Translator’s notes (in Times font), by Thomas Holloway

 To facilitate comment on specific passages, I have entered numbered footnotes in the text. First, however, general comment: Thanks for the opportunity to help put this important speech/essay before a broader audience. By these notes I do not mean to intrude on any eventual gloss or interpretation others will provide, nor to belabor the obvious. Some of my comments adhere more closely to issues of translation. I’ll let others decide if any part of those notes warrant inclusion in some form, in the final product. Other comments result from my failure to resist the urge to take off my translator’s cap and put on the hat I wore for forty years as a historian of Latin America, with a sub-specialty in social and racial issues. I certainly do not intend any of such commentary to appear in published notes connected to me. I offer them here for whatever anyone might think they are worth.

 I will also note that I worked from the original text of the speech published by the Institute where it was given, now in the NYPL Schomburg collection and inscribed by Urrutia himself to Arturo Schomburg in November 1937. The text is the same as the 2005 *Del Caribe* reprinting, but the latter has several typos, and the Schomburg version is a primary document. I will, however comment here on the introduction to the *Del Caribe* version, by Tomás Fernández Robaina. It makes no substantive contribution to the analysis of this speech/essay, beyond saying it is important, followed by a list of bibliographic citations. On one point, however, Fernández Robaina is quite questionable, at least as far as “Points of View of the New Negro” is concerned, when he writes that Urrutia “fought tirelessly for the full integration of Afrodescendants, Afro-Cubans as he called them, for their civil and political rights, and did so with much respect for the African culture and religions still active in his time.” As I point out in the *seriatim* notes below, Urrutia not only ignores the African culture and religions active at his time, he positively (if indirectly and in passing) denies their existence.

**Points of View of the New Negro**

Lecture by architect **Gustavo** **E.** **Urrutia**

First of a series of lectures on social, scientific, and educational issues, sponsored by the National Institute for Welfare and Social Reform, at its Study Center, on July 8, 1937.

Worthy audience:

The first time I gave what I thought might be a lecture was at the University of the Air, of fond memory, around mid-1933. After suffering the panic the microphone imposes on most of those new to radio, and then receiving the solemn congratulations common on such occasions, a gentleman in the studio audience extended his hand, with a silent smile, and called me aside. Smiling more broadly, he said “you’re a journalist, right? Well then, what you’ve just read to us is a long article. But don’t be discouraged. I guarantee that some day you will write a lecture.” He then left quietly without giving me a time frame for that miracle to occur.

It has been four years since that friendly piece of advice, and I don’t think I’ve advanced at all in the art of lecturing. Quite the contrary, which is why honesty obliges me to warn you that what I’m about to read is also not a lecture, and not even a long article like that first attempt. It is a sort of weaving together of notes for a more complete report. If anyone in the audience, after kindly listening to what I have to say, feels moved to confirm that I have progressed backwards, I will be as grateful for that as for your willingness to tolerate me to the end. If that happens, I will say farewell to the lecture hall tonight. It will not be the first time I will have yielded to the impossible.

And if, ladies and gentlemen, despite knowing my limitations, I am here with my text prepared, it is for one reason: the importance of the topic, the urgent need to call attention to the points of view of the New Negro, as they bear on the complex issue of race relations in the broader Cuban context. And what better place for this than the opportunity so kindly offered by the Study Center of the National Institute for Welfare and Social Reform, and an audience such as yourselves, so accustomed to mental discipline? I might also suggest that the problem of race relations, which for far too long has been suppressed by the taboo of pseudo patriotic sentiment, enters this hall stripped of all impassioned flutter.[[1]](#footnote-2) It is placed within a rigorous intellectual framework like any of the other social problems studied in the enlightened institute that has honored me with its hospitality today

It is certainly the case that I have always dealt with the subject on that intellectual level, devoid of any trace of bitterness, whether at the lectern, in the press, or in my most intimate thoughts. I don’t mean to deny that the question of race, like all social problems and most questions of human interaction, is fraught with difficult emotions. But at the same time, these racial situations, which are usually the effect rather than the cause, are subject to a series of remote and inexorable imperatives which are the result of past historical development, and of the laws of human progress in its successive development toward the future. Such imperatives definitely rule over the will of men and social groups. They modify causes and effects, adjusting them to the objective conditions of a present that is constantly evolving toward progress. In order to fruitfully analyze the effects of those overarching and superhuman imperatives, and their determinant forces, we must discard all passions, which only obscure and confuse our understanding. We must take an approach that is strictly intellectual, philosophical, and technical, using the methods of modern social science. This dispassionate and thoughtful attitude is precisely what the New Negro adopts in order to confront the problem of race relations. This gives the New Negro his calm state of mind, his firm immunity to the blows of negrophobia and the flattery of negrophilia, his self reliance and mental toughness. Finally, it is the source of his optimistic vision of a time in the relatively near future when race might cease to be a problem because it it will have lost its reason for existence; in other words, the vision of a future in which racial prejudice would be as absurd and incongruous as black slavery would be for the today’s economic system.

But before going on, it would be appropriate to define this “New Negro” more specifically—this sort of “New Deal,” if you will.

The New Negro is the Afro-Cuban—male or female, young or old—[[2]](#footnote-3) who has reached the conclusion that our existing liberal democracy is unable on its own to overcome the subordination and socio-economic devaluation of people of color that we have inherited from our history as a slave colony. The current regime is incapable of overcoming the great disadvantages suffered by the Cuban proletariat and middle class, where the whole of the colored race is located.

The New Negro is someone who has overcome the inferiority complex imposed on him by the burden of slavery. He no longer persists in asking for social and economic equality based on his enormous historical contribution of patriotism and labor in the development of Cuba and the Republic. He has, however, developed a thorough understanding of that honorable contribution, so that he feels fully worthy of such equality in the past, in the present, and in the great work that the future holds for progressive Cubans. He is aware not only of his significance in the past and what he means for his Cuban homeland today, but also of the African Negro’s place in the historical progress of the West, and since the Great War, the significance of the Negro for international equilibrium, world peace, and thus for the survival of Western civilization—as we will see in the course of this lecture.

The New Negro is not subject to the various definitions of blacks provided by his white friends and foes. Rather, he begins by defining his own self, and by having his own definition of others, as would be the case for any rational and educated person.

The New Negro of Cuba is an Afro-Cuban who studies our race problem with a clinical eye and a philosophical mind, devoid of any genuine racism, even if it were only a reflection or reaction against white racism. In this talk I hope to be able to explain, as I have explained in the press, my reasons for believing that the Negro in the Americas, and especially in Cuba, has no good reason to feel he is racist.

The New Negro, finally, is the Afro-Cuban who no longer thinks of his fellow white citizen as a big brother, and who sees the racist white Cuban as a biased and malevolent brother. He takes this attitude without rancor, but with the caution necessary to counteract the noxious effects of white racism on the good Cuban character. As for the progressive and revolutionary white Cuban, revolutionary in the most noble sense of the term, the New Negro loves him like a twin brother and as a comrade in the struggle for objectives both national and human.

This is the New Negro, who has emerged from the confusion in which his race and the rest of the Cuban lower classes were submerged, caused by the failure of our revolutionary struggles to achieve true democracy. He has again found his way, with the understanding that even genuine liberal democracy would not be able to guarantee collective economic and social justice, because it is essentially individualistic and plutocratic. He has pointed himself toward the promotion of some form of socialism—of the left for most people—compatible with our own character and our international relations.[[3]](#footnote-4)

Does this make the New Negro arrogant? Instead of the New Negro, have we given birth to the New Pedant? Does he think he’s the lord and master of the only truth? Was he born out of social upheaval or breakdown? Does he scorn the old Negro, his peers, the whites of the past and today? Is he stubborn, imperious, or rebellious?

No, certainly not. He is nurtured by history, and is filled with true scientific and philosophical humility. He knows that he owes his civil and political freedom to historically derived principles of western economics and politics, not from largesse or penitence. But for all that, he values the good work of the abolitionists, and the fraternal integrity of genuinely revolutionary white people in all times. (He denies that status to the pseudo revolutionaries of the past and today.) He acknowledges the legacy of white culture as well as black culture, and feels admiration for the efforts of his black ancestors, in the most adverse conditions, to raise him to the level of enlightenment and culture he now enjoys. The New Negro knows he is nothing more, after all, than the most recent version of the noble, edifying, patriotic, and brotherly spirit the Afro-Cuban has always had. He also knows that he currently finds himself in a time of mental and political transformation. That’s why we are used to hearing him think out loud. That’s why we commonly see him as polemical. He is trying to explain his position. He is convinced for certain that our national problems—including racial problems—cannot be solved by blacks alone or by whites alone.[[4]](#footnote-5) While he develops and expounds his own ideas, he also seeks to present them to society at large for collective approval by all of Cuba, whose support he will need for the great task in which he is engaged. I owe my presence here this evening to that position, in an effort to explain the mindset of the New Negro, to substantiate his points of view. And I am prepared to answer any questions you might have at the end, as long as they are not too erudite. The Afro-Cuban has no external reasons to feel racist. He aspires to eliminate all racial discrimination. Be that as it may, the New Negro begins by identifying as black. The creation of such a specific mental autonomy, of group identity, does not constitute any lamentable lapse in either logic or tactics.

On the contrary, such a perspective is based on the reality that black people suffer economically and socially because of their race. Thus they need to reach a deep and perfect understanding of their position in Cuban society, on their own terms, in order to come up with ideas that might contribute to a solution to those problems, and specifically the problem of racial discrimination. Blacks then need to merge their own ideas with those of progressive whites, and develop a set of policies that would have a common philosophy, set of goals, and plans for achieving those objectives. More than once I have said that where discrimination exists, to achieve *racial indifferentiation* it is necessary to begin by specifying and defining the differences that exist, in order to be able to eliminate them. It is not a question of erasing biological differences, but making them innocuous.[[5]](#footnote-6) This process of developing a preliminary and transitory racialized perspective, however, is one of the most difficult challenges for the very delicate mission of the New Negro, because on the one hand he is diligently seeking solutions to problems of social justice that are floating around in the world, and on the other hand because the Negro is, after all, the last person who should become addicted to racism.

When the New Negro becomes the channel for his own values and mobilizes them for the good of the community, defining for himself what the Negro means for Cuba and the world, the process of spiritual self determination will begin.[[6]](#footnote-7)

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In order to specify these ideas more concretely, we can designate the topic just mentioned as the first point of view of the New Negro: What is the significance of the black African in the global context, and what do the slavery of the past and the Afro-Cuban descendants of slaves mean for our nation? The answers will tell us why the New Negro has overcome the inferiority complex with regard to the black roots of his ancestry.

Although it may not be widely known, the fact is that the African continent and its people constitute the deep and solid foundation on which the world’s economic, political, and military balance rests—and in latent form, the social problem such a balance implies. Those two factors, territories and people, were the underlying causes of the Great War. Because of them, Germany did not succeed in crushing France before the United States arrived to support the Allied Powers. Those two factors are the object of imperialistic greed, and a major shift in the distribution of colonial territories might precipitate another universal war, which is brewing precisely for control of Africa.

It seems that African territories are the only ones virtually unclaimed, where land can be taken with the least concern for the violating the international code of ethics; where the people, due to their naïveté,[[7]](#footnote-8) are the easiest to subjugate. This combination of weaknesses constitutes a constant temptation for those set on conquest, through diplomacy or war, and it is the weakest point in the precarious postwar situation.

After suppressing the transatlantic slave trade to suit its own interests, England made a discovery that was as important for world politics and economics as the great feat of Christopher Columbus. British merchant genius discovered that the servitude and slavery that still existed within Africa itself could be more profitable than transporting the labor force to other parts of the world. Western nations then came to colonize Africa as they had in the New World: in the name of Civilization. This dictum, of course, does not suggest any malicious intent when it is applied exclusively to the rise of civilization in Europe, although eventually the excess of civilizing zeal would stir up the sordid economic rivalries that provoked the most astounding slaughter in history—the World War.

England, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain—all used their colonies to feed industrialization until in most of those nations it reached monstrous and heartless proportions. Market competition required that maximum advantage had to be squeezed from the human and natural resources of Africa. The European nations had to be ready for war to defend their positions and possessions, and to be vigilant for the opportunity to snatch what they could from any adversary. War industries and financial capital expanded as never before. The western plutocracies needed war on a grand scale to empty their warehouses and expand credit..

According to Burghardt Du Bois, Bismarck wanted the Congo Free State for Germany, and even after the death of the great chancellor Germany dreamed of an African empire which would include the Congo, half of the Portuguese colonial territories, and all of the French, to become the largest and strongest colonial power in Africa, which is to say the greatest world power. The eminent Afro-American sociologist states that Germany entered the war, in the course of which it was pushed out of Africa entirely, with those goals in mind.

At this perilous juncture France stopped the formidable German invasion, reinforcing their army with black troops, who were quickly recruited by all possible means—by the draft, by deception, by disguised coercion—and thrown into the horrible butchery. This new source of manpower was as surprising and effective as the German gas attacks.

Centuries ago Spain discovered a new continent where they could bring black labor to be exploited. England then invented the exploitation of that labor force in the land of the blacks itself. And more recently France introduced a new type of weapon in modern warfare: black Africans. They were novel for their military nerve, their boldness, and for their fierce heroism. They were a new factor that had never before figured in the European military balance of power. For France they meant a considerable increase in troop strength, making its armies more formidable. France put 673,000 Africans on the battlefield, in 1933 they had 1,600,000 colored troops, and today God only knows how many there are.

But these new developments have created a serious problem for those who benefit from Imperialism in Africa, and reveal an aspect of the so-called “black peril.” How to counteract this unforeseen black force?

None of the other colonial powers can count on a similar source of manpower in Africa. No other European country occupies such a favorable geographical and strategic position in the Old Continent. Only France has colonies situated and prepared for such immediate and complete military and economic advantage. And now, how to head off the certain threat of an even greater influx of black French troops in the next Great War? Alliances with or against France have not managed to reduce the anxieties this gigantic innovation has provoked.

The most dramatic issue for the whites is not so much the military threat and the still irreconcilable attitude of France toward Germany. It is, rather, the threat that this introduction of African forces, initiated and now maintained by the French on a permanent basis, represents for the global hegemony of the white race. The result could be that France, pressed to guarantee the friendly cooperation of its colonies, might have to grant them a greater measure of human and political rights than they now have.

The white world had always counted on the absolute submission of the darker races, based on its own military power and industrial efficiency, and considering the lack of unity of the colored world, its babel of languages, and the immense diversity of its religions. If now a certain group of whites seeks the support of blacks, ceding to them even a minimum of prerogatives in return, the white world gets nervous, sullen, and stubborn to the core. This state of mind and attitude is similar to that of our own slaveholders, when the whites fighting for independence in 1868 and 1895 sought the cooperation of black Cubans in exchange for recognizing equal civil and political rights—which was all they could offer, since our revolutions did not imply fundamental economic or social change.

But on the other hand, it so happens that France is also a first rank industrial power engaged in a difficult battle for hegemony in the new Western Europe. How then, to deal with its African colonies? Should it be based on the merciless exploitation of the black population, as England does, in order to compete with them? By developmental policies benefiting the colonies, in exchange for military cooperation? To what point would the French investors and captains of industry put up with such economic sacrifice?

For France and the other industrialized imperialist powers, this whole matter is a problem for the whites. But there is no doubt that it is also a matter for the blacks. It follows that the black race cannot be left out of the discussion. Although the majority of black Africans live in the wild—by which I mean they are dwellers of the forest, not barbarians—[[8]](#footnote-9) there are millions of native Africans and blacks born in the continental Americas and the Antilles, who are sufficiently knowledgeable to take interest in a full and fair solution.

We have a situation, then, in which, due to his decisive military contribution to the war effort, the black African has earned a reputation for military prowess, rather than for less positive qualities, in the future of western civilization—in its economic, political, social, and military aspects—not much less than the status and military prowess of the blondest of the Nordic peoples.

\* \* \*

But what? Is that all the black African is good for? Can we applaud a new invasion of the barbarians? Is it great or honorable to serve as cannon fodder or attack dog?

We civilized westerners need to look at this matter carefully, so that we don’t ignore its implications. In the first place, and despite more or less sophisticated ideas to the contrary, brute force, the law of strongest, so-called military prowess, continue to dominate our western world. Secondly, we have already seen that black soldiers from Africa, by their military support for the French metropole, are gaining advantages for their land and their race. But beyond that, and somewhat to the surprise of many people, the reality is that black Africa has a level of culture—literary, religious, artistic, musical, poetic, and social—which is in no way inferior to that of certain oriental peoples who have acquired prestige in those fields.

We will need to back up these assertions, and what we will see later with regard to the contribution of the black Cuban to our nation and our culture, because these elements are the essence of the mental attitude of the New Negro. His other points of view require less argumentation because they are simply the results of these basic premises, and because they deal with topics that are more familiar because they have been and continue to be part of our own lives.

What would be more important for characterizing the contribution of the black race to human progress, that a number of notable blacks have distinguished themselves within white civilization by their intellectual activities, art, holiness, and heroism; or that for more than twenty years western civilization has been nurturing its artistic essence on black art? More simply put, would it be that the Negro is a contributor to white culture, or that he participates in guiding its emotive core?

The individual achievements of blacks within white civilization of course repudiate the idea that they are inherently inferior, but that doesn’t raise the status of the black race as a whole. Successful blacks are still considered to be subordinates who adapt to white culture, are a product of it, or at best are seen as evidence of the magical effect of white culture even on those who are considered to be inferior beings. In contrast, the fact that modern white civilization has voluntarily accepted inspiration from the artistic spirit of black culture, a phenomenon that is not considered to be aesthetic degeneration, is recognition and confirmation that black culture shares the first ranks of the artistic cultures of the world. So we see that the Negro is not the intelligent monkey, the domesticated and tamed new arrival from Africa, nor the mixed-race person redeemed from presumed inferiority by a few drops of someone else’s blood. Instead, he is the teacher of his own race and the white race, the creator of beauty, the source of a pure art—as pure as the Greek, the Egyptian, or the Chinese.

We all recognize the prominence of jazz and the spirituals[[9]](#footnote-10) in the world. Less well known is the recent renewal of European and American art, where the master works—not the eyesores—of the vanguard in sculpture, literature, and music are inspired by the sensibilities and rhythms of ancient African sculpture. Many people are repulsed by an African mask or sculpture because we want it to show us what it does not: an ideal of physical beauty or some moral, intellectual, or expressive quality. Our aesthetic attitude is therefore incapable of perceiving its *purely* artistic quality. I’m not saying “merely” artistic, but “purely” artistic. Its predominant qualities are the sculptural design, overall harmony, unexpected variations and contrasts, and the rhythmic sequences that satisfy the urge of all human beings for a sense of cadence. But to appreciate these qualities we must put aside our usual way of contemplating a sculpture—as an anatomical reproduction or expressive document—in order to perceive only its artistic message.

The sculptors of all great traditions in the past went beyond natural anatomical features, accentuating certain elements and eliminating others to turn their creations into true works of art. The distortions in African art that leave many viewers perplexed also exist in the sculpture of Ancient Greece, Egypt, and China. In black sculpture, however, the alterations are freer and go further, and are thus more amazing, richer in rhythmic variations, just as the rhythms of black music are infinitely richer than those of European music.

This richness and variety of rhythmic harmony is what has distinguished ancient African art, and places it alongside the greatest achievements of past cultures. The sculpture of ancient Africa was certainly not the work of a barbarous people, because before the invasion of Africa by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, only a small part of the African population was in a primitive state. Their sculpture was the manifestation of a stable and organized way of life, adapted to its environment, and therefore capable of developing a natural and authentic mode of artistic expression.

All this justifies the enthusiasm of modern critics for the exotic art of Africa. More than twenty years ago, when western art was threatened with a decline into a state of orthodox formalism and eclecticism, similar to what happened to Italian art in the sixteenth century, the treasures of African art were recovered from anthropologists and antiquarians, who had reserved them for their purely scientific interest. They served as new influences on recent creations in art, music, and poetry, which have profoundly affected European and American civilization.

According to the American critic Albert C. Barnes, of the Barnes Foundation, any intelligent observer can discover black motifs in the painting and sculpture of the modern masters—Picasso, Matisse, Modigliani, Lipchitz, Soutine, and others. In the music of the famous group of French composers known as “The Six”—Satie, Auric, Honegger, Milhaud, Poulenc, and Tailleferre—the black spirit is incorporated into the representative forms of the most refined musical culture. Many of the best works of Stravinsky are in the same category. Diaghilev, director of the famous Ballets Russes, created his best dance pieces by blending the spirit of African sculpture with the essence of the music of Russian ballet.

The poetry and prose of Guillaume, Apollinaire, Jean Cocteau, Max Jacob, Blais Cendrars, and Riverdi are also fundamentally black in their emotional content and expressive forms. The creations of the noted Parisian fashion designer Paul Poiret are influenced by his contact with black sculpture. In the 1925 Exposition of Decorative Arts in Paris, the prevalence of black motifs in the truly innovative work of the decorative artists of all nations was impressive. In Europe and America the posters that are capturing public attention are clearly inspired by primitive black sculpture. Today’s creative artists openly recognize all these great and extensive influences—in painting, sculpture, music, poetry, literature, decorative arts.

Mr. Barnes also says that despite its quality, this sculpture has not been fully appreciated by the public, and even the spirituals[[10]](#footnote-11) have only recently been recognized. He adds that as black art becomes more widely known, the hope grows that the arrogance of the white race might be tamped down, and that the miserable feeling of inferiority among blacks might be put to rest—both of which are so damaging to the well-being of the two races.

For the New Negro, the highest aspiration of the modern black person should be to harmonize the essences of white culture with those of black culture, to achieve an integration that transcends them both.

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As for Cuba itself, what has been the role of the African and Afro-Cuban ancestors of the New Negro? What have they taught him? What is his, and our homeland’s, debt to them?

Understanding is the greatest quality that black people have contributed to our national character—intuitive, rational understanding. This explains, in sum, the intelligent attitude of the black race from our African ancestors to the people of today, an attitude of constant cooperation in the development of Cuba in all times and circumstances, however adverse they may have been; a calm spirit, self denial, sacrifice, all enlightened by a clear vision of the future; longing for a future that has not yet arrived, but which fills our pure soul and lets us look on the past without sadness nor resentment. Resentment against whom? Against the history of humankind? Isn’t it better to have a simpler past one can feel satisfied with?

Of course, the black African did not come to Cuba as a tourist. But it’s also clear that neither casual arrivals nor any “desirable immigration” produced more benefits for our country. Black slavery in Cuba may not have the most barbaric in the Americas, but it was hard for our ancestors, and it still affects our sensibilities as cultured people.

But both they and we understand the clearly romantic mission of black people in the New World. We are the bedrock of civilization in the Americas. We made this continent productive; from here we revived the decrepit life of Europe. We were the source of worldwide renewal. With our pain we made slavery detestable. We were the proof of the economic error of labor in chains. We spread the love of freedom through the colonies, and gave them the resources and courage to gain their independence. We have injected the negroid element into the psychological makeup of the Americas, firmly linking our spirits. And as passive educators, teaching by example, as those who suffer from it, we are showing the absurdity of race and color prejudice. This conduct is more eloquent and effective than any arguments we could bring to bear against such prejudice. All these lessons, all these notable services, were accomplished in the Americas by a minority of African slaves and their descendants with exemplary stoicism, and in the perverse conditions of which we are all aware.

Nevertheless, the Negro feels no debt to the white man for any of this. The Negro feels as though, by an order from on high, he was brought from Africa to carry out an exalted mission, like a biblical tribe torn from its homeland to teach the world a lesson. And he thanks God for choosing him, and for the fact that in the history of the Americas there is not a single page he should feel ashamed of. By being thus separated from their original tribes, the great peoples of the world were reconstituted, with no return to their former groups. But what’s more, we have given soul and vitality not to one people, but to a new world, merging with it to remain forever, like a tacit and firm emotive resource. Our blood and spirit will be able to divide into infinitesimal particles through society, but every person will carry these characteristics within themselves, and we will continue to be integrated forever.

It is not strange that rational understanding should reveal these truths to us Negros today. But it is a thing of wonder that our ancestors, both Africans and those born here, enslaved and uneducated, intuitively understood this transcendental destiny, and behaved in ways that began the journey, and make it possible for us to continue.

The Cuban slaves was a hard worker. He tended the land like someone developing his own property. The lash did not cut his back except to squeeze out extortionate production. He conscientiously fulfilled his primary mission to enrich the land that should have also been his, and he was also the basis of the urban economy. Slaves worked in the skilled trades and household labor, leaving the whites largely to devote themselves to intellectual occupations, through which they acquired the skills that permitted them to conceive and develop a national identity.

In addition, despite prohibitive laws and regulations, slaves organized themselves. They established secret mutual aid societies, patterned after those in Africa, which over time became the memorable *cabildos* organized on the basis of African nationalities, which in turn became recreational and social centers for blacks. They were similar to the Regional Centers that developed during the colonial era, with the essential difference that members of the Centers had no economic or spiritual connection to their place of origin in Africa. They were organized on the basis of language, religion, and culture, but were wholly and willingly Cuban, to their last breath. They were moved by a sort of incipient nationalism that brought them together with those who felt the call of the Cuban independence movement, which had important implications.

They also tried to promote the economic and intellectual life of their race, but how could they do that, as enslaved people for whom basic education was strictly prohibited? Many learned to read, and some also to write, contradicting the law and the will of their owners, as in a difficult conspiracy. They only did as much as they could, but they put their whole soul into the effort to educate their descendants. More than anything else, they tried to purchase freedom with cold cash. They had to raise the money by working for their own account during their scarce leisure time, on small plots of land or in urban occupations, to scrape the funds together. They formed cooperative manumission societies that pooled funds to buy the freedom of their members, one by one. And all this by their own efforts, in a hostile environment.

Those manumissions, and others obtained individually, were possible because of their commitment to an ideal. They accumulated savings through workshop production and petty retail commerce. By such activities blacks came to own nearly all the houses in the old Havana neighborhoods of El Angel, Los Sitios, and Jesús María, as well as rural and urban properties outside the capital. They were later manipulated by unscrupulous lawyers, accused of racial conspiracies, deprived of their property, harassed, and many were killed.

Nevertheless, between 1815 and 1885, thinking only of Cuba’s future, that generation of slaves provided Cuban culture with an appreciable number of poets, writers, and journalists, although it was only in the last years of slavery that it was permissible to teach free blacks reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion. All others got their education by their own talent and clandestine study.

With these well established social achievements, the black race responded to the Revolution of 1868. It was not a depraved mob of slaves with no more spiritual stimulus than a primordial instinct for freedom. They brought with them the rudiments of the civilization they lived in, and the experience of structures they had built for themselves, against the current of the time. They brought economic, religious, intellectual, and patriotic understanding, and amazing ideological and political intuition, which was developed to a surprising degree in the period from the Pact of Zanjón to the War of Independence.

The Negro understood the political and economic ideals of the Revolution. He appreciated its social implications, and added the strength of his majority numbers and his heroism to the faltering liberation forces. The national unification of the Cuban people was achieved. The Revolution granted the Negro all the civil and political rights of citizenship, and all military ranks and honors. By heading for the hills to fight, all racial differences and colonial iniquities were ended in principle and in practice. The black soldier or civilian official of the Republic in arms issued or obeyed orders without regard for racial distinctions. Whites and blacks joined together in the dignity of the struggle and in responsibility for carrying it out.

The spiritual culture the Negro had developed by this time meant that no leader of color would abuse his rank, status, or authority to offend the Republic. They all served with exemplary discipline, loyalty, and intelligence.

After the Ten Years War the real political education of the Cuban people began, and the majority of the colored race became prepared and organized for the final struggle for Independence, which they were called to join. Even more than in 1868, they made up the great majority of the Liberating Army. That was the great achievement of Juan Gualberto Gómez, the patriot to whom the Cuban nation owes so much gratitude. In my opinion, neither the ideas of Martí nor the military genius of Maceo would have achieved the triumph of the Revolution without the willing and intelligent collaboration of the black masses.

The reaction of the colonial government after the Ten Years War took the form of rage against blacks, who were the main force of the rebellion. With slavery abolished completely in 1886, all sorts of subtle and sordid pressures were applied in the attempt to discourage them, break their independent spirit, and frustrate their egalitarian aspirations. Such tactics turned out to be counterproductive, however, because they pushed blacks to join the independence cause, which offered them equality and real freedoms. But for blacks, after demanding their human rights, those underhanded maneuvers were more cruel than the deep humiliations of slavery. They brought about a sort of disoriented stupor that would delay the next insurrection.

It was urgent, then, to counteract those policies. Furthermore, the future revolution created a new set of problems for all involved. It would be influenced by new internal and international factors, as well as ideological, economic, and political issues. It was necessary to promote a new philosophy, new policies, better methods of planning and propaganda. People had to be moved, and funds raised. As we well know, it was a massive undertaking, which involved a considerable part of the Cuban population.

Juan Gualberto Gómez carried out an enormous task. He taught his race to plan together. He ensured that every man, within his abilities, would be the focus of pro independence understanding and teaching, and that every social organization would be a revolutionary center. He organized the famous Central Directorate of Societies of the Colored Race, which represented the majority of the black race, unifying it to speak on its own behalf, while at the same time working for the nation as a whole.

Parallel with their political activities, people of color put determined efforts into education. It was necessary to prepare capable citizens for the future. In place of those dear old African *cabildos*, Afrodescendant people organized numerous Societies for Mutual Aid, Instruction, and Recreation, which provided free primary education for children and adults of any race, color, or origin. These organizations were, in the three elements of their long name, both a symbol and a powerful instrument of the vast progress blacks had made prior to the *Grito* *de* *Baire*. All the collective status of the race was incorporated into the Societies, until most of them were dissolved during 1895 to provide educated participants in the War of Independence.

And so the black race joined the last revolution for independence, in much greater numbers and with much more efficacy than had been the case in 1868. Its quota of blood, intelligence, discipline, and social skill was unmatched, and deserves universal admiration. Maceo became immortalized. The image of the people of color shone with patriotic acclaim. The black race rose to the same level as the white, to share with it the responsibilities of the independent nation.

The Republic was established at last, and so began the time of the greatest contribution of blacks to the Cuban nation, through talent, work, wealth, and social organization, as well as military acumen and discipline, blood, and sacrifice. All the qualities shown by the Negro up to that time were tangible and apparent in normal human attributes. The only unusual thing is that they would flourish in such a short time, as from a mature culture. It might have been that our African grandfathers carried latent in their spirit the strengths of a prehistoric civilization.

Our foresight prepared us to cooperate with our white compatriots in the establishment and functioning of the Republic. In the quality and significance of our participation in the political, intellectual, and artistic life of the nation, we have a record similar to whites. Although in the relative percentage of some of these activities our rate of progress is greater that the white race (as the new people that we are, avid for education and full of vitality), this is really no more of an achievement than having earned and maintained, through our own efforts, a place in the front ranks that normally takes many decades of dedication.

There is, however, one singular contribution that Cuba owes to its black citizens, something that is less common, more subtle, an indication of real originality and greater psychological refinement. It is innate in the Negro, not something blacks could have acquired from white civilization, because the latter, with its materialized culture, does not have it: stoicism and ethnic sacrifice.[[11]](#footnote-12) This is the metaphysical culmination of the thorough understanding that has filled the black soul from the time the first African slaves arrived on our shores; that romantic and magisterial mission we feel invested to carry out, to serve a people and someday disappear, leaving our indelible mark on its spirit.

The Republic has not been able to fulfill its commitment to love the black Cuban. Due to a mix of social and economic circumstances, that beautiful revolutionary program of cordial and effective equality has been unfulfilled. The letter of that program has been written into the Constitution, while in practice everything conspires to our despair and extinction, by deliberate and urgent design.

Since we understand the tragedy of the Republican regime, might we not react with racist anger, perhaps looking to build an ideological alliance with the millions of blacks that are only a short distance away all around us? But if we repudiate race prejudice in the white population, how could we allow it among blacks? Noble action brings people together. Furthermore, our greatest satisfaction comes from never causing conflict for our country, even in the moral realm. We are all aware—and history will in time confirm—that the badly named “race war” of 1912 was nothing more than the monstrous and disastrous result of the political ambition of a small group of blacks and a few white government officials. It was the most sordid and lamentable episode of the Republican era, but the only effect of that disgraceful event on the Negro was the excessive and bloody repression that ensued.[[12]](#footnote-13)

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I seem to feel in the air something like an impatience to return to the question: How, then, is the New Negro different from the old Negro, or any other black these days? Well, he is different in the way that the New White is distinct from other whites. More specifically, he is different from the survivors of the struggle for freedom of 1898, because he has a less romantic and more rational interpretation of the economic and social failure of our liberal democracy. He is different for his mental synchronization with the socialist waves that vibrate today in the world’s atmosphere. He differs also in directing his political confidence toward a “Cuban-style” socialist government.

I beg a little more of your attention, ladies and gentlemen, to briefly explain my position on this important point. The true revolutionaries, those still faithful to the old ideals of independence, have not convinced themselves that the current government of our republic is incapable of guaranteeing equality of economic and social opportunity without making a series of changes so drastic that they would, *ipso* *facto* fundamentally alter the present regime. The New Negro and the New White seek to establish a government that can only exist on the basis of those equal opportunities. Just as liberal democracy cannot survive without the vote, this new governmental system can only survive on economic and social security. It would not be a system in which those benefits would depend on the benevolence of government officials—a utopian dream. Rather, they would be guaranteed by the organization of the state itself. White and black Cubans of the old school of political thought still react today with pained and resentful pessimism against our officials, our society, and our politicians for failures for which, in the last analysis, they are not responsible, rather than recognize that the failure is in the governmental system itself. The New Negro and the New White refrain from pressuring the officials of the inept government, asking them to cross the Pacific in a pedal-powered airplane. They work toward the establishment of a state system that would rectify, complete, and surpass liberal democracy.

The New Negro and the New White, then, have the same vision for the future. So where does this leave the mental autonomy of the New Negro I spoke about earlier? It leaves it not in the future, but in a present stained by Cuban negrophobia. This Cuban negrophobia differs from the negrophobia in the United States in that over there it is explicit and violent, while here it is embarrassing, euphemistic, and passive. There blacks are insulted, segregated, and lynched; here they are cheated out of their economic and social rights, left to starve to death, and dissolved in surrounding whiteness.[[13]](#footnote-14) When the Cuban New Negro is presented with the case for the extinction of people of color through mixing with the white race, as a natural biological solution backed by science, he is sure to smile and counter with a condition that almost always stops the dialogue abruptly: I accept the proposal, the New Negro replies, as long as the white male and the black male are equally free to contribute to the mixing of the races; as long as what happened in rural huts and urban bedrooms during slave times, is over. The masculine dignity of the black race would not voluntarily agree to any other proposal.

It is true that the Afro-Cuban suffers from an inferior economic and social position like that of urban and rural laborers, and women—in other words those we call the *elements of revolution*. They are all subordinated, but the situation for blacks is aggravated by the lingering prejudice of slavery, which in Cuba today is manifested more against color than against race. The black urban laborer, the black rural worker, the black woman, the black middle class, in addition to suffering all the abuse in common with other *elements of revolution*, carry the additional burden of racial prejudice. It is what we have defined as THE SURPLUS PAIN OF THE NEGRO.[[14]](#footnote-15) Today, then, Cuban blacks have specific problems to focus on, to understand their causes, to place in the context of broader national issues, and to develop their own solutions, in order to then engage in collaboration with the New White.

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And now, ladies and gentlemen, since you have so kindly allowed me to conclude this attempt to make my case based on historical analysis, and we’re coming into to home stretch, I will put before you, more or less randomly, the other points of view of the New Negro. As I have said, they are simply the consequences of what I have explained at length.

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The Morúa Law should be modified and amended so that is no longer a political trap for the Afro-Cuban. It is a good thing to prohibit political parties made up of citizens of only one race. But is unfair to exclude Negros from executive positions in political parties and from being candidates for public office (which is how parties put their platforms into practice), and do so with impunity. The language of the law needs to be changed along the following lines: “Organizations that do not include Cubans of both the white race and the colored race will not be considered political parties for the effects of the law.” And this should be added: “Candidate lists for public office, and for leadership positions in political parties, which do not include Cubans of these two races, will also be illegal.”

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As long as there is no change in the government that would put an end to *de* *facto* exclusions and privileges, it would be appropriate, if only to comply with legal technicalities, to draft the article in the Constitution along these lines: “All Cubans are equal before the Law. The Republic does not recognize individual rights or privileges based on sex, religion, race, or color. The law will impose penalties for violations of this principle, whether they be ostensible or surreptitious.” Contrary to fallacious arguments that have been put forth, this of course is not to request special favors for blacks. It is to request that the exercise of privileges against blacks does not continue with impunity. What is proposed here is RACIAL INDIFFERENCE: no favors for being black, but no prejudice for not being white.

Personally, I have no faith whatsoever in a proposal to amend the Constitution that is not backed by an active mobilization of public opinion and a governmental structure that is consistent with it. Experience warns us against relying on emotions.

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Another point of view: there is no black or colored race that is of one mind, whether in opinions or policies, just as there is no white race with similar characteristics. The majority of New Negros are on the left; but there is no lack of sympathizers with fascism or Nazism. It is an insidious error to claim that all Afro-Cubans are right-wing, all leftists, all centrists, or all indifferent. The pseudo revolutionaries who opposed Machado made this mistake, or fell into this sin, when they accused the black race, or THE NEGROS of being Machadists or of being cool to the revolutionary project. Leading up to August 12, 1933, the proportion of blacks among the anti-Machado revolutionaries was commensurate with the small number of whites, and similar in that the majority were not drawn from the common people. There were more blacks among the supporters of the government than among the revolutionaries, but there were infinitely more white Machadists than rebels. The anathema the eminent Enrique José Varona proclaimed against blacks, when he was at death’s door, has been shown to be neither objectively accurate nor fair with regard to Afro-Cubans, as the ABC itself has indirectly recognized, and history will prove in due time.

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Another opinion of the New Negro: The secondary racial prejudice between blacks and mulattos, as it persists strongly in some regions of Cuba—and to a greater or lesser degree throughout the Republic—while it is lamentable, does not imply an inherent inferiority specific to Afro-Cubans. Such an ugly sub-prejudice will disappear on the day that being white or almost white no longer constitutes a positive advantage in our country. In order to resist the temptation to use whitening as a means of escaping the limitations that the dominant prejudice imposes on dark skinned Cubans, an exceptionally strong character is required. Our white men carefully cultivate those temptations in the Cuban Negro. This is very different from the whites in the United States, for whom anyone who has a drop of African blood in their veins, however white and blond they might look, is a Negro—and is relegated to the black world whenever they are discovered.

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As for the inferiority complex of the Negro, its historical explanation stems from slavery, and continues in the economic and social devaluation of the Afro-Cuban. That defect is fading away more rapidly than one might expect. This black inferiority complex has its counterpart in the inferiority complex Cuban whites feel toward everything connected to the United States since we established the Republic, and which in colonial times they felt toward everything European: Paris . . . London! This inferiority complex of white and nearly white Cubans is most extreme in their eagerness to see blacks disappear.[[15]](#footnote-16) It is extreme because even if the day might come when we would all have skin more or less the color of marble, the Cuban soul will forever be mulatto, just as the Mexican soul will always be Indian, for example. Extreme, because the Nordic man of the United States knows that Cuba is located in the negroid zone of the Caribbean, and he he will not think of us as his equal until he loses his own superiority complex. History fully excuses, or at least explains, this inferiority complex of white Cubans.

\* \* \*

Another subtle and delicate subject: There are some who disparage the Afro-Cuban a little for not defending himself by an affirmation of black racism. This school of thought claims that it would be better for Cuba if blacks were more black and whites were more white. I would prefer to let nature and the human instinct for sociability freely carry out their project of biological fusion and cultural mixture, without artificial constraints or stimuli. As plausible examples of this thesis we have the racial affirmation of blacks in the United States, the racial cohesion of the Chinese, the Jews, and so forth. This is a mistake. It’s a delusion to think that African Americans advance farther because they live in isolation, turned in on themselves. One only needs to read their newspapers and books to see how much damage they suffer from this racial isolation, and how much more progress they could make if they were not so terribly discriminated against. We in Cuba can only imagine such a situation.

But digging a little deeper, one soon discovers that blacks in the Americas, whether in the United States, Cuba, or elsewhere, have not maintained in the past nor do we now have any contact with Africa nor with blacks in Africa, that would serve as the basis of racial solidarity similar to that of the Chinese or Semites.

For blacks in the Americas, the slave trade violently and definitively tore their ancestors from their homelands and former social groups. By the nature of their situation they were automatically connected to white civilization, where they were forced to live from then on. Thus the sense of homeland and family emerging out of slavery has to be stronger than any racial or ancestral connection to Africa. Their only physical or spiritual possessions are their families, the places where they were born, the few things they have been able to acquire. They would never think of going back to Africa, where in any case they might be unwelcome. What connection do they have with those people, other than the color of their skin and a vague and distorted sense of kinship? The Semites are united by religion and the contacts they maintain around the world. We blacks in the various parts of the Americas barely know each other, and vary widely in culture, religion, education, and outlook. Even in Cuba. the Africans brought here were different from one another. This being the case, what would be the basis for a black racism? It’s absurd. The solution is not racism, but in linking the common interests of blacks and whites.[[16]](#footnote-17)

Finally, the New Negro feels the responsibility to provide guidance, and he wants to carry out that mission without bluster or an anachronistic autocratic style that would be inconsistent with his own project: to indoctrinate the Afro-Cuban masses, in order to prepare them for the possible change of government that he feels is coming. He modestly offers himself to carry out a program of legitimate advocacy guided by the principles I have laid out.

An Organizing Committee for a national Convention of Cuban organizations of the colored race presently exists. Note that I did not say “a convention of the colored race,” because as I argued earlier, it would be a political and social impossibility to convene all the colored race or all the white race. That Committee—of which I am not a member, but whose operations I look upon favorably—wants to bring together the only social organizations the colored race has, to deliberate on the problems of Cuba and the race question, to put before the Convention ideas like those I have had the honor to present to you this evening, reach a majority agreement on a program, and proceed according to the edifying principles that might be agreed upon. The generic label “organizations of the colored race” includes those antiquated groups from the colonial era, as well as modern cultural and sport organizations, and so forth—all the civil societies that function under our Law of Association.

This Convention will probably be the most momentous and representative civic event by a substantial group of Afro-Cubans since the venerable Juan Gualberto Gómez organized that famous “Central Directorate of Societies of the Colored Race” on the eve of 1895.

The Organizing Committee has prepared a broad program covering the most fundamental issues facing our nation, and the solutions deemed appropriate. The program is not focused on the secondary question of race relations. The New Negro lays out overall solutions for Cuba’s problems, with the vision of a statesman, in the spirit of justice for all, white and black. When the Convention has agreed upon a collective program, an expression of the Afro-Cuban position relative to our national problems, I believe the executive group will put it alongside the ideas of the “new whites,” with those of the genuine revolutionaries of today, in order to bring those ideas together as the basis for the New Negro and the New White to carry on together, like the whites and blacks of the independence movement, in a new liberating crusade for social and economic justice for all the inhabitants of our country.

And if this Convention does not take place, or if it fails, another will be organized. It must be organized, because it is a necessity in these new times.

Dear audience:

Only the urge to explain the outlook of the New Negro has given me the audacity to ask for so much of your time. The New Negro needs to be heard, answered, and argued with, if not for the merit of his positions, at least in deference to his desire to serve the nation in the most useful way possible. He wants to have his positions confirmed, or corrected if necessary. But above all he wants to work, and to serve. I beg you to complete the gift of your presence here this evening by helping to publicize, by whatever means you have available, the essence of what you have listened to with such cordial generosity.

Thank you very much.

1. His audience would have been well aware of the famous declaration by José Martí that pro-independence forces should put race aside, and unify for the struggle. That was used by the white leadership as a way to suppress any criticism of white supremacy. See more at <https://library.brown.edu/create/modernlatinamerica/chapters/chapter-4-cuba/primary-documents-w-accompanying-discussion-questions/documenet-9-my-race-from-patria-1893-jose-marti/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. This is the only reference to gender, or women, in this text. He lived in a culture and at a time we now recognize as thoroughly sexist, and his native language didn’t help. As you know, Spanish is gendered through and through, with no gender-neutral anything. So when he constantly and consistently refers to “el negro,” and translation compels me to use the masculine pronoun, Urrutia is not necessarily saying “the black man, to the exclusion of women,” even though it seems unlikely that he was thinking of men and women with anything resembling gender equality. “El negro” is one of many singular constructions in Spanish that refers to a group that might be rendered as “black people.” (My search function now tells me I use “black people” four times, when it seemed stylistically appropriate.) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. We need to remember that this is 1937, when the National Socialist Party ruled Germany, and Mussolini’s Fascism, which grew out of the Italian Socialism rules Italy—but WWII and the Holocaust are yet to come. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. This is the first of several digs at the Partido Independiente de Color, of which more below. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. This is one of several statements suggesting fairly strongly that Urrutia thinks that there are biological, and certainly cultural differences, beyond skin color. The word “innocuous” is the literal “inocuo” in Spanish, which could also be translated as “irrelevant.” The invented term *racial* *indifferentiation* is also literal, from “indiferenciación racial,” and it was bolded/italicized in the original. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Urrutia frequently invokes “spiritual” qualities or conditions that are difficult to render in English. It’s clear he’s not talking about religious concepts of spirituality—one of the striking qualities of this text is that he never so much as mentions religion, whether Christianity or the several variants of Afro-Cuban religious practices (Santería, Abakuá) that were thriving in his time, despite efforts to ignore or suppress them. By spiritual qualities he means something like “the human spirit,” or ethos. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. The Spanish here is “por ser ingenuos,” by which he means that the tribal or non-Europeanized Africans are not sufficiently aware of or adequately prepared to fully comprehend the onslaught of European colonization, in order to resist it. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. This is another phrase that some might call problematic. The Spanish is “Aunque la mayoría de los negros africanos son salvajes—selváticos quiero decir, no bárbaros —.” Salvaje is literally “savage,” but in English that term is so loaded with connotations of fierce aggressiveness that I have rendered it the way Urrutia explains it in his parenthetical, which is consistent with the Latin root word, “silvaticus,” dwellers of the forest. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Both “jazz” and “spirituals” are bolded/italicized in the Spanish text, because they are English words. It’s clear he is referring to the musical form. How soon we forget the time when “Go Down Moses,” “Old Black Joe,” et al. were extolled as a “Negro” contribution to American culture, along with jazz. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. A second mention of the recognition of the Negro spiritual musical genre. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Although this is the only time he uses the term, it’s fairly apparent that Urrutia thought that the different races had innate and broadly shared qualities beyond skin color, that he referred to in such vague terms as mental outlook, spirit, etc. This also comes through in his discussion of art, music (blacks have more rhythm!). So in some ways he had views that we would now call racist. That being the case, what did he mean when he said blacks should not be racist? He meant that blacks should not separate or isolate themselves, socially and especially politically, based on race, taking a position that in more recent times has been termed black nationalism. Thus his rejection of “back to Africa” and implicitly of Garveyism, and his explicit condemnation of Cuba’s Partido Independiente de Color.

 This is a translation issue because someone reading his essay today, applying the modern understanding of what constitutes racism, might accuse Urrutia of a double standard, naïveté, or hypocrisy. That would be unfair, because he used the term “racist” differently. But I don’t think that I, it translating his words, should take it upon myself to change his term to “black nationalist” or some similar neologism. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. This paragraph is his most explicit rejection of the “racism” in my previous note, and condemnation of the Partido Independiente de Color, widely recognized as the first political party in the Western Hemisphere based on racial identity. The demand of the PIC for “our rightful share” gave Aline Helg the title for her excellent book on this topic. Urrutia was 31 years old in 1912 when the assault on the PIC and the ensuing massacre occurred, an event by which the 1921 tragedy of Tulsa pales in comparison, and he and his audience was well aware of it. Here is basically saying that the separatism of the PIC was the misguided idea of a bunch of radicals, resulting in murderous repression far beyond the PIC itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. The original language here is “disuelto en una pasta blanca,” literally “dissolved in a white paste/dough/mush/slurry/pasta.” (First, I’ll say that excessive literalism is a translator’s bane.) His meaning is made clear(er) in the next few lines, referring to race mixture and including the sardonic dig that he accepts race mixing, as long as black sperm has equal opportunity—I was medium shocked to see that thinly veiled “joke” in this formal setting. The idea, widespread in Latin America, that miscegenation will eventually “whiten” the population as a whole is implicitly based on the assumption that most of the sperm involved in the process will be “white.” (The idea that it might involve black sperm and white eggs was inconceivable—to coin a phrase.) At the end of this paragraph Urrutia says fairly explicitly that such an assumption is an affront to the self respect of the black male. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. First, all the *italicized*  and ALL CAPS in this translation are consistent with the original text. As for “surplus-pain of the Negro—this involves a play on words with a term common to Marxian economics, “surplus value,” which in Spanish is “plus-valor.” Urrutia invents a similar term for the burden of racism, “plus-dolor,” which rhymes with plus-valor. Unfortunately the English translation, surplus-pain, doesn’t have the same ring. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. This is another reference to the idea of eventually “whitening” the population through miscegenation, not through mass murder or expulsion. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. This paragraph clarifies what he means by black “racism,” akin to black nationalism. But this paragraph is also striking to me in its suggestion that there was no cultural connection between black Cubans and Africa. African-based or -inspired religions and culinary patterns, e g., were widespread among rural and less westernized Afro-Cubans—phenomena that Urrutia not only doesn’t want to talk about, but here denies. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)