

Freedom Rider: Cuba in the American Imagination

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"There are no benevolent motives behind the Obama administration's actions."

On December 17, 2014, the Obama administration announced changes in relations with Cuba which broke with over fifty years of foreign policy decisions. The United States will open an embassy in Havana for the first time since 1961. All of the [Cuban Five](#) [5] political prisoners are now free. While Congress must approve a complete end of the trade embargo, some trade restrictions have already been loosened.

Of course, Yankee imperialism gave with one hand, and took with the other. The day after the Cuba announcement, president Obama signed legislation imposing sanctions against the [Venezuelan](#) [6] government. Instead of asking why the United States would help Cuba but punish its biggest benefactor, Americans are celebrating what they hope is a return to Cuba's status as a de facto American colony.

Anyone who depended on the inane exultations from the corporate media and so-called leftists would think that Cuba ceased to exist from January 1, 1959 until now. They speak as if it has remained in a state of suspended animation, not waking up until the United States woke it with a kiss, as if in a fairy tale. While Americans think that Cubans exist as relics like cars from the 1950s, that nation has succeeded in achieving a number of accomplishments which Americans refuse to acknowledge. Of course that is easy to do if revolutionary Cuba isn't thought of as a real nation, which is as much as the average American mind can fathom.

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Cuban soldiers hastened the end of South Africa's apartheid system. The victory at [Cuito Cuanavale](#) [7] in Angola proved that the South African army was not invincible. While the United States sent troops to build only one paltry hospital during the most recent [Ebola epidemic](#) [8], Cuba sent over 400 doctors to treat patients in the affected areas. Cubans have an excellent health care system which compares quite well to the private and astronomically expensive system in the United States.

Cuba is a nation with its own interests and a history of fighting first against Spanish colonialism and then United States control. Yet in the popular mind Cuba is still a mafia outpost from the 1950s where Americans went to soak up sun and sin. The corporate media helps with ludicrous wishful thinking about [expropriated property](#) [9] being returned fifty years after the fact.

Even supposedly serious thinkers succumbed and revealed more about [their own](#)

[fantasies](#) [10] than any insight about Cuba. Liberal pundit David Corn could only think of his stereotypes in a startling missive posted on twitter. "Cuba's a swell place to visit. Beaches, rum, baseball, music. It'll be great for more USers to visit-& that could counter repression there." If there were a prize awarded for truly stupid twitter posts, Code Pink's Medea Benjamin should win with these words, "Obama spoke with Raul Castro yesterday. The ice is melting. Mojitos for all!"

It is difficult to know where to begin in analyzing such nonsense. It isn't clear what Corn means by repression, but surely the presence of Americans having fun has never made people safe anywhere in the world. As for Benjamin, anyone whose response to a foreign policy decision includes references to a cocktail should be ignored now and forever.

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The foolishly excited liberals are outdone by people who revel in vulgarity but who expose a lot by doing so. [Blogger Matt Forney opined](#) [11], "What Russia was to Generation X, Cuba will be for the Millennials: a land where the white man is God."

That is the crux of the matter. Cuba's history and its politics mean nothing to the right or to liberals who may espouse somewhat higher motives. Cuba is a dream for white people who want a place where they can be well, white. They can fantasize about having a good time while their government controls a largely brown skinned and subservient group.

The lovers of empire may have celebrated too soon however. While even a partial end to the embargo will benefit Cubans, their government made it clear they will not return to subservience. President Raul Castro stated in no uncertain terms that Cuba will remain socialist and will not extradite Assata Shakur or anyone else granted asylum by the government.

Obama said himself, "The whole point of normalizing relations is that it gives us a greater opportunity to have influence with that government." None of the cognoscenti dared ask what those words meant. Imperialism is on the march as never before. United States and Saudi Arabian machinations have succeeded in lowering oil prices and crippling Russia, Venezuela and Iran. Sanctions and market manipulations can succeed where sending troops cannot.

No one can argue against the end of a 16 year-long ordeal for the Cuban Five, but there are no benevolent motives behind the Obama administration's actions. The United States did not suddenly give up its plan for unipolar domination. Indeed we must assume that these latest moves are part of the larger plan to bring every nation to heel.

Cuba is a nation which has suffered and struggled to be free from domination. It doesn't matter if it is a psychological after thought for Americans. They may try to pretend that the last fifty years never happened but there is no turning back. People in the United States may have selective amnesia, but surely Cubans do not.

Margaret Kimberley's Freedom Rider column appears weekly in BAR, and is widely reprinted elsewhere. She maintains a frequently updated blog as well as at <http://freedomrider.blogspot.com> [12]. Ms. Kimberley lives in New York City, and can be reached via e-Mail at [Margaret.Kimberley\(at\)BlackAgendaReport.com](mailto:Margaret.Kimberley(at)BlackAgendaReport.com).

Notes:

- [1] <http://www.blackagendareport.com/category/americas/cuba>
- [2] <http://www.blackagendareport.com/category/americas/venezuela>
- [3] <http://www.blackagendareport.com/category/us-politics/democrats>
- [4] <http://www.blackagendareport.com/category/us-politics/obamarama>
- [5] <http://www.freethefive.org/>
- [6] <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/11093>
- [7] <http://www.blackagendareport.com/content/march-23-anniversary-beginning-apartheids-end-battle-cuito-cuanavale>
- [8] <http://www.blackagendareport.com/node/14470>
- [9] <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/22/world/cuba-seizures-now-present-opportunities.html?action=click&contentCollection=Americas®ion=Footer&module=MoreInSection&pgtype=article>
- [10] <https://cienflamingos.wordpress.com/2014/12/17/diplomacy-is-shit-the-president-is-evil-the-left-is-trash/>
- [11] <https://twitter.com/Mobute/status/545732150474321920/photo/1>
- [12] <http://freedomrider.blogspot.com>
- [13] http://www.addtoany.com/share_save?linkurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.blackagendareport.com%2Fnode%2F14589&linkname=Freedom%20Rider%3A%20Cuba%20in%20the%20American%20Imagination

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