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# An Army of Educators: Gender, Revolution and the Cuban Literacy Campaign of 1961

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*Somos la Brigada Conrado Benítez,  
somos la vanguardia de la Revolución,  
con el libro en alto cumplimos una meta:  
llevar a toda Cuba la alfabetización.  
Por llanos y montañas el brigadista va,  
cumpliendo con la Patria, luchando por la paz.  
¡Abajo el imperialismo!, ¡Arriba la libertad!  
Llevamos con las letras la luz de la verdad.  
Cuba, Cuba, estudio, trabajo, fusil,  
lápiz, cartilla, manual,  
a alfabetizar, a alfabetizar.  
¡Venceremos!*

Eduardo Saborit, *Himno de la alfabetización*, 1961<sup>1</sup>

The conventional scholarly narrative of feminism in post-revolutionary Cuba is that class trumped gender. The Revolution's work towards women's equality was overshadowed by its work towards social equality and this prevented the emergence of an explicitly feminist movement.<sup>2</sup> In 1960, Fidel Castro created the Federation of Cuban Women, an organisation that helped women through measures such as the establishment of subsidised daycare centres and vocational schools for women, but whose primary purpose was to mobilise women in support of the revolutionary government.<sup>3</sup> Castro considered the proper role for the women's movement to be 'a revolution within the revolution'. The elimination of autonomous space for feminist organising in the wake of the revolution kept any articulation of women's needs beneath the umbrella of broader socialist aims.<sup>4</sup> The space that was made available for organising, though led by and composed of women, was created by and relied on the revolutionary government's male leadership.

Recent scholarship on gender in Latin America has increasingly considered women's participation in revolutions in order to understand their roles in post-revolutionary societies. Sociologist Julie Shayne examines what she calls 'the revolution question', asking not what revolutions do for women, but rather 'What do women do for revolutions and how does revolution relate to feminism?'<sup>5</sup> Shayne finds that consistently, guerrilla strategy in Latin American revolutions both exploited and reproduced gender stereotypes. In Cuba, women most often acted in 'feminine' and

logistical roles such as transporting weapons, providing shelter and nursing. When females engaged in combat later in the insurrectionary period, they were grossly under-represented; respected female fighters were considered exceptional and their male subordinates regularly challenged their authority. Even those women who engaged in combat recount that they were charged with the additional tasks of sewing, cooking and cleaning. Shayne argues that in countries such as El Salvador, women's subordinated and underappreciated roles in revolutionary struggles, combined with their training as activists during the revolution, led them to organise feminist movements. Alternatively, in Cuba, while women did experience such discrimination, post-revolutionary governmental initiatives met women's basic needs in a way that stifled the immediate need for feminist organising.<sup>6</sup> Echoing the narrative articulated by Smith and Padula and borrowing terms developed by Maxine Molyneux, Shayne contends that with Cuban women's *practical* interests met by officially sanctioned programmes, women never organised around *strategic* interests.<sup>7</sup>

While it is surely the case that gender inequality persists in Cuba, the narrative that tracks the trajectory of socialism as an inhibitor of gender equality from the days of armed struggle to the present tends to overshadow several factors at play in the consolidation of post-revolutionary society. Through a close look at women's participation in the Cuban National Literacy Campaign, this paper seeks to rescue and analyse several of those factors. First, when Shayne and others look at women's participation in armed combat and guerrilla activity in order to examine the roles of women in revolution, they limit 'revolution' to the insurrectionary period that precipitated Castro's rise to power. This definition overlooks the massive social undertakings that followed, which were, and continue to be, a fundamental component of 'The Revolution' as Cubans understand it. Importantly, it was a component with far greater female participation. Lynn Stoner has noted that the militarisation of daily life through the creation of militancy-infused social programmes after the rebels took power, turned unarmed women into revolutionaries.<sup>8</sup> Focusing on the literacy campaign, this article will look further at the ways in which social work was posited as revolutionary action and consequently, how women contributed to the triumph of the revolution beyond the sphere of armed struggle. Second, it will consider the extent to which many women embraced the rhetoric of heroic militancy attributed to their contributions, albeit as dictated by male leadership. Finally, in light of the first two points, this article will argue that female contributions to the literacy campaign and the meanings assigned them changed the nature of the patriarchy that defined Cuban culture at a crucial moment of consolidation for the revolutionary regime. The cooption narrative, while certainly accurate in broad strokes, threatens to obscure instances in which women did contribute significantly to the revolution and broke with traditional gender norms in transformative ways. In other words, there is a difference between organising *against* patriarchy and acting to *change the nature of* patriarchy. If the absorption of women's needs by the male-led socialist movement did not allow women the space to accomplish the former, by actively participating in the socialist struggle, they did accomplish the latter.

The literacy campaign has not generally appeared as a significant factor in narratives of gender and revolution in Cuba, though it is frequently referenced as an instance in which the Federation of Cuban Women helped organise volunteers. Its minimal presence is conspicuous for several reasons. First, official rhetoric upheld the literacy campaign as a component of the revolution that was equally as important as

the armed insurrection that preceded it. Education had been a centrepiece of the revolutionary agenda from Castro's 1953 foundational 'History Will Absolve Me' speech, onward.<sup>9</sup> Educating the population was not only strategic in terms of advancing Cuba's social development; it was also a moral endeavour. The revolutionary leadership articulated a vision of an ideal Cuban citizen who would be at once a student, a teacher and a volunteer. This new citizen, to whom the leadership referred as the 'New Man', would be inspired by moral rather than material interests and would be formed in the education system.<sup>10</sup> Second, over half of those who volunteered to teach in the literacy campaign were female and over half of the beneficiaries of the campaign were also female, meaning that women were instrumental to the project of creating a nation of 'New Men' and, in ways explored below, thereby asserted a 'New Woman'. And finally, the concerted efforts on the part of the leaders of the revolution to militarise the language, organisation and content of the literacy campaign challenged traditional understandings of education as a realm that is gendered as feminine. That nearly half of volunteer literacy teachers were male speaks to the pervasiveness of this new perspective on education as a revolutionary activity. The campaign cannot be dismissed as an unremarkable instance in which women participated once more in a traditionally female-dominated undertaking.

Rather than a feminine educational effort, official rhetoric portrayed the literacy campaign as a military feat. The 'army of literacy teachers' would battle ignorance and liberate Cubans in the countryside from the oppression of illiteracy. In a speech in May 1961, Castro insisted that the revolution had two armies – the militias and the *alfabetizadores* (literacy teachers). Dividing the struggle into these two armies, Castro could have taken advantage of prevailing gender norms to establish the combative army to be one of men and the teaching army to be one of women. Rather than adopt military language, he could have used rhetoric evoking women's traditional role as the nurturing and educating force of society, advancing the gendered division of responsibilities that Shayne identifies during the insurrection. Instead, literacy teachers were organised into battalions, referred to as *brigadistas* (brigadiers), adorned with military-like uniforms similar to those of the armed forces and honoured as soldiers (Figure 1). Though it is clear that this mobilisation did not mark a challenge to patriarchy – evidenced by the very fact that in order to make a gendered feminine sphere 'heroic', it was made 'manly' – the militant language of the literacy campaign and the mass participation of women, which required eschewing previously acceptable norms for female behaviour, illustrate how new values were advanced during this formative phase of the revolution.

This article addresses a number of related questions. What did it mean for a traditionally feminine contribution to society to be portrayed as masculine, courageous and heroic? What was women's role in creating, shaping and sustaining the changes unfolding in Cuban culture during this period? How did women understand their participation and inclusion when, rather than be called upon to fulfil their gendered fate, they were recruited on equal footing with their male counterparts as soldiers of the revolution?

To begin, I will highlight the militarised and revolutionary aspects of the literacy campaign by exploring the organisation and content of the campaign. Then, through a close reading of a speech given by Castro to departing *brigadistas*, I will examine the official discourse and value system in which the campaign was embedded. Finally, I will analyse recurring motifs in testimonies given by women that were members



**Figure 1:** Literacy teachers celebrate the declaration of Cuba as a territory free of illiteracy, 22 December 1961. Source: Alexandra Keeble (ed.), *In the Spirit of Wandering Teachers* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2001), p. 47.

of the Conrado Benítez Brigades, reflecting on their experiences as *brigadistas* in the literacy campaign. The collection of testimonies pertains to *The Literacy Project*, an oral archive that is not yet public and whose resources have yet to be utilised in academic scholarship. The interviews were conducted without the intervention of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) or other official Cuban institution. They stand to contribute a great deal to scholarly understandings of meaning and memory surrounding revolutionary educational campaigns.<sup>11</sup> While the former *alfabetizadoras* whose stories I consider below do not articulate their experiences in feminist terms, their testimonies make clear that they did not feel like second-class citizens in the revolutionary movement, nor were they passively appeased by the revolutionary government's satisfaction of their basic needs. Rather, by volunteering to teach in the literacy campaign, leaving their urban homes and pampered lifestyles, and defying their parents' conservative views on appropriate female behaviour, they participated actively in the Cuban revolution and in doing so challenged prevailing gender norms.

### Overview of the literacy campaign

At a meeting of the United Nations in New York in September 1960, less than two years after taking power, Fidel Castro announced his intention to eliminate illiteracy in Cuba within one year. This announcement took place in a global context in which literacy was coming into focus as an important indicator of social and

economic development. Practitioners and educational theorists such as Paulo Freire were undertaking important efforts to eradicate illiteracy in other regions of the hemisphere. Six months after Castro's announcement, President John F. Kennedy launched the Alliance for Progress, which encouraged social reform in Latin America in order to prevent revolution and sought to eliminate illiteracy in Latin America by 1970.<sup>12</sup>

According to the Cuban census of 1953, the last census taken in Cuba prior to the revolution, 23.6 per cent of the Cuban nation was illiterate.<sup>13</sup> Illiteracy was disproportionately prevalent in the countryside. While only 11 per cent of the urban population was illiterate, that rate was 41.7 per cent amongst the rural population.<sup>14</sup> The immense undertaking that Castro proposed at the United Nations meeting would be carried out by the mass mobilisation of volunteer literacy teachers. Nearly fifty years later, the literacy campaign continues to be one of the revolution's most prized and successful endeavours.

After a preparatory period from September through December 1960, the campaign was carried out in three increasingly intensive stages during 1961, officially declared the 'Year of Education'.<sup>15</sup> The first stage of the campaign lasted from 1 January 1961 through to the end of April. Adult amateur teachers called *Alfabetizadores Populares* (People's Instructors) were given training in the use of the teaching materials that had been developed specifically for the campaign during the preparatory stage – a teaching manual called *Alfabeticemos* (Let's Teach Literacy) and a student primer called *Venceremos* (We Shall Triumph). Professional teachers, who were involved throughout the campaign in supervisory, organisational and instructional capacities, led the training. In tandem with the adult volunteers, pilot brigades of teenage students also began teaching.

The second stage began in April when Castro closed schools early for the summer in order to facilitate the massive incorporation of students into the literacy effort. Ultimately 105,664 students volunteered, forming the Conrado Benítez Brigades, named after a teacher killed months earlier by counter-revolutionaries. Fifty-two per cent of the *brigadistas* were female.<sup>16</sup> They were predominantly urban youth from middle-class families, for most of whom joining the campaign meant leaving home for the first time. Forty per cent of the *brigadistas* were between the ages of ten and fourteen. Forty-seven per cent were fifteen to nineteen.<sup>17</sup> The majority of the remaining 13 per cent were above the age of nineteen, though the youngest documented teacher was eight years old.<sup>18</sup>

*Brigadistas* spent a week at a training camp in Varadero where they received instruction on the use of the manual and primer. From there they were sent to their assigned destination where they lived and worked with the families that they taught to read and write. Although the Conrado Benítez *brigadistas* comprised less than half of the entire teaching force – the rest of the force consisted of professional teachers, factory worker volunteers and *alfabetizadores populares* – the Conrado Benítez *brigadistas* are the most iconic.<sup>19</sup> Narratives of the campaign commonly speak of the campaign's 100,000 literacy teachers (in reality there were more than 260,000) – book covers, commemorative posters, magazine articles and news clippings tend to show pictures of enthusiastic youth in uniform, often captured in the act of teaching their students, who were most commonly adults. The oldest documented student was 106 years old.<sup>20</sup> The symbolism of this meeting of urban youth with elderly people in rural areas holds a strong presence in the mythology of the campaign.

In August, Castro solicited help from another segment of the population, this time appealing to the factories rather than schools. Over 13,000 workers responded to Castro's call and formed the *Patria o Muerte* (Fatherland or Death) Workers' Brigades. The final stage of the campaign took place from 5 September through to 22 December. This stage was marked by an intensification of efforts in order to achieve the goal of completing the campaign by the end of the year. Efforts to identify remaining illiterates increased. Acceleration camps were established to aid those who struggled the most to learn to read and write.

Finally, on 22 December, the entire country was declared free of illiteracy. A mass celebration took place in the Plaza of the Revolution in which workers, teachers and students were bussed in from all over the country to march together under the banner 'We Have Triumphed'. By 1961, Cuba's population totalled 6,933,253. Over the course of the year, 707,212 of the nation's 979,207 illiterates attained the level of literacy necessary to complete the final assignment of the campaign primer: writing a letter to Fidel Castro.<sup>21</sup> Fifty-five per cent of the newly literate were women.<sup>22</sup>

### Context of the national literacy campaign

The timing of the literacy campaign is crucial to understanding its importance in the history of the revolution. The campaign took place in a context of moral panic in which the revolutionary government struggled to assert a new ethos that would govern post-revolutionary society. During the 1961 'Year of Education', the United States broke diplomatic relations with Cuba, the Bay of Pigs invasion took place, Castro declared Cuba a socialist country and declared himself a Marxist-Leninist. Circumstance demanded that the revolutionary government defend and define itself. The literacy campaign, occurring in this context, was an important tool for defence and definition. The campaign's mobilisation of vastly disparate sectors of the national population around the specific revolutionary messages contained in the campaign material, which will be considered in greater detail below, was paramount to consolidating a new Cuba and to transmitting a singular vision of the past, present and desired future.

Timing is also important in understanding the militarisation of the campaign, as it took place within a climate of real danger. At each stage of the campaign, violent acts received national attention and were used to rally volunteers to persevere in the face of threat. In the first official month of the campaign, Conrado Benítez, an eighteen-year-old volunteer-teacher, was murdered in the countryside by counter-revolutionaries.<sup>23</sup> The Bay of Pigs invasion took place in April. In November, weeks before the completion of the campaign, another young volunteer named Manuel Ascunce was killed alongside the father of the family that he was teaching.<sup>24</sup> Interspersed amongst these three well-known acts were countless assaults on literacy teachers by counter-revolutionaries in the countryside, resulting in over forty deaths.<sup>25</sup> In this context, the militarised rhetoric of the campaign was not only believable, it was grounded in current events.

The militarisation was evident in all of the campaign's facets. As mentioned earlier, *brigadistas* were organised into brigades and wore military-like uniforms. The names of the particular brigades further highlight their militaristic nature. The youth brigades were named after Conrado Benítez, the campaign's first martyr (Figure 2). The combative nature of the name of the workers' brigade, '*Patria o Muerte*', requires no explanation.



**Figure 2:** *Brigadistas* carried ‘Army of Educators’ ID cards. Source: Alexandra Keeble (ed.), *In the Spirit of Wandering Teachers* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2001), p. 47.

The publicity initiative that promoted the campaign also perpetuated the military image. Posters encouraged young people to ‘join the army of young literacy teachers’.<sup>26</sup> Graphic promotional materials depicted Conrado Benítez in uniform stabbing the word ‘illiteracy’ with a giant pencil (Figure 3). The text below the image read ‘Death to Illiteracy’.<sup>27</sup> The hymn of the Conrado Benítez Brigade, broadcast on the radio six times daily, called the *brigadistas* ‘the vanguard of the revolution’ and proclaimed ‘down with imperialism!’.<sup>28</sup>

The military nature of the campaign was also evidenced by ceremonies and symbols associated with the campaign. On one occasion, Castro hosted a ‘second Bay of Pigs invasion’ in which the beach where the Bay of Pigs invasion took place was ceremoniously ‘invaded’ by literacy teachers approaching the shore from boats bearing giant pencils. Planes and helicopters overhead ‘bombed’ the beach with literacy manuals and primers.<sup>29</sup> On another occasion, after Cuban exiles launched an air attack on a public school in Havana, a tattered and bullet-ridden blackboard that had been used hours earlier to teach a sixth-grade social studies class about imperialism, was transported to the training camp at Varadero for *brigadistas* to see as they went about their work.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the content of the campaign materials was also militant. During this crucial moment of defence and definition of the revolution, the literacy campaign provided not only a moment of mass mobilisation but also one of mass indoctrination. By working with the materials given to them *brigadistas* took the message of the revolutionary government into the countryside where counter-revolutionary forces were still active and support for Castro was less secure than in the urban centres. During their training *alfabetizadores* themselves became better versed in the revolutionary message.

The teaching manual they used was organised around twenty-four themes including ‘Fidel is Our Leader’, ‘Cuba Had Riches but was Poor’ and ‘The Revolution Wins all the Battles’.<sup>31</sup> A brief look at the texts that corresponded to the thematic sections makes clear that the manual was a form of coaching *alfabetizadores*, not just on the



**Figure 3:** ‘Death to Illiteracy’. Source: Alexandra Keeble (ed.), *In the Spirit of Wandering Teachers* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2001), p. 17.

art of teaching, but also on the revolutionary message that they would take to the countryside. The first section, ‘Revolution’, read:

People need revolution in order to develop and advance. . . . When the wealth of a nation is in the hands of another nation, a revolution is needed to recover that wealth. When the humble men and women of a country live without work, without land to cultivate, without education, they must create a revolution.<sup>32</sup>

In section two, ‘Fidel is our Leader’, the manual stated, ‘We respect and love the one who has guided us in the struggle to make Cuba a free and prosperous country in which we might live happy and educated’.<sup>33</sup> In the section on ‘International Unity’ addressed imperialism:

the interests of the United States are not the same as the interests of Latin American countries, for while the former is an exploiting country, the latter are countries oppressed by imperialism, and though they say in the meetings of the Organization of American States that all countries have the same rights and opportunities, when it comes time to vote, U.S. economic and military pressure is the deciding factor.<sup>34</sup>

While these first themes were mainly instructional in dogma and rhetoric, subsequent themes offered more substantive information about the specifics of the revolution’s undertakings. For example, the section entitled ‘The Land is Ours’ outlined the Agrarian Reform’s specific objectives.<sup>35</sup> The section called ‘Nationalization’ explained



the Tariff Reform Law and the Tax Reform Law recently enacted by Castro's government.<sup>36</sup> Section Nine, 'The Revolution Converts Army Barracks into Schools', reaffirmed the revolutionary educational mission upon which volunteers and their students embarked together.<sup>37</sup>

The teaching method the *brigadistas* learned created ample opportunity for this information to be conveyed to their students. Each lesson in the student primer, *We Shall Triumph*, began with a photograph and was entitled with an 'active word', many of which resonated with both the personal experiences of the students and the message of the revolution. The first two lessons, 'OEA' and 'INRA', the Spanish-language acronyms of Organisation of American States and the National Institute of Agrarian Reform are concise examples of the opportunities for consciousness-raising provided by the course material. The methodology employed also contributed to this feat. The photo, active word and the appearance of the active word in increasingly complex sentences, were meant to stimulate dialogue between the *brigadistas* and their students about revolutionary topics meaningful in the students' lives.<sup>38</sup> For example, the lesson entitled 'The Land' stated: 'The *campesinos* now at last are owners of the land. The *campesinos* cultivate their land. The Cuban land is rich'.<sup>39</sup> The lesson, 'The People's Store' said, 'The *campesino* buys his needs both good and cheap within the people's store'. However, the topics contained in the lessons were not limited to the day-to-day lives of the peasants, they also introduced geopolitical concepts. The topic of imperialism appeared in the section 'Cuba is Not Alone', which stated 'United we shall overcome aggression. They [the United States] will not be able to stop the revolution'.<sup>40</sup>

While many socially charged topics, such as land reform, economic inequality and imperialism, were included in both the manual and the primer, the material did not directly address issues of gender. This fact resonates with conventional understandings of the Cuban revolution that emphasise the ways in which women's issues were subsumed by socialist ones. Indeed, the revolutionary message concerning gender was embodied by the operation of the campaign rather than articulated explicitly in the material. Male and female teachers in identical uniforms, with identical equipment and materials, spread throughout the countryside to carry out the work of the revolution on an equal footing. The participation of a mixed group of volunteers, all exemplifying the masculine ideals inherent to the vision of the 'New Man', introduced Cubans in rural areas to a 'New Woman'.

### Fidel Castro's speech in Varadero

While all of the above-mentioned factors testify to the revolutionary and militarised nature of the literacy campaign, nothing shaped the meaning of the campaign more than the words of Fidel Castro. A speech Castro delivered to departing *brigadistas* and their families at the training camp in Varadero on Mothers' Day in May 1961 is one of the most famous of the campaign. While uniforms, ceremonies, propaganda and materials gave the campaign a martial aesthetic, Castro's discourse provided a framework for conceptualising the campaign in military terms. This framework was imbued with the values of the emergent Cuban culture.

The first of the military themes is the two-army motif with which Castro began his speech:

There are two armies in our nation: one armed with rifles and cannons to defend the work of the revolution, and one armed with books to advance the revolution; one army to combat foreign enemies, traitors and those who would destroy what we have accomplished, and another army to combat lack of culture and illiteracy. The revolution needs both these armies, one can do nothing without the other.<sup>41</sup>

Not only were the two armies vital to the revolution, the educational initiative was prized above that of physical security: 'the battle that defeats ignorance will give our country more glory than any military battle we have waged so far, or any military battle we shall wage in the future'. Importantly, participation in the literacy campaign was depicted as being as commendable as participation in combat: 'Just as much heroism is needed to defeat illiteracy as it is to defeat mercenaries of imperialism'.<sup>42</sup> Another significant aspect of the use of the battle motif is that according to the metaphor illiteracy and ignorance were not just social ills, they were enemies of Cuba. When articulated as part of the two-army motif, imperialism and illiteracy did not just appear as two enemies of Cuba, they appeared as each other's allies. Through this rhetorical twist, a fight against illiteracy became part of the fight against imperialism.

This conflation of enemies was further nurtured by the notion that imperialist forces actively tried to precipitate the failure of the literacy campaign. Rumours that the CIA financed the counter-revolutionary groups that *brigadistas* faced in the countryside, as well as the foiled Bay of Pigs invasion just months into the campaign, further increased the sense that imperialism was an enemy of the campaign. In reference to the Bay of Pigs invasion, Castro stated:

We knew that each and every invader would be defeated; we were confident that our soldiers would wipe them out within a few hours. What did worry us, though, was that the events might hinder or slow down the movement of this other army – the army that is fighting a much longer and far more difficult battle.<sup>43</sup>

Here, the image of the literacy volunteer as a revolutionary soldier was reiterated – the *brigadistas* not only taught people to read and write, they also stood up against imperialism.

Another familiar wartime theme in Castro's speech is the pressure not to surrender. In fact, the speech was published in the Cuban newspaper *El Mundo* under the headline 'It is Shameful to Abandon Literacy Education'.<sup>44</sup> To this point Castro said:

None of you will want to confess to your friends and sweethearts that you didn't have enough willpower to spend the necessary time in the mountains . . . you won't want to admit that, while tens of thousands of other boys and girls remained in the battle, you gave up and withdrew. . . . It will always be humiliating to have lacked the willpower to stay to the end just as it will always be a source of pride for all of you – until the time of your grandchildren – to have belonged to this literacy army.<sup>45</sup>

The shame associated with 'chickening out' is significant not only because it mirrors the pressure not to desert a military battle, but also because it is very much tied up with ideals of masculinity.

Furthermore, Castro instructed the *brigadistas* that they must not only carry with them the revolutionary message as contained in the primers and manuals, they must embody the revolutionary spirit in a way that would be attractive to the *campesinos*: 'Not only must you teach the *campesinos*, you must win them over. You must win their sympathies in order to teach them what the revolution is all about.' Later in the speech

he became more precise, 'each *campesino* is going to be looking at you to see what a revolutionary is like; if he gets the idea that a revolutionary is a person who is correct, respectful and disciplined, that will also form his opinion of the revolution itself'.<sup>46</sup> Again, the literacy teacher was not *just* a literacy teacher, he or she was a foot soldier of the revolution and an exemplar of new Cuban morality.

Castro's speech did not appeal to gender, it appealed to youth. Rather than speak of the novelty of large numbers of men participating in an educational initiative or the novelty of large numbers of women participating in a revolutionary endeavour, he spoke to the novelty of young people partaking in both: 'Rarely has the youth of any nation been faced with such a task; rarely has any country's youth been called on to do a job as important as this one.'<sup>47</sup> Castro was aware of the ways in which this experience, like going to war, entailed a certain 'coming of age' for the *brigadista* generation: 'Each of you is going to feel that you have become more of a man or woman than you were when you left for the countryside'.<sup>48</sup> The experience was also a rite of passage on the way to fulfilling one's revolutionary potential, 'the success of the literacy campaign will mean not only that we have taught more than a million illiterate Cubans to read and write, but also that we have made a hundred thousand young people from the cities better, more revolutionary citizens'.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, Castro said that the greatest reward of participating in the literacy campaign would be a legitimate claim to having been part of the revolution, 'Tomorrow you will have the satisfaction of saying that this work was also yours, that you helped to build this edifice. Tomorrow you will be able to feel infinitely satisfied that you were part of this revolution.'<sup>50</sup> Most of the *brigadistas* were too young to join the guerrilla insurrection while it was taking place and, as the scholarship has pointed out, females by and large did not participate in combat. In the official discourse he constructed, however, Castro offered the *brigadistas* ownership of the revolution, even though they were incorporated after the principal stages of armed insurrection had ended.

Gender was specifically evoked only once in this speech, but it is an important and revealing fragment:

We sometimes hear protests when we send boys to the most isolated places and girls to places closer to towns. But by no means does this mean that we have any discriminatory ideas about women. The fact is that we are responsible to your parents, and must take every precaution to put them at ease.<sup>51</sup>

Here, Castro distanced himself from gender discrimination and instead attributed discriminating ideas to the *brigadistas'* parents. He assured the *brigadistas* that while he had to appease their parents, he did not share their parents' values. This differentiation of value systems is significant because it marks a generational divide between pre- and post-revolutionary Cuban gender norms. As we will see below, in articulating their experiences, many female *brigadistas* emphasise the significance of leaving home, with or without their parents' blessings. An entire generation's departure from their parents' homes in many ways marked a breaking away from that Batista-era value system.

### **The testimonies of *alfabetizadoras***

That over half of the volunteer teaching force was female is, in itself, testament to the degree to which women responded to the militant challenge posed by campaign recruitment efforts. An analysis of the personal testimonies of female former volunteers sheds further light on the extent to which women embraced the militant rhetoric of the

campaign, the actions they took in order to respond to Castro's call and the meaning they attributed to their endeavours.<sup>52</sup>

Official discourse at the time gave *brigadistas* a framework for understanding what they had signed up for and it continues to shape the collective memory of the experience fifty years later. The official narrative has been perpetuated and reinforced over the years through celebrations on milestone anniversaries, the honouring of former *brigadistas* with military medals and the creation of the Museum of the National Literacy Campaign in the former army barracks of Camp Colombia. Through these ceremonies and gestures, the legacy of the literacy campaign as a military one lives on. An exploration of interviews with former *brigadistas* conducted forty to fifty years after the triumph of the campaign reveals that this militarised legacy also lives on in the memories of those who experienced it.<sup>53</sup> The persistence of this narrative in the present is important because it highlights women's success in changing the nature of patriarchy, rather than (as is true of many studies) emphasising their failure to get rid of it entirely. While terms such as 'patriarchy' do not appear in these testimonies, women remember, with pride and other positive emotions, the ways they broke with convention, often noting that society's definition of 'conventional' subsequently shifted.

A set of recurring motifs is readily apparent in the interview transcripts. All *brigadistas* spoke of their experience leaving home and how their parents reacted to their decisions to join the campaign. Anecdotes of this nature reveal a great deal about the degree to which the act of leaving home for such a purpose constituted a break with what was previously acceptable for youth, especially for girls. Students were required to get permission slips signed by their parents in order to join the brigades. In rare cases, parents expressed encouragement. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales was only eleven years old when she decided to join the literacy campaign and her family encouraged her.<sup>54</sup> Many of her family members had participated in the insurrection, were members of the July 26 Movement and had been forced to live clandestinely prior to Castro's victory. Having been too young to engage in armed combat, Raquel was encouraged to follow in the footsteps of her relatives by becoming a *brigadista*.

The support of other parents was much more mild and tenuous. While María Dinora Avelle Guerra, who became a literacy teacher at the age of thirteen, initially had no problem obtaining her parents' permission to join the Conrado Benítez Brigade, when it came time for her to leave, her mother 'ran after the bus saying "Get off the bus, María, I don't want you to go anymore. Get off, María".<sup>55</sup> Dalia Peñalver Masa, who became a *brigadista* with her parents' permission at the age of fourteen, said that her father signed her permission slip only because he had no faith in her ability to fulfil her mission: 'Yeah, let her go, let her go, she'll be back here in two weeks'.<sup>56</sup>

Others faced more overt opposition. When their parents refused to grant them permission, they were able to participate in the campaign only through outright defiance. Lilian Delia Navarro Morán, sixteen years old at the time, asked her parents for permission twice before she took matters into her own hands.<sup>57</sup> Her strict household was 'worse than a military regime'.<sup>58</sup> She noted the significance of her gender in shaping her predicament: 'It was very intense, especially for the women, because of the upbringing, the way of life that was led in those times'.<sup>59</sup> In order to participate in the campaign, Lilian snuck away during a free moment at school to enlist and gave the authorities a friend's address. When she collected the materials and uniform she stored them at her friend's house. When the day of her departure approached, she

confronted her family with the news and showed them her boots and backpack. The ensuing argument was passionate but she insisted, 'I'm going, with or without boots, with or without a backpack'.<sup>60</sup> When her family finally recognised that she could not be convinced to stay, as a gesture of support in the wake of the upheaval, an uncle who had opposed her leaving gave her a pair of gloves so that she would not hurt her hands clearing brush in the countryside.

Like Raquel, Lilian had not dared to join the communist revolutionary 13 March Movement at her school, due to her parents' strict control over her schedule. This was something she always regretted. She saw leaving home to teach literacy as her chance finally to take part in the revolution, 'having lived. . . those years of revolution and triumph that I hadn't been able to as I'd wanted in the previous stage, I feel very satisfied'.<sup>61</sup>

Adria Santana was also forbidden by her parents from teaching literacy and, like Lilian, she found a way around it.<sup>62</sup> She was only twelve years old at the time and her father refused to sign her permission slip, despite his willingness to sign her sixteen-year-old sister's slip. Though their father was a communist and supported the campaign, he thought Adria was too young. Adria attributed her parents' fear to her gender: 'They didn't want us to go because they were scared, we were female'.<sup>63</sup> Determined to go anyway, Adria copied her father's signature from her sister's permission slip. When Adria's actions came to light, her mother and grandmother intervened on her behalf to convince her father to allow her to go. Their main contention was that 'a communist couldn't say no'.<sup>64</sup> They argued that what Adria had done in order to participate in the campaign 'didn't deserve punishment, it deserved praise'.<sup>65</sup> While the outcomes of the stories of Lilian's and Adria's deceit may seem suspiciously felicitous, it is the message that *brigadistas* hoped to convey with their stories, more than the veracity of each anecdote, that is the concern of this article.

Other young women were definitively prohibited from leaving home but found innovative ways to participate in the campaign without officially joining the brigades. Seventeen-year-old Mercedes' father was deceased and she was charged with taking care of the house while her mother earned money as a seamstress.<sup>66</sup> Her brother left home to join the Conrado Benítez Brigades but her own participation was forbidden: 'When I told my mom that I wanted to teach literacy, she told me no because I was female and females couldn't leave the home, especially at that age'.<sup>67</sup> Well-versed in the gender dynamic of the household, Mercedes appealed to her uncles. They intervened on her behalf and a compromise was reached – Mercedes was allowed to teach illiterates in her neighbourhood during the day, as long as she kept up her housework. Although she stayed home and so was not able to participate in all of the rites of passage that *brigadistas* spoke of in their narratives, the experience was nonetheless transformative for Mercedes: 'It turned me into another person in the sense that I felt useful and needed . . . a person changes when they know that they've done something important. Until that moment, the only things I'd done were housework and study'.<sup>68</sup> Though the degree to which gender appears to have been the most important factor in fuelling parents' resistance to their daughters' participation varies between testimonies and other factors such as youth appear more significant in some, it is important to note that none of the males whose testimonies were recorded by *The Literacy Project* were prohibited by their parents from joining the campaign. This suggests that gender was likely an important factor even in instances where it was not made explicit.<sup>69</sup>

Those who did teach in the countryside were frequently threatened, some even assaulted, by counter-revolutionaries. As mentioned earlier, one of the campaign's most famous martyrs was a young *brigadista* named Manuel Ascunce. When counter-revolutionaries came to the home where Manuel was teaching he was not in uniform, he was dressed as a *campesino*. When the counter-revolutionaries demanded to know which of the young people present was the literacy teacher, the mother of the family claimed Manuel as her son to protect him. When they persisted, Manuel stepped forward and said, 'I am the teacher'. He was taken away with one of his students and hung from a tree.<sup>70</sup> His story became so legendary that to this day it is fashionable for students in Cuba to wear sweatshirts that say 'I am the teacher'.<sup>71</sup>

Raquel, the eleven year old whose revolutionary family members supported her joining the campaign, came under threat of attack by counter-revolutionaries on two occasions. After she was threatened in the first home where she lived and taught, she was moved to another location. When she recounted the more dangerous of the two incidents in her story she presented herself as a sort of Manuel Ascunce.

When they surrounded the house, the *campesino* said 'Be quiet, be quiet, the house is surrounded' and I put on my uniform and said, 'Lets go outside, all of us together, I'm not staying in here lying down.' 'That can't be, you're twelve years old, you're from Havana.' 'So what? I'm from Havana and I'm here with you, doing the same work as you.' I got up and I put on my uniform and I went outside with the *campesino*. 'If you must go outside, I'm going outside with you, I'm not staying in here lying down.'<sup>72</sup>

Whether or not the then twelve-year-old girl went out to face a band of counter-revolutionaries in her literacy uniform is not as important as the way that Raquel, years later, constructed this story. She presented herself as a militant revolutionary who defied expectations and identified herself with the famed attitude of a martyr.

This same commitment and determination also appeared in *brigadistas'* testimonies through bold statements about how they refused to abandon their mission in the face of danger and uncertainty, thereby appropriating the rhetoric of masculine courage upheld by Castro in his speech at Varadero. In Raquel's case, when campaign officials attempted to move her again to another location after her encounter with counter-revolutionaries she refused to leave her post, telling the officials, 'I'm not moving from here, whatever happens I will face it'.<sup>73</sup> María remembered that her mother, the one who had chased after the bus as it carried her daughter away, would visit her where she taught every few weeks. At the end of every visit, her mother would suggest they return home together. María's response was always the same, 'I'm not leaving until I finish'.<sup>74</sup>

Those who deserted the campaign before finishing their work were called '*rajadores*' and the label carried a heavy stigma. While many *brigadistas* swore that they stayed despite the danger purely to honour their commitment to the campaign, others confessed that their decision was also influenced by the intense pressure not to give up, which was articulated in Castro's speech and perpetuated through the culture of the campaign. Adria, the twelve year old who forged her father's signature and went to teach with her sixteen-year-old sister, remembered that one night she and her sister heard horses outside. Voices yelled, 'Bring out the *alfabetizadores!* Bring out the *alfabetizadores!*'<sup>75</sup> Eventually the counter-revolutionaries went away and no real conflict developed, but Adria and her sister

were horrified, as were their parents when they heard about what had happened. Still, the sisters refused to leave, setting and abiding by standards for themselves in line with the values of the revolutionary leadership: 'It was very poorly viewed that you deserted, that you returned home without finishing, it was a shameful thing . . . And there was no way that we wanted to experience that shame'.<sup>76</sup>

During the literacy campaign, *brigadistas* were forced to grow up quickly. As with a generation that goes off to war, the notion that this experience marked a 'coming of age' is also a major part of these narratives. Away from their parents, *brigadistas* had to take care of themselves for the first time. As Raquel put it:

Just imagine. I was a little girl who didn't even wash her own underwear or anything, my mom did everything . . . When I went to teach in the literacy campaign . . . I learned to do everything . . . Fidel said in a speech, 'You will come back men and women' and that is how it was.<sup>77</sup>

For some, this transition took place quite literally. Dalia recalls, 'a lot of girls had their first menstruation there. You don't forget that ever'.<sup>78</sup>

*Alfabetizadores* were also expected to contribute as much as possible to the *campesinos*' work in order to avoid being a burden. Their participation in manual labour not only broke down urban-rural barriers and forced middle-class youth into a new form of maturity, it also obscured gendered divisions of labour. María Dinora explained, 'It was there that I separated myself from my childhood . . . we did anything we could, it was the same if we did a man's job or a woman's job'.<sup>79</sup> She later stated, 'I even did the work of an ox'.<sup>80</sup> In the same breath that María expressed the difficulty and novelty of the work in which she engaged with the peasants, she also emphasised the success of the *brigadistas* in winning over the peasants in the way Castro had urged them to, 'We were embraced by the *campesinos*, they loved us very much, they protected us a lot, they took care of us as though we were their own children'.<sup>81</sup>

Since the campaign, the *brigadistas* have been honoured extensively for their contribution. The medals they were awarded held particular significance to *brigadistas* and many interviewees showed their medals to the interviewers. Adria's older sister Ivonne explained, 'over the years they gave us medals in recognition of what we did in '61. No one did it to get recognition later but it was still nice to receive it – that it was seen, applauded'.<sup>82</sup> When reflecting on the meaning of the campaign, the militaristic tone of *brigadistas*' stories often became nostalgic and altruistic. Adria explains, 'It was the first time that we could give, you understand. We came from a humble family, we didn't have anything to give except for love'.<sup>83</sup> The self-sacrificing woman with nothing to give but love is a familiar patriarchal image, but in this case, the selflessness Adria expresses resonates more closely with the 'New Man' morality of Che Guevara than with a perceived duty of womanhood. Indeed, throughout the interviews, female former volunteers consistently express 'New Man values' as their own while simultaneously emphasising the ways in which their adoption of those values and active participation in the revolution, as women, involved knocking down obstacles presented by Cuban patriarchy.

## Conclusion

Time and again, the motifs that Castro touched on in his speech at Varadero were brought to life in the stories of *brigadistas*. Castro's assertions that literacy volunteers composed an army of educators fighting the dual threats of ignorance and imperialism

were echoed in the *brigadistas*' stories of courage and danger. The notion that volunteering to teach meant becoming a revolutionary was affirmed by women's assertions that the literacy campaign afforded them the opportunity finally to participate in the revolution. But as these stories show, women did not simply respond obediently to Castro's call in an inconsequential manner. Their participation in the campaign required transgression and defiance. While the 'education as battle' framework articulated by the government began to alter the blueprint of gender in society by masculinising a sphere historically portrayed as feminine, the actions of female volunteers fundamentally challenged what their parents and their communities expected of them.

This should not be lost in the streamlining of scholarly narratives that seek to make sense of where the limits on women's liberation lay. While it is certainly the case that the regime's prizing of socialism over all potential interest groups prevented the emergence of an independent feminist movement and that the literacy campaign was led by men and fuelled by masculine ideals, the actions of female volunteers contributed to the consolidation of an emerging post-revolutionary culture in which patriarchy, though still present, was changed. Though not a complete victory over female oppression, women's participation in the campaign was meaningful and transformative. It merits a place amongst the early triumphs for women's condition in revolutionary Cuba, triumphs often portrayed as a list of policy changes enacted by male leaders and paralleled by the elimination of autonomous space in which women themselves could organise.

## Notes

1. 'We are the *Conrado Benítez* Brigade, we are the vanguard of the revolution, with books we achieve our goal of bringing literacy to all of Cuba. Through fields and over mountains, the brigadiers go, honouring the fatherland, struggling for peace. Down with imperialism! Long live liberty! We bring with words the light of truth. Cuba, Cuba, education, work, rifle, pencil, primer, manual, let's go teach literacy, let's go teach literacy, we shall triumph!' Eduardo Saborit, *Himno de la Alfabetización*, 1961. Also known as *Himno de las Brigadas Conrado Benítez*.
2. For a much-cited articulation of this point of view, see Lois M. Smith and Alfred Padula, *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Ilja Luciak, *Gender and Democracy in Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), furthers this argument by asserting that while women in Cuba enjoy 'formal' gender equality they do not experience 'substantive' gender equality. See also Julie D. Shayne, *The Revolution Question: Feminisms in El Salvador, Chile, and Cuba* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004).
3. Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, pp. 36–7.
4. Oscar Lewis, *Four Women: Living the Revolution, an Oral History of Contemporary Cuba* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), underscores the ways in which the values inherent to socialist and capitalist systems significantly alter the meaning of women's liberation, in that 'liberation' in a capitalist context is largely defined by individual self-fulfillment, in contrast to socialist systems.
5. Shayne, *The Revolution Question*. See also Karen Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, Cuba* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).
6. Shayne, *The Revolution Question*, p. 4.
7. Maxine Molyneux distinguishes between practical interests, those that meet immediate basic needs and strategic interests, which challenge patriarchal systems. She argues that pursuit of the former often develops into a feminist struggle for the latter. See Maxine Molyneux, 'Mobilization without Emancipation?: Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua', *Feminist Studies* 11 (1985), pp. 227–54.
8. Lynn Stoner, 'Militant Heroines and the Consecration of the Patriarchal State: The Glorification of Loyalty, Combat and National Suicide in the Making of Cuban National Identity', *Cuban Studies* 34 (2003), pp. 71–96.



9. Fidel Castro, 'La historia me absolverá' (speech, Santiago de Cuba, 16 October 1953).
10. The 'New Man' that Che Guevara envisioned would, he argued, be formed in the educational system. See Theodore MacDonald, *Making a New People: Education in Revolutionary Cuba* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1985), pp. 18–20.
11. *The Literacy Project* is a growing audio and visual archive of testimonies about literacy. It is, to my knowledge, the largest collection of testimonies about the Cuban Literacy Campaign in existence. With the intention of making a documentary film about the Cuban Literacy Campaign (*Maestra*, forthcoming), the director of the archive, filmmaker and journalist Catherine Murphy, began collecting interviews in 2002 through contacts established during the ten years that she lived in Cuba. The interviews were conducted with a Press Visa and therefore did not require the same sort of local sponsorship or approval demanded of academic researchers. *The Literacy Project* had no contact whatsoever with the FMC. The testimonies contained in the collection, which currently include the stories of fifty-three women and nineteen men, represent a vast range of past and current political affiliations and viewpoints. The projected timeline for the publication of this collection is as follows: Transcripts of the interviews will be deposited in the National Literacy Museum in Cuba and in a sister repository in the United States still to be determined and will be published on *The Literacy Project's* website by mid-December of 2012. Permission was granted to use real names. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and the translations used in this article are my own.
12. Andrew J. Kirkendall, 'Paulo Freire, Eduardo Frei, Literacy Training and the Politics of Consciousness Raising in Chile, 1964–1970', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 36 (2004), pp. 687–717, here, p. 687 and Andrew J. Kirkendall *Paulo Freire and the Cold War Politics of Literacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). For a comparative perspective on literacy campaigns across greater swaths of time and space, see Robert F. Arnove and Harvey J. Graff (eds), *National Literacy Campaigns: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Plenum Press, 1987).
13. United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO), *Methods and Means Utilized in Cuba to Eliminate Illiteracy: UNESCO Report* (Havana: Editora Pedagógica, 1965), p. 15.
14. UNESCO, *Methods and Means*, p. 15.
15. UNESCO, *Methods and Means*, p. 21.
16. UNESCO, *Methods and Means*, p. 45.
17. Richard Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 45.
18. Jonathan Kozol, *Children of the Revolution: A Yankee Teacher in Cuban Public Schools* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978), p. 6.
19. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 42.
20. Kozol, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 6.
21. UNESCO, *Methods and Means*, p. 29.
22. Cecilia McCall, 'Women and Literacy, The Cuban Experience', *Journal of Reading* 30 (1987), pp. 318–24; here, p. 320.
23. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 42.
24. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 52.
25. Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 189.
26. Kozol, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 6.
27. Alexandra Keeble (ed.), *In the Spirit of Wandering Teachers* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2001), p. 17.
28. Saborit, *Himno de la Alfabetización*, 1961.
29. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 56; Keeble, *Wandering Teachers*, p. 18.
30. Kozol, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 44.
31. Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Alfabetícemos: Manual Para el Alfabetizador* (Havana: Ministry of Education, 1961). The following translations are my own. A full English translation of the manual is available in Richard Fagen, *Cuba: The Political Content of Adult Education* (Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, 1964), pp. 23–53.
32. Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Alfabetícemos*, p. 23.
33. Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Alfabetícemos*, p. 24.
34. Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Alfabetícemos*, pp. 51–2.
35. Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Alfabetícemos*, p. 25.
36. Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Alfabetícemos*, p. 34.
37. Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Alfabetícemos*, p. 38.
38. Kozol, *Children of the Revolution*, pp. 15–16.
39. Kozol, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 17.
40. Kozol, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 17.

41. Fidel Castro, 'Speech at Varadero to Departing Conrado Benítez Brigadistas and Their Families, Mother's Day, 14 May 1961', tr. Richard Fagen in Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, pp. 180–92. Spanish transcript of speech published in *El Mundo*, 16 May 1961, pp. 6, 8.
42. Castro as translated and reproduced in Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 181.
43. Castro as translated and reproduced in Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 181.
44. *El Mundo*, 16 May 1961, p. 6. My translation.
45. Castro as translated and reproduced in Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 190.
46. Castro as translated and reproduced in Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 189.
47. Castro as translated and reproduced in Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 182.
48. Castro as translated and reproduced in Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 183.
49. Castro as translated and reproduced in Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 184.
50. Castro as translated and reproduced in Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 187.
51. Castro as translated and reproduced in Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 189.
52. This paper does not claim to represent the experiences of *all* women that participated in the campaign. There is likely to be a degree of self-selection amongst the women willing to offer their testimonies to a documentary endeavor such as *The Literacy Project*. However, there were a broad range of political perspectives amongst the women interviewed and the similar motifs and values identified in their narratives despite such differences suggest certain trends in how many women assign meaning to their experience. For a well-known example of a more ambivalent testimony of a female former volunteer (a testimony that is still, nonetheless, structured around many of the motifs listed below), see the story of Monica Ramos in Oscar Lewis, *Four Women*, pp. 3–128.
53. I turn to these interviews not to confirm events with individual accounts but rather to explore the meaning that emerges when individuals narrate 'what happened'. For more on the uses of oral history see Daniel James, *Doña Maria's Story: Life, History, Memory and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).
54. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, interview by Catherine Murphy, *The Literacy Project*, Havana, Cuba, April 2006.
55. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, *The Literacy Project*, p. 15.
56. Dalia Peñalver Masa, interview by Catherine Murphy, *The Literacy Project*, Havana, Cuba, April 2006, p. 2.
57. Lilian Delia Navarro Morán, interview by Ivonne Chapman, *The Literacy Project*, Havana, Cuba, May 2007.
58. Lilian Delia Navarro Morán, *The Literacy Project*, p. 2.
59. Lilian Delia Navarro Morán, *The Literacy Project*, p. 1.
60. Lilian Delia Navarro Morán, *The Literacy Project*, p. 3.
61. Lilian Delia Navarro Morán, *The Literacy Project*, p. 12.
62. Adria and Ivonne Santana, interview by Catherine Murphy, *The Literacy Project*, Havana, Cuba, June 2006.
63. Adria and Ivonne Santana, *The Literacy Project*, p. 2.
64. Adria and Ivonne Santana, *The Literacy Project*, p. 3.
65. Adria and Ivonne Santana, *The Literacy Project*, p. 3.
66. Mercedes Angelina Delgado, interview by Ivonne Chapman, *The Literacy Project*, Havana, Cuba, May 2006.
67. Mercedes Angelina Delgado, *The Literacy Project*, p. 1.
68. Mercedes Angelina Delgado, *The Literacy Project*, p. 5.
69. While a comparative analysis of the experiences of female and male volunteers would lead to a greater understanding of the gender norms that the campaign challenged as well as those in which it was embedded, a thorough analysis of this sort is beyond the scope of this article as the collection of interviews that it draws from primarily consists of the stories of female volunteers.
70. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p. 52.
71. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, *The Literacy Project*, p. 9.
72. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, *The Literacy Project*, p. 9.
73. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, *The Literacy Project*, p. 8.
74. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, *The Literacy Project*, p. 17.

75. Adria and Ivonne Santana, *The Literacy Project*, p. 4.
76. Adria and Ivonne Santana, *The Literacy Project*, p. 4.
77. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, *The Literacy Project*, p. 6.
78. Dalia Peñalver Masa, *The Literacy Project*, p. 7.
79. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, *The Literacy Project*, p. 14.
80. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, *The Literacy Project*, p. 16.
81. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, *The Literacy Project*, p. 14.
82. Raquel Arredondo Gonzales, María Dinora Avelle Guerra, and Eddy Avelle Alfaro, *The Literacy Project*, p. 9.
83. Adria and Ivonne Santana, *The Literacy Project*, p. 13.

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