

# Lessons for Ethnic Studies Teacher Resource Book



**CHOICES  
PROGRAM**  
BROWN UNIVERSITY

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## Cuban American Experiences

### Objectives

**Students will:** Analyze personal stories about life in Cuba and migration to the United States.

Consider the views of Cuban Americans in the debate about Cuba's future.

### Handouts

"Understanding Cuban American Experiences" (TRB-91) for all students

One page of "Cuban American Memoirs" (TRB 92-101) for each pair

### Video:

The videos used with this lesson are available at [www.choices.edu/ethnic-studies](http://www.choices.edu/ethnic-studies).

- "What was your family's experience emigrating from Cuba?" (Professor Michael Bustamante)
- "How and why do many Cubans try to leave Cuba?" (Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo)

### In the Classroom:

**1. Set the Stage**—Review with students why many Cubans have left Cuba. Play the video of Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo, answering the question, "How and why do many Cubans try to leave Cuba?" What does he mean when he calls Cuba a "diasporic nation"? What does he think this means for the future of Cuba?

Play the video of Professor Michael Bustamante answering the question, "What was your family's experience emigrating from Cuba?" Why did his family leave Cuba?

**2. Focus Question**—Ask students what they know about the experiences of immigrants, either from their own lives, from family members, or from people in their community. What kinds of stories do people tell about their home countries?

### 3. Examining Cuban American Memoirs—

Divide students into pairs and give each pair "Understanding Cuban American Experiences" and a selection from "Cuban American Memoirs." Have students read the introduction and the directions carefully before they read their memoir selection and answer the questions. Remind students that they are responsible for presenting their author to the class. Each presentation should have two parts. The first part should provide factual background information about their author, while the second part should be an explanation of the author's views on Cuba and Cuba's future. Each presentation should be no longer than two minutes total.

You should remind students that these selections are merely a handful of individual experiences from the twentieth century and do not represent a comprehensive picture of the experiences of Cuban Americans.

**4. Presentations**—During the presentations, students should take notes, jotting down information such as the authors' dates of birth, where they were born, when they or their families left Cuba, their views on Cuba and Cuba's future, and the emotions expressed in each presentation.

**5. Making Connections**—Ask students whether they noted any recurring themes or ideas during the presentations. What information did the memoirs provide about the experiences of Cuban Americans? Ask students to consider the role of Cuban Americans in the future of Cuba. How should the views of Cuban Americans be considered?

### Related Content

For more on this topic, see the Choices curriculum unit *History, Revolution, and Reform: New Directions for Cuba*.

## Understanding Cuban American Experiences

### Introduction

Cubans have migrated to the United States for hundreds of years, but the greatest numbers have arrived only in the last sixty years. Since 1959, hundreds of thousands of Cubans have moved to the United States. Some left Cuba for explicitly political reasons, while others migrated primarily for economic opportunity.

Many left Cuba during the early years of the Revolution. Some Cuban parents sent their children alone to the United States in a program called Operation Pedro Pan (Peter Pan), which was sponsored by the CIA and run by the Catholic church and the Cuban exile community. Because of rumors initiated by the CIA, many Cuban parents believed that the Cuban government would send their children to Soviet work camps. Between 1960 and 1962, Operation Pedro Pan resettled more than fourteen thousand children in the United States with relatives, friends, or in church camps until their parents were able to join them (often years later). From 1965 to 1972, the U.S. government also sponsored twice-a-day Freedom Flights from Havana to Miami in order to reunify Cubans wishing to leave the island with their relatives in the United States. In later years, many Cubans traveled to the United States by boat or raft, for example in the Mariel boatlift or in the rafter exodus of 1994. Today, Cubans continue to migrate and more than two million Cubans and their descendants live in the United States.

### Instructions

In this exercise, you will read an excerpt\* of a memoir from the twentieth century by a Cuban American. Together with your partner, you will present your author to the class. One of you will give a short presentation explaining who your author is, based on your answers to Part 1 of the worksheet on the next page. The other partner will explain your author's views on the future of Cuba, and describe the emotions you identify in Part 2 of the worksheet. Although you will each be responsible for a different part of the presentation, you should answer all of the questions on the worksheet together. Keep in mind that your combined presentation should be no longer than two minutes.

Read your memoir selection carefully with your partner. After you have finished, answer the questions on the worksheet. If you are unable to answer a question, just leave it blank. Once you have answered all that you can, go back to the questions that you were unable to answer. Based on what you know about Cuban history, Cuban American history, and the author of the memoir, speculate about what the answer might be. Your answers should be believable and should align with what you already know about the author. With these answers, you and your partner should then prepare a presentation for the class about your author. Be sure to disclose to the class if you are speculating about an answer.

\*All excerpts from Herrera, Andrea O'Reilly (ed.). *ReMembering Cuba: Legacy of a Diaspora* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

## Cuban American Memoirs

### Memoir 1: Enrique Patterson

*Born in 1950 in San Andrés, Cuba, he left the island in 1992.*

Although many people do not know this, very few Blacks fought in the rebel army; race was not part of the agenda of the 26 of July Movement. Like most Blacks, however, my family supported Fidel at the outset of the revolution; we believed that he would fulfill the promise he made before the revolution to restore democracy and, following the triumph, improve conditions for Blacks in Cuba. At first, things seemed to get better; Fidel eliminated the segregation that existed in many public places, and Blacks were mixed into the *masa* (dough). Yet we soon began to realize things were not as good as they seemed. For example, before the revolution Blacks had their own societies where they could gather together to talk about their problems. After the revolution, Black organizations were formally disbanded.... The official version or rationale was that since the regime had “eliminated” discrimination, there was no reason for anyone to have a separate organization. By breaking up these gatherings, including those attended by the Black communists,... Fidel... later prevented Blacks from assuming leadership roles in the revolutionary party. This was a very subtle form of discrimination to which no one could object because if you protested, you were regarded as a counterrevolutionary....

Although my mother continued to be a Fidelista, my father began to lose faith in the revolution early. My disillusionment and the beginning of my psychological or interior exile began when I was only sixteen years old; it was a process that began when I started to get tired of the racist treatment that I had been exposed to since my early childhood....

During the years that I taught at the University of Havana (1973-1981) the police kept raiding my house. Finally, I decided that since I was going to be persecuted no matter what I did, I might as well become a counterrevolutionary.... I joined a group of eight young intellectuals... together we formed La Corriente Socialista Democrática, an organization that promoted democracy and human rights. Among the eight, I was the only Negro; I am certain that because of my race, I was the first member of the group that the political police went after. As a result I was hauled away to the station about every fifteen days....

I decided to leave Cuba. In my view, dying in prison for the cause was pointless; unlike my ancestors, I refused to be just another Black martyr. I decided to make an appointment with the American consul.... After looking at my record, the consul asked me why I hadn't left the Island earlier. I told him that I had always preserved the hope that if we kept fighting, change would eventually come about. “If people like me leave,” I told him, “nothing will ever change at all”...

**Memoir 2: Alicia Serrano Machirán Granto**

*Born in 1949 in Santiago de Cuba, she left Cuba for the United States in 1963.*

I left my childhood behind in Cuba at the age of fourteen. I still have a terribly vivid memory of my brother and me in the *pecera* (the fishbowl) at the Havana Airport, where they placed children leaving the country to keep them separated from their relatives as they waited to board the plane that would take them away from everything and everyone they had known since birth.

A couple of weeks after the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion, our family home was confiscated. My parents were given forty-eight hours to remove their belongings.... I, along with my brother and sister, was bewildered and in a daze; I was so full of pain that I could not even talk about it.

Together, my parents... came to the painful conclusion to send my brother and me out of Cuba when my father discovered that I was writing anti-Castro graffiti on the walls of a beach clubhouse we frequented. After having overheard a *militario* say that if he caught the “bastard” who was writing things against “*El Comandante*,” he or she would regret it, my father became frantic with fear when my older cousin, who had already spent three months in jail for distributing pro-freedom-of-speech flyers, told him that I was the culprit....

In order to leave as a family, my father would have had to resign his job, which would have severed the means he needed to get us out of the country. With the same epidemic desperation caught by hundreds of parents, who were fearful that their children’s brains would be “washed by communism,” Papi and Mami sent my brother and me out of Cuba in 1963; they remained behind with my sister, who was mentally retarded<sup>1</sup>. We were sent to my maternal uncle and aunt who lived in Miami; they had been exiled for a couple of months. I remember being in a daze for days. It was not culture shock yet—being surrounded by the family softened that blow somewhat—it was trauma, which thanks to my immaturity manifested itself in deep denial. In effect, I convinced myself that I was visiting the States as a tourist, and soon the vacation would be over and I’d go home to my parents....

A few months after our arrival in the States, my uncle was relocated to Wilmington, North Carolina and my brother and I went with him.... I remember feeling completely displaced and not belonging; the possibility that I might not see Cuba again suddenly occurred to me, and it triggered a defensive reaction in me. As a result, I submerged myself in my studies so intensely that I became one of the top five students at the Catholic school I attended. Once in a while, I would wake up in the middle of the night with anxiety attacks. “Oh my God,” I would ask myself, “am I ever going to see my parents again? Am I ever going back to Cuba?”...

I can honestly say that every aspect of my life is impacted by my heritage, sometimes more than I would like. Externally, I have adjusted very well to American life. Internally, however, I often feel schizophrenic<sup>2</sup> in my dealings outside of my Cuban “circle.”... Whenever I am mistaken for something other than a *cubana*, or even called an American-Born Cuban, I have made it a point to explain that I am Cuban, born and raised. Why is this so? I’m not exactly sure if I can explain, but I suppose it reflects my tremendous pride in my Cuban heritage.

1 At the time, this was likely a medical diagnosis, and not thought of as a derogatory term. The term is no longer used today.

2 In this usage, this term means “conflicted” or “characterized by contradictory attitudes.” It does not reflect qualities of the illness schizophrenia.

### **Memoir 3: Ada Manero Alvaré**

*Born in Sagua la Grande, Cuba, she left Cuba via Jamaica in 1980.*

Like many of our friends, we were initially sympathetic with Fidel and the revolution. We believed him when he assured us that the revolution was as green as the palm trees; but he betrayed the Cuban people. (Afterwards we joked that the revolution was actually more like a [guava]: green on the outside and red on the inside.)...

By 1961 it became apparent that something was wrong. Not only was the government confiscating property, but...[a]ll of the secondary students were told that they had to go to the *escuelas al campo* (the work camps in the country where student “volunteers” helped to meet agricultural quotas). The conditions at these schools were deplorable.... I was particularly worried about my son Carlos, mostly because he was asthmatic and could not endure the intense heat and the dust from the cane.

During those early years, we watched many people leave the Island. Knowing that Carlos would be sent to the military if he stayed, we decided that it would be best for him and his sister, Adita, to leave Cuba.... I never dreamed that I would be separated from my children for seventeen years....

Soon it became clear that the sacrifice we had made for our children was in vain; by that time, we were not permitted to leave Cuba—they were detaining all medical professionals because the government desperately needed doctors [Ada’s husband was a surgeon].... After the Missile Crisis it was impossible to get visas to the United States.... We had no control over our lives.

This lack of freedom is epitomized for me in two events, both which resulted in our being denied passage out of Cuba. The first took place shortly after we had finally been granted a visa to leave the Island. Once we knew that we were leaving, I offered to sell a piano that had once belonged to Adita to a neighbor who said he’d like to buy it—it was a way of raising a little money to take with us. When he refused to pay, I decided to give the piano to the nuns. Perhaps out of anger, the neighbor’s wife denounced us by reporting the fact that we were giving away the piano to a friend of hers, who was on the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution. As a result, our exit visas were revoked. This happened a second time when I decided to give a neighbor, who was very poor, a couch for her son to sleep on.... Once again, the same neighbor reported me to her friend, and our visas were suspended a second time! In effect, I realized that I didn’t even have the right to give away the things that belonged to me....

[W]e finally received permission to leave Cuba.... I cried the entire first year after our arrival.... For the second time in my life, I was forced to make an impossible choice: for me, leaving Cuba meant leaving behind my memories of infancy and youth; it meant leaving behind my friends; it meant leaving behind my entire world. Can you imagine, at sixty years of age I had to start my life all over again....

Although I still mourn the loss of my country, the ultimate exile for me was being separated from my children.... Though I have many regrets, I want to close by saying that, despite all that is negative about communism, in some sense it taught me to be a better person, in that I learned to place all of my faith in my spiritual life and in human relationships, as opposed to material things. Nevertheless, if I were to live my life over again, I would never have sent my children out of Cuba alone—never.

**Memoir 4: Mariá Cristina García**

*Born in Havana but left at the age of seven months in 1961 for Miami, the Bahamas, and eventually Puerto Rico. She now lives in the United States.*

So much of what we learned about Cuba and things Cuban was learned from my grandmother, not only on our adventures through Cuban Miami, but at home through her numerous stories, which she recounted as we did our homework, helped cook or clean the house, or prepared for bed. My parents were busy rebuilding their lives in exile, ensuring that we had clothes, food, and a roof over our heads; if they dreamt of returning to Cuba one day, they kept it to themselves. But Abui did dream about returning, and her constant talk of Cuba turned the Island into a tangible entity that sat down to dinner with us....

In 1991, after so many years of stories, I became the first member of my family to return to Cuba for a short visit; I was invited to participate at a conference at my parents' alma mater, the University of Havana. My parents reacted to the news of my trip with disapproval, concerned that my attendance in some way legitimated the Castro regime. My grandmother responded to the news by drawing me a map of Havana on a yellow legal pad. On this grid map with dozens of streets, she located all the places that were important to my family's history; the major landmarks were not government buildings, stores, or museums but, rather, the churches, schools, and homes where their lives had been nurtured. Most of the churches no longer stand, converted by the Cuban government into utilitarian structures; and the schools and homes are in sad decay. But every Cuban to whom I showed that map was amazed by my eighty-year-old grandmother's memory of a city that she hadn't seen in almost thirty years....

Abui died in 1997 in Texas.... Thankfully, she died in her sleep, surrounded by photographs of those living and those waiting for her. We arranged for her to be buried in her beloved Miami because it was the closest she could get to her beloved Cuba. The cemetery where we buried her in southwest Miami is full of *abuelitas* like her, who tried to instill a sense of *cubanidad* in their grandchildren, and who dreamt and prayed of returning to their homeland but never quite made it....

## **Memoir 5: Jorge Luis Romeu**

*Born in Havana in 1945, he left for the United States in 1980.*

The Revolution of January 1959 seemed to represent a triumph for the liberal aspirations of the Cuban people. Its professed aim was to provide the material and spiritual renovation for which our nation had searched for a long time. The delivery of this revolutionary movement to Marxism-Leninism constituted, for many of Fidel Castro's original comrades-in-arms and supporters, a deliberate act of treason. It alienated a large section of the population that originally fought for the Revolution, many of whom had come from the ranks of the professional classes. As a result the majority of the existing professional class was pushed into exile or incarcerated, due to their refusal to ally themselves with the unexpected detour that the new revolutionary philosophy had taken.

My experience as a student and professional in Cuba mirrors the experiences of those who refused, or continue to refuse, to align themselves with the government. I have always been politically incorrect. I came from a family that supported the Revolution; when it became clear that Castro was pro-communist, we actively combated his government....

[In the mid-1960s, he was expelled from the University of Havana.]

Those, like myself, who had been expelled for their open opposition were not given a second chance. In 1966 I, along with more than thirty thousand other young Cubans, was sent to the UMAP... labor camps, which were concentrated in the province of Camagüey. In addition to political dissidents, the camps were filled with people from all over the Island representing all races, religions, and sexual orientations, and classes. Special emphasis, however, was placed on the homosexuals; it was suggested by the government propaganda that the camps were quarantine wards for untouchables. There, we learned to withstand and overcome long days of hard labor in the cane fields twelve hours a day, seven days a week. In addition to being underfed, we were constantly being reminded that we were the scum of the country and would be made to suffer our punishment until we demonstrated repentance and compliance....

After all that I had witnessed, I finally determined that the only way for me to effectively express my dissent and disagreement with the political regime and to spare my children the things that I had experienced was to leave the Island. Essentially, I had arrived at a dead end inside Cuba, for I had a dossier with the secret police. Although the Revolution had already separated our family—my sister, Rachel, was already living in New York—in 1978 we made the painful decision to leave....

Although I have been disillusioned from time to time, I am still grateful for the many things this blessed democracy [the United States] has given us.... In addition to having the privilege to contribute to several newspapers, I have been able to produce a weekly short-wave radio program, which reaches my fellow Cubans who remain on the Island. Like a soldier fighting to deliver my country from oppression, the media has always been my trench. In addition to providing for my family, the opportunity to work for what I believe is true and just and sacred has been my greatest goal and achievement in my eighteen years of exile. This has been, and continues to be, my only justification for having left Cuba in the first place.

**Memoir 6: Hector R. Romero**

*Born in Santa Clara, Cuba in 1942, he left the island in 1961.*

I am an exile; there is no doubt in my mind about this fact. At nineteen, I was forced to make a decision that would drastically alter my life for years to come. I chose to leave Cuba, my homeland, because it was clear to me that I could no longer endure, or even survive, in that type of repressive regime. After two unsuccessful attempts, I finally managed to escape in a small boat in the middle of the night, sneaking out and looking over my shoulder, just like a thief who is trying to get away with something that is not his. In my case, I was indeed trying to get away with something, but it was all mine: my freedom, my dignity, my beliefs, my individuality, my rights, and my culture....

On December 31, 1958, the rebel forces of Che Guevara entered Santa Clara, my hometown, where the most violent battle of the Revolution was fought. I was sixteen years old. Caught in the romantic idealism of the moment, I joined the rebel forces as a scout.... In 1960, disappointed by what I had seen and by the direction in which the Revolution was turning, I joined the MRR (Movement for the Recovery of the Revolution). As a result of my clandestine activities against Castro's communist regime, I was incarcerated three times.... In addition, I was expelled from the University of Havana in 1961, and my picture was prominently displayed, along with many others, on a bulletin board referred to as the "Gallery of Maggots." We had been found to be traitors to "the magnanimity of the Revolution."...

I would not like to end these thoughts without addressing my feelings for that Island that is still called Cuba. To simplify my feelings as much as possible, I would have to compare them with those of a husband whose wife has been unfaithful. Divorced and living apart, he thinks of her every day, hating her new lover and asking himself if a reconciliation is possible. Is it possible to forgive, forget, and rekindle the passion that was there before? How much is he, through his own nostalgia, idealizing the past? Today, I am convinced that the Cuba I remember no longer exists. Cuba is decaying both morally and physically. There, the structures are crumbling down; while here, my memories are beginning to fade, just as old pictures do in family albums. There is no return either to a time or to a place. If there is any hope for the future, it is to be found in our own history—the history that has been erased from the memory of Cubans still living on the Island. The new foundation, if one can be built, must be erected on our common past, on the basis of our history, of our roots, and of our culture....

## **Memoir 7: Carlota Caulfield**

*Born in Havana in 1953, she left the island in 1981 and eventually settled in the United States.*

I first became aware of the changes my family faced when one night my father, my mother, and my cousins gathered around a table late at night to listen to Radio Rebelde. This memory takes me back to 1957. Then, I developed a fear of radio news that I was able to conquer only recently. My cousins and my best friends left the country, but my parents decided to stay. They opposed the Batista dictatorship and for many years supported the Revolution.

I remember when the Cuban authorities confiscated my mother's perfumery. It was 1968. Some of our best neighbors, now changed into Castro's inspectors, harassed her. They took possession of the place and made my mother sign surrender papers in the name of a New Society. She became an exile in her own home, and the following years were very hard for us. But my mother decided that her place was in Cuba; and she is still there.

During that same time I was the target of many of my classmates, who would point their fingers at me, saying, "She is not like us." Yes, during many years I experienced social and spiritual persecution. I censored myself many times. I found myself in danger for speaking, for staying quiet, and for not belonging in the Cuban mainstream.

Some years later, my life's "security" was put to test once again. In 1980, I witnessed many violent outbreaks in Havana. Trouble was everywhere. People who tried to leave the country were persecuted, humiliated, and sometimes killed. We (my husband and I) decided it was time to leave Cuba. After innumerable false starts, one day we found the way to leave behind the desperate situation we were experiencing, now that we were without jobs and the target of neighbors and other people.... I left Cuba for ethical and moral reasons....

The most striking feature of exile is its very complicated spaces.... Yes, it's always an easy-difficult task to talk about exile, and in particular about our exile. You always take risks (many emotional ones) with Cuban matters. Between a Cuban and his/her Island, there are many bridges (silences, dialogues, and quarrels), with his/her self and with others. As circumstances change, we deal with them. Having entered the twenty-first century, Cubans everywhere continue to argue over which direction things will take. Let's see how many more years we keep playing with pebbles on the seashore. Let's see how many more years we keep singing the same song.

**Memoir 8: Gisele M. Requena***Born in 1972 in Miami.*

I was born in Miami—well, at Hialeah Hospital—in 1972 to Cuban parents and grandparents. My mother had been in the United States for eleven years, my grandparents for merely four....

How did I come to feel so Cuban, though? I see many others in my twenty-something age group who, while being aware of their ethnicity, do not stress it as much as I.... Yet for me, the Cuban flag is as much a part of the present as seeing fireworks on the Fourth of July. My family members didn't choose to immigrate to the United States. They loved their Cuban lives and thought they would get to go back, so assimilation was never fully considered. They already had a flag and an anthem and a way of life; and settling in Miami, they did not have to give these up. They chose to pass it all on to me; and it is a gift I have accepted....

I would not know how to even tell anyone about myself, about my life, without saying I come from Miami and I am Cuban. Because while I am an American at the same time, with a master's degree in English from the University of South Carolina, who reads books and newspapers in English and eats pizza more often than plantains—when I look at the Cuban flag, it is my flag. When people speak of the Island, it is my country. And even when people talk of the great fall of Fidel that will someday come, when they will be able to “go home,” I understand. While I do not plan on being on the first boats back with them, I—who have never set foot in Cuba—also want to return to see my town of Bayamo for the first time and to see the house my family had to leave. Granted, I know that after so many years of deterioration and disrepair, the house I will someday look upon may barely resemble the one in which my mother lived. I realize things change. Nevertheless, I will be setting foot in my house, on the soil of my homeland....

And so, I continue to introduce myself as a Cuban, to explain to people why my family left, to tell outrageous stories about fiery Miami and the Cuban exiles, whose dreams of Cuba affect their reality. I consider myself very lucky to have been raised in Miami, where *el exilio* reigns and where Cuban culture continues. There, I have been raised as a Cuban and am part of a group that can truly claim to be as much Cuban as American. Being Cuban American means a great deal to me personally, but I believe it is also important on the grander scale of life in *el exilio*. As time elapses and the older generation passes away, it becomes increasingly difficult to keep Cuban traditions alive. It becomes important to hold on. And so, the fact that of my grandfather's four grandchildren only I, the Miami-bred one, see myself as Cuban becomes a triumph. For all Cubans it is one less loss in a situation where so much has been forfeited already.

## Memoir 9: Maura Barrios

*Born in 1949 in Tampa, Florida.*

My family has been leaving Cuba for more than one hundred years. According to my grandmother, our exile began in the 1870s when my great-great-grandfather, José Álvarez, encountered a Spaniard who said, “All of the women of Cuba are whores.” José responded by hitting the Spaniard on the head with a kerosene lamp. He and his wife and nine children had to leave Cuba that night in a rowboat that landed in Cayo Hueso. This was at the height of the Ten Years War, the Cubans’ failed attempt to gain independence from Spain. He left Cuba in order to live on.

My grandmother was a very patriotic *cubana*, so she may have invented this story. I’ve heard other versions from the Álvarez clan. Some of them insist that José was a Spaniard! But I like her version. I have had a constant desire to get my own history straight. This may be particularly difficult for exiles. Our histories are rewritten or forgotten to adjust to new worlds.

My great-grandmother, Juana Álvarez, was married to a cigar maker and moved between Key West and Cuba. The cigar industry later moved to Tampa in 1886. Juana’s generation shaped and defined the *tabaquero-cubano* [Cuban tobacco] communities of Key West and Tampa. They transplanted their Cuban culture to the Florida swamplands of the nineteenth century.... They invited José Martí to Tampa, where he established the Cuban Revolutionary Party. They financed the Cuban independence movement by sacrificing one day of pay each week for the cause of *Cuba libre*. The Vanguard of José Martí! We *tampeños* [people from Tampa] have a particular pride in our ancestors’ role in Cuba history. However, our Tampa history also includes Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders camping here before departing for Cuba in 1898. I had to search beyond the high-school history books to discover my pride in the ancestors....

I was born in 1949, following the births of a brother and a sister. We lived in a house that my father built—a Cape Cod cottage facing a park in West Tampa. I attended public schools, where most of the teachers were Latinos. Television taught us how to behave like *americanos* and we tried. But the images did not fit with our Cuban bodies, our Cuban souls. Our grandparents lived nearby, so that we would always be reminded—*nosotros somos cubanos* [we are Cubans]!

I wanted to be pure *americana*. My adolescent rebellion involved rejecting my family’s values and culture and making fun of my grandparents’ bad English.... No pride in the old *la lucha* [struggle] for me....

I recovered my (Cuban) identity in a gradual process. But first I had to study history in order to feel pride. All of my education had not ever mentioned cubanos or Latinos.... We/I was invisible in that history.... I had to recover the lost memories of my great-grandmother.

During those liberal-radical-hippie times, the Cuban Revolution sparked a sense of pride, especially among Latin Americans with idealist tendencies. The Anti-U.S. Cuban Revolution! What a conflict. My anger for all the injustices could conveniently be blamed on the racist-capitalist system of the U.S. I could join the whole Third World and the Chicanos and the Blacks in an angry revolt—a different kind of cry for help, acceptance. A demand to be included! To have voice! Didn’t I, the child of the Vanguard of José Martí, have something meaningful to say?...

**Part 1****Author Name** \_\_\_\_\_

1.
  - a. When was the author born?
  - b. Where was the author born?
  - c. In what year did the author or their family come to the United States?
  - d. If born in Cuba, about how old was the author when leaving the island?
  - e. Has the author been back to Cuba since leaving?
2. Why did the author or their family leave Cuba?
3. How is Cuba a part of the author's daily life?
4. What did you learn about Cuba, Cuban Americans, or the experience of Cubans in the United States from reading this selection?

**Part 2**

5. How does the author feel about leaving Cuba or their family members leaving Cuba?
6. What are the author's (or their relatives') views on Cuba? Have these views changed over time? How?
7. What emotions does the author express when he/she writes about Cuba? For example, does he/she seem angry? Nostalgic? Depressed? Hopeful? Proud?
8. What do you think the author would want for Cuba's future? What issues would he/she be most concerned about? Would he/she want to return to visit? To live?