

1. Introduction: Why Revisit Cuba's National Literacy Campaign Now?

As our world changes rapidly in what has been called globalization, the concept of global citizenship has emerged. United States citizens, if we come to realize that our nation has unprecedented power among the world's nations, have different interpretations of global citizenship. We can be paternalistic or even chauvinistic in our views of global citizenship, or we can reach a different understanding of the concept through a critical lens on power and domination. Cuban citizens, as they have learned of their historic and current struggles for national sovereignty, have a perspective on global citizenship that is quite different from that of US citizens. Cuba experienced a prolonged colonialism under Spain and is struggling to break free from neocolonialism under the US. As citizens of Cuba, the US, and all countries try to identify their orientations toward global citizenship, there is a need for what has been called critical global citizenship. Viewing globalization through a critical lens, people can become critical global citizens with priorities for advancing empathy, solidarity, and social justice in the world. Critical global citizens study the history of power and domination while seeking a vision for a greater humanity, and the history of Cuba through a lens of critical global citizenship, with a focus on the National Literacy Campaign of 1961, provides an important example of a struggle filled with hope.

Cuba represents an important turning point in world history. It became the first nation in Latin America to chart and sustain its own course politically, economically, and socially despite the will of its powerful neighbor to the north. Other countries in Latin America had experienced nationalist movements trying to do the same – most notably Mexico, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. When the US succeeded in orchestrating the military overthrow of the democratically elected presidency of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán in Guatemala in 1954, Argentine doctor Ernesto “Ché” Guevara became convinced of the need to join Fidel Castro's small revolutionary organi-

zation stationed in Mexico with plans to transform Cuba or die trying (Guevara, 1968). The resulting Cuban Revolution that triumphed in 1959 continues to trouble the US government today, nearly twenty years after the end of the Cold War.

The Revolution triumphed after two years of grueling guerrilla warfare. The new revolutionary government faced the challenges of implementing the reforms spelled out in Castro's famous speech titled *History will absolve me*, delivered to a court in 1953 before his conviction and imprisonment for his leadership in the attack on the Moncada barracks. A redistribution of land was the first priority. Lands held by wealthy national and international owners became the property of agricultural cooperatives and the state. Among other immediate concerns was the problem of illiteracy. The survival of the Revolution depended on keeping the hearts and minds of Cuban citizens satisfied. A goal to eliminate illiteracy joined the task of developing a new citizenship for Cubans.

Cuba, like many Latin American countries, inherited from colonialism a tradition in which education was a privilege rather than a human right. A census of 1953, Cuba's last before 1959, identified 23.6 percent of the nation's people as illiterate. The National Literacy Campaign of 1961 lowered that figure, as confirmed by a United Nations study, to 3.9 percent (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1965). How that transformation occurred is a subject of rare mass participation. Since many teachers opposed to the Revolution had left for the US, the task of teaching the mostly rural illiterate people fell to the mostly urban literate adolescents. Schools closed to enable teachers to coach the young volunteer instructors, who needed official parental permission in order to leave their homes for a teaching assignment. Each willing rural family in need of teaching hosted a young teacher in its home. By sharing in the work, the guest learned quickly about the hardships of rural poverty and the hard work of living off of the land. In return, the young visitor used the training and the materials of the Campaign to bring reading and writing into the lives of the host family.

Before and during the Campaign's initial mass push, a violent opposition tested the will of Cubans. The Campaign was in a trial stage in January of 1961 when counter-revolutionary terrorists bru-

tally murdered a young literacy instructor in a rural zone away from his home. Conrado Benítez was 18 years old, and he became a martyr. The youth who later would leave their homes to teach in rural zones became known as Conrado Benítez brigadistas. As the nation began the full force of its literacy work in April, the US attacked air bases in Cuba. Two days after those bombings, the famous US invasion at Bay of Pigs, known as Playa Girón in Cuba, failed to mobilize Cubans against the revolutionary government and faced defeat in three days.

These episodes of counterrevolutionary violence and others that followed only emboldened Cubans in their resolve to accomplish the goal of eliminating illiteracy within a year. By summer leaders were concerned that the work was not on pace for a December completion, and they recruited literate workers to teach illiterate co-workers while increasing the drive to mobilize participation of all potential teachers and all illiterate citizens in neighborhoods throughout the nation. The early November murder of another young instructor, Manuel Ascunce, brought another martyr to the Campaign. Municipalities, one by one, declared their completion in alfabetizando [making literate] all of its residents who had been identified as illiterate. The culminating assignment for the newly literate person was to write a letter to Castro, and approximately 707,000 such letters are in the Museum of the Literacy Campaign in Havana. On December 22, 1961, Cubans celebrated the end of the successful Campaign in Havana, and the young instructors were home for Christmas.

The work of 1961 was only a beginning. A follow-up program encouraged newly literate people to continue their education to at least a sixth-grade level. The government built schools in rural zones where there had not been any and enforced compulsory education for all Cuban youth through the ninth grade. Subsidies have provided free university education through graduate levels for all citizens who are academically prepared. Education, along with land reform and health care, has become one of the pillars of the Revolution.

The effects of Cuba's revolutionary education project have been international as well. Many Cubans fought in Angola's civil

war in the 1970s to defeat the UNITA rebels, who were allied with Western nations, including the US, and with the racist apartheid regime of South Africa. Cuban educators supported Nicaragua's literacy campaign in the early 1980s. In 2006, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) awarded one of two King Sejong Literacy Prizes to Cuba's Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogical Institute (IPLAC) for its innovative work in literacy campaigns of 15 countries, including Venezuela and Ecuador. Cuban medical doctors have worked in many countries with severe shortages of health professionals. Youth from Latin America and the US who are academically qualified for medical school but lack money for the expenses have gone to Cuba for their advanced studies. Clearly, Cuban educators have promoted a critical global citizenship with powerful results.

This theme of critical global citizenship is my focus in this book about Cuba's National Literacy Campaign. It is a central theme in all phases of Cuba's post-Columbian history—colonial, neocolonial, and revolutionary. Cubans who struggled for independence against imperialist Spain identified with the critical global citizenship of neighboring Latin American colonies in various phases of the same struggle. After gaining independence from Spain, Cubans struggled for a new nationalism, identifying with José Martí's critical global citizenship that could foresee US imperialism as Cuba's second challenge for true independence. Since the 1959 triumph of the Revolution, Cuba has struggled to defend its independence against the US military attacks of 1961 and an ongoing economic blockade by the US. A strong identification with critical global citizenship, as I will argue, is central to Cuba's will to sustain its independence.

Critical global citizenship and Cuban history

It is common knowledge that the world today is becoming increasingly globalized. Advances in global transportation have reached a plateau with the airplane, but global communications are bringing rapid changes to the way people live. As the Internet makes all kinds and qualities of information easily available, the need for critical thinking skills becomes greater. At stake is the in-

creased potential for either socialization into the status quo or literacy for change agency. hC

Global citizenship is a phrase that has become cliché, and I need to contrast it with my interpretation of critical global citizenship. Any transnational corporation that searches the world for the cheapest labor and absent health and environmental standards can misrepresent itself as an entity that practices global citizenship. Any military conquest for narrow economic and political interests can be misrepresented as an altruistic “operation” for “freedom” in the name of global citizenship. A critical analysis is necessary for exposing contradictions and deceptions behind the label. ✓
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Critical global citizenship is a relatively new phrase with different interpretations of *critical*. Some educators, when connecting global citizenship with critical thinking, now refer to critical global citizenship (White & Openshaw, 2004). This is important and powerful only if the critical thinking leads to action. Only by learning to become an agent of change can someone become a critical global citizen, and this involves a long process of effort and focus. The media, schools, governments, and corporations lead people to believe that globalization is inevitable, and perhaps it is. What is not inevitable, though, is the way that globalization plays out. There are real conflicts over this, and people need to be empowered with literacy for critical global citizenship in order to participate democratically in debates and problem-solving efforts. G

The current state of globalization is alarmingly undemocratic. The United Nations is a powerless entity for making global policies because each of the five permanent nations in the Security Council has complete veto power. One of those five is the US, the most powerful nation economically, politically, and, especially, militarily in the history of the world. Key global advances affecting war and peace, prosperity and hunger, diseases and remedies – all can be subverted unilaterally by the leaders of a single nation. There seems to be little outcry about this, but that is due to the partnership between the beneficiaries of this world order and the global media that serve their interests.

An important example of the undemocratic nature of this so-called world order is the annual vote by all member nations of the

UN to denounce the US embargo on trade with Cuba. The vote has been overwhelmingly in favor of ending the embargo every year since it was first counted in 1992. The most recent vote as of this writing, in 2008, was 185 to 3 with two abstentions. The votes against ending the embargo were by the US, Israel, and Palau, and the abstentions were by Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. Many Cubans call the US policy a blockade instead of an embargo, and this is more accurate. The US has an enormous share in the volume of global trade, and it can and does stop transactions with any company from another country that also does business with Cuba. Many such companies avoid this risk and simply stop shipments to Cuba. As a result, Cuba has undergone many shortages in important supplies, including foods and medicines, since the 1960 advent of the blockade. The Cuban government regularly and openly calls this blockade an act of economic warfare.

This annual UN vote against the blockade appears briefly in mainstream US newspapers for a single day and disappears for another year. Such articles quote responses from US and Cuban government officials. Typically, the US official denounces the Cuban government as a tyranny or a dictatorship. Demonizing Fidel Castro and now his brother Raúl, current President since Fidel's health problems forced him to step down in 2006, has been the simple strategy of the US government for discrediting the Cuban Revolution. Republicans and Democrats share in this strategy because the reward is the votes of Cuban immigrants in Florida, an important swing state as the 2000 presidential election attests.

At the heart of this example of the blockade lies the fact that one cannot understand Cuba without understanding its place in the world, especially in its relations with the US. Cuba is much unlike an island in the sense that it was engulfed by political and economic penetrations first from Spain and then from the US. Cubans have resisted this outside domination, and their struggle continues. There is a long history of US actions and expressions in the interest of controlling Latin America, going back officially to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. The US conquest of a third of Mexico in the 1840s demonstrated the willingness of the US government to use force in order to expand or maintain its control, and many examples of US

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aggression in Latin America have followed since then. Cuba won its second war for independence from Spain in 1898 only to face a US military occupation that became an official and long-term US policy with the Platt Amendment of 1902.

What followed in Cuba was a long series of dictatorships that were, to different degrees, friendly with US political and economic interests. Much of Cuban literature calls this period from 1898 to 1958 the 'pseudo-republic'. Fulgencio Batista came to power through a coup d'état twice – in 1934 as military strongman and in 1952 as self-declared president – to replace administrations that the US government deemed too leftist, and Presidents Roosevelt and Eisenhower, respectively, gave full support to this loyal intimidator. Batista's second dictatorship, though, met an uprising that could not be contained, beginning with the attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953 with Castro's leadership.

This uprising culminated in the guerrilla warfare that began with only 82 men led by Castro aboard a small boat named Granma, leaving Mexico on November 25, 1956, and landing on December 2 in Cuba. This small group grew into a large Revolutionary Army as landless peasants joined. As mountainous zones of the Oriente Province became liberated, Che Guevara led efforts to set up schools where there never had been any. The US supported Batista's army from the Guantánamo base with weapons and fuel for planes, but the Revolutionary Army prevailed by late 1958 through great sacrifice and through support from the revolutionary underground in cities. The Revolution celebrated its triumph on January 1, 1959, as Batista fled the island.

Cubans, whether they have identified themselves with the Revolution or against it, cannot speak of national identity at length without addressing the power of the US. Citizens of the US, on the other hand, are likely not to think of Cuba as they describe their national identity, especially since the so-called War on Terror has dominated international news. As with national identity, the concept of global citizenship is affected by perspective. Critical global citizenship necessarily looks at all perspectives, assumptions, interests, and contradictions. That is not to say that it is lost in moral relativism. Critical global citizens seek clarity by analyzing facts,

propaganda, and ideology. Their conclusions often compel them to rethink their values and to take action for defending a social justice or confronting a social injustice. No great and good change has ever occurred without a vision of hope and a commitment to action.

Globalization, neoliberalism, and absence of democracy

There are many common assumptions in mainstream discourse about our globalized world that need to be examined carefully by critical global citizens. “The political and the economic are separate realms;” “Globalization exists apart from politics;” “Capitalism is compatible with democracy while socialism is compatible with dictatorship;” “The free market is a natural phenomenon;” “Neoliberalism is the new liberation of the free market.”

These assumptions blend together and become parts of a grand mystification, and it is the difficult task of critical global citizens to demystify it. The case of Cuba-US relations can serve this task, and that is my aim. I focus on Cuba’s National Literacy Campaign as a mass movement of critical global citizenship that must be viewed within the context of its historical roots and its legacy. One cannot understand the Campaign without understanding the broader Cuban Revolution, and vice versa. The Revolution followed a long pattern of historical struggles for freedom. Today the Revolution continues to struggle as the global order of neoliberalism punishes Cuba for its disobedience.

Neoliberalism is a term that expresses the full force of globalized capitalism today. Economic liberalism was a global movement in the middle of the 19th Century to transfer economic and political power from monarchs and churches to the noble class of educated landowners. Neoliberalism is the current global economic movement with three objectives (Stromquist, 2002). First, it seeks to diminish or eliminate government regulations on markets, such as tariffs, environmental standards, worker safety laws, minimum wage, and taxes on corporate profits. Second, it has a goal to privatize many services that traditionally have been provided by the public sector. Third, it pressures governments to minimize spending on social services such as education, health care, and social security.

There is nothing natural about these aims of neoliberalism. They are policies made by global elites for the benefit of global elites. Q

A global network supports neoliberalism systematically and undemocratically. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) often provide loans to developing nations upon conditions that they adhere to the objectives of neoliberalism. The World Trade Organization (WTO) administers rules of global trade, also with a bias in favor of neoliberalism. There is no democratic accountability over these organizations. They serve the interests of global capital with power to bully governments into compliance. The WTO claims to make decisions by consensus among representatives of member nations, but transnational corporations use carrots and sticks to guide who can become the representatives and how they will vote. An example of this is how the WTO claims to protect intellectual property rights as it prohibits townships in South Africa from receiving free AIDS drugs (Klein, 2007). Q

Cuba, although it withdrew its memberships with the World Bank and IMF shortly after the Revolution triumphed, joined the WTO in 1995 as a way to garner international support for ending the blockade. The WTO has overseen grievances from Cuban immigrants in the US regarding private enterprises and industries that Cuba nationalized. The most notable recent case has been that of Bacardi Rum, formerly from Cuba and now in Puerto Rico, challenging Cuba in its right to use the label Havana Club Rum, which Bacardi had acquired before 1959 and Cuba nationalized in 1960.

The Cuban Revolution has been determined to set its own course politically and economically. As the Cuban government began in 1959 to nationalize industries formerly owned and operated by private national and international corporations, it offered to compensate these corporations, which mostly were from the US, through twenty-year bonds with 4.5 percent annual interest up to the amount of assets the corporations had claimed to own when assessed for taxation in Cuba (Farber, 2006). The US government rejected the offer and demanded full payments for higher totals. Cuba had begun payments but stopped after diplomatic relations ended between the two countries. Cuba turned to the Soviet Union for oil supplies in 1960 when US refineries refused to deliver oil,

and that was the beginning of a long-term trade partnership in which the Soviet Union gave Cuba favorable terms.

Over the decades since 1959, Cuba has implemented several policy changes regarding nationalization or moderate deregulation of small businesses and industries. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought the end of Cuba's advantageous trade relations, and Cuba entered difficult economic times in the early 1990s known as the Special Period. The US government tried to deal the Cuban Revolution a death blow through the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts, which increased economic sanctions for international companies trading with Cuba. In response, Cuba allowed an increase in foreign investment while turning to tourism as a vehicle for economic recovery. Terrorist attacks on hotels aimed to undermine tourism resulted in the death of an Italian vacationer in 1997, but Cuba's economy continued to grow gradually.

Today, the global beneficiaries of neoliberalism continue to speculate on the prospects of doing business in Cuba their way. They perpetuate the idea through the media that the end of Fidel Castro's leadership marks the possible beginning of a substantial change in the nation's political economy. In this way they depend on the myth that Cuba has been a totalitarian state. In reality, Cuba's government operates democratically to different degrees at municipal, provincial, and national levels without the corrupting influence of privately financed campaigns. The citizens of Cuba directly nominate and elect their representatives in the municipal assemblies of Poder Popular, or People's Power, and they vote to confirm or to reject single candidates at the provincial and national levels. Fidel Castro, as a delegate of the national assembly, was accountable to the vote of his constituents, but they never voted him out of office. Castro continued to lead the country as military commander after his early successes with the Revolutionary War and the defense against the Playa Girón invasion.

What threatens neoliberalism most are its exposure as being fundamentally anti-democratic and the growth of democratic socialism in developing countries. The image of the Castro brothers as dictators, which ignores the extent to which Cubans participate in democratic elections for the legislative branch, certainly has

given the right wing in the US its strategy for discrediting the Cuban Revolution. What is especially troublesome now to global capitalism, though, is the emergence of democratically elected governments in South America that openly are rejecting neoliberalism. The Bush Administration failed to enact the pro-business Free Trade Agreement of the Americas because of grassroots opposition in many Latin American countries. The strongest positions against Washington's version of free trade have come from Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador. These three bold governments are moving toward a democratic and humanist socialism on their own terms as they break apart the myth that capitalism is democratic while socialism is totalitarian.

As Cuba continues to keep its socialist project alive despite the ongoing blockade, critical global citizens need to recognize the vast gap that Cuba was first to bridge and how much it has cost. Medical students at the University of Michigan have organized a campaign of relief efforts against the damaging effects of the blockade on the health of Cubans (Medical Students for Cuba, 2006). Each year since 1969, a group of US citizens called the Venceremos Brigade delivers medicines, school supplies, and other goods to Cuba to alleviate shortages. Each person in the Brigade risks a fine of thousands of dollars if prosecuted by the US government for violating the travel ban to Cuba. These displays of solidarity and others have allowed Cubans to separate US citizens from US foreign policy when defining the culprit. After Hurricane Katrina caused its devastation in 2005, the Cuban government immediately offered aid to the victims. The US government refused to accept it, showing its stubborn pride.

Critical global citizenship needs a vocabulary and a concept map for political economy, and one of the most important case studies is in the history and current events of Cuba-US relations. As neoliberalism demonstrates, the economy is political. Cuba took a revolutionary turn away from the rest of Latin America by defying US hegemony. Now other nations in Latin America are following with ballots rather than bullets. Cuba's sacrifices on battlefields and through struggles against the blockade have made it possible for other nations to imagine possibilities for another paradigm. Many

Cubans who were too young to fight in the Revolutionary War went on to do the hard work of the National Literacy Campaign. Cuba built its new political and economic identity with the strength that comes from valuing education as a human right for all. The success of the Campaign continues to inspire contemporary literacy campaigns in other nations.

Critical global citizenship, nationalism, and internationalism

Frantz Fanon (1963), while focusing on the global effects of Eurocentric racism, asserted that colonized people must triumph in nationalist revolutions followed by proletarian revolutions in order to have a meaningful freedom. The Cuban Revolution was nationalist and did not become socialist by name until the day after the US bombed Cuban airports in April of 1961. Cuban nationalism against colonialism had had a long history. Cubans recognize Hatuey, the Taíno rebel who fought against the earliest Spanish invasions, as their first revolutionary leader. After the Spanish had massacred nearly all of the Taíno and gained control of Cuba, it was not until the early 19th Century that Cuban nationalism took hold with the leadership of Félix Varela, a Catholic priest who showed great courage in opposing slavery and colonialism. Cuba fought two revolutionary wars in the later half of the century to defeat Spanish imperialism, only to face a more indirect but no less oppressive imperialism from the US. Cubans experienced a nationalist reawakening in the 1920s, when dissidents led by student groups resisted the US-supported Machado dictatorship until its collapse in 1933. This revolt did not result in a lasting independence from colonialism, but it set the stage for a radicalized nationalism and the Revolution two decades later.

Nationalism, whether in regard to ethnicity or political statehood, is a source that gives people a sense of belonging. Native Americans in Canada identify themselves as members of First Nations, and many people of French heritage in Quebec have formed a nationalist movement with the goal of secession. The Civil Rights Movement eliminated *de jure* segregation in the US, but it also spawned nationalist organizations such as the Black Panthers, the

American Indian Movement, and the Brown Berets. These nationalist organizations faced severe governmental repression and never grew into mass movements; however, their struggles led to the possibilities for institutions of higher education to offer courses and even degree programs in African American Studies, Native American Studies, and Chicano or Mexican American Studies.

Nationalism is important to citizens of the US, but not in a monolithic way. Many find a false sense of security in a chauvinistic nationalism. They learn in school not to question the myth of benevolence of the US toward other nations. To question their government's motives behind a war, they learn, is to be unpatriotic. They come to see the racism of slavery, Jim Crow, and the forced removal of Native Americans from their homelands as historical phases without any legacy in today's 'colorblind' society. This kind of nationalism, akin to what Michael Parenti (2004) calls super-patriotism, provides a sense of superiority when other aspects of life leave one feeling powerless. When people become alienated with unfulfilling work, consumerism, and competitive relationships under the ethos of rugged individualism, they can turn their insecurity into the idea that they are a part of the most superior and most powerful country in the world. Others in the US—and I include myself—identify with a different nationalism, finding hope in struggles throughout US history for social justice from the abolitionist movement to movements for gender equality to current demands for affordable housing in post-Katrina New Orleans. We pay attention to mainstream media, but we also learn about our country and the world through media that are neither owned nor sponsored by corporations. Our heroes are ordinary people who love justice and care about people from all nations and nationalities.

Nationalism in Cuba is fundamentally different from the ideas of nationalism in the US. Cuba continues to assert its national identity after having lived in the shadows of Spain and the US. The Revolution for a majority of Cubans is the advanced expression of national liberation. A large minority of Cubans has opposed the Revolution, though, and many have voted with their feet to live in Miami and other parts of the US. For all Cubans nationalism is closely tied to internationalism in relation to the US. The mighty

neighbor to the north has the image of either the hand that feeds or the grip that strangles. In either case, Cubans cannot ignore the giant only 90 miles away.

Cuba's internationalism since the triumph of the Revolution has not been fixated on the US, though. By necessity, Cuba turned to the Soviet Union for trade after the US imposed its blockade. This new economic dependence did not, however, translate to political and social dependence. Cuban troops supported anti-colonial and anti-apartheid military struggles in Africa during the 1960s and '70s despite a strong disapproval from the Soviet government (Gleijeses, 2002). Although Soviet influence on Cuban education and culture increased during the '70s, it never approached the magnitude of domination. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Cuba faced severe economic hardship and turned to partnerships with foreign capital for a growing tourism industry. The US government tightened its economic blockade on Cuba during the '90s, but that did not stop all foreign companies from doing business with Cuba. Even during the Special Period of economic recovery, Cuba continued to send educators and doctors to developing countries with the greatest needs. When US citizens wonder out loud when Cuba will "open up," they obviously are unaware that Cuba has been open for international trade and relations – only not on terms that satisfy self-serving US interests.

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Q Internationalism in the US is complicated. There are those who not so jokingly suggest that everyone in the world should be able to vote in US national elections because this single nation holds such great power over the entire world. The US dominates the world in terms of wealth, albeit in the hands of fewer and fewer elites, and military might. Eisenhower warned about the possibility of a military-industrial complex becoming a power unto itself, and now the US government is still involved in the so-called War on Terror after neoconservatives attempted to lay a foundation for endless war. The government, with ample support from Democrats, sold the war in Iraq to the citizens first with unsubstantiated claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, followed by ludicrous claims that Saddam Hussein was allied to Al Qaeda. Later we were told that the mission is to bring democracy to Iraq, which would

result in more democracies in the Middle East and a safer and more secure world. Meanwhile, transnational corporations based in the US and the UK conveniently take control of formerly nationalized Iraqi oil.

Critical global citizenship in the US is a great challenge. The First Amendment provides the freedom to criticize our government, but to do so during this time of war is to be labeled “unpatriotic” or a part of the “blame America first” subgroup. Voters opposed to the war in Iraq put Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress in 2006, but the vast majority of Democrats continued to vote for ongoing funding of the war. In 2008 voters faced the choices of either a transfer of troops from Iraq to Afghanistan under Obama or a military occupation in both countries of possibly 100 years under McCain’s vision. Neither major party questioned the wisdom of US perpetuation of the military-industrial complex. The corporate media ignores and marginalizes any candidate who would do so. They excluded Dennis Kucinich from some of the debates during the primary elections for Democrats, claiming that he was too low in polls to be a serious contender. That becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, though, when the same media willfully ignore dissenting candidates from the beginnings of their campaigns.

Although Obama won the presidency in 2008, critical global citizens of the US will continue to face the challenges of bipartisan support for neoliberalism, the military-industrial complex, the building of a wall along the Mexican border, the less-than-urgent response to global climate change, the push to privatize struggling schools in impoverished districts, and more. Although the US has five percent of the world’s population, it consumes about 25 percent of the world’s energy resources. The growth that capitalism needs to satisfy wealthy investors is unsustainable. The global policy of neoliberalism is profoundly undemocratic. The fact that nearly a billion people go to bed hungry every night in this world of plenty is a travesty. A world of peace will never be possible when so many people cannot feed their families.

The way US citizens view their place in the world is steeped in a tradition of tunnel vision. The US and Europe tend to divide the world into so-called Western and non-Western civilizations. Apply-

ing a negative label puts the “non-Western” societies in a category of the “other.” This dehumanizing categorization makes it easier for many “Westerners” to demonize Islam, especially after September 11, 2001. Christine Sleeter (2004) analyzed the state standards for social studies in California for elementary and secondary schools and found that there was us-versus-them language throughout the document along the line of “Western” and “non-Western” societies. School children learn early that “Western” is the standard of civilization by which the rest of the world is measured, and Sleeter poignantly calls this “standardizing imperialism.”

Q | Another way of viewing the world is to see the global North and global South. This perspective places the political economy of colonialism and imperialism at the center. Western European empires covered the Americas, Africa and parts of Asia. The US, within 50 years of gaining independence, declared with the Monroe Doctrine that Latin America was off limits to further European colonization. With the exceptions of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, and the canal zone of Panamá, the US did not go on to expropriate lands in Latin America. What happened on a much larger scale was the neocolonialism of US-based transnational corporations exploiting natural resources and human labor throughout the region. The prime example was the United Fruit Company, but many other US industries have jumped at the chance to maximize profits globally. Latin America was part of Europe’s global South, and it became the object of the United States’ southward Manifest Destiny.

Times are changing, though, in much of Latin America. Cuba was the first to sustain a revolution against neocolonialism. Chile followed with the democratic election of socialist President Salvador Allende in 1970, only to be crushed by a CIA-supported coup d’état that happened on the *other* September 11, in 1973. During the 1980s, the US government covertly funded the *Contra* paramilitary forces to destroy the leftist Sandinista government of Nicaragua. As civil wars escalated in Guatemala and El Salvador, the US supported the armies of right-wing dictators to ensure that no more leftist movements would gain control. The Cold War passed, and the US became the world’s sole superpower. John Williamson, a

US economist, coined the term “Washington Consensus” in 1990 in regard to a set of neoliberal policies toward Latin America with the cooperation of the World Bank, the IMF and the US government. Several national governments in Latin America have rejected these policies to varying degrees with the strongest resistance currently coming from Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador.

As Latin American nations continue to declare independence from neoliberalism, critical global citizens of the US will have an important role of solidarity. The US government placed Cuba on its list of “state sponsors of terrorism” in 1982, and Cuba remains on that list as of this writing with only three others—Iran, Syria, and Sudan. On April 30, 2007, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice classified Venezuela as “not fully cooperating” with US counter-terrorism efforts. Critical global citizens of the US need to investigate through international and independent media how Cuba and Venezuela have received and retained these designations. It will also be necessary to realize how such designations in Latin America might continue in the future with respect to questionable evidence and hidden motives. The US government has a recent track record of using deception to justify the initiation of full-scale wars against Vietnam and Iraq, and the possibility exists for the same in targeting any part of Latin America. When military forces of US-ally Colombia entered Ecuador to kill a rebel leader of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) on March 3, 2008, both Venezuela and Ecuador immediately expelled Colombian diplomats. Tensions did not escalate, but the event was a spark with the potential for igniting a wildfire.

If not for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US military might very well be in Venezuela to prevent the Chávez administration from keeping more oil wealth for the people of Venezuela. Just as the US military serves the so-called US interests behind the global giant of neoliberalism, there is a need for a global civil society to resist that power and to create new possibilities for peace with social and economic justice. The concept of critical global citizenship needs to grow in the US to the point where a new paradigm arises beyond the sterile notion that democracy is merely voting for one of the two parties representing Wall Street. Cuba had a revolu-

tion before its education became revolutionary. The US is not on the brink of a revolution, but a small and growing cadre of progressive and radical educators can make a big difference. The assumption that schools merely reflect the broader society in which they exist is debilitating and cynical. Educators in the US can foster critical thinking and critical global citizenship in an organized and systematic fashion, and the world eagerly awaits this. Young people, as they did in Cuba's National Literacy Campaign, can collectively become a force for change in the US, and the world eagerly awaits this.

Scope of this book

Cuba's National Literacy Campaign of 1961 set the stage for a new critical global citizenship in Cuba, and the implications were immense for the rest of Latin America and the entire so-called Third World. Cuba's Year of Education, 1961, is the focus of the fourth and fifth of six chapters. Since the meaning of the Campaign can be understood only in context of its antecedent history and its legacy, the remaining four chapters provide a chronological development of articulations between literacy and national identity in Cuba. The concept of critical global citizenship gives a framework throughout the chapters.

The second chapter provides a history of Cuba's pre-Columbian, colonial and neocolonial eras. The focus is on literacy as a key to anti-imperialism and critical global citizenship. I start with the indigenous Taíno culture before and after Spanish conquest. Cuba's first revolutionary leader, Hatuey, led a resistance against the invaders, and he is an important figure in Cuba's multicultural history of struggles for freedom. What follows is Cuba's colonial existence in the Spanish empire and the evolution from organizations for greater autonomy to mobilizations for revolutionary wars. This section highlights movements that joined in efforts to abolish slavery and to demand Cuba's independence. It culminates in the impact of José Martí, the exiled anti-imperialist philosopher, poet and essayist who inspired many Cubans to fight the second revolutionary war against Spain and who remains Cuba's foremost

national hero today. The chapter then addresses the era that followed in the years 1898 to 1958. While focusing on trends in literacy drives, it follows the developments from reformist nationalism to revolutionary insurrection and war in response to dictatorships supported by the US. Throughout this second chapter is an explanation of how internationalism, or critical global citizenship, played important roles in Cuba's reformist and revolutionary movements.

The third chapter looks at critical global citizenship as a source of strength for Cuba's work after the triumph of the Revolution in 1959, focusing on the work of two years that went into preparations for the National Literacy Campaign. Literacy became the most urgent priority after land redistribution. Cuba was embracing a process of transforming education from a privilege to a human right. Armando Hart, Cuba's new Minister of Education, and the newly formed National Commission for Literacy shared in the leadership for planning the Campaign. The Commission published a manual and a primer for instruction in the upcoming Campaign, and these books contained many themes of nationalism and internationalism within the goals of the Revolution. This chapter explains how Cuba's new revolutionary internationalism was an example of critical global citizenship.

The fourth chapter, from a perspective of critical global citizenship, gives a detailed account of 1961 as the Campaign took center stage in the Year of Education. The government recruited and trained mainly urban youth, whose average age was 15 to 16, as instructors for remote rural regions that had been without schools. Parents gave their documented permission even after the murder of the young teacher, Conrado Benítez, by counter-revolutionary terrorists during the pilot phase. The US attacks on Cuban airports, Castro's declaration of the socialist nature of the Revolution, and the Bay of Pigs invasion all occurred in April as the mass mobilization of the Campaign was underway. Cuba's successful defense against the invasion brought new energy to the Campaign. As rural families became literate, the young instructors learned from them about the hard work of living off of the land. Landless peasants had been the majority of fighters in the Revolutionary War against Batista's army, and then relatively privileged urban youth were ex-

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changing the gift of reading and writing for the perspective of those who had been at the center of the military struggles for a national transformation. The government urged all who could teach to do so and all who needed to learn to do so. Literate workers taught illiterate co-workers, and urban dwellers taught neighbors. The rural families that became literate were working through the lessons and toward the final assignment of writing a letter to Castro. The November murder of another instructor, Manuel Ascunce, brought grief but also greater resolve to finish the work. One by one, municipalities across Cuba declared themselves to be free of illiteracy. The national celebration at the end of the Campaign occurred in Havana on December 22, and the young instructors were home for Christmas. This chapter, as well, presents ongoing themes of internationalism in light of critical global citizenship.

The fifth chapter is where I present and comment on excerpts of testimonies from Cubans who participated in the Campaign. These testimonies are from about 100 people who in 2003 shared with me their experiences in 1961 and their thoughts in interviews and focus groups. Although I captured their words on transcripts, I often am reminded of how much the printed words do not reveal the passion behind the spoken expressions. As a doctoral student, I did not have the resources to video-tape the communications. I have tried my best in this chapter to represent the spirit behind the participants' words, knowing that it is impossible to capture it fully. I had some difficulty limiting the number of testimonies to include, and I chose to allow several themes to appear while emphasizing critical global citizenship.

The sixth and final chapter considers the national and international legacies of the Campaign. Cuba's newly literate, numbering about 707,000, continued to learn in a follow-up program called Battle for the Sixth Grade. Schools appeared for the first time in many rural zones. The government enforced compulsory education for all children through the ninth grade and provided free tuition through graduate school. This national transformation of education has made Cuba a leader in literacy rates among Latin American nations. As other nations around the world have needed assistance for literacy drives or medical care, Cuba has sent many profession-

als. Cuban youth grow up learning a critical global citizenship of solidarity with all nations that likewise have suffered underdevelopment through colonialism and neocolonialism. As such nations stand up for their rights to have genuine sovereignty and alternatives to the neoliberal status quo, they can understand the struggles and possibilities through Cuba's experience with critical global citizenship.

Several writings on Cuba's National Literacy Campaign already exist in English, and my hope is that this book provides a new perspective with regard to critical global citizenship. The Campaign was a great success for the Cuban Revolution, and it merits much greater attention than it has received in English print. This book places the Campaign in contexts of history and legacy while highlighting the importance of critical global citizenship throughout Cuba's struggles for national sovereignty. As of this writing, President Barack Obama has kept his promise to continue the damaging economic blockade on Cuba. Global condemnations of the blockade through UN votes have not been enough to persuade US leaders to end the aggression. It will end only if more US citizens take time to learn the history of US-Cuba relations and then apply pressure on their representatives in Washington for change. Schools, churches, unions, and many more potential sites of education and action need to explore how Cuba can be a source of hope for all nations struggling for meaningful sovereignty. It takes time and commitment to gain an understanding of neoliberalism today and its predecessor that is colonialism. This account of Cuba's National Literacy Campaign can be one piece of a grand puzzle that can expose the current oppressive and undemocratic realities of globalization in its current state. It might be true that globalization is inevitable, but it can be made more democratic, more just, and more sustainable with the help of more attention toward critical global citizenship.