branceamento* in Brazil) through *mestizaje* (mixing of the races). In order to “*avanzar a la raza*” (to advance the race), populations of African and other ancestries are taught to seek unions with people of European ancestry. It is thought that the progeny of these unions will have better racial features (straighter hair, lighter skin, smaller, more European noses, etc.) and achieve a greater acceptance in society than their darker progenitors. Statistical evidence proves otherwise, for in countries such as Brazil and Cuba, the mulatto and the black are equally as disadvantaged and both are faring far worse than their white counterparts (Nascimento 1987; Sawyer 2005).

However, the hope that *blanqueamiento* works is engrained into the concepts of nationhood by several Latin American nations. Brazil has seen itself as a “racial democracy” as early as 1933 when Gilberto Freyre proclaimed it as such (Freyre and Putman [1933] 1946). In racial democracy, national identity is privileged and racism is thought to be much less severe than in the United States (Pena, Sidanius, and Sawyer 2004). Miscegenation is also higher because the Iberian conquerors were more lax about maintaining the color line than the English colonizers, although this had a distinct white male, non-white female pairing to parallel colonization (Moore as cited in Muselmann 2003). Brazil was the very last nation in the Western Hemisphere to abolish slavery (1888) and had a plantation economy that depended on the Transatlantic Slave Trade for labor. Since freed Afro-Brazilians were not believed to be fit for skilled labor in a new economy aspiring to capitalism, the Brazilian government brought 2 million Europeans to

enter the workforce, but this was a thinly-veiled state project of branceamento (Holloway 1980) (Jones-de Oliveira 2003: 104-5). Even until the present day, Brazil is considered as the country with the most afro-descendants outside of Africa, although it has been slow to embrace its African roots. Key figures such as Abdias do Nascimento and other founders of *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (TEN) went to great lengths in creating pride in African ancestry, but studies conclude that racism is still pervasive in Brazil and that afro-descendants fare worse economically and in social standing than Brazilians of European ancestry (Nascimento 1987; Telles 1992, 2004; Silva and Reis, 2011).

In contrast to Brazil's conceptions of race, the United States had anti-miscegenation laws until 1967 and still operates socially from the perspective of the "one drop rule" along with the rule of hypodescent – one drop of African ancestry deemed a person black and the progeny takes on the racial identity of the parent with the lower status (Middleton 2008). Also emerging from a plantation economy in the South, the United States abolished slavery in 1865 but harsh Jim Crow laws were a backlash to integrationist efforts during reconstruction, and de jure segregation was a stark reality of life for many Black Americans during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and even later in some areas that resisted the progressive measures of the Civil Rights Movement). Consequently, the black-white racial dichotomy is one of the most pervasive remnants of the historical racism that it is still evident in race relations today. Even in places such as Louisiana where a creole identity was asserted, Jim Crow laws applied both to mulattos and blacks. As late as the 1890 U.S. Census, people of African and European ancestry were identified as mulattoes (1/2 black), quadroons (1/4 black), and octaroons (1/8 black) (Hochschild and Weaver 2007). However, the one drop rule soon became the law of the

land and the U.S. census abandoned the category of mulatto in 1930 (Hochschild and Weaver 2007; Middleton 2008). Today, mulatto is not a term that is used by African Americans, although the majority could qualify as such.

From the backdrop of Brazil and the United States, Cuba borrows both from racial democracy ideology of Latin America as exemplified in Brazil and from its neighbors to el Norte. Whereas mixed black/white marriages were against U.S. federal law until 1967, Cuba did allow official mixed race marriages in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though these were closely regulated by civil authorities. Most were color hypergamous and aligned with the white male/ mulatto female pairing that parallel colonization (Martinez-Alier, Moore as cited in Muselmann). The desire of the colored population to advance the race through blanqueamiento was evident even in the 1800s (Martinez-Alier). However, the theory of hypodescent was operative in 19th century Cuba, so the progeny of mixed race unions were considered non-white (Martinez-Alier), but not to the extreme of U.S. “one drop rule.”

Like Brazil and the United States, Cuba was also a plantation economy that relied heavily on importing human chattel until slavery was abolished in 1886. Most estimate the number of Africans transported to Cuba during the Transatlantic Slave trade to be anywhere from 700,000 to 1 million (Ortiz 1916). One of the most striking features of Cuba’s Wars of Independence against Spain was the high level of participation of Afro-Cubans in these efforts. Ada Ferrer identifies three phases of the revolutionary struggle – the Ten Years War (1868-1878), the Little War (1879-1880), and the Final War of Independence (1895-98) – as remarkable in that these were wars in which blacks, whites, and mulattos fought together in an integrated front against Spanish rule (1999b).



Moreover, she detects a “revolutionary cross-racial alliance” in the Cuban project for independence and deems it an unprecedented one, especially for the times (14-15). Historians such as Aline Helg (1995) believe that the Wars of Independence created high expectations in Afro-Cubans to earn “their rightful share,” only to be systematically divested of this optimism by the low participation in the republic they helped to create.

In Cuba today, and throughout Latin America, there exists a “pigmentocracy” where the lighter a person’s skin is, the higher is the perception in terms of social standing, even if this does not translate to higher socio-economic status (Sawyer 2005, Middleton 2008). The concept of racial mixture is not solely contained in the term “mulatto.” Mestizaje or mixing of the races creates a rainbow of colorings ranging from blanconazo (almost white), trigoeno (“wheat”-y), jabao (very light with distinctive African features), mulatto claro/oscuro (light or dark mulatto), mulatto chino (Chinese mulatto), mulatto-mestizo or indio mulatto (white, black, and native ancestry) mulatto ruso (Red-headed, freckled “Russian” mulatto), negro (black), and negro negro or negro asabache (very black; onyx black) (see Roland’s “The color-race continuum table,” p. 34 for a vertically arranged Cuban color hierarchy).

Cuba’s own version of racial democracy can be summarized in *cubanidad* – literally Cuban-ness or Cuban identity. When ideas of *cubanidad*, or a Cuban identity, were being formulated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, José Antonio Sacó represented the white middle class of his time (R. Moore 1997: 17) by clearly stating the following: “the only one that any sensible man would concern himself with [was] a nationality formed by the white race” (quoted in Ferrer, “Cuba, 1898” 1999a: 24). The abolitionist wanted to export the Africans back to Africa, and when that was clearly not feasible, he advocated a

whitening of the Black population through white immigration and blanqueamiento (Martínez-Alier).

Sacó was not alone in his desire to create a Cuba that in the words of the agrarian upper class was “better Spanish than African” (Duharte Jiménez 1993: 40). A contemporary of Sacó, Planter Arango y Parreño envisioned a future Cuba in which the black population would disappear altogether through interracial unions (Martínez-Alier). Just as in Brazil, a concerted effort was made by the Cuban government to ensure that the Black race would eventually disappear or be deemed insignificant through the importation of approximately 900,000 Spanish laborers in the early Cuban republic (Helg 1995: 56). Saco best represents the aspects of cubanidad that emphasize Spanish ancestry, blanqueamiento, and whiteness.

Other notable iterations of cubanidad are best represented by Jose Martí, Fernando Ortiz, and Nicolás Guillén. Nineteenth century patriot, poet, journalist, and philosopher, José Martí was a visionary that imagined a cubanidad that transcended race. He imagined a raceless nationality that still resonates today: “Men are more than whites, mulattos or Negroes. Cubans are more than whites, mulattos or Negroes. On the field of battle, dying for Cuba, the souls of whites and Negroes have risen together into the air” (Martí “My Race”). For Martí, cubanidad is a patriotism that transcends race. The soul is, after all, colorless, and this essence of a human being’s moral character transcends the physical body – and its skin color - lying on the battlefield. He would say in “Our America,” “there can be no racial animosity because there are no races” (Martí “Our America”).

Martí was not ignorant of differences in skin color, but he wanted his fellow Cubans to put aside divisive vanities and prejudices (“My Race”) and unite toward the common cause of building a nation that was greater than the sum of its parts. Martí then is the key spokesperson for a *transcendent or raceless cubanidad*. This transcendence does not anchor itself in racial identity but emphasizes the national identity. While several have argued that this transcendent vision has been used to repress discussions on race and race identity for Afro-Cubans (Ferrer; Helg; Bronfman; Sawyer), there is much to be said for how this transcendent vision has empowered Afro-Cubans in claiming their rights (de la Fuente). For example, this transcendent vision was behind the granting of universal male suffrage which became the most important element of inclusion into the Cuban republic.

Fernando Ortiz can be said to be the foremost proponent of *transcultural cubanidad*. Just as he is attributed with coining the term “Afro-Cuban,” he is also given credit for coining the term “cubanía” (Pérez-Firmat “Havana Mañana” 20), as well as being one of the earliest to define *cubanidad*. Over a half a century ago, the illustrious creator of the Afro-Cuban Studies asserted that Cuba was an “*ajiaco*” or a stew that contained separate ethnic identities that influenced each other and created the Cuban identity, or *cubanidad*. This concept was first introduced in Ortiz’s 1939 conference titled “*Los Factores Humanos de La Cubanidad*” (The Human Factors of Cuban Identity) and later extended a year later in his seminal “*Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*” (*Cuban Counterpoint of Tobacco and Sugar*) (Castellanos 2003: 136-138). His model of transculturation was in direct opposition to the acculturation (or assimilationism to use Hartmann and Gerteis’ term ) that was considered the best way to integrate blacks

into Cuba at the time (Ortiz, “*Contrapunteo Cubano*,” 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1963: 98-104).

*Transcultural cubanidad* is a direct descendent of transcendent *cubanidad*, but it sees value in recognizing the individual contributions that each of the ethnic groups made to the creation of the Cuban national character. Ortiz’s groundbreaking ethnographic studies were pivotal in what would become the afrocubanismo movement which had its heyday in the 1940s (Rey 2006, Branche 2006, Laremont and Yun 1999). Unlike Pan-Africanism and *négritude*, Afrocubanismo situates African culture within the national culture as an essential element.

A contributor to both the *negrismo* and *afrocubanismo* movements in Cuba, Nicolás Guillén became the foremost representative of *mestizo cubanidad*, which is aligned closely to racial democracy theories and Vasconcelos’ “cosmic race.” Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989), poet laureate of Cuba and supporter of the Cuban Revolution, wrote extensively about themes of black and mulatto identity. In one of his later declarations which showed a shift from the sentiments expressed in his earlier *negrista* poetry, he noted that “*El espíritu de Cuba es mestizo y del espíritu hacia la piel nos vendrá el color definitivo. Algún día se dirá: Color cubano*” (Guillén qtd. in Lorenzo). (The Cuban spirit is mestizo and from the spirit will come a definitive color. One day we will say: Cuban color.) Like Martí, he also envisioned a transcendent identity centered on the spirit (or soul) of the human being. But instead of *cubanidad* being colorless, like the soul, for Guillén, it is this very spirit that projects a Cuban color on *cubanidad*. For Guillén, *cubanidad* would be decidedly mestizo, and Cuban color would be a physical manifestation of the *ajiaco* – a blended color that represents multiple identities. This is strikingly similar to Jose Vasconcelos’ “cosmic race” in which a 5<sup>th</sup> race would emerge

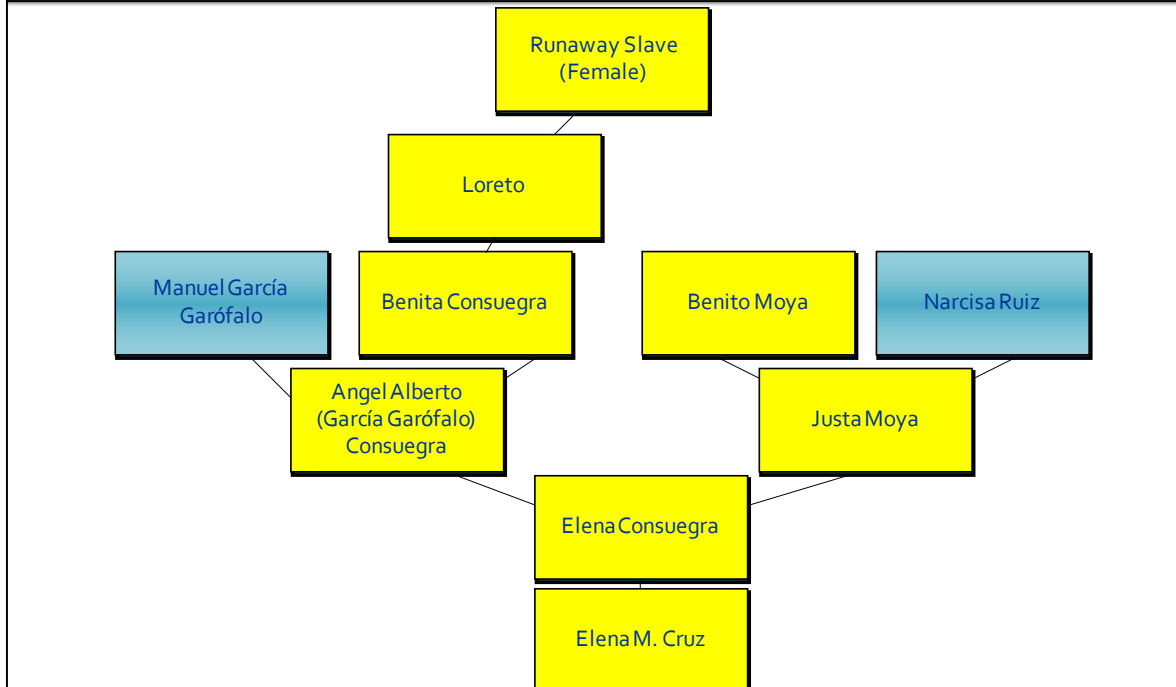
that would be stronger than its component parts (1925). Critics of the ideology of mestizaje believe that this emphasis has been to the detriment of African descendants in Cuba (Ayorinde 2004).

The patroness of Cuba, la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, also embodies this mestizaje as “la Virgen Mulata,” and in her incarnation as the orisha Ochún, she is simultaneously the embodiment of transculturation. *Mestizaje* can be seen as a version of the *transcultural cubanidad* with less emphasis on the original ethnic elements retaining their identity. Whereas *transcultural cubanidad* values the contributions of each group that make up the Cuban identity and recognizes that each group has influenced each other in the *ajiaco*, *mestizaje* puts the *ajiaco* in a “blender” so to speak. A Cuban race emerges from the blender which implies intermarriage/interracial relationships and interracial progeny. While it perhaps beckons the highest level of inclusiveness (inclusion into the family sphere), when it is paired with the goal of blanqueamiento, it can serve to exclude African ancestry from cubanidad.

While the preceding analysis of the historical roots of cubanidad gives greater credence to the notion that Cuba fits the Brazilian paradigm of racial democracy more than the one-drop rule of the United States, the neighbors to the North have made an indelible imprint Cuban history and culture, including race relations. Helg contends that one of the reasons for the Race War of 1912 was Cuba’s desire to prove to its northern neighbor that it was white enough to rule itself. She also sees that Cuba follows the white/black dichotomy more so than its other Latin American neighbors, but instead of using the U.S. “one drop rule,” Cubans see people as being “of color” if they have visible African ancestry. The multiple events in which the United States intervened in running

the Cuban government were also seen as times in which Afro-Cubans fared worse and racial tensions heightened with North American racism being exported south (De la Fuente, Helg). Scientific racism that was espoused in the social sciences of the early twentieth century both in the U.S. and worldwide - anthropometry, Lombrosian criminology, eugenics and others – also made its way to Cuba and legitimated ideas of racial inferiority of people of African descent (Bronfman). Thus cubanidad and the Cuban pigmentocracy contain elements of both Latin American and U.S. racial ideologies. The following section shows how race and racial ideologies were lived out in a family from Santa Clara, Cuba.

# Abbreviated Family Tree



**Figure 15: Abbreviated Family Tree for Elena M. Cruz**

## **B. Self-ethnography**

### **a. Family History and African Ancestry – the first Diaspora**

Born in Miami, Florida, I am a bi-racial Afro-Cuban American. My Afro-Cuban roots are traced through my matrilineal ancestry represented here. “Maria,” the octogenarian introduced in the previous chapters, is none other than my mother, Elena Consuegra, who was born in Santa Clara, Cuba, to a middle-class family comprised of both African and Spanish ancestry. Our African roots are Yoruba and our abbreviated family tree is represented in figure 1 above.

With the exception of me, everyone represented in the family tree was born in Cuba. The generation born before Loreto’s mother was born in Africa. I am six

generations removed from Africa from my grandfather's side and no more than four to five generations removed from my grandmother's side. The female runaway slave was shot while attempting to leave the Consuegra plantation with a babe in arms (Loreto). She later died from the gunshot wound while Loreto survived. They were taken into the Garcia Garofalo family, of mainly Spanish origins and some Italian descent given the Garofalo surname, unique in all of Santa Clara. Over the years, the families became intertwined. Loreto gave birth to Benita who later gave birth to my grandfather, Angel Alberto (Garcia Garofalo) Consuegra. I place Garcia Garofalo in parentheses because he cleaved to his mother's identity and origins, not his father's. Benita was described as mestiza, which is usually reserved for people lighter than mulatto but not white.

Manuel Garcia Garofalo Morales was considered the "father of journalism in Santa Clara," an eminent librarian, and a colonel of the Liberation Army where he used his pen to describe the events taking place and he assisted Maximo Gomez and other well-known Cuban patriots of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (EcuRed). There was also an interrelation of the family with President Gerardo Machado y Morales, also a Santa Clareño. I often wondered why Angel Alberto chose Consuegra over Garcia Garofalo, given the prestige associated with that last name in Santa Clara. His half-brother, Manuel Garcia Garofalo Mesa, inherited the passion for writing and was a diplomat for Cuba to Mexico and other countries. Angel Alberto lived in the family house on Calle Cuba and worked at el Purio, the same central that Esteban Montejo did sixty years earlier. Montejo's colorful life history is documented in *Biography of a Runaway Slave* (Barnett 1994[1968]). Angel Alberto also had knowledge of construction and was able to build a modern house in the early 1960s; it was prescient because they were able to modernize their living conditions



and downsize prior to larger houses being confiscated and/or subdivided. Angel Alberto would have preferred that my mother's suitors be black, but almost all of them were white.

Angel Alberto married Justa Moya, also a product of an interracial union (color hypogamous). While Angel Alberto was a tall man with big teddy bear personality, the diminutive Justa Moya was a fire-cracker. She got her temper from both parents. Her father was Benito Moya, also a veteran of the Independence War. Unlike Don Manual who fought with his pen, Benito fought with the weapons available at that time, including machetes. He lived to an old age and was said to have slept with a machete next to him, just in case. He was described *negro, negro* (very black) – as in Quintin Banderas black. Apart from his veteran's pension, he also was a lucky guy and purchased a farm with the winnings of a lottery. Benito was also a ladies' man. Justa Moya's mother, Narcisa Ruiz, was considered white, and she and Benito had nine children. When Narcisa found out that he had another woman living on different part of the same farm, she requested her portion of the farm to live on, separated from him, took the female children, left him with the boys, and never saw him again. Unfortunately, she passed away in the early 1920s due to the influenza epidemic. Her last child is my grandmother, Justa Moya. Angel Alberto and Justa Moya had two children, Alberto and my mother. Like his father, Alberto also sided with the humble origins of family. Not my mom. She relished in being a Garcia Garofalo and was spoiled to death because she was the only girl born into the family in that generation.

Both Angel Alberto and Justa Moya were considered light-skinned as was Alberto their son. My mom was significantly darker than her parents which was a source of

considerable amazement and consternation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. She took after Benito, it was assumed, but the “*salto atrás*” (jump backwards) in terms of skin color was dramatic and unexpected. Both the novelty of her being a girl and her skin color ended up being an advantage, and she was treated as extra-special. There were two dominant, wealthy white *madrinas* (godmothers) of that family, Mercedes and Maria, and they ran the family. Mercedes was married to an administrator of one of the *centrales* (sugar mills), spent her money freely, and liked to gamble. Maria earned her doctorate in pedagogy (rare for that era) and was one of the first teachers trained during an American occupation of Cuba. My mom was the apple of both their eyes, especially Maria. Maria used to collect Chinese artefacts and could pass for Asian when she wore traditional costumes, even though she was not thought to have Asian ancestry. While my mother was not treated as less than because of her skin color as you would expect in a pigmentocracy, two curious anecdotes highlight how race was lived in that era. When Angel Alberto and Justa married, it was customary for newlyweds to live in the family house. My mother was born six years after Alberto. She was not only darker but her hair was much kinkier as well. When my mother was about 1 years old, Maria thought that her hair would grow out better if she cut it really short. With both of her parents having relatively “good” hair, “Elenita can’t have *pasas*” (literally raisins, a term for kinky hair), she reasoned. She had someone cut her hair and was in the middle of the act when Justa found out. Maria had to hide because Justa was going after her with a stick. Justa ended up moving out of that house and living in a more modest residence rather than be under her thumb. As the years passed, Justa found it increasingly more difficult to do my

mother's hair, and when this caused a conflict, Angel Alberto would step in and do his young daughter's hair.

My mom was still the apple of Maria's eye, and she got whatever she wanted. Even though she no longer lived there, she spent plenty of time at the family house. Because the *madrinas* were rich, she was raised that way. This infuriated Justa who did not want her daughter to perceive herself as rich. Maria would always say to my mom, "*tu eres blanca, rubia, con los ojos azules.*" (You are white, blond, with blue eyes). This was so much the case that when my mother saw another dark-skinned little girl that looked like her, she said "*mira, ella también es blanca, rubia, con los ojos azules.*" (Look, she is also white, blond, and with blue eyes.) This is a treasured anecdote for my mom. This was not said once or twice; she continuously heard this statement throughout her childhood and beyond. Maria also wanted her to respond to anyone who dared call her black, that, no, she was white, blond, and blue-eyed. I have no doubt that Maria truly loved my mother, but I don't know why she had to be rebranded this way. Was it to say, "you are as beautiful as someone who is white, blond, and with blue eyes"? Was it the old adage that money whitens? "You have my money, that makes you rich and white"? Was it to build an inner world of worth that contrasted to how the greater society would view her? If race were not a factor nor her color seen as abject, why was she being assigned a racial identity at the opposite end of a white-black color continuum?

### **b. Migration to the U.S. – The Second Diaspora**

My mother was the only one of her nuclear family to come to the United States on one of the freedom flights in December 1965. Although she graduated from La Escuela Normal de Maestras and was taking courses toward a doctorate in pedagogy, she had to

say that she was a housewife to escape Cuba as they were trying to stem the brain drain by making it harder for professionals and military aged people to leave. Her house and the house of educator Herminia Mollinedo were the only ones in the vicinity that didn't have an "*Esta es tu casa, Fidel*" (This is your house, Fidel) sign in the front window. The only one in her family that supported the revolution was her brother, Alberto. No one else. Afro-Cubans stayed in Cuba for many reasons other than supporting the revolution. For some, it was fear of the unknown and avoiding the vicious racism that existed in the United States. For others, Fidel was thought to be a passing fad that was going to be replaced soon by somebody else. Those people lived and died waiting for a regime change.

She was processed in the Freedom Tower in Miami and immediately sent to Boston where she met and married a white Cuban before coming to South Florida in 1969. Even though she was not working in her profession, she experienced more prosperity and better work opportunities up north than she ever did in South Florida. All roads lead to Miami for the Cuban, however, and she was lured by the warm climate, nostalgia, and the concentration of Cubans already making South Florida their home. The network of physicians who were Cuban exiles proved to be beneficial to her. When she gave birth to my brother and sister in a major hospital in Massachusetts, the head physician was a Cuban exile that had worked with her *padrino*, a prominent white obstetrician. When she gave birth to me, the only Miami born of the siblings, at Mercy Hospital, she was also attended to by a Cuban exile that had worked with her *padrino*. Because of her godfather, this resulted in special treatment each time.

### **C. Residential incorporation**

Before I was born, there was a time in which my family lived in Little Havana, when they were going back and forth between Boston and Miami, but this was short-lived. Eventually, they settled in the northwest area of Miami. My family experienced housing discrimination in Carol City, and my mother could not present when houses were being rented. I spent the first 23 years of my life living in the neighborhoods of Carol City and Opa-Locka, which in short order became predominantly black due to white flight. My mother was widowed and remarried a white Puerto Rican man, whom she later divorced. She was never able to take advantage of the retraining opportunities for teachers that were being provided to the exile community. She didn't have anyone to take care of us. This is where the size of the family migrating together and their networks matter. We did not have a multigenerational, multi-income household, where grandparents provided childcare while my mom could have pursued her career aspirations. A few people that mom knew from Cuba seemed to gloat over this change of circumstances: she was from a prominent Santa Clara family, but she descended to low-income, black neighborhood. In Cuba, she was up; they were down. Now, they were up economically and socially (because of their white skin), and she was down.

Although Carol City was on the bookends of those 23 years, I consider myself to be born and raised in Opa-Locka. I graduated from Opa-Locka Elementary, attended North Dade Junior High (both predominantly black schools), before graduating from American High which had a balance of Hispanics from Hialeah, whites from Miami Lakes, and blacks from Carol City. I divide my life in Opa-Locka by decades. Before 1980, it wasn't a bad place to live in and our neighborhood, at least the block where we

lived, seemed working-class. After 1980, the cost of housing sky-rocketed and the area fell socio-economically. Some people blamed the downturn on the Mariel refugees when there were numerous factors including Reaganomics that negatively impacted the city. Before 1980, we lived in a modest single-family home that was painted an elegant orange. However, if I close my eyes and see the mustard-colored house where we lived the longest after 1980, this is what I would see: to my left, there was a Haitian family whose property wasn't very well maintained, but neither was ours or any others in the vicinity. To my right, was Lloyd, an older Anglo man who was thought to have sired a fair-skinned child with the local crack head, a dark-skinned woman of about 80 lbs. who would ask for money regularly. "Mom! Why are you giving her money? She is just going to buy more drugs!" Her response: "She promised me that she will buy milk for the baby." Diagonally to the left was the scourge of the neighborhood, a crack house we nicknamed the roach motel.

We established diasporic alliances to Panamanians, Puerto Ricans, Salvadorans, Dominicans, etc. – Black Latinos but also white and indigenous ones – in an effort to retain our *latinidad* (Latin culture and values) in the face of the detrimental life scripts being lived out all around us. Cubans, in particular, were hated by many, especially some African Americans, who told us "you're one of them; what are you doing here?" Mom's darker skin was an advantage in Opa-Locka; she could walk the neighborhood at any hour and not be harmed, she just couldn't open her mouth or her Cuban-accented English would give her away. That was unthinkable for myself and my lighter skinned sister. While there were aspects to life with the urban underclass that we would never accept, we learned to coexist with African Americans and came to know about the historical

antecedents of the present circumstances. I grew to understand my African American classmates and appreciate the many wonderful educators that I met attending those schools. For example, I did not cringe when Mary Mary sang the Negro National Anthem at Super Bowl LVI because I grew up in schools where it was often performed and know every word. As an adult, I would be in settings where the anthem was performed and would hear white Hispanics and Afro-Caribbeans question the value of such an anthem and would look at me in shock because they didn't expect for me to know it.

I grew up with Marti's raceless cubanidad as an ideological frame that over time became more aligned with Ortiz's transcultural cubanidad. I did not grow up with the terms black Hispanic or white Hispanic in my vocabulary. I did not call myself Afro-Cuban either. I did not think of anyone as better than anybody else because of his or her skin color. But my open-minded, color-blind ways quickly became challenged by the social importance of race. Like Yusleydis, some of my Black classmates were fascinated by my hair, and I would often come home with a different hairstyle than the one I came to school with. Others treated me disparagingly for being both bi-racial and for being Hispanic. I remember an African American girl in elementary school who would never speak to me again because both of my parents came to school, and she realized that I was "mixed" which was a pejorative term back then. In junior high, they tried to anglicize my last name and explain away the "café con leche" complexion with "she has Indian in her" – anything but white.

When we progressed economically as a family and moved to predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods, the treatment by my fellow Cubans was unsettling. In fact, I

was given another nationality because, of course, I am Dominican<sup>71</sup> if I speak Spanish and am black. “You’re Cuban? REALLY? You don’t look Cuban.” To be given another nationality is to be assigned another identity or mediating group in the fragmented pluralism schema (Hartmann and Gerteis 2005). It says, “You’re not one of us.” Yet, a healthy part of the population has both African and Spanish roots – just like me. My mother, who could be Celia Cruz’s cousin, left everything behind when she came to this country. When we were incorporated into the northwest section of Miami, Mom always kept our values alive and intact. She emphasized education and hard work as keys to progress. While she was generally accepted by the African-American community, at least until she spoke English in a clearly non-native accent, she longed to return to life that she left behind and dreamed of living at the same standard of living that she had in Cuba. She also wanted to be surrounded by people who shared her values.

Thirty years after her arrival to the U.S., we saved up enough money to live in a nice house in Westchester, an all-Cuban suburb in Miami. I can still remember the house now – spacious, inviting, with gleaming Porcelanosa floors, it lacked no amenity. It was surrounded by beautifully manicured front and back yards (we were living in an apartment in Fontainebleau before that, so having a yard again was a big deal to us). It was the American dream, but we lasted only three months and broke the lease. Why? Because walking down the streets of Westchester with our complexions, we felt like we were walking through some Klan town straight out of *Mississippi Burning*. The stares of disgust and contempt were unbearable. We also didn’t fit the Westchester lifestyle. In

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<sup>71</sup> For years, I let people assume that I was Dominican. People seemed happier with me when I was in a box that made sense to them. I lived there for a brief time in my childhood and grew to love and appreciate the people and the culture.



our former cosmopolitan pan-Hispanic neighborhood, there were always people walking in the sidewalks and shopping centers were close by. While many people had cars, public transportation wasn't beneath the inhabitants. In Westchester at that time, if you didn't have four cars in your garage and spilling into your lawn, and at least 1 Cadillac, something was wrong with you. The public transportation was very infrequently used and inconveniently located. While my mother's family in Cuba is a mix of black and white, and she lived in an integrated neighborhood in Santa Clara, thirty years of separation left her "worlds apart" in Miami from her countrymen. Like Joel of Mirta Ojito's article (2000), they did not accept us, and we just didn't fit in. This is from the same people who lined the streets to pay homage to the late and great Celia Cruz. Just don't let Celia's cousin move next door!

We returned to living in the Fontainebleau area, where we purchased property, and the family has been settled in that area of Miami since the mid-1990s. We have lived longer there than we did in the African American neighborhoods. I married an African American man from Indiana/Alabama (a diasporic alliance) and lived in South Broward for a number of years. After we separated, I also lived in Ives Estates (a middle class, increasingly Haitian area) for several years before returning to Fontainebleau to assist with taking care of my mother in her *tercera edad* (senior years). Ultimately, our initial residential incorporation into Miami's predominantly black Northwest areas made an indelible impact on my ethno-racial identity and racial formation. It allowed for us to develop an empathy and an understanding that greatly differs from many of our co-ethnics that live in other parts of the county with limited contact with Black Americans. In some ways, residential incorporation subsumed other forms of incorporation because it

impacted the schools that I attended (educational incorporation), whom I married (marital incorporation), and colored some of my political views (political incorporation). If cultural identity is a strategic positioning (Hall), my decision to describe myself as an Afro-Cuban American stems from a recognition and an appreciation of my African roots as something worthy of foregrounding. It also enhances my ability to create diasporic alliances with other afro-descendent groups.

#### **D. Experiences of inclusion and exclusion**

My experiences with inclusion in and exclusion from *cubanidad* have been many, so I will just give a couple as representative of a lifetime of experiences. I grew up with Martí's ideology held up as Cuba's highest expression of *cubanidad*, but I had a rude awakening when the transcendent discourse frequently did not fit the behavior of my fellow Miami Cubans. Class was always used to explain away the obnoxious behavior – “they are guajiros” (country folk), “they are uneducated,” or “from las afueras de la ciudad” (from the outskirts of the city). Yet in my academic journey, I have been subjected to racist statements from people with doctorates in pedagogy from the University of Havana. One Havana grad and professor looked around the classroom where I was the only person of color and told me bluntly that “in Cuba, there was no *financial aid*.” “Financial aid” was said with a sneer – like it was food stamps. In other words, the only reason why I, a *mulata*, was at this expensive institution was because of financial aid – a government hand-out. In Cuba (according to her), I would never be in a higher education setting with whites (nor would I be included in any definition of *cubanidad*). However, she spoke to the wrong person for many reasons: my mother is a Black Cuban who went to the University of

Havana and studied pedagogy as well. I was also the recipient of a full *merit-based* academic scholarship.

While the previous incident was a microaggression directed at me specifically, the next experience was about an exclusion in general. Although it was several years ago, I remember it as if it were yesterday. I received a university-wide email announcing that the Cuban Genealogy Club of Miami would be hosting a conference in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the birth of the Cuban Republic. I have always wanted to know more about my roots, and the conference was being hosted right at the university where I worked, in the same building where my office was; I could just go downstairs to the ballrooms. Excitedly, I downloaded the conference agenda only to find a glaring omission. Of the conference's packed two-day agenda, there was *not a single session* on African ancestry. Of course, Spain was well-represented, but it also included Chinese ancestry, Jewish ancestry, and others. Wondering if I was alone in my observation, I printed the agenda and showed it other Afro-Cubans including my mom. "Take a look at the Cuban Genealogy Club's Conference Agenda. Is there anything ... missing?" It only took a couple seconds ... "¿¿¿Qué, no hay UNA sola sesión sobre ascendencia africana???" Pero... hay muchos más afrodescendientes en Cuba que algunos de los grupos que veo aquí." (What, not ONE session on African ancestry??? But ... there are way more afro-descendants in Cuba than some of the groups I see here.) The agenda gets tossed to the ground. "¡¡¡¡Esta gente!!!! ¿¿¿Hasta dónde llegan???" Ellos han creado un mundo para ellos mismos." (These people!!!! How far will they go??? They have created a world for themselves.) This is not Saco's cubanidad where only the Spanish element would have been emphasized, nor is it Ortiz's cubanidad where the African is an integral part of the

ajiaco (ethnic stew). In creating a world for themselves, a white habitus, they have a “black free environment” (Gonzalez-Zayas 2020) where only whites and honorary whites are allowed. This version of cubanidad makes it clear that black Cubans are not welcome.

For every experience of exclusion, there have also been opportunities for inclusion. There are Cubans and Cuban-Americans of all racial backgrounds with non-racist mentalities and open minds. The arts, sports, and religion are certainly areas of significant inclusion for Afro-Cubans. Santeria boasts 100,000 practitioners (Clary 2008) although it is still stigmatized identity. There are examples of inclusive representations of cubanidad, such as “Cuba under the Stars 2” which had a significant level of Afro-Cuban participation if not in the actors at least in the singers and the producers of the show (2022). I will close this self-ethnography on a positive experience of inclusion that I had a couple years back. In 2006, Israel Lopez “Cachao” and his fellow Afro-Cuban All Stars gave what was held to be their farewell concert (he passed away not too long after that). Since we were big fans of Cachao, my mother, brother, and I got tickets. I had the opportunity to meet Cachao years earlier; he was very down-to-earth and would hang out at our neighborhood Publix, drink a *cafecito*, and talk politics. I don’t know what it was, but the people who were attending the event were *very* happy to see us. Maybe they thought we were his relatives or something. Perhaps they thought, “Look, there *are* black Cubans in Miami!!!” Or it could have possibly been my mother’s charisma or her spiritual aura that drew people to her. Someone was literally asking her for a *consulta* (spiritual consultation) right there in the lobby before entering the auditorium. Whatever it was, that was one event where we were the most important

people there. There *is* hope for the Cuban community, but we have to face the uncomfortable issue of race and racism in the Cuban American community, which will be addressed in the next chapter. Below are pictures to accompany the self-ethnographic portion of this chapter.

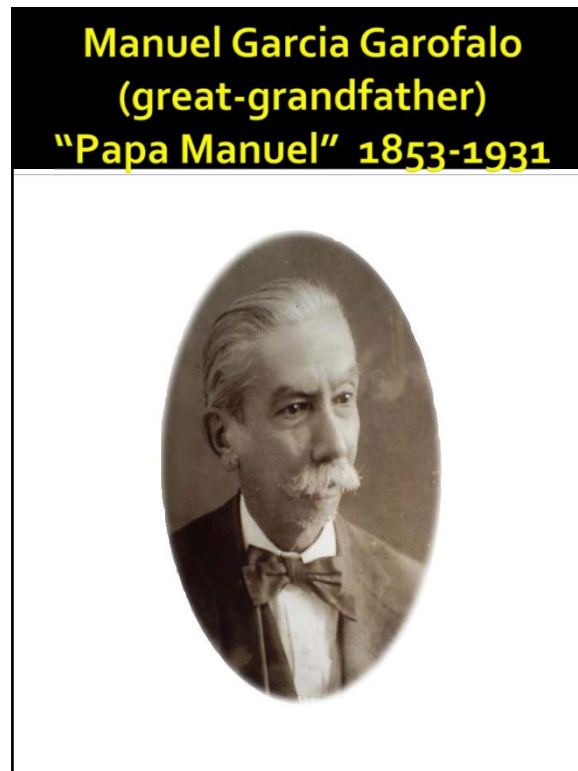
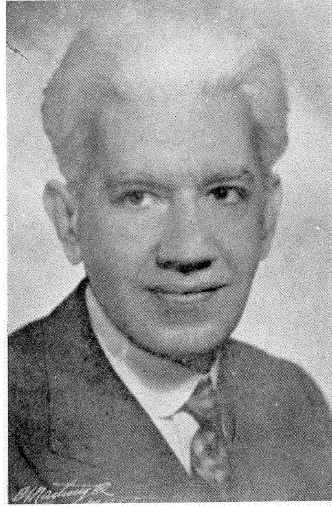


Figure 16: Papa Manuel.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Source: ecured.cu. Image is in the public domain.

## Manuel Garcia Garofalo (great-uncle) Diplomat



M. Garcia Garófalo Mesa, autor de "José María Heredia en México".

Figure 17: Manolo<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Source: García Garófalo Mesa, M. *Vida de José María Heredia en México, 1825-1839*. México, D. F: Ediciones Botas, 1945. Print. Publication is in the public domain.

## Great-grandmother Narcisa (early 20<sup>th</sup> century)



Figure 18: Narcisa and Daughters  
Narcisa with some of her daughters.  
Abuela Justa is on her lap. Family  
photo from author's collection.

## My grandfather and mother, c. 1959



Figure 19: Angel Alberto and Mom

Mom's graduation from la Escuela Normal de Maestras.

Family photo from the author's collection.



## Three generations of Afro-Cuban women



Figure 20: Three generations of Afro-Cuban Women

The author (Elena Cruz), Mariana Robertson Cruz (my daughter), and my mom in front of the incomparable Celia Cruz.

Family photo from the author's collection.

## E. Concepción: an ethnographic case study

Before addressing the issue of racism in the Cuban American community in South Florida, I am including Concepción's story as an ethnographic case study that encapsulates many of the themes of this chapter and this dissertation.

### a. Residential incorporation

Concepción is a professor at a higher education institution in South Florida and is one of the founding faculty members of her program. A ball of fire is the best way that I can describe her. She is very outspoken and quick to put people in their places. She has a lovely smile and a vivacious personality. Her dark brown skin contrasts with her stylish short afro which is almost completely gray as she is in her late 50s. A Havana native, she came to the United States at age four on one of the Freedom Flights with her mother, father, and siblings. Her father was part of Batista's secret police, and she remembers not wanting her father to come home because *if he came home, he would be shot in front of us*.<sup>74</sup> Her father found work immediately with the help of family and friends already here, and they were able to make their way in Miami. The family settled in the Allapattah area. She attended West Dunbar Elementary, which she describes as a school that was created for the Freedom Flight kids; then she attended Citrus Grove before graduating from Miami High. Recently, she was accepted into a doctoral program in her field. She recalls settling in Allapattah as a strategic choice made by her parents: *I grew up right on this side of the overpass. We moved to the neighborhood Allapattah and we didn't find out it was called Allapattah, till my parents bought the house seriously*

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<sup>74</sup> Concepcion, interview with author, March 19, 2022.

*because we just considered all Miami. My parents always want us to be around not a homogenous group of people, but a very heterogeneous group. So when I was little, I was in groups with people from all over the world. And like Allapattah back then, although it was still predominantly blacks, we also had people from different parts of the world in the neighborhood. So, it was rather more heterogeneous than going like, my parents never wanted to go to Southwest Miami. They were like, "No, you guys need to be exposed to other people from other cultures besides yourself."*<sup>75</sup>

The choice of Allapattah represents a certain level of agency by her parents and a desire to expose them to a predominantly Black yet heterogeneous environment. It also expresses a desire to not be in the *saguesera* and surrounded solely by Cubans. Just like the schools that I attended in Opa-Locka, at Dunbar, they included Black History Month in the curriculum, and she learned spirituals to the astonishment of her Black friends today. Running a daycare from her home, her mother was part of the cross-cultural interaction occurring in Allapattah: *She did do, back in the day, a day care for a lot of the nurses at Jackson. So we learned a lot about different cultures. Also from some of the nurses found out that she would take care of the kids at the house and some of those kids still are in contact with my mom. And it's very interesting when you're like they still speak Spanish because at home she would tell the parents "they're going to learn Spanish from me. It's not that I'm not aware of the English language, but I think it behooves them to*

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

*have this second language.” So, we had kids from different ... I think one year she even had this little Polish kid and he learned Spanish from my mom.*<sup>76</sup>

Yet Concepción does not feel welcome and would not feel comfortable living in all parts of Miami. Where does she comfortable? *North of eighth street is. [Wow]. Okay north of Kendall. Okay. You've noticed how straightforward I am. Imagine me at a Cuban party. One of my godparents. He's like, You never thought about buying over here? He lives close to FIU [South]. My godmother and him are like, you know, you never thought ... I said probably Homestead I would go. But the Kendall area. And I tell them, you know how I am politically, spiritually. For somebody to call the police on me because of what I'm practicing. It's going to cause a major problem. And I find that people north of basically eighth Street, you know, the more you go not like if you're going north Florida. No, no, no. I'm talking about in Miami. Like the more north you go ... Black Americans are very understanding of people's differences and cultures.*<sup>77</sup>

Concepción is a high priestess of Santeria and Palo as has been ordained for the past twenty years. Even though it was determined in the famous case of the Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah (1993) that *santeros* have freedom to practice their religion, the idea that the authorities would be called on Concepción is not something that she wants to experience. There are *santeros* who are white Cubans that live in Kendall among other areas in Miami, but she feels that the authorities would be called on *her*. Her blackness makes her conspicuous in these areas. Homestead is seen

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

as a more friendly environment than Kendall, but it is prohibitively too far from the rest of the county. Conversely, Concepción sees African Americans who mainly live in the north part of the county as being more accepting of the Afro-Cuban religions. While not widely practiced by African Americans, there is a level of respect given to these religions rooted in the African motherland. This is the African diaspora in action.

Her level of discomfort in Kendall goes beyond the religious intolerance. *I've never had an issue with being in those areas [predominately Black areas in Miami]. I have more issues being in southwest Miami-Dade because they assume I don't speak Spanish. And then Kendall, one of my friends, I tell you, when I would go see one of my godparents, I'd be calling her on the phone. Stay on the phone with me. 8:00 at night, dude. I drive through Liberty City and all these areas, 8:00 at night with no phone on 8:00 at night over there, get on the phone. And they're like, "Why?" There's a police officer, and I just want to make sure I'm on the phone with somebody if they decide to stop me.*<sup>78</sup> The lack of acknowledgment of her as Spanish-speaking person from the same Spanish-speaking country that many people in Kendall are from is a refrain repeated by many of the participants in this study and is something that I routinely experience. Like my mom, Concepción's dark skin gives her a cloak of protection in areas like Liberty City that may not be available to even lighter-skinned Blacks. Liberty City is a predominantly Black, low-income area that in Miami is seen by many as unsafe and crime-ridden, while Kendall is upper middle class, largely white Hispanic, and suburban. Yet Concepción feels more unsafe in Kendall than in Liberty City and does

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

not want to be caught “driving while Black” there. This is how Blacks and Black Cubans feel in areas dominated by the white Latino Supermajority.

b. Mestizaje

Concepción is one of the few participants who has done the genetic ancestry testing. This knowledge has confirmed the mestizaje that is part of her heritage. *On both sides of my parents. Where did we come from? I actually did the genome testing with National Geographic. Wow. Found out. 'Cause of course we have northern and southern African. Sub-saharan Africa. Definitely European. We also have Indian, native Indian. And well, the most interesting part was when I got to. All of it. And then we have like 2% Asian, but not more like either Chinese or Japanese. And I called my mom, remember that you once told us we had a Japanese or Chinese ancestor? Actually, once gave me a rundown of the family tree and she explained, Yes, we come from Morocco, we come from Italy, and I know there's a Chinese ancestor besides our African ancestor and besides our Indian ancestors and a lot of people. Tell, you know, when the Spaniards came over, the Tainos died and I said, yes, it's true. But some of them married women and those women had children. That's right. My grandmother on my mother's side, because a lot of people, when they meet my daughters, they're like, oh, her long hair comes from her dad's side. Actually, it comes from my side. Her dad does have. He did. He died. He did have long hair also. But I found out that my grandmother's hair was Indian long. And so my mom is like, yeah, we have a very interesting ancestry when it comes to where we come from. So we're kind of what they truly say, the mixed Cuban family, that's us.*

Ortiz's *ajiaco* can be found in Concepción: African, Asian, European, and Indigenous ancestries. Included in this ancestry is a great-grandfather who was a Cuban Independence War veteran as well. While she could be the ultimate embodiment of Ortiz's transculturation, not all elements of the ethnic "stew" are privileged equally. There is also an anti-indigenous sentiment of among some Cubans, especially those of European ancestry, who insist that Bartolome de las Casas' account is proof that there is not one trace of Indian ancestry remaining in Cuba. It is as if to admit indigenous ancestry is to be lowered to the social status of indigenous Central or South Americans in the United States. Maria-Luisa Veisaga is a Quechua from Bolivia who holds a science Ph.D. and is currently a Senior Lab Teaching Specialist at Florida International University. In the webinar *Tenemos que hablar: El racismo que no queremos ver* ("We Have to Talk: The Racism We Don't Want to See"), Veisaga proclaimed Miami to be more racist than the Midwest and even parts of South America. Because Veisaga is unabashedly and proudly indigenous, wears her hair in two braids, and often wears indigenous clothing, she has been at the grocery store in Miami and Latinas will ask her how much she charges to clean houses (2021). This has not happened to her anywhere else. In this environment, Concepción could be reduced to one element of the ethnic stew (the African) and taken out of the pot of *cubanidad* altogether, but Concepción won't let that happen. As a double diasporic person, she is fully both Black and Cuban and proud of the entirety of her ancestry.

c. Undercounting

Concepción actually got her census form sent back because they thought that she didn't fill it out correctly: *Okay. So, yeah, that whole census thing, I screw that up every year because you know, when you write other or when they tell you mark all of them. Yeah. They actually sent it back to me and I actually wrote back and said, I have DNA proof. Do you want me to do this again? They never sent it again.*<sup>79</sup> Someone like Concepción is also not counted if she puts "other" or if they question that someone can have multiple ancestries if you are allowed to check all that apply. Concerning the emphatically white characterization of the Miami Cuban community, she observes: *Do they look like me? No. Are they light skinned? Like my daughter? Who are told, "No, no, no. You write down white." Yeah*<sup>80</sup>.

Lighter-skinned Afro-Cubans are discouraged by some from embracing a Black identity. Both of Concepción's daughters are light-skinned, and her eldest has waist-length straight hair. She could be from India, the Middle East, Native American, and from a number of other places, but she describes herself as Black American. *So a lot of the white Cubans, when my daughter got the older one, she went ballistic because she received something from Nicholas [Children's Hospital] and they wrote the little guy as white. She called them. "Where did you get the idea that my son was white or that I'm white?" Wow. Okay. And I told her. That's what they do. You know, Light skinned Dominicans and light skinned Puerto Ricans, unlike the old song from Puerto Rico, "Y tu*

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.



*abuela, donde esta?"* (Where is your grandmother?)<sup>81</sup> However, some Latin Americans would be okay with that characterization of themselves and their child and see it as “*avanazando la raza*” away from their Black Latina mother’s skin tone. If Concepción’s daughter had not stepped in to correct the record, her child would have been assumed to be white. This is one of the many ways that undercounting persists.

d. Political Invisibility

Given Concepción’s educational and professional achievements and her family’s political background in Cuba, it should not be surprising that she has been asked to run for office. Why aren’t there any Black Cuban politicians of prominence? Would she consider running? *[Whispering] They don't want us to be there. [Exactly.] Yes. You don't see any black Cubans because the political. They want to bring [back] Cuba 1950s. Yes. That's the political idea in Miami. Okay. And trust me, as somebody who's been asked, I'm like, no ... politics is the dirtiest game. So, for somebody like me to get into Cuban politics, it's not that my back story has to be clean. It's just, could I deal with what they will try and do? Because trust me. The first thing they're going to say is, “no, this person is a leftist.” And unfortunately. We have political parties and people in charge of political parties that don't get up and say, “you know, let me let me school you on what leftist means. And then you tell me which of us is a leftist.”*<sup>82</sup> Like Cuba Nostalgia, this is an attempt to recreate a whiter version of Cuba that didn’t even exist in the 1950’s. In the 1950’s, Batista, a mulatto, was the president of Cuba. Yet, Batista was snubbed by the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

white social clubs of his day, and the rebellion to overthrow him certainly had racial overtones (Moore 2008). The idea of labelling anyone a “leftist” is a common ploy by the Miami Cuban establishment to marginalize those who are pro-social justice or progressive. She is also pointing out that, so far, no one else has taken control of the narrative to explain what these political concepts really mean. If a political candidate in South Florida gets labeled “leftist” or “communist” and it sticks in the media, it is highly unlikely that the person will be elected.

Concepción has also not encouraged other Afro-Cubans who are politically engaged to enter the political scene in Miami. *One of the families that I grew up with, their son was going to do, the whole political thing. And what happened that the reason we all grew up together was because my mom and dad belonged to the lodges, the Cuban lodges, and that's how I met them. And one day he and I were talking, and he was like, “Oh, I think I'm going to get into politics in Miami.” I'm like, “good luck with that.” And he's like, “What?” “The time you're going to spend trying to stop the lies won't let you do your job.”*<sup>83</sup> It is hard to disagree with this advice.

## **F. Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I presented cubanidad as a racial ideology which borrows from both the Latin American version of mestizaje and the U.S. racial ideology of the one drop rule. I reviewed different versions of cubanidad, with the raceless or transcendent version of Jose Marti being among the most popular. I included a self-ethnography which explores how race was lived in my family from Santa Clara, Cuba, and which

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

includes both the first and second diasporas. Moreover, I describe our residential incorporation into predominantly Black neighborhood and our experiences in predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods to demonstrate how the Afro-Cuban ethnicity is lived out in South Florida. Additionally, I give a few experiences of inclusion and exclusion from cubanidad from a phenomenological perspective of my lived experience. I close the chapter with Concepción as an ethnographic case study that highlights many of the themes explored in this dissertation: residential incorporation, mestizaje, undercounting of Afro-Cubans, and their political invisibility. Though socially well-positioned, Concepción has not heeded the call to enter the political area because of the red-baiting and defamation that occurs when candidates are not aligned with the Miami Cuban establishment and their version of cubanidad. This occurred when a “new sheriff” came to town recently, and his case will be discussed in the final chapter.

## V. Discussion and Implications

[Miami Commissioner Joe] Carollo who arrived in Miami on a flight from Cuba in 1961, took issue with Acevedo's participation in the Patria y Vida solidarity protests over the summer. At today's meeting he opined that the Cuban-born police chief “got up on stage and wanted to pretend that he was a real Cuban.” (Ceballos 2021b).

There were high hopes when Art Acevedo was courted to become the chief of police in Miami. Having a stellar law enforcement career of national prominence, Mayor Suarez called him the “Tom Brady” or “Michael Jordan” of police chiefs (Rabin and Flechas 2021). Yet he lasted only 6 months before being excoriated and publicly ousted from his position. Why?

Acevedo came to Miami with a mission to rid the department of corruption, and he came swinging a stick. He made some high-profile demotions and firings which were extremely unpopular, but he was trying to set the tone of integrity by showing that everybody had to play by the same rules and that there were no sacred cows in the department. He was also on a mission to befriend the Black community and the Miami Community Police Benevolent Association, the second oldest fraternal order of Black police officers in the country (Ceballos 2021a). He took the helm of the Miami Police Department in April 2021 (NBC Miami 2021), not too long after the murder of George Floyd reverberated around the nation and the world. Yet he was befuddled by the persistent interference of Miami Commissioners in his department’s affairs, especially the “three amigos” – Joe Carollo, Alex de la Portilla, and Manolo Reyes (Ceballos 2021b). He decried this harassment in an eight-page memo to the City Manager and the Mayor (Ceballos 2021c). Included in this list of interferences is the defunding of Heather Morris’ position, the first female Deputy Chief in Miami whom Acevedo had

just hired in August (NBC 6 2021). In a meeting in August, Acevedo mentioned jokingly that there was a “Cuban mafia” that controls Miami, which angered Carollo and for which he later had to apologize (Ceballos 2021a). Dismissed as a term that Castro used to besmirch the Miami Cuban community, this term is commonplace in Miami. Many people (especially Blacks, Anglos, other Hispanics) feel that there is a Cuban oligarchy in Miami that runs the show; not a literal Mafia, but a group of empowered Cubans running the city and leaving everyone else out. One article mentioned that if you are not of Cuban origin, it's almost not worth running for public office in Miami (Portes and Puhrman 2015: 42). I would add that you have to be the right kind of Cuban. Clearly there is a “real Cuban” (the owners of cubanidad) and a “not really Cuban” category. Acevedo was apparently not a “real Cuban.”

How is Havana-born Acevedo less Cuban than the Miami-born Alex Diaz de la Portilla? What disqualifies Acevedo from being a “real Cuba”? He arrived to the United States at the age of 4, but was raised in California, not Miami (Ceballos 2021b). Therefore, he was not formed in the Miami Cuban enclave. Joe Carollo, for example, arrived to the United States in 1961 as part of the Pedro Pan cohort (Bell 1996), and is part of the first wave (Golden Exiles), whereas Art Acevedo arrived in 1968 and is of the Freedom Flight cohort. While often lumped together as the *Exilio Historico*, there are people in each wave that think they are better than the waves that followed, and this is certainly the case with some Golden Exiles. Acevedo is a “moderate Republican” who takes issue with Donald Trump (Santiago 2021b), which would make him not Republican enough to be Cuban. Although not considered Black, he is a shade of tan that would

contrast with Carollo, his principal inquisitor. Rather than his physical proximity, it was his emotional proximity to the Black community that raised some eyebrows. The Miami Fraternal Order of Police was opposed to Acevedo, while the Police Benevolent Association was behind him (Ceballos 2021a). Acevedo not only participated in the Black Lives Matter protests in Miami, he joined the Police Benevolent Association (Santiago 2021e) and he received praise by former Opa-Locka major Samuel Latimore for his work with the predominantly Black Liberty City and Model City areas (Bojnansky 2021). Perhaps he is not anti-Black enough to be Cuban.

In the hours-long hearing which seemed more like a career lynching, Carollo presented a video of Acevedo at a charity event years ago wearing a tight suit, imitating Elvis, dancing, having a great time. Carollo asked for the video to be paused and zoomed in on Acevedo's crotch, stating that he would never wear anything like this and the last time he wore tights was when he played football (Santiago 2021b). This was also part of the evidence against Acevedo. The prospect of being dismissed was not enough, his manhood was being questioned too. Was his demise "a predetermined outcome" as Acevedo himself stated in an interview on NBC News? (NBC Miami 2021)? To me, this is the enclave closing its circle to leave out someone who didn't fit its standards. He sort-of could pass; that is why they let him in. He had a good reputation, but it was built outside of the enclave. Suarez was optimistic when he hired him but eventually had to bow to the leadership's desire and participate in his ousting.<sup>84</sup> Acevedo was emotional in the press conference after his dismissal but confident that the work he started to uproot

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<sup>84</sup> Mayor Suarez ceded to his political enemy, Joe Carollo, on this issue (Santiago 2021e).

corruption would continue after his departure as his complaints have been escalated to the federal level (Portal 2021). His dismissal, of course, proves his point that there is indeed a group of Cubans running the show, hiring and firing whom they deem fit. This is another example of *cubanidad* gone awry and the policing of *cubanidad* - who is accepted, who is let in conditionally, who is ultimately rejected and ejected from being part of the Cuban Success Story. Concepción astutely observes: “Look what they did to Acevedo. Well, what do you what do you think they would do to one of us?”<sup>85</sup>

### **A. Discussion of Findings**

From the narrow definition of *cubanidad* described above, none of my Cuban-born research participants would be Cuban which exacerbates their invisibility to the Cuban community. In this dissertation, I presented the dilemma of Afro-Cubans in South Florida – both their documented presence and their relative invisibility. I sought to examine their incorporation into South Florida, examine the role of race and racism in their socio-economic adjustment, and determine the impact on their ethno-racial identity. In chapter 2, I introduced a theoretical framework which brings together Critical Race Theory, migration studies, and Diaspora studies, all centered on the intersectionality of the Afro-Cuban identity. Chapters 3 – 5 present ethnographic evidence interpreted by the theoretical framework. In chapter 3, I foregrounded the Afro-Cuban presence in the Cuban migration story and went beyond the traditional labels for Miami to demonstrate Miami as both a city of superdiversity and one dominated by a white Latino supermajority. The intersectionality of Afro-Cubans allows them to navigate the

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<sup>85</sup>Concepcion, interview with author, March 19, 2022.

paradox of both simultaneous realities. The ethnographic evidence gives insight on the phenomenon of undercounting of Afro-Cubans, their political invisibility, and their residential segregation and its relation to the Cuban enclave. In chapter 4, I approach Afro-Cubans as double diasporic subjects, being deterritorialized twice and adapting to each diasporic setting. In the first diasporic setting, African influences were syncretized; in the second diasporic setting, they have been whitewashed. Moreover, I give 6 criteria derived from the literature on diaspora and double diaspora and apply these criteria to three major ethnographies on Afro-Cubans. Using participant observation, I demonstrate the whitewashing of cubanidad and Cuban nostalgia. I also provide ethnographic evidence further supporting the interpretation of Afro-Cubans as double diasporic subjects and show how the participants use diasporic alliances to create supportive social circles and establish economic opportunities for incorporation. The natural hair movement and Black Lives Matter are interpreted within the framework of the Black Atlantic as counterculture to modernity. Both of these movements and diasporic alliances are being used strategically in this second diaspora to create connections and foment self-worth. In chapter 5, I present cubanidad as a racial ideology and use self-ethnography as the main research method to interrogate my family history and our incorporation into South Florida and its impact on ethno-racial identity. I also interpret this history through the lens of double diaspora, describe our use of diasporic alliances, and approach residential incorporation as the master paradigm that subsumes all other forms of incorporation. I gave instances of inclusion and exclusion from cubanidad which resonated with the experiences of the study participants and demonstrate how



Afro-Cuban identity is lived in South Florida. I close with an ethnographic case study that summarizes the key themes of the dissertation.

There are several key findings of this study. In many ways, Afro-Cubans in South Florida are a population hiding in plain sight. While the official estimates are very low, the actual number of Afro-Cubans is likely double the official count given the way racial categories are presented in the census and other official documents. Moreover, the pervasiveness of a raceless cubanidad and a deeply rooted anti-black prejudice discourages Black Cubans from embracing an identity as Afrodescendants. Black Cubans have been described as apolitical, but the choice to pursue other fields of endeavor rather than politics stem from a low probability of success as a Black Cuban politician in a city with a white Latino supermajority. Unfortunately, some Black Cubans believe several of the stereotypes about Blacks that would limit their potential. Residential segregation is a factor not only with whom Afro-Cubans associate, but it is also a factor in the social isolation felt by several participants of this study. It has financial implications as well. A modern, well-appointed house in Opa-Locka for example (and there were at least one or two houses like this when I was growing up) is worth hundreds of thousands of dollars less than if that house were transplanted to Coral Gables just because of who lives there and the surroundings. Consequently, Afro-Cubans used their double diasporic identity to form diasporic alliances that were used as a tool to break social isolation and create economic opportunities for entrepreneurs. These diasporic alliances were not only to African Americans, but also to Afro-Caribbeans and other members of the Caribbean diaspora who are not African but have a kinship with

Afrodescendants given their exposure to this culture in their home countries. The Cuban enclave does and does not work for Afro-Cubans, which complicates Hays findings. Some Afro-Cubans are able to stake their claim into the enclave, while others cannot or are racially incorporated into less lucrative business opportunities in the county. Afro-Cubans are part of the migration story of Cubans to the United States and part of the Cuban Success Story, but outside of a coveted few heralded in areas such as arts and sports, this is a quiet success, because Carlos Moore said years ago, Black Cubans do not want to call attention to themselves. Afro-Cubans are not part of the political success of Cuban Americans in the United States for reasons described above, and many do not anticipate this to be the case in the near future.

### **B. Implications for Theory**

This study has numerous implications for theory and presents several novel contributions. It presents a multilayered theoretical framework that can be applicable to other Black immigrants and other similar populations. Double diaspora theory as it is delineated here is an original contribution to the diaspora theory. It gives criteria to determine what is and is not double diaspora which can be helpful in studying other double diasporic populations. Miami is shown as encompassing a paradox of both superdiversity and a white Latino supermajority and offers superdiversity as a having greater explanatory power than segmented assimilation and other migration theories. The study demonstrates the continued relevance of Critical Race Theory as it captured voices of color that have been suppressed under the ideology of a raceless cubanidad, and

it closes the literature gap on Afro-Cubans in Miami from an ethnographer who is from this ethno-racial group.

### **C. Recommendations for Research and Practice**

Additional areas for research include marital incorporation of Afro-Cubans and their religious incorporation into the Afro-Cuban religions, Catholicism, Protestantism, and other forms of religion, which was outside of the scope of this study. Future directions for research could include a comparison with Afro-Cubans residing in the New York/New Jersey area, Tampa, places of recent settlement such as Arizona to see how ethno-racial identity is formed and if diasporic alliances are found. South Dade (especially Homestead) can be considered a micro-geography for future research on Afro-Cubans as well as Allapattah, Opa-Locka, and Miami Gardens. The anglophone Afro-Cubans were some of my most outspoken participants and have a unique perspective that can be explored in its own study. The natural hair movement has emerged as way to embrace an Afrocentric identity, especially in younger women. Afro-Cuban professionals could also be a subject of sustained research as well as Afro-Cuban entrepreneurs.

Afro-Cuban Americans, born and raised in Miami, could also be the subject of another study. Over the course of this study, I have had people refer others who they thought were born in Cuba but were actually born in Miami. Yet in my discussions with Afro-Cuban Americans, I have found many of the same themes that emanate from the Cuban born. **Sebastian** was born in Miami in the late 1980s. His Afro-Cuban father and grandmother came in 1970 on one of the Freedom Flights. His grandmother was really

taken aback with how few Afro-Cubans were in Miami when she arrived. While his mother is a white Central American, he is strongly rooted in his Cuban ethnicity, having been raised by his grandmother in Little Havana. A strapping young man who is light in complexion, Sebastian's wife is Cuban born and arrived just 10 years ago. They live in the Hialeah area with his growing family. He doesn't really enjoy living in Hialeah as he feels that the people there are *too intense*.<sup>86</sup> Apart from his wife, his close social circle is largely composed of Black Americans and Haitians. He started making these diasporic alliances after he graduated from high school and went to college in Tennessee. There, he observed a different form of interaction between the races:

*Yes. I didn't know how divided Miami was until I left. When I was in college in Tennessee, I was like, hey, you know, everybody talked about don't go to Tennessee. Everybody's racist, right? And then I went and I saw how, you know, blacks and whites were hanging out or doing a bunch of stuff together. And then I go, man, I never really saw that type of interaction in Miami. Come back to Miami and I go, man, a lot of my, you know, my Latin friends who are white like, they don't they don't hang out with blacks or they don't want to be around blacks or they don't have they don't try to get that connection. And then I see the division of the city and, and especially with Latin Americans and, and the whole, you know, being or black, it's just a division that I noticed and more and more. And as I got an older and wiser and I was a cross-cultural sociology major, so I was exposed to trying to learn about different cultures. And I just saw I see so much division here. Yes. But, you know, in Cuba or in this country or in Colombia,*

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<sup>86</sup> Sebastian, interview with author, March 17, 2022.

*there's a lot of blacks and all that. But that doesn't mean anything: that's very different from the way things are here. So, I also make it I make it an attempt that I make sure that I connect with my black friends who are not of Latin descent or, you know, because that's something that Latins don't do here (emphasis mine).*<sup>87</sup>

Sebastian is speaking about the anti-Black prejudice of the white Latino supermajority that is so pervasive in Miami. Despite the significant presence of Blacks in countries like Cuba, it means nothing here. Certainly, Cubans brought some anti-Black prejudice from Cuba, but the desire to have no interactions with Blacks or even acknowledge that there were and are Blacks in Cuba is another level of anti-Black prejudice. When the *balsero* crisis was at its height, I was privy to the most absurd conversations that were happening around me because my coworkers at a summer job I was at assumed I was Dominican: “Did you SEE how BLACK the *balseros* are??? I’ve never seen Cubans that black! Never. It can’t be. Everyone’s black!” This is not only the denial of African ancestry in Cuba, but the fear of miscegenation erasing any remaining European ancestry. Just recently, the postponed 2020 summer Olympics was being broadcast on a jumbo-sized TV monitor and a group of people were crowded to see the parade of nations. One white Cuban remarked upon seeing the almost all-Black Cuban contingent, “*That’s not my country anymore. I can’t relate to them.*”

Benson (2016) documents the silence of the early exile community in exile publications about issues of race and the treatment of Afro-Cubans both in Cuba and the United States, preferring an anti-communist/pro-democracy argument over calls for

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

equality; moreover, there was a sense that racial justice should wait until after the demise of communism. Sixty years later, we are still waiting for the right time to discuss race and the Cuban community in South Florida or even to take pride in an Afro-Cuban identity. I was told by one of my research participants that someone responded to my post about this study by cursing because “we are all the same.” While this post did coincide with the month of the historic protests in Cuba, there is never a good time to address the experiences of Afro-Cubans in South Florida. Another participant described Spanish talk radio as the most virulent, uncensored, racist, biased venue he had ever encountered, and this has been true for decades. In Spanish radio, there was never a mention of George Floyd being unarmed and killed by a white police officer; Floyd was cast as a criminal who deserved his fate. Still others described being subjected to racial comments and racist jokes but then being told “but not you!!” Afro-Cubans are often required to “pick a team” – Team Cuban or Team Black, but you can’t be both. Moreover, there are not enough discussions contextualizing Martí’s raceless cubanidad and recognizing that noble intentions have been applied for ignoble purposes to silence Afro-Cuban voices in Cuba and the United States.

This discussion may need to be targeted to the adult children and grandchildren of the established Miami Cuban exile community or other interested community stakeholders. Just like Critical Race Theory has been demonized, “woke” has been turned into a joke instead of representing an awakened consciousness. **Concepción** describes why the idea of “woke” has been criticized and who could represent a change in the Miami Cuban community: *The idea of awaken means “I am going to go against*

*the establishment.” The establishment cannot have that because it means the power is going to be taken. Those in power want to stay in power. That's right. So, the establishment is going to be taken down not by people like us but by their own kids who are like, hey, I'm tired of this is the best way to say, okay, let's make it negative. So that's my whole thing with, you know, what happened with George Floyd, what's going on with this idea that the woke culture is a black and brown thing? And I tell them, no, that culture that awakening did not come from us. We were our kids were awakened. They lived with this every day. It's your kids who need it to be awakened to reality. And if we get those kids that far awakened, they will remove you because they realize you lied to them.<sup>88</sup>*

Going back to the opening anecdote of this dissertation, this is why a revised mission statement that includes the ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion and the incorporation of Black History into the curriculum of Carrollton is so threatening. The elite Cuban establishment does not want an awakened consciousness to permeate their children because they will realize that what they have been told, such as George Floyd deserving his fate, is a lie. But a racial reckoning is occurring, and the time is ripe for a recognition of Afro-Cuban concerns as a part of a larger story of Black disenfranchisement in Miami and in this country. There is no better time.

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<sup>88</sup> Concepcion, interview with author, March 19, 2022.

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## APPENDIX

Maps of Miami-Dade County derived from 2010 Census Data

Source: Department of Planning & Zoning Planning Research Section, Miami Dade County, April 2011

“Where Black Non-Hispanics Live, 2010: Miami Dade County, Florida.”

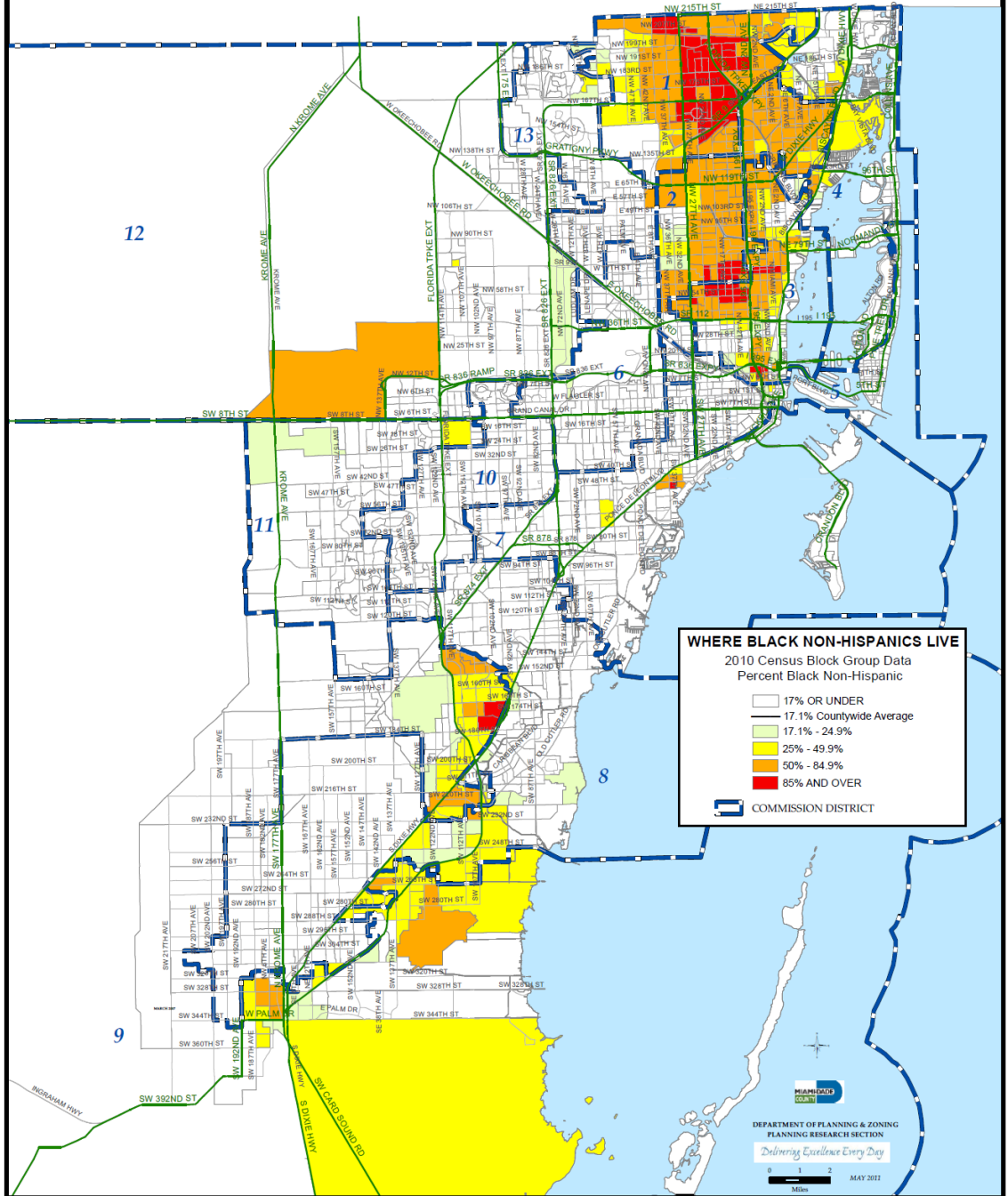
“Where Hispanics Live, 2010: Miami Dade County, Florida.”

“Where White Non-Hispanics Live, 2010: Miami Dade County, Florida.”

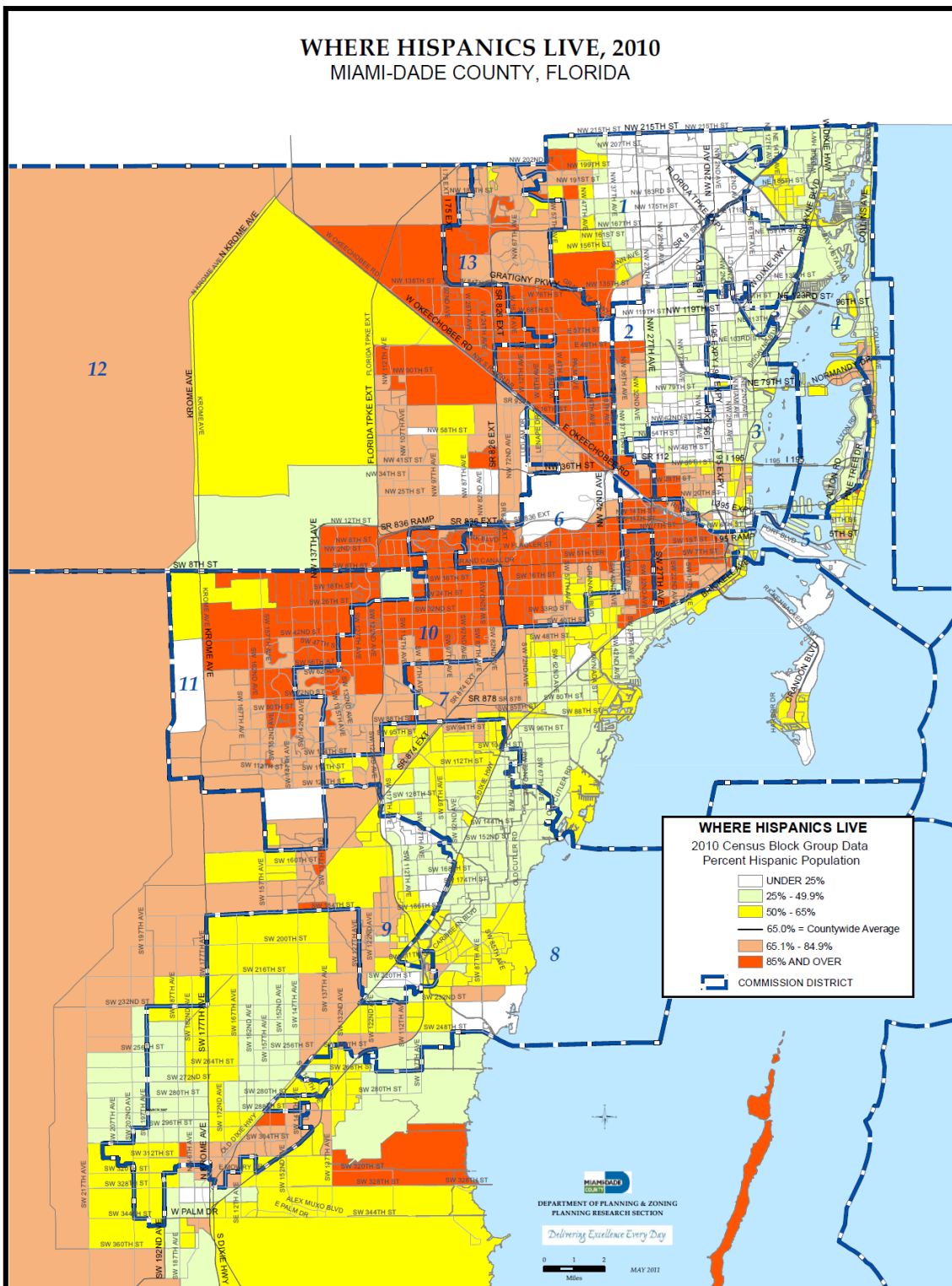


# WHERE BLACK NON-HISPANICS LIVE, 2010

## MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

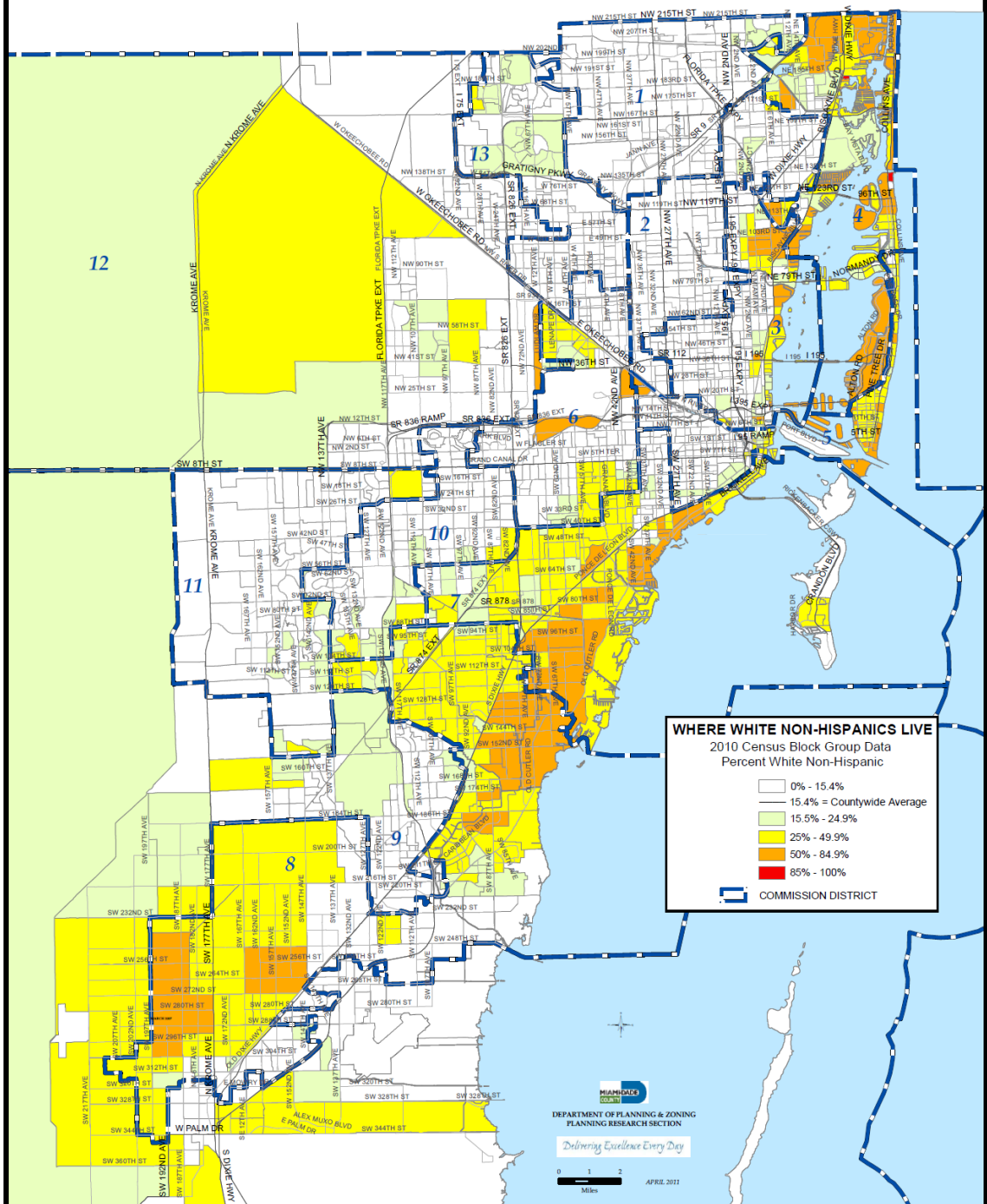


# WHERE HISPANICS LIVE, 2010 MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA



# WHERE WHITE NON-HISPANICS LIVE, 2010

## MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA



## Participant Demographics

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Skin Color</b>	<b>Profession</b>
Brenda	40s	medium	retail worker
Anton	30s	light	biological science tech
Antonia	40s	med-dark	bakery worker
Aymee	50s	light	housekeeping
Barbara	70s	light	beautician
Carlos	40s	light	construction worker
Clara	70s	light	retired
Concepción	50s	dark	college professor
Dialys	20s	light	student
Edwards	60s	dark	doctor
Ernesto	70s	dark	handyman
Haydee	60s	light	custodian
Jorge	30s	light	restaurant worker
Juan	50s	light	maintenance
Lazaro	70s	med-dark	retired
Luisa	20s	light	housewife
Magalys	40s	dark	postal worker
Manuel	50s	light	musician/technician
Marcela	80s	dark	retired
Mari	70s	dark	retired
Maria	80s	dark	retired
Mario	40s	dark	nurse
Mercedes	50s	dark	florist
Miguel	70s	med	janitor
Milagros	60s	dark	cafeteria worker
Nicolas	20s	med	dental hygienist
Odalys	50s	med	accountant
Ramon	70s	light	retired
Raul	20s	light	student
Rigoberto	40s	medium	office clerk
Rosa	70s	med-dark	childcare worker
Sebastian	30s	light	college administrator
Wilfredo	40s	medium	security
Xiomara	40s	light	medical technician
Yamilet	20s	light	student
Yanet	40s	med	cashier
Yasiel	20s	light	driver

<b>Table 5 (continued)</b>			
<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Skin Color</b>	<b>Profession</b>
Yesenia	30s	light	nurse
Yocelin	40s	med-dark	teacher
Yolanda	60s	light	unemployed waitress
Yusleydis	late teens	light	student
Average age:	51.2		

<b>Table 6: Participants and Place (alphabetical order)</b>			
<b>City of Birth</b>	<b># of participants</b>	<b>Current Neighborhood</b>	<b># of participants</b>
Baracoa	1	Allapattah	1
Camaguey	2	Fontainebleau	1
Cienfuegos	1	Goulds	1
Colon	1	Hialeah	5
Guantanamo	1	Homestead	5
Guines	1	Kendall	1
Havana	19	Little Havana	1
Holguin	2	Miami	9
Las Tunas	2	Miami Beach	1
Matanzas	2	Miami Gardens	1
Miami	1	Miami Shores	1
Moa	1	Miami Springs	1
Remedios	1	North Miami	3
Sagua la Grande	1	North Miami Beach	1
Santa Clara	1	Opa-Locka	3
Santi Spiritus	1	South Florida	3
Santiago	2	Sweetwater	1
Trinidad	1	West Miami	1
		Westchester	1

<b>Table 7: Political Affiliation and Migration/Generation of the Participants</b>			
<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b># of participants</b>	<b>Migration/Generation</b>	<b># of participants</b>
Conservative Democrat	1	2nd wave	11
Democrat	18	3rd wave	7
Independent	6	4th wave	12
Not Affiliated	2	5th wave	10
Republican	14	1st generation	1

## VITA

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## SELECT PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

2015. "Afro-Cubans and the Miami Hierarchy," 10th CRI Conference on Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, FIU, Miami, FL
2013. "Double Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and *Cubanidad* in Miami's Exile Community." 9th CRI Conference on Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, FIU, Miami, FL.
2003. "Social movements theory: a Burkean approach to the rhetoric of abolition." Thesis. M.A. in English. Major Professor: Bruce Harvey. Florida International University. FIU Digital Commons.