

The Janus-Faced Character of Tourism in Cuba

Peter M. Sanchez and Kathleen M. Adams

While a group of American tourists rested and sipped sugar cane nectar following a boat tour of limestone caverns outside Viñales, Cuba, a two-year-old member of the entourage delighted in discovering a friendly puppy. As the toddler frolicked with the Cuban dog, several locals gathered to watch the playful scene. An older man, the puppy's owner, turned to the girl's American parents and queried, "Why don't you adopt him and take him back to the United States, since she likes him so much?" The father answered politely, "Well, we would love to but we already have a dog." With a mischievous sparkle in his eyes, the Cuban responded by recounting to all within earshot that he knew an employee at Havana's luxurious *Hotel Nacional* who witnessed a middle-aged North American woman bring a skinny Cuban dog back to her room. There she fed it steak and paid veterinarians to administer shots and vitamins. Eventually, the woman flew back to the United States, taking the now-plump and pampered Cuban dog with her. For weeks, the refrain of the workers at the *Hotel Nacional* was, "Gee, why can't I become a dog?" This type of wry humor abounds in Cuba. The average Cuban lives in hardship, as the basic requirements of life are scarce. At the same time, Cuba is under siege by foreigners, many of whom stay in opulent government-owned hotels and dine at restaurants where food is abundant and varied. This duality of existence has created a serious strain on Cubans who have already

experienced long-term deprivations. Although tourism is increasingly important to the Cuban economy, observers cannot help but wonder if the island can survive this capitalist abundance amidst socialist scarcity.

Many developing nations, socialist and nonsocialist, have turned to tourism as a vehicle for nation-building. While tourism carries the allure of being a quick way to earn hard currency, capital is usually a means for achieving a much broader nation-building agenda that may include national integration, strengthening of the state, self-determination (sovereignty), and social equity and justice. Thus, nation-building is herein seen as a broad plan that includes economic, political, social, and ideological goals. Tourism is salient in this regard, as it allows developing nations to exploit their scenic and heritage resources, potentially instilling civic pride, while simultaneously generating new revenue, principally for the achievement of more important goals.

This article explores the uneasy marriage between socialism and tourism in an economically challenged nation. It focuses on Cuba as a case study for examining what we term the “Janus-faced” character of tourism. Allcock and Przeclawski (1990) first noted the contradictory tendencies between socialism and tourism, and this article further explores these paradoxes. While tourism initially appears as an economic panacea—for example, in 1990 it earned Caribbean countries “six times the revenue of all traditional agricultural exports” (Edwards 2005:5)—the industry has potentially ruinous side effects that can undermine a developing (particularly a socialist) country’s nation-building aspirations. Our study both documents the complex ways in which tourism development interfaces with the cultivation of a loyal socialist citizenry and also explores how Cuba has sought to use tourism to build international sympathy and political support. In short, we aim to examine the extent to which national goals, particularly social justice visions, are realized, challenged, or contorted in the process of developing tourism in a socialist, developing nation. We suggest that while tourism has helped Cuba weather a severe economic storm, the unpleasant face of tourism may be undermining the support that the Cuban people have had for socialist ideology.¹

In recent years, scholars have devoted increasing attention to tourism’s political and sociocultural dimensions (Hall and Jenkins 1995; Teo, et al. 2001; Enloe 2001). As Hall observed, however, with a few exceptions, most politically oriented studies “focus on notions of prescription, efficiency and economy rather than ideals of equality and social justice” (1994:7–8). Inspired by this charge, we seek to spotlight tourism politics, social justice, and inequality. Our study asks: How does Cuba attempt to use tourism to advance international support for its own social justice visions? Domestically, how is tourism in Cuba intertwined with social equality and inequality, and with support for the Cuban government? For counties that include social justice and equality on their agendas, tourism must be examined closely to assess whether it assists or undermines these nation-strengthening goals.

In addressing issues of social inequality, the nexus between tourism and “racial” relations is particularly salient. As van den Berghe (1980) observed,

international tourism is generally superimposed on local systems of ethnic relations and can profoundly affect indigenous ethnic hierarchies. Only recently, however, have scholars started exploring the salience of van den Berghe's observations for nations embracing tourism as a strategy for revenue and nation-building (Adams 1998; Picard and Wood 1997). For instance, Wood has underscored that, although various institutions mediate the relationship between tourism and ethnicity, generally none are more central than the state (1997:2). As Wood emphasizes, state policies intersect with tourism development and ethnic/racial politics, "shaping the range of ethnic options available to groups and the construction of otherness produced by a variety of local actors" (1997:6). In Cuba's case, as argued here, tourism is subtly entwined with racial stereotyping. Moreover, hiring practices and tourist dollar flows underscore the dormant racial hierarchies of the Batista era—hierarchies that socialism sought to erase (cf. De La Fuente 1998).

While tourism in Cuba poses threats to national integration and independence, it also offers opportunities to enhance images of the nation and its accomplishments. As shown in other locales, tourism has been used by states to project positive images abroad. Leong chronicled how Singapore has touristically mined ethnic cultures for not only economic development but also national image management (1989). And Richter documented how the Marcos government used tourism to foster a favorable international image of the Philippines (1989). Likewise, apartheid-era South Africa conscripted tourism to project an enhanced image of the nation to visitors from countries inclined to impose trade sanctions (Pizam and Mansfield 1996). This article chronicles how Cuba has drawn on tourism to foster both respect for its socialist accomplishments and sympathy for the injustices suffered at the hands of Cuba's antagonistic northern neighbor, the United States. As will be shown, however, the state has had an uphill struggle since the less attractive face of tourism works against the accomplishment of these goals.

Despite the prominence of political agendas and ironies in Cuban tourism, surprisingly few researchers have spotlighted these themes. While some scholars (cf. de Holan and Phillips 1997) analyze the economic dimensions of Cuba's decision to pursue tourism, and others examine the sociopolitical ramifications of sex/romance tourism in Cuba (cf. O'Connell-Davidson 1996; Cabezas 2004), the intersection between international tourism to Cuba, Cuban sentiments about socialism, and the government's attempts to channel foreigners' political sensibilities via tourism policy remains understudied. Seaton's examination of tourism's effects on political culture within Cuba is an exception. Seaton argues that poor governments most in need of tourism as a source of revenue are "most likely to be subverted by it politically" (1999: 307). His findings regarding Cuba's domestic situation resonate with those herein; although, unlike this study, Seaton does not address the flip side of Cuba's political use of tourism to woo foreign audiences.

As the Cuban government attempted to rebuild the nation economically, politically, and ideologically, after the collapse of the Soviet bloc,

partly via the tourism industry, the unpleasant “face” of tourism emerged very quickly in ways that undermined some of the government’s goals. This article examines this paradox, chronicling both the external political sympathy the Cuban government seeks to inspire via tourist-oriented displays and the internal challenges to the socialist vision triggered by Cuba’s opening to international tourism.

Tourism in Cuba

Cuba has experienced four periods during which tourism became important to the island’s economy. This article addresses the most recent, fourth tourism boom, which was inspired by economic crisis and necessity. When the Soviet Bloc disintegrated between 1989 and 1991, Cuba lost its preferential trading relationship with communist countries. In 1995, an official in Cuba’s Finance Ministry explained to one author the stark realities of the time. He noted that, while prior to 1991 Cuba could send one negotiating team to Moscow and devise a comprehensive trade deal with the entire Communist bloc within a couple weeks, after the USSR’s fall, Cuba was informed that it would henceforth have to negotiate trade deals with each country individually. Additionally, Russia and former Soviet republics now insisted on paying market prices for Cuba’s sugar and other products, while also insisting that Cuba pay market prices for all goods and services purchased from them. The economic effects on Cuba were dramatic and devastating. Cuba experienced an unprecedented drop in real Gross Domestic Product for three consecutive years: –25% in 1991, –14% in 1992, and –20% in 1993 (Pastor and Zimbalist 1995:11).

As a result, after 1991, Cuba desperately needed hard currency and many basic products, including food. The economic crisis, termed the “special period in time of peace” by Castro, also meant that Cuba’s health and educational systems, the pride of the revolution, suffered. In desperation, the government implemented dramatic economic changes (directly contradicting socialist and revolutionary values) designed to increase economic efficiency and to promote the tourism industry, much as China and other socialist countries had already done (Zhang et al. 1999:478; and Matthews and Richter 1991:125). Foreign investors were allowed to establish joint ventures with the Cuban government in almost all sectors of the economy, save for health and education. Eventually, the Cuban government sanctioned a limited number of wholly owned foreign ventures. In 1993, Cuba allowed U.S. dollars to circulate in the economy and, ironically, dollars soon became the dominant currency. Cuba also legalized a number of small private businesses. Cubans were allowed to rent out rooms, *casas particulares*, to tourists or Cuban-Americans visiting relatives on the island. And Cubans were permitted to establish small private restaurants, *paladares*, in their homes.

Tourism became the preferred panacea for surviving the economic cri-

sis. The result was a dramatic rise in hotel construction and foreigners visiting Cuba. In 1990, 340,000 foreigners visited Cuba, but by 2000 the figure jumped to 1,774,000 (Centro de Promoción de Inversiones 2005). In 2004, Cuba broke the two million mark, with 2,048,572 foreign arrivals (Grogg 2005). Cuba's goal is to receive 6.2 million tourists and to add 70,000 hotel rooms by 2010 (Centro de Promoción de Inversiones 2005).

While the Cuban state was able to weather the economic crisis by turning to tourism, the influx of foreigners and the advent of semi-capitalist economic ventures have reintroduced to Cuba the more unpleasant face of tourism—prostitution, drugs, and corruption—reminiscent of the 1950s, which threatens to undermine many of the Cuban government's national goals, including the preservation of socialism.

Socialism or Tourism? When Karl Marx Meets Adam Smith

When Cuba entered its contemporary economic crisis in 1991, the regime's new slogan became "socialism or death!" The slogan could just as well have read "socialism or tourism?" Instead, the Cuban government embarked on a program to embrace both socialism *and* tourism, as it opened its economy to foreign investment while steadfastly attempting to retain its socialist economic and political system. To promote tourism, however, the government had to make fundamental economic changes, such as inviting foreign investment and legalizing the U.S. dollar, significantly challenging the character of Cuban socialism. These changes have led to new inequalities and to the return of some of the problems—corruption, drugs, racism, and prostitution—that once characterized the Batista dictatorship (Barbassa 2005:17). Private incentive and entrepreneurship, whether legal or not, is now a salient characteristic of the Cuban economy. Much of this individualism takes place in the tourist sector where Cubans struggle to get hard currency through various means not sanctioned by the government. Until 2004, the U.S. dollar was king, but after the Bush Administration imposed tighter rules on travel and U.S. currency entering Cuba, Cuba banned the U.S. dollar, and now the convertible peso has taken its place.

Recognizing the potential threat of tourism to revolutionary ideals, Cuba attempted initially to limit the contact between foreigners and Cubans. At first, the government focused its tourism expansion on the Varadero Beach complex, and similar areas, where it could isolate tourists more easily from as many Cubans as possible. But as hotels mushroomed around the country and growing numbers of tourists arrived, it became increasingly difficult to enforce tourism segregation. Consequently, Cubans came into contact with tourists and began to experience the pernicious dimensions of tourism.

Perhaps one of the most paradoxical outcomes of the tourism boom is the increasingly visible economic inequality in a socialist county, described

by Jackiewicz as a “huge class divide” (2002). Although a political elite existed in Cuba since the early days of the revolution, tourism has contributed to the emergence of a nascent *petite bourgeoisie* whose members are becoming conspicuous consumers. Those with access to tourism-industry-derived hard currency can live far more comfortably than those without it. And, since the government can no longer provide for all basic needs and has accepted the notion of unemployment, many Cubans lacking access to hard currency now live in the kind of poverty visible in other developing countries. Cubans running paladares or casas particulares, working in hotels, or selling products illegally to tourists all have access to hard currency and have managed to weather the economic crisis much better than those outside the tourism sector. For example, in Cuba, a doctor earns less money than a bellhop at an internationally oriented hotel, as many hotel workers told the authors during interviews. Wood and Jayawardena (2003:153) report that while a general practitioner in Cuba earns roughly U.S.\$20 per month, a hotel manager earns approximately U.S.\$40 per month and a restaurant waiter earns U.S.\$20, plus another U.S.\$17 in tips. Consequently, many professionals (including communist party members) have abandoned government jobs to enter the tourism industry.² These tourism jobs may be perceived as “demeaning” from a professional perspective, but they are financially rewarding. One hotel worker, previously employed as a mechanical engineer, related to the authors that his hotel bellhop job had resulted in both a larger income and the chance to travel abroad, indirectly giving him access to more money. Likewise, a recent study observes that the tourist industry offers a venue in which workers can meet foreigners who may facilitate travel to other nations or who may become marriage partners, thus enabling the worker to gain more currency and, potentially, the opportunity to leave the country (Cabezas 2006:508). In effect, then, the emerging tourist industry has undermined the Cuban government’s goal of egalitarianism. Adding insult to this phenomenon is the fact that the merit-based economic structure has been partly inverted by menial jobs in the tourist industry becoming more desirable than professional and high-level government jobs.

Although racism persisted in Cuba despite the efforts by the revolution to eradicate it, the existence of heightened racism is clear from various interviews with Cubans. Furthermore, ethnographic experiences show that the economic pressures of the “special period” have exacerbated the racism that survives on the island. For instance, one of us (Sanchez, a Cuban-born scholar) witnessed conflict erupt between a “white” tourist-industry translator and three Afro-Cuban scholars who were speaking to an American study group visiting the Santiago *Centro Cultural Afrocubano* in 1995. Answering a question posed by one of the Americans, the scholars stated that, despite the efforts of the revolution, racism still existed in Cuba. The translator, however, did not translate their meaning, leaving out their conviction that racism was still prevalent in Cuba. The scholars responded quickly, telling the translator that her translations were “incorrect.” The translator curtly replied to the

Afro-Cubans, “I don’t know the language of your people’s research,” disparagingly implying that blacks used different terminology than whites. One Afro-Cuban scholar promptly rebutted with a Cuban saying, “He without blood from Congo has blood from Carabali,” suggesting that all Cubans have blood from Africa. The authors witnessed similar racial tensions many times on all three research visits.

Racism has a long history in Cuba, and clearly it has not been eradicated by the revolution. The presence of the burgeoning tourist industry has exacerbated racist attitudes and racial discrimination. Not only do fairer-skinned Cubans have easier access to more visible and prestigious positions in the hotel industry (Cabezas 2004:995), but many white Cubans are uninhibited about expressing racial biases, both among themselves and to foreign visitors. Often it is subtle, such as sliding the index and middle fingers back and forth over one’s forearm to signify someone dark; but sometimes it is disturbingly direct, as in the example above, or by constantly suggesting to tourists that crime in Old Havana is perpetuated by blacks (which may be true to some extent but only because blacks are generally poorer than whites, serving as clear evidence that racism is still present on Cuba). For instance, while strolling in Old Havana at night one white Cuban woman cautioned one of us in racist terms: “Not all Negroes are thieves, but all thieves are Negroes.” A young, black male, in fact, complained to one author that while all Cubans are supposed to be able to attend university, at the University of Havana, the student body is “principally white.” He stressed that the same was generally true with tourism-industry jobs.

At the Hotel Sevilla, for example, our survey of the bellhops in May 2004 found that all were white and university educated. And, although chambermaids were not necessarily university educated, they tended to be fair-skinned. This pattern was repeated time and again. In a total of three trips to Cuba, spanning nine years, we found that almost all workers at the front desks of Havana and Varadero hotels oriented towards international tourists were predominantly “white.”³ In a study of racism in Cuba, De la Fuente quotes a black Cuban singer as saying: “Tourism firms look like South African companies in the times of Peter Botha. You go there, and they are all white. And I wonder: Where am I, in Holland?” (1998:7). In keeping with our findings, Cabezas also observes that “Afro-Cubans are excluded from front line service positions with direct customer contact” (2006:513). Certainly, Afro-Cubans can be found in the tourist industry and sometimes they occupy key positions, but overall, while they represent a significant segment of the Cuban population, they are underrepresented in the high-level and best-paying positions in the industry. Racial preferences in tourism-related hiring appear, then, to have exacerbated inequality and racism. This inequality, within a socialist system, threatens to erode domestic support for the Cuban government. While they may fear the alternative and still view Castro’s revolution positively, many Cubans we interviewed were often quite critical of the government’s policies and lamented their current paradoxical

experiences and hardships. Thus, tourism has also increased ethnic divisions in Cuba. Rather than helping build and integrate the nation and strengthening the state, tourism has helped in part to do the opposite in Cuba—yielding more social division and tension.

Another form of emerging inequality is that between Cubans and foreign tourists. In most developing countries, mainstream tourists enjoy more luxurious lifestyles than most local citizens. However, in socialist Cuba, a society infused with ideals of equality, national pride, and accomplishment, the contrast between the struggling Cuban and the lavish-living tourist is particularly disturbing. Most Cubans, even those with dollars, cannot stay at the principal tourist-oriented hotels, unless they are honeymooning or have received rewards from the state for some accomplishment. As a tourist official we interviewed reported, even when a Cuban couple or worker is allowed to stay in a tourist hotel, it is often at a less desirable hotel, and the government can shorten their stay or move them to a lesser hotel if foreign tourists need the room. While foreigners cavort in Cuba's opulent hotels, play golf on manicured courses in the Varadero resort region, and dine in elegant hotel restaurants, Cubans must stay principally in less-lavish hotels for domestic tourism. Moreover, even when invited by foreign visitors, Cubans for many years were not permitted to go beyond the lobby of hotels meant for foreigners. On various occasions during all three of our visits, the authors witnessed Cubans become enraged by this humiliating inequality and discrimination. According to an official at the Center for Promotion of Foreign Investment (who confirmed this practice), the reason for this policy is that Cuba desperately needs hard currency. When a foreigner stays at the prestigious *Hotel Nacional*, the government charges in dollars; but, for honeymooning Cubans, payment is in pesos. This explanation, while economically sound, does not address the policy of barring Cubans from entering hotels catering to foreigners and its attendant, negative social ramifications.

Recent changes, if fully implemented, will allow Cubans to stay at any hotel. In recent years, Cubans have been allowed to dine at restaurants frequented by tourists. However, they had to pay in dollars (now convertible pesos), meaning that the vast majority of Cubans do not or cannot go to these restaurants. This deliberate and de facto segregation highlights the emerging inequality in Cuba and effectively locates Cubans below foreigners in the international social hierarchy—a reality that is palpably askew in a socialist society, as almost all Cubans interviewed underscored. Tourism has, in effect, helped turn Cubans into second-class citizens, an undesirable outcome for a government attempting to promote self-determination, national pride, and equality. Again, for a state using tourism for nation-building, tourism's economic benefits may pale in comparison to the resurgent unpleasant face of the tourist industry.

To the emerging inequality, tourism has added new forms of corruption. Although all corruption certainly cannot be tied to the tourism industry and Cuba is heralded as one of the least corrupt countries in the world (Chavez

2005:13), the presence of more foreigners on the island has helped increase the willingness of some Cubans to engage in criminalized activity in order to acquire tourists' hard currency. In this regard, from the state's perspective, almost all Cubans have become criminals. *Resolver*, "to resolve" or "deal with," is a term widely used by Cubans that refers to any instance where a Cuban takes care of a difficult situation. Since most Cubans are in difficult situations every day, "resolver" is a way of life on the island. While resolver suggests great cunning and ingenuity, it also often refers to some degree of illegal activity. During the course of interviews and participant observation, the authors heard many stories of how tourism workers engage in resolver. For instance, one tourism worker recounted how her brother, who worked at a cigar factory, would conspire with other workers to sneak out cigar bands from the factory. The bands were essential since they would authenticate a cigar as being "made in Cuba." With bands secreted out of the factory, ordinary cigars could look authentic enough to sell to tourists, and all workers involved would share the profits. Another worker with access to dollars, because of his job in the tourist sector, purchased house paint on the black market. When a state inspector visited his home, the official fined him for possessing paint that he was not supposed to have. From the states' perspective, this individual either stole the paint from the state or bought it on the black market, both illegal actions. These two examples illustrate the wide range of activities that can be termed as efforts to resolver. Almost every Cuban we talked with about the hardships in Cuba shared similar stories. These types of illegal resolver activities have clearly reached epidemic proportions in Cuba: they are so pervasive that the state can only make superficial attempts to combat them.

Another tourism-related phenomenon that brings in currency and has the potential to undermine the egalitarian revolutionary narrative is *jinetismo*. *Jinetero* means jockey, and was most likely initially applied to prostitution. However, the word is now applied much more broadly to cover any kind of activity, often illegal, resulting in acquiring hard currency from tourists; essentially the hustling of foreigners. It can represent a range of commodified and often sexually tinged services, including prostitution, courting a foreigner for a meal or marriage, or simply serving as an attractive guide for dollars (now convertible pesos). The Cuban, in the wit implied by the expression, takes the foreigner for a ride.

Prior to the revolution, prostitution was seen as the product of corrupt U.S.-imposed capitalism. The revolution, it was envisioned, would erase Havana's reputation as the "brothel of the Caribbean" (Pattullo 1996:90). Socialism, it was assumed, would eradicate sex work, since equality and personal-dignity would replace exploitation. The dire economic crisis of the 1990s and the rise of tourism, however, revitalized commoditized sexual encounters in Cuba. When tourists began to return in large numbers during a period when Cubans were struggling to survive, the incentive for young women and men to become involved in sex work was too strong to resist

(Trumbull 2001). By 1995, *jineteras*, as well as *jineteros*, walked the streets and approached tourists at hotels openly. The Cuban government has made several attempts to curb prostitution, by rounding up and fining sex workers, but it continues to thrive, although not as blatantly as in the mid-1990s. In 1996, for instance, Cuba's Central Committee publicly denounced the "humiliating" dimensions of tourism, noting prostitution as a key problem, along with eroding values prompted by citizen access to tourism dollars (Schwartz 1997:211). In the same year, the government attempted to crack down on organized prostitution networks in Havana and Varadero Beach (Schwartz 1997). In 2004, at a meeting with representatives of the Cuban Women's Federation in a Havana neighborhood, the authors were told that the community of 125,000 residents had 213 prostitutes in 2003. The federation had worked with these prostitutes and the number had dropped to 87 in 2004, although the improvement was partly because 16 had fled Cuba. Despite some gains in reducing prostitution, the continuing existence of commoditized sexual services in socialist Cuba is an embarrassment for the government and militates against the solidifying socialist ideology and attaining national goals. One should note, however, that for those engaged in *jineterismo*, these activities are yet another avenue to resolver.⁴

Hustling tourists is no longer the sole domain of the lone entrepreneur. State employees, whether working at a hotel or for one of the island's travel agencies, like Havanatur, are increasingly participating in *jineterismo*, as well. For example, a state-employed tour guide may steer a group to a particular *paladar* or organized event, earning a kickback from the restaurateur or venue director. A hotel security guard or bellhop may accept a fee for a sex worker to enter a hotel to visit a guest. A bus driver may take a group on a nonscheduled side-trip, for a tip. The authors did not observe these practices in 1995, but they were pervasive in 2004. In essence, *jineterismo* is thriving and seems to be expanding to include state workers.

One individual told us that even party officials who run state-operated restaurants are able to take part of the "profit" in order to augment their base salaries. Even the military is involved in the tourist industry and its enticing profits. For instance, *Gaviota* is a state-operated tourism concern that is controlled by the Cuban armed forces (*Economist* 2004). Thus, Cubans who are involved in illegal activities and hustling now include party and military officials. While it is understandable that government officials would want to cash in on the tourism bonanza, these pseudocapitalist enriching endeavors invariably undermine the government's stated core values. As more and more citizens, government officials, and party elite become engaged in *jineterismo* and profiteering, socialism in Cuba risks becoming pure rhetoric, with a decreasing chance for survival now that Raul Castro is in power and after Fidel Castro's death.

Not surprisingly, in summer 2004, a major shake-up at the Ministry of Tourism occurred. Several key officials lost their jobs, including the minister of tourism, and the positions were filled by players from *Gaviota*. According

to the *Economist*, “The military takeover of tourism is part of a broader campaign against corruption,” since Raul Castro had recently said that the tourist industry was resulting in a “lack of respect” for Cuba’s communist party and the state (*Economist* 2004). It is clear that the Cuban government understands fully that the contradictions inherent in the tourist industry are dangerous for socialist Cuba’s values and regime. Although tourism is certainly not the only explanation for increased corruption, it is nevertheless a recent important contributor. If corruption continues and increases, achieving the goals of nation-building, social justice, and egalitarianism will become more difficult.

Socializing the Tourists (and the People): Socialism 101

Recognizing that tourism has fueled ideological contradictions, Cuba’s government has attempted to politicize tourism as much as possible to gain both internal and external support. As in most countries, the Cuban government promotes its political achievements and values in various ways through the tourist industry. Most Cuban tours include visits to the Museum of the Revolution, where foreign tourists learn of Castro’s July 26 revolutionary movement that destroyed the Batista dictatorship. Here, the pedigree of Castro’s revolutionary movement is the focal point. In the galleries of this celebrated museum, tourists and Cuban schoolchildren meander through three floors of displays. The initial displays on the top floor trace Cuba’s history and are infused with egalitarian, socialist ideology. For instance, the colonial phase, during which the cultures of indigenous populations became “extinct,” is represented as a period in which “feudal methods of capitalist market production are introduced” along with slave labor and the “birth of more advanced social groups that fought for economic and political emancipation.” Displays in this section celebrate rebellious indigenous leaders, such as Cacique Guama who is heralded as the “maximum expression of the rebelliousness of our inhabitants against the Spanish conquerors in the 16th century.” As one moves through subsequent displays covering more recent centuries, the overarching story celebrates many historic instances of Cubans’ continued and heroic resistance to a series of external, largely capitalist, oppressors. U.S. visitors to these galleries who read the display copy are invariably prompted to reflect on how these representations of history contrast sharply with what their American schoolbooks had taught them. For instance, on the 2004 study tour we led to Cuba, our American students clustered in a gallery dedicated to the 1898 commencement of the “Yankee Military Occupation” and read with astonishment the following caption in English:

“Despite resistance from the more enlightened sectors of our people, the Yankee imperialist intervention [of 1898] succeeded in establishing itself and opened the way for the transformation of the former colony of Spain into a neocolony of the U.S.”

When discussing the Museum of the Revolution, a number of the American travelers we interviewed commented not only on this “eye-opening” socialist lens on American intervention in Cuba but also on subsequent displays that, among other things, recounted the CIA’s 1971–1974 efforts to introduce a pig fever virus (reputed to have killed over a million Cuban pigs); and celebrated the educational and health care advances accomplished during Cuba’s socialist era. Other galleries that appeared to consistently draw the focused attention of foreign tourists included a room devoted to “Che” Guevara and his comrades. In this way, Cuban museums socialize not only Cuban schoolchildren but also prompt foreign tourists to reflect on the Cuban experience with new eyes.

International tourists also frequent Playa Girón on the southern coast, where the Cuban government’s victory over a CIA-supported Cuban-exile invasion force at the “Bay of Pigs,” as it is known in English, is glorified. In Santiago, the old Moncada barracks, where Castro carried out his first military operation against Batista’s army on 26 July 1953, is now a museum that again pays tribute almost exclusively to the 26-July movement. Revolutionary posters, billboards, and murals abound in Cuba, and tour buses often pause to facilitate tourist photos of these monuments. In short, the tourist in Cuba, both domestic and foreign, is continually reminded of the revolution and Cuba’s socialist ideology.

While these sorts of nation-building, socializing tourist sites are hardly unique to Cuba, what is distinctive is the government’s use of tourism to publicize and generate international sympathy, and even social activism, on behalf of Cuban causes. In 2004, the political cause being highlighted for tourists was that of five Cubans convicted of espionage in the United States in 2001. These five men, according to the Cuban government, were infiltrating Cuban-American groups in Miami that had been involved in acts of “terrorism” in Cuba. From Cuba’s perspective, these men are heroes who were protecting their country and the global community via their efforts to end international terrorism. In contrast, to the U.S. government they were “spies” pursuing intelligence-gathering activities for a foreign government on U.S. soil. Throughout Cuba in 2004, poster displays and memorial statues were prominent in spots frequented by international tourists. Five-starred stone and cement memorials to the five men were common, bordering parking lots at tobacco farms, nature parks, and rum and cigar factories on the tourist circuit. As tourists alighting from their buses and taxis spotted these intriguing shrine-like memorials, their curiosity was invariably piqued and their Cuban guides promptly offered them introductory lessons on the “Cuba Five.” Likewise, guides show videos about the injustices faced by these “five heroes” to foreign tourists on long bus rides. Many hotels catering to international tourists also prominently displayed multilingual petitions for tourists to sign, demanding that the United States free these men. Hundreds of foreign tourists had signed the petitions we examined, declaring sympathy toward the five men and solidarity with Cuba. Of course, it is easy for tourists to sign a

petition in support of the Cuba Five or Cuba's political system. But will this support translate into understanding more activist roles on their return home?

Other ways in which Cuba attempts to engender support for the government and socialism include health tourism (see Goodrich 1993) and tour stops to showcase specific local health care facilities. At Frank País Orthopedic hospital foreigners can obtain expert medical care at considerably less expense than in other countries. Numerous medical facilities in Cuba provide similarly low-cost specialized health care to foreigners. Tours of these facilities further highlight Cuba's medical and health accomplishments and thus help to dispel negative images of Cuba and socialism.

Tourists are also routinely taken to destinations showcasing the ecological accomplishments of the socialist government. At the Las Terrazas ecological community, a popular destination (particularly for solidarity tours), located about 30 minutes from Havana, tourists are able to observe an economically self-sufficient, sustainable commune (Winson 2006:15–17). The ultimate message is that socialism can work given the proper conditions. All commune residents work and live in the preserved biosphere and produce all they consume. Local musicians greet and serenade tourists. Tourists can stay overnight at the ecological community's lodge, stroll in the hilly terrain, and learn about coffee growing and processing from collective members. Tourist sites such as these, along with the many others that highlight the revolution and socialist ideals, serve as potential counterweights to the pernicious effects that increasing individualism and capitalism have on Cuba.

Some "pro-Cuba" tourism originates from abroad. In the United States and in other countries, numerous organizations sponsor and organize educational and solidarity trips to Cuba. These trips also pursue the goal, directly or indirectly, of promoting support for Cuba's socialist government. For example, Global Exchange, based in San Francisco, is one U.S.-based group that has traditionally organized such trips. The group's Web page states that the primary goals of the organization are to end the U.S. government's classification of Cuba as a terrorist country, end the U.S. embargo against Cuba, and end U.S. travel restrictions against Cuba (Global Exchange 2005). Likewise, in Canada, Cuba Education Tours organizes trips to Cuba to "advance learning, friendship, dialogue, and understanding." This organization rejects U.S. policy and supports the goals of Castro's government, stating on their Web site: "100% literacy, free education and health care for all in Cuba" (Cuba Solidarity 2005). Finally, the New York-based Center for Cuban Studies, founded by a group of scholars, promotes educational trips to Cuba "to counter the effects of U.S. policy" (Cuba Update 2005). These organizations, and others, take people to Cuba to showcase both the benefits of the Cuban revolution and the pernicious effects of U.S. policies. Although the Cuban government publicizes these tours, often the "average" Cuban plays no role, so it is hard to determine whether Cuban citizens are fully aware of the international sympathy and support for Cuba. Generally, Cubans who are eking out an existence are still left with growing inequality, lack of government ser-

vices, and a parade of wealthy tourists, spending seemingly unlimited quantities of cash. All this takes place on an island where sensibilities about equality, community, social justice, and dignity have been instilled for almost five decades. Much of the way in which Cuba politicizes tourism, therefore, influences foreigners much more than Cubans.

The immersion course we ran for students in Cuba in 2004, for example, could be categorized as solidarity travel in that students from the United States visited Cuba to learn about its political system, culture, and society, which almost always results in a greater appreciation for a country that is often criticized heavily by the U.S. government and media. Our 14 students visited the Museum of the Revolution, met with representatives of the Federation of Cuban Women, visited Frank País Hospital, visited the Las Terrazas ecological community, and engaged in activities that often highlighted the benefits and accomplishments of the Cuban system. At the end of the course, the students filled out an open-ended questionnaire that asked them to note the most important things they learned and to express how their image of Cuba changed on the trip. The survey's two most pertinent, open-ended questions were: What is your impression of Cuban culture, people, and society; and what is your impression of the Cuban political system? Without exception, the students stated they had generally a negative impression of Cuba before the immersion experience. Thus, although these students were open to visiting Cuba and learning of its system, they were, nevertheless, like most Americans in their willingness to accept the negative image of Cuba prevalent in the United States. All the students, however, expressed very positive views of the Cuban people in the post-trip survey, characterizing them as "friendly," "generous," worthy of respect, and very committed to the "goals of the revolution."

When discussing their impression of the political system, however, students were much more willing to express negative sentiments. Students expressed concerns about living conditions, the system's unfairness (particularly resulting from tourism), poor implementation of principles, apathy, the lack of transportation, and so forth. One student wrote, "I now believe the Cuban political system is in grave danger." Thus, while the students enjoyed their immersion experience and visited many locations highlighting the benefits of Cuba's socialist system, none of the students expressed clearly positive opinions toward the system, in its current manifestation. If other "solidarity" tourists are leaving with the same impressions, then the government's efforts at gaining support are not having the desired effect.

Regarding the system's survival, however, what Cuban citizens think is much more important than what foreigners think. And what Cubans think is conditioned significantly by the emergence of tourism and its attendant ironies. Even before the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, the Cuban government had already begun to prepare for the coming economic shock that led to the "special period." Cuban officials realized that with the pending loss of Soviet subsidies and preferential trade agreements, Cuba would have to find new

avenues for earning hard currency. Tourism was an obvious option so the government quickly began to develop Varadero Beach as a destination, building hotels and an airport via joint ventures with foreign companies. As early as 1989, Castro was promoting the importance and value of the tourist industry. In a television interview broadcast by Tele-Rebelde immediately before the inauguration of the new airport at Varadero, Castro told the viewers that Cuba's natural beauty is a "patrimony of humanity" and "people throughout the world are eager to have fresh air, fresh water, to escape from the poison in the environment, the toxins that have accumulated." More pragmatically, Castro added: "At the same time, it [tourism] will serve as a very important source of income for the country" (FBIS 1989.) By 1993, Castro conceded that tourism was not a panacea, particularly in terms of its effects on Cuba's ideology. In an interview televised by Cubavisión, Castro said:

Tourism has many positive aspects and some negative aspects. We try to develop the positive aspects of tourism and to avoid the negative aspects. What do we try to avoid? We have not established gambling, casinos, and all that. . . . This is not a country full of drugs and we maintain a strict and rigorous policy in this regard. (FBIS 1993)

Castro neglected to mention sex work and jineterismo, but by 1993, these tourism ills had emerged and would continue to fuel the Janus-faced character of Cuba's tourism. The Cuban government, from the outset, put a positive face on tourism despite the fact that Cuba's political elite would not have given much thought to developing tourism if not for the economic crisis. Necessity turned Cuba's leaders into supporters of an industry closely associated with the evils of global capitalism and a bourgeois lifestyle. Tourism, after all, had been a plague encouraged by the Batista regime that had "infected" Cubans and disgraced the nation. Now tourism, the government argued, would represent Cuba's gift to a world suffering from capitalism.

The greatest challenge for the Cuban government, however, is to sell this Pollyannaish view of tourism to its own citizens. As discussed above, most Cubans who are exposed to the tourist industry have strongly mixed feelings about tourism. They enjoy the access to cash that enables some of them to live better than their fellow citizens and fraternize with foreigners. Yet, many are frustrated and offended by the corruption, inequality, and humiliation that tourism has helped to generate. Cubans, in many ways, have had to sell themselves and their country for access to hard currency. And now, increasingly, some Cubans are living an almost bourgeois lifestyle. Although opinion polls pertaining to whether Cubans are persuaded by the government's positive rhetoric do not exist, the authors' conversations and interviews would suggest that most Cubans are generally resentful of what tourism has done to the island, where sun, sand, and sex, are increasingly viewed as the exclusive domain of the foreigners and newly privileged Cubans. Almost all of the Cubans we interviewed, including government officials and tourism workers, spoke of tourism in disparaging ways. Accord-

ing to most Cubans we spoke with the most negative aspects of the tourism industry by far is the inequality it has helped to fuel, both financially and in terms of the opulent and free lifestyle of the foreign tourist. Perhaps these are sentiments that exist only in areas where tourism is pervasive, such as Havana and Varadero. This is small consolation, though, since tourism is prevalent in Havana and other larger cities where most of the Cuban population resides. We surmise, therefore, that Cuba's political elite will have a difficult time at best in moderating the negative effects of tourism.

Conclusion

Tourism in Cuba has, to some extent, helped to "save" the economy by providing much needed hard currency. The Castro government in the early 1990s experienced a serious crisis that had grave political repercussions. Castro introduced major economic changes in order to survive, but despite these changes, in the fall of 1994 alone, roughly 30,000 fled the island and there were clashes with the police near the Malecón. The government, nevertheless, survived that crisis. The economy grew, and, while Cuban life is still challenging, some degree of normalcy emerged, as hard currency continued to arrive via tourism. More recently, Castro's exit from power and the taking of the reins by Raul, has not led to a collapse of the Castro government and revolution, demonstrating the strength of the state and its economic strategies, like the focus on tourism. On the other hand, tourism has created serious contradictions that have not been ameliorated and threaten to undermine the government's most important national goals—mainly, the preservation of socialism. Continuing inequality, racism, prostitution, and corruption threaten to lessen support for Castro's government and Cuba's ideology. The government has attempted to deal with the contradictions by using tourism as a vehicle for support. But the government's attempts to lasso tourism to highlight the values of the revolution and to foster international support may be nothing more than window dressing when compared with the deleterious effects of tourism on the government, national goals, and socialist ideology.

More broadly, the Cuban case illustrates some of the potential contradictions that can arise in the uneasy marriage between tourism and nation-building for developing nations and socialist nations in transition. While it can certainly contribute to a country's coffers and enhance pride in citizenship, tourism can also fuel or regenerate ethnic divisions, economic inequalities, and corruption, all of which may undermine the authority of the state. Under such a scenario, the Janus-faced character of tourism may well prevent developing states from achieving their nation-building goals. And, nation-states that pursue social justice as one of their chief national goals may want to weigh more carefully the decision to embrace tourism as a vehicle for fueling national development, fostering international sympathy, and building a loyal citizenry.

In the small beach community of Guanabo, in Playas del Este, live Silvio and Nora, brother and sister, both retired. They are Afro-Cubans, octogenarians and former professionals. Silvio was a musician, son of Aniceto Diaz who introduced the *danzonete* to Cuba's already rich music repertoire. Nora was a black female lawyer in 1950s Havana but suffered a breakdown in the 1990s. They live in their small, run-down home that they won in a newspaper lottery in the mid 1950s, cook their food on a counter-top camping stove, and rely on a dated, rusting refrigerator. Their kitchen is devoid of food and condiments; ironically even the sugar jar is empty. Their pensions from the state are meager and, unlike Cubans with relatives involved in tourism or sending remissions from abroad, Silvio and Nora have no access to hard currency. Consequently, they cannot afford to purchase "luxury" items such as soap, toothpaste, toilet paper, and the like. They are gaunt. Silvio and Nora represent the government's last hope for support. The revolution was made for people like them. If *they* lose faith and confidence in the system, then, with or without tourist capital, the revolution may not outlast Fidel and Raul Castro.

Source: Adapted from "The Janus-faced Character of Tourism in Cuba." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 2008, 35:27–46.

Notes

- ¹ The research for this article is based on three trips to Cuba, over a span of nine years. Sanchez is Cuban born. He returned to Cuba in 1995 on a short-term group research trip during which he conducted preliminary research on the emerging non-governmental organizations, met with representatives from 14 organizations, and conducted interviews with dozens of Cubans in Havana and Santiago. He returned for additional research in 1996, and again in May 2004, when Sanchez and Adams took 14 students on a Cuba immersion course. On this more recent trip, the authors met with representatives of 19 organizations and government agencies, attended community events, and interviewed workers and managers at hotels and tourist restaurants in a variety of Cuban tourist destinations.
- ² One should note that not only tourist dollars enabled the emergence of this petite bourgeoisie, but also remissions sent by departed family members to kin remaining in Cuba.
- ³ Classification of race is different in Cuba and the United States. Many Cubans classifying themselves as white would be perceived as "black" by people in the United States.
- ⁴ Brenner (2004) discusses parallel themes in Haitian and Dominican women's sex tourism work, terming it an "advancement strategy."

References

- Adams, K. M. 1998. "Domestic Tourism and Nation-Building in South Sulawesi." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 26(75):77–97.
- Allcock, J. B., and P. Przecławski. 1990. "Tourism in Centrally-Planned Economies." *Annals of Tourism Research* 17:3.
- Barbassa, J. 2005. "The New Cuban Capitalist," in *Capitalism, God, and a Good Cigar*, ed. Lydia Chavez, pp. 17–30, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Brenner, D. 2004. *What's Love Got To Do With It? Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Cabezas, A. 2004. "Between Love and Money: Sex, Tourism, and Citizenship in Cuba and the Dominican Republic." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29(4):987–1012.
- . 2006. "The Eroticization of Labor in Cuba's All-Inclusive Resorts: Performing Race, Class and Gender in the New Tourist Economy." *Social Identities* 12(5):507–521.
- Centro de Promoción de Inversiones. 2005. Oportunidades de Inversión, Turismo, Estructura Sectoral (.zip) <www.cpi-minvec.cu/op-turismo-esp.htm>
- Chavez, L. 2005. "Adrift: An Introduction to Contemporary Cuba," in *Capitalism, God, and a Good Cigar*, ed. Lydia Chavez, pp. 1–14, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Cuba Solidarity. 2005. Cuba Education Tours <www.cubasolidarity.ca>
- Cuba Update. 2005. History and Purpose, Center for Cuban Studies <www.cubaupdate.org/more.htm>
- De Holan, P., and N. Phillips. 1997. "Sun, Sand and Hard Currency: Tourism in Cuba." *Annals of Tourism Research* 24:777–795.
- De La Fuente, A. 1998 "Recreating Racism: Race and Discrimination in Cuba's 'Special Period.'" *Cuba Briefing Paper Series*, Number 18, July. Georgetown University, Center for Latin American Studies.
- Economist*. 2004. "Tourists, by the Left," March 372 (July 31):33.
- Edwards, J. 2005. "Building the Tourism Mega-Cluster: What Works and What Doesn't. Strategic Considerations of Building a Tourism Mega-Cluster." <http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:XYvz6cUo6K8J:www.intracen.org/wedf/ef2005/Tourism_Mega_Cluster_Papers/7Discussion_paper_Jennifer_Edwards.pdf+%22times+the+revenue+of+all+traditional+agricultural+exports%22&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us>
- Enloe, C. 2001. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- FBIS. 1989. "Castro Discusses Tourism with Reporters." *Daily Report*, Report No. LAT-89-186, September 27.
- . 1993. "Castro Holds News Conference on Tourism." *Daily Report*, Report No. LAT-93-109, June 7.
- Global Exchange. 2005. *Programs in the Americas: Cuba* <www.globalexchange.org/countries/americas/cuba>
- Goodrich, J. 1993. "Socialist Cuba: A Study of Health Tourism." *Journal of Travel Research* 32 (Summer):36–41.
- Grogg, P. 2005. "Tourism-Cuba: Record Number of Visitors, Despite Odds." *Inter-Press Service News Agency*, January 18 <www.ipsnews.net/africa/interna.asp?idnews=27080>
- Hall, C. M. 1994. *Tourism and Politics: Policy, Power and Place*. New York: John Wiley.
- Hall, C. M., and J. Jenkins. 1995. *Tourism and Public Policy*. London: Routledge.
- Jackiewicz, E. L. 2002. "'Bowling for Dollars': Economic Conflicts and Challenges in Contemporary Cuba." *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Leong, W. 1989. "Culture and the State: Manufacturing Traditions for Tourism." *Cultural Studies in Mass Communication* 6(4):355–375.
- Matthews, H. G., and Richter, L. K. 1991. "Political Science and Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 18:120–135.
- O'Connell-Davidson, J. 1996 "Sex Tourism in Cuba." *Race and Class* 38 (July):39–48.
- Pastor, M., and A. Zimbalist. 1995. "Cuba's Economic Conundrum." *NACLA: Report on the Americas* 29(2):7–12.
- Pattullo, P. 1996. *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean*. London: Cassell.
- Picard, M., and R. Wood, eds. 1997. *Tourism, Ethnicity and the State in Asian and Pacific Societies*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Pizam, A., and Y. Mansfield, eds. 1996. *Tourism, Crime, and International Security Issues*. West Sussex: John Wiley.

- Richter, L. 1989 *The Politics of Tourism in Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Schwartz, R. 1997. *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Seaton, A. V. 1999. "Demonstration Effects or Relative Deprivation: The Counter-Revolutionary Pressures of Tourism in Cuba." *Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research* 3(4):307–320.
- Teo, P. et al., eds. 2001. *Interconnected Worlds: Southeast Asia Tourism in the 21st Century*. Cambridge: Pergamon Press.
- Trumbull, C. 2001 "Prostitution and Sex Tourism in Cuba." <<http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/asce/pdfs/volume11/trumbull2.pdf>> (accessed May 20, 2009).
- Van den Berghe, P. 1980. "Tourism as Ethnic Relations: A Case Study of Cuzco, Peru." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 3(4):375–392.
- Winson, A. 2006. "Ecotourism and Sustainability in Cuba: Does Socialism Make a Difference?" *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 14:6–23.
- Wood, P. and C. Jayawardena. 2003. "Cuba: Hero of the Caribbean? A Profile of its Tourism Education Strategy." *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 15(3):151–155.
- Wood, R. E. 1997 "Tourism and the State: Ethnic Options and Constructions of Otherness," in *Tourism, Ethnicity and the State in Asian and Pacific Societies*, ed. Michel Picard and Robert E. Wood, pp. 1–34. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Zhang, H., et. al. 1999. "An Analysis of Tourism Policy Development in Modern China." *Tourism Management* 20:471–485.