# FIGHTING AN UPHILL BATTLE:
## Race, Politics, Power, and Institutionalization in Cuba*

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Abstract: *Although there exists a significant body of literature documenting the under-representation of black Cubans in the island's most important governing institutions throughout the forty-four years of Fidel Castro's rule, these analyses have emphasized limited access to political power as the sole factor responsible for this state of affairs. However, this comprehensive analysis contends that with the aging of the Cuban Revolution, other factors such as low holdover and high replacement rates for blacks during periodic reshuffling of the political elite have become crucial, albeit unacknowledged, explanatory variables for the paucity of blacks among the country's leadership. An important determinant for this pattern is the existence of inter- and intra-institutional stratification among blacks, the reasons for which remain unknown. Nonetheless, the presence of this factor increases the vulnerability of nonwhites as decisions are made about which individuals should be retained or replaced in key government institutions.*

### INTRODUCTION

In a May 2000 televised speech, Raúl Castro acknowledged the most visible and enduring deficiency of race relations in socialist Cuba: the under-representation of black Cubans[1] among the leadership of a political process now entering its fifth decade. Although Fidel Castro had addressed racial power sharing on previous occasions, never before had a leading member of the island's political elite discussed this issue so candidly and in so public a forum. From the revolution's inception, critics of the lack of racial diversity in high-level party and state offices have focused exclusively on the limited access to political power for

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1. The term "black" is being used here as an encompassing description for Cubans of full or partial African descent, these latter individuals categorized as "mulattos." The distinction between blacks and mulattos tends to be more one of aesthetics since the groups have many social and socioeconomic features in common.

nonwhites (Moore 1964; Sutherland 1969; Clytus 1970; Montaner 1981; Domínguez 1982; McGarrity and Cárdenas 1995; de la Fuente 2001). While undoubtedly true—especially during the first two decades after the revolution—focusing on this factor alone reduces the dynamics of Cuba's racial politics to a single variable. In this research note, I will argue that an equally important, but generally overlooked factor is the difficulty encountered by nonwhites in establishing a long-term presence in the political structure. In effect, although access to key institutions has improved, blacks still tend to be replaced at rates exceeding those of whites during processes of elite rotation, negating any long-term benefits accrued from more opportunities to secure political office.

One can only speculate as to the motives for the government's decision to openly address this aspect of socialist politics, and therefore it is not my intention to explain the motives behind the decision to broach this topic. On one hand, it might simply be the natural progression of an introspective process during which the authorities initiated a critical examination of race relations, sponsoring cultural projects with racial themes and also tolerating independent polemics about the indignities blacks encounter daily on the island. Racial discrimination is also a popular theme in the songs by young, black rap artists of Cuba's burgeoning Hip-Hop Movement, itself a by-product of liberalized cultural policies first introduced in the mid-1990s. Other evidence suggests a direct cause and effect relationship for heightening official concern about race relations, devolving from the country's economic crisis and legalization of the U.S dollar. Because these factors have had a more negative impact on blacks, racial symbolism in the awarding of leadership positions becomes the official palliative of a government no longer capable of satisfying the material aspirations of ordinary Cubans. Consequently, following an August 1994 riot in Central Havana during which young nonwhites demanded political and economic changes, a new generation of blacks was promoted to the party's leadership (*Washington Post*, 12 November 2000, pp. A1, A30). Nonetheless, the majority of nonwhites do not regard the paucity of blacks among top officials as a relevant racial issue (de la Fuente and Glasco 1996). In fact, it can be asserted that few blacks believe their socioeconomic status would improve substantively just because more persons of color occupied decision-making roles. Yet, this does not mean that the issue lacks resonance, both symbolically, and also as an easily articulated substitute for general discontent with the socialist system.

This research note's objective is to analyze the relationship between race and political power in order to understand the reasons for the persistent under-representation of nonwhites in decision-making positions. The following analysis consists of three sections dissecting race and political power in Cuba. The first section provides an overall view of racial

diversity across the island's main institutions of actual and symbolic power so as to gauge the present-day political status of black Cubans. Secondly, the factors responsible for the declining black share of power are examined, even as the class of elites has increased in size and heterogeneity. Finally, the third section analyzes the make up of the Central Committee and the degree to which blacks conform or diverge from its general distribution patterns as a possible explanation for their political condition.

RACE AND THE CONTEMPORARY STATE OF POLITICAL POWER

Cuba is administered under a socialist constitution providing for a system of governance structured around five party and state institutions. In addition to a Politburo (most powerful decision-making body), Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party (leading party militants), and Council of Ministers (executive organ of the government), the constitution created the National Assembly of the Popular Power (premier legislative assembly) and its executive arm, the thirty-one member Council of State. These institutions cement the tight control of Cuban society by a small coterie of individuals and formalize an elite hierarchy. Among top leaders, some are more equal than others with simultaneous membership in the more powerful organs often indicating political prominence.[2] Exerting the greatest influence on the day-to-day lives of ordinary Cubans are the Politburo, Council of Ministers (especially its executive committee), and Council of State. The Central Committee and National Assembly of the Popular Power, or Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular (ANPP), while less influential in terms of actual policy making,[3] nonetheless confer prestige on its members and highlight institutional interests and groups regarded as important for governing.

Despite its self-identification as a "Latin-African" nation and a population officially designated as 34 percent nonwhite—but generally believed to be significantly higher—the complexion of political power in

2. While in general this remains true, there are exceptions. Two of the leading candidates to replace the Castro brothers as part of a collective leadership lack membership in crucial institutions. Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, head of the National Assembly and the point man for Cuba's relations with the United States, does not belong to the Council of State although he sits on the Politburo. Felipe Pérez Roque, the foreign minister and a favorite of Fidel Castro, does not formally belong to the Politburo although this is certain to be rectified at the next party congress.

3. Although the Central Committee was granted special powers at the Fourth Party Congress to confront Cuba's economic crisis, its actual policy-making role remains subordinate to other more exclusive organs.

Cuba remains overwhelmingly white. Notwithstanding a black share of the main party and state organs of 32.3 percent—197 of a total 610 Cubans representing these bodies—this proportion declines markedly for those exclusive institutions with decision-making power. Of a combined fifty members of the Politburo, Council of State, and Council of Ministers, just 10 or 20 percent are black, a slight improvement from comparable percentages of approximately 28 percent and 18 percent at the end of the 1990s, but nonetheless underscoring the existing stratification among blacks in the governing apparatus. As far as inclusiveness among select organs, the Council of State continues to be the most racially diverse, and the Council of Ministers with only one black among its thirty-nine members, the least representative, despite 12.1 percent of the Central State Administration—the most senior state cadres—being nonwhite (*Granma*, 22 February 2002, 1).

The National Assembly represented an early test case of the official commitment to increasing racial representation in Cuba's power structure. ANPP elections in January 2003 led to the replacement of more than three-fifths of the prior assembly (64.4 percent), including the presidents of six of the island's fifteen provincial assemblies. Blacks comprised 31.5 percent of departed members with the five provinces of Cuba's heavily black eastern region each losing at least 70 percent of their sitting delegates, the only delegations to be so affected. In Guantánamo, the most nonwhite province, 87.5 percent of its delegation was not re-elected, and collectively, the three predominantly black provinces with 21 percent of all delegates in the outgoing assembly represented 25.1 percent of those replaced. Compared to its predecessor, the new assembly's distribution of its membership remained unchanged. Havana, the capital city and most populous administrative region had a plurality of delegates, more than twice the number of any other province, while the Isle of Youth continued to be represented by just four delegates (table 1).

Of 609 members in the new ANPP, 32.8 percent were black, up 4.5 percent compared to the old assembly. This percentage approximated the inaugural assembly's nonwhite share estimated at about one third (Casal 1979). Among newcomers, blacks garnered a 38.5 percent share, surpassing their official percentage of the population.

Among the various delegations, blacks exceeded or approximated their population shares in nine of the fifteen provinces (table 1). Although no delegation from a majority black province completely reflected that territory's racial demographics, Guantánamo and Santiago de Cuba had the highest percentages of black delegates and combined with neighboring Granma, accounted for 28.5 percent of all elected nonwhites. Nonetheless there did not appear to be a strong correlation between race and the makeup of the delegations. Cuba's western provinces, which

*Table 1  Blacks in the National Assembly of the Peoples' Power (ANPP)*

| | Racial Pct. | ANPP Members | | Black Members | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Provinces | Blacks | Total | Pct. | Total | Pct. |
| Camaguey | 23% | 45 | 7.5% | 12 | 26.7% |
| Cienfuegos | 23.4% | 23 | 3.8% | 7 | 30.4% |
| Granma | 57.3% | 44 | 7.2% | 13 | 29.5% |
| Guantánamo | 73.7% | 32 | 5.3% | 20 | 62.5% |
| Havana City | 37% | 112 | 18.3% | 43 | 38.4% |
| Havana Province | 17.8% | 42 | 7.2% | 15 | 35.7% |
| Holguín | 21.2% | 54 | 8.8% | 10 | 18.5% |
| Ciego de Avila | 19.2% | 26 | 4.2% | 4 | 15.4% |
| Isla de la Juventud* | 33.2% | 4 | 0.7% | 2 | 50% |
| Las Tunas | 25.6% | 27 | 4.7% | 6 | 22.2% |
| Matanzas | 24% | 40 | 6.5% | 14 | 35% |
| Pinar del Rio | 21.7% | 39 | 6.3% | 13 | 33.3% |
| Sancti Spirítus | 15.9% | 25 | 4% | 6 | 24% |
| Santiago de Cuba | 69.8% | 52 | 8.5% | 25 | 48.1% |
| Villa Clara | 17.5% | 44 | 7.2% | 10 | 22.7% |

Source: *Granma*, 7, 17– 21, 23–24, 27 December 2002 (supplements).

Note: The "black" share of each province includes minuscule percentages of Asians, never more than 0.4 percent in any area.
* Isla de la Juventud (Isle of Youth) is designated a special municipality.

provided 38.3 percent of all delegates and a 33 percent nonwhite population, accounted for 42.5 percent of ANPP black delegates. In total, 36.5 percent of those persons representing the western section of the island were nonwhite. At the same time, although 51.7 percent black, the eastern provinces contributed just 37 percent of nonwhites, while sending 34.3 percent of all delegates to the assembly. Nonwhites were 35.4 percent of representatives from this region. Of the six new provincial assembly presidents, just one was black, the only person of color among a total of fifteen. Therefore, while nonwhites increased their representation compared to the previous ANPP, access to important offices such as provincial presidencies was limited, testifying to the duality of their presence in the ANPP.

This effort at greater inclusiveness also included the Council of State, Cuba's supreme governing authority, and arguably a more definitive test of redistributing power than the relatively powerless ANPP. The sixth Council of State elected in March 2003 for a mandated five-year term increased the total number of nonwhites to eight, or 25.8 percent of membership—the highest percentage in its more than twenty-five year history (table 2). The hierarchy of top officers remained unchanged as Fidel Castro and all six of the sitting vice presidents, including two blacks, were re-elected.

*Table 2  Black Members on the Council of State (1976–2003)*

| Year | Members | Blacks | Pct. | Pct. Change | Pct. New Members |
|------|---------|--------|------|-------------|------------------|
| 1976 | 31 | 4 | 12.9% | — | — |
| 1981 | 31 | 5 | 16.1% | +24.8% | +20% |
| 1986 | 31 | 7 | 22.6% | +40.4% | +45.5% |
| 1993 | 31 | 5 | 16.1% | -28.8% | +25% |
| 1998 | 31 | 7 | 22.6% | +40.4% | +28.6% |
| 2003 | 31 | 8 | 25.8% | +24.8% | +55.6% |

Source: *Granma*, 4 December 1976, 1; ibid., 29 December 1981, 8; ibid., 29 December 1986, 8; ibid., 16 March 1993, 4–5; *Granma International*, 8 March 1998, 3; *Granma*, 7 March 2003, 1.

Unlike the ANPP, only about a third of the Council was replaced, with four of the ten demoted members being black. Compensating for these departures, five nonwhites were included among the nine new-comers and a former council member re-elected to another term. In a departure from prior Councils, the majority of these first-time members did not enjoy a cross-affiliation with any of the other major institutions. Admittedly, while only one of the new nonwhites—the party secretary for a successful province and a member of the Politburo—could expect to have a decisive decision-making role, the integration of a relatively sizeable number of other blacks possesses its own symbolism for over-all prospects for increased representation in the governing structure.

Undoubtedly, the ultimate test of the commitment to inclusion re-mains the Politburo, although its racial makeup is unlikely to improve without greater participation by nonwhites at other levels of the party and government. Five nonwhites belong to the Politburo, the highest number ever, but nonetheless, inclusion on this most prestigious of de-cision-making organs has occurred at a glacial pace (table 3). While the negligible black presence could be explained in part by the fact that only eight other members were added to an initial eight-person Politburo during Fidel Castro's first twenty years in power, as turnover increased in subsequent years, the number of nonwhites barely changed. Thus, although twenty-nine individuals have rotated through the Politburo during the last fifteen years, only three or 10.3 percent were black or mulatto. In total, six blacks have served on this elite body, a mere 13.3 percent of its collective membership.

The party's Central Committee displayed a similar lack of racial di-versity. Following the October 1997 Fifth Party Congress, only 13.3 per-cent of the 150 members of the Central Committee were nonwhites, a decline of 25.6 percent from the prior committee, and a staggering 77.4 percent from the apogee of racial inclusion attained at the February 1986 Third Congress (table 4). In fact, with the exception of the two 1980s congresses, the proportion of blacks declined on other occasions.

*Table 3 Racial Composition of the Politburo (1965–97)*

| Categories | All Members | Blacks | Whites | Pct. Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1965 | 8 | 1 | 7 | — |
| 1975 | 13 | 2 | 11 | +20% |
| 1980 | 16 | 2 | 14 | 0% |
| 1986 | 14 | 2 | 12 | +20% |
| 1991 | 25 | 3 | 22 | + 6.3% |
| 1997* | 24 | 5 | 19 | +22.2% |

Sources: *Granma*, 10 October 1965 (supplement), 5–12; ibid., 23 December 1975, 8; ibid., 27 December 1980 (supplement), 1–5; ibid., 12 February 1986 (supplement), 1–6; ibid., 19 October 1991, 3–6; ibid., 11 October 1997 (supplement), 7–11.

* Although never reported in the Cuban media, in July 2002, the ex-Foreign Minister, Roberto Robaina González was expelled from the Politburo, Central Committee, ANPP and the PCC itself. Consequently, the Politburo has been reduced to twenty-three persons.

A total of 544 individuals have served on the six central committees. Three hundred seventy-nine or 69.7 percent were elected as full members and the rest as alternates or candidate members. Blacks numbered 108, or just 19.9 percent of this total, the share of full members at 19.8 percent, slightly less than the 21.8 percent for alternates. Although elevation to full membership was difficult for all alternates regardless of color, only 39.7 percent receiving promotions, blacks experienced greater difficulty in making the transition. Consequently, while 43.7 percent of whites improved their status, just 27 percent of blacks were similarly rewarded.

### STRUGGLING TO ESTABLISH AN INSTITUTIONAL FOOTHOLD

Criticizing Cuba's institutional insularity, one commentator on the island's race relations blamed a white governing clique presiding over a discriminatory political system that is fundamentally hostile to the interests of blacks (Moore 1964, 1988). However, as noted by several observers, racial discrimination in Cuba occurs primarily in the sphere of personal or intimate relations (Booth 1976; de la Fuente 1995; Fernández 1996). Consequently, systemic discrimination against otherwise qualified revolutionaries solely based on color would be surprising behavior for a government that prizes loyalty above all else, and also a departure from the island's historical patterns of discrimination. In addition, charges of racism ignore the fact that the many blacks, exhibiting initial ambivalence, did not participate in revolutionary activities commensurate with their population share. In effect, whether a result of propaganda by the Batista government portraying the predominantly white revolutionaries as having nothing to offer nonwhites (Carneado 1982), or their political invisibility in pre-revolutionary Cuba (Thomas 1971),

Table 4  Blacks in the Central Committee of the PCC (1965–97)

| Categories | All Members | Blacks | Pct of Blacks | Pct. Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1965 | 100 | 9 | 9% | — |
| 1975[a] | 124 | 10 | 7.3% | -18.9% |
| 1980[b] | 225 | 28 | 12.4% | +69.9% |
| 1986[c] | 225 | 53 | 23.6% | +90.3% |
| 1991[d] | 225 | 38 | 16.9% | -28.4% |
| 1997[e] | 150 | 20 | 13.3% | -21.3% |

Sources: Jorge I. Domínguez, "The New Demand for Orderliness." In *Cuba: Internal and International Affairs,* edited by Jorge I. Domínguez, 24. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc., 1982.; see also table 3.

[a] Of this total, 112 were full members and 12 were alternates.
[b] Membership was divided between 148 full members and 77 alternates.
[c] Included 146 persons with full membership and 79 alternates.
[d] Alternate level of membership abolished at this Congress.
[e] Reduction of central committee by a third to 150 members.

blacks remained on the sidelines. Therefore, during the subsequent monopolization of political power, dominance by a small coterie of whites must be viewed as a natural outcome of these dynamics. Moreover, the elite remained remarkably stable even after an expansion of its ranks during the Second Congress (table 5). At this meeting, 76.6 percent of the previous Central Committee was reelected, identical to the previous congress. Although turnover subsequently increased at the third and fourth congresses and corresponding holdover rates declined, during the Fifth Congress this pattern was reversed with an ostensibly modest 45.3 percent holdover rate, masking a more robust rate of 68 percent.

However, recognizing the elite stability restrictions upon advancement opportunities for nonwhites still leaves unanswered the issue of Cuba's failure to fully integrate its institutions. The revolution's maturation and departure from active politics of the so-called *históricos,* has opened up leadership positions. Therefore, the political system must be judged in terms of the rates at which blacks secure promotions to these available offices—in other words, their accessibility to power. The results so far have been mixed as attested to by the difficulties in gaining access to the Politburo and Council of Ministers, although less so the Council of State. Similarly, since the Third Congress ushered in significant elite renovation, 49.1 percent of the Central Committee has been new members and indicative of greater access, 27.3 percent have been black (see table 5).

Of greater concern are two interrelated indices: the rates at which blacks become holdovers and are demoted from those institutions to which they belong. With respect to the former, a high of 13.8 percent and an average of 10.4 percent serve to highlight the difficulty for non-

*Table 5  Black Central Committee Holdovers and First-Time Members*

| Year | Holdovers | | First-time Members | | Black Holdovers | | Black First-time Members | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *No.* | *Pct.* | *No.* | *Pct.* | *No.* | *Pct.* | *No.* | *Pct.* |
| 1965 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 1975[a] | 77 | 77% | 47 | 37.9% | 6 | 7.8% | 6 | 12.8% |
| 1980[b] | 95 | 76.6% | 130 | 57.8% | 10 | 10.5% | 18 | 13.8% |
| 1986 | 130 | 57.8% | 95 | 42.2% | 18 | 13.8% | 35 | 36.8% |
| 1991 | 99 | 44% | 126 | 56% | 10 | 10.1% | 28 | 22.2% |
| 1997[c] | 102 | 45.3% | 46 | 30.7% | 10 | 9.8% | 10 | 21.7% |

Source: See table 4.

[a] Central Committee increases to 124 from 100 members.
[b] Further expansion in the size of the Central Committee to 225.
[c] Besides a reduction of the Central Committee to 150, the number of first-timers was affected by the reappearance by two persons previously dismissed during the Third Congress.

*Table 6  Dismissal Rate for Blacks on the Central Committee*

| Year | Total | Blacks | Pct. | Whites | Pct. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1975 | 23 | 3 | 13% | 20 | 87% |
| 1980 | 29 | 2 | 6.9% | 27 | 93.1% |
| 1986 | 95 | 11 | 11.6% | 84 | 88.4% |
| 1991 | 126 | 43 | 34.1% | 83 | 65.9% |
| 1997 | 123 | 28 | 22.8% | 95 | 77.2% |

Source: Computed from data in table 5.

whites to maintain a long-term presence on this body. Although the mirror component of holdovers—those members dropped from the central committee—indicated whites constituted the overwhelming percentage of those replaced, and at 23.8 percent fewer blacks have been replaced than were elected since 1986, it is also true that sizeable percentages of blacks have been dismissed during the last two congresses, contributing to their declining presence (table 6). In effect, both rates hold negative consequences for the number of blacks on the Central Committee.

An additional calculation of the respective dismissal rates for blacks and whites reveals the extent to which the former have lost ground. Until the 1980s, the disparities in these rates fluctuated in both directions. In the 1990s, however, the percentages of blacks soared in comparison to those of whites, heightening the under-representation of the former on the Central Committee (table 7). Therefore, as a proportion of their overall presence on the Central Committee, in the 1990s blacks were approximately one and a half times more likely than whites to be replaced, offsetting the aforementioned moderate increases in the number of nonwhites.

*Table 7  Rates of Dismissal on the Central Committee*

| Year | Dismissal Rate | Dismissal Rates for Blacks | Dismissal Rates for Whites |
|------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1965 | — | — | — |
| 1975 | 23% | 33.3% | 22% |
| 1980 | 23.4% | 16.7% | 24.1% |
| 1986 | 42.2% | 35.7% | 43.4% |
| 1991 | 56% | 81.1% | 48.3% |
| 1997 | 54.7% | 76.2% | 49.5% |

Source: Computed from tables 4 and 5 data.

*Table 8  Blacks Demoted from the Council of State (1976–2003)*

| Year | All Members | Replaced | Pct. | Blacks | Pct. |
|------|-------------|----------|------|--------|------|
| 1976 | 31 | — | — | — | — |
| 1981 | 31 | 5 | 16.1% | — | — |
| 1986 | 31 | 11 | 35.5% | 3 | 27.3% |
| 1993 | 31 | 16 | 51.6% | 6 | 37.5% |
| 1998 | 31 | 14 | 45.2% | 2 | 14.3% |
| 2003 | 31 | 10 | 32.3% | 4 | 40% |

Source: See table 2.

An analysis of the Council of State indicates the presence of different dynamics, even controlling for the incremental gains secured by black members during the last round of elections. Cumulatively, eighty-six individuals have served on six incarnations of this body, including twenty-three nonwhites accounting for twenty-three or 26.7 percent. With the beginning of significant turnover on the Council of State, 59.3 percent of members were replaced, 29.4 percent black. Simultaneously, 36 percent of first-timers elected as replacements have been nonwhite, a positive gain in representation. Exempting the 2003 council, this figure declines to 31.7 percent—smaller, but still a net increase. Blacks benefited because of a policy of reaching outside the recognized elite in selecting individuals for inclusion on the Council of State. Therefore, while 76.7 percent of council members have been senior military officers or high-ranking cadres of the party or state, blacks represented just 12.1 percent of such persons.

However, fifteen of the twenty-two members lacking cross-affiliation with any of the other key institutions—the definitive indicator of political relevancy—have been black, representing 65.2 percent of nonwhites on the Council of State. Only 11.1 percent of whites are similarly situated. This discrepancy impacts negatively on the re-election prospects of blacks since these members could expect to be replaced upon the expiration of their initial five-year terms.

MEMBERSHIP DISTRIBUTION ON THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The composition of the Central Committee invariably reflects the interests regarded as important for governing, and a candidate's affiliation with a particular institution or organization usually determines election and retention prospects. Historically, senior party and state cadres, and Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias—FAR) officers have been favored in the make-up of the Central Committee, consistently accounting for 65 percent or more of each committee's total membership (table 9). Since 1986, 37.1 percent of first-time Central Committee members have been party cadres, nearly double the nearest category at 19.5 percent, and four times the military with a mere 9 percent, reversing the pattern of dominance by the military at the first three committees. The party's assumption of a larger share of the Central Committee appears to reflect the model of "mobilizational authoritarianism" adopted by the government, based on a primacy of political imperatives, limited economic reforms, and preservation of the island's national sovereignty by the military (Pérez-Stable 1999). Therefore, notwithstanding its decline from its zenith of 58 percent in 1965 to 15.3 percent at the last congress, the military remains a preeminent institution inside Cuba.

This preference for party functionaries has helped the category obtain a plurality of the cumulative total of Central Committee members, comfortably ahead of the FAR and officials with primary responsibilities in the state sector. By far, the least representative category comprised those persons involved in foreign affairs (table 10). Blacks, with 55.2 percent of the three main categories were under-represented compared to the committees' general distribution pattern, their highest percentage being among non-elite professionals in the cultural, health, teaching, and scientific research fields as well as representing mass organizations.

As a percentage of each group's Central Committee representation, blacks and whites had one category in common—party cadres—all the others reflecting proportional advantages for one of the races (table 11). Among the remaining categories, whites in other important sectors such as the state bureaucracy and military enjoyed sizeable advantages compared to similar shares for blacks. In only one category did nonwhites enjoy a substantial advantage over whites, although this relatively powerless category suggested positive social changes and access to educational opportunities rather than actual political power.

Despite an appreciable number of non-elites, at 53.7 percent blacks belonging to elite categories composed a narrow majority of their total Central Committee membership, seemingly enhancing their re-election prospects (see table 11). However, more blacks were replaced than elected

*Table 9  Distribution of Central Committee Members by Category and Year*

| | Year | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Category* | *1965* | *1975* | *1980* | *1986* | *1991* | *1997* |
| PCC | 10% | 6.6% | 21.3% | 28.9% | 27.1% | 36% |
| Military | 58% | 32.3% | 27.1% | 19.6% | 12.9% | 15.3% |
| State/Administration | 17% | 17.7% | 17.3% | 20.9% | 22.7% | 20% |
| Mass Organizations | 7% | 8.1% | 15.6% | 10.2% | 5.8% | 4.7% |
| Education, Science, Health, and Culture | 4% | 5.6% | 5.8% | 10.2% | 17.8% | 12% |
| Others | 1% | 1.6% | 6.7% | 7.6% | 11.6% | 10% |
| Foreign Affairs | 3% | 8.1% | 6.2% | 3.1% | 2.2% | 2.7% |

Source: See table 4.

*Table 10  Black Central Committee Membership by Category (1965–97)*

| *Category* | *Total* | *Pct.* | *Blacks* | *Pct.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PCC | 152 | 27.9% | 31 | 20.4% |
| Military | 116 | 21.3% | 17 | 14.7% |
| State/Administration | 88 | 16.2% | 10 | 11.4% |
| Mass Organizations | 53 | 9.7% | 14 | 26.4% |
| Education, Science, Culture, and Health | 72 | 13.2% | 23 | 31.9% |
| Foreign Affairs | 15 | 2.8% | 1 | 6.7% |
| Others | 48 | 8.8% | 12 | 25% |

Source: Computed from tables 3 and 4.

*Table 11  White and Black Central Committee Members (1965–97)*

| *Category* | *Whites* | *Pct.* | *Blacks* | *Pct.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PCC | 121 | 27.8% | 31 | 28.7% |
| Military | 99 | 22.7% | 17 | 15.7% |
| State/Administration | 78 | 17.9% | 10 | 9.3% |
| Mass Organizations | 39 | 8.9% | 14 | 13% |
| Education, Science, Culture, and Health | 49 | 11.2% | 23 | 21.3% |
| Foreign Affairs | 14 | 3.2% | 1 | 0.9% |
| Others | 36 | 8.8% | 12 | 11.1% |

Source: See table 10.

among the most influential categories, the exception being party cadres. In the tradeoff between individuals elected to, and those dismissed from the Central Committee, elite categories registered a slight positive gain with a collective 61.8 percent of the new membership compared to a loss of 59.9 percent (table 12). In only two categories were more persons

*Table 12  Blacks on the Central Committee (1986–97)*

| Categories | First-timers | | Blacks | | Replaced | | Blacks | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | Pct. | No. | Pct. | No. | Pct. | No. | Pct. |
| PCC | 99 | 37.1% | 20 | 21.5% | 93 | 27% | 16 | 17.2% |
| State/ Administration | 42 | 15.7% | 3 | 7.1% | 62 | 18% | 10 | 16.1% |
| Military | 24 | 9% | 8 | 33.3% | 51 | 14.8% | 14 | 27.5% |
| Mass Organs. | 16 | 6% | 20 | 38.5% | 35 | 10.2% | 7 | 43.8% |
| Education, Science, Health & Culture | 52 | 19.5% | 18 | 54.5% | 44 | 12.8% | 19 | 43.2% |
| Others | 33 | 12.4% | 8 | 50% | 48 | 14% | 17 | 35.4% |
| Foreign Affairs | 1 | 0.3% | — | — | 11 | 3.2% | — | — |

Sources: *Granma*, 12 February 1986 (supplement), 1–6; ibid., 19 October 1991 (supplement), 3–6; ibid., 11 October 1997 (supplement), 7–11.

elected than replaced—the most prominent being political cadres whose representation led both numerically and proportionately. The other main categories both suffered significant attrition in membership, losing 47.6 percent (state bureaucrats) and 52.9 percent (military) respectively. Conforming to this pattern, party cadres tied for the lead among newly elected nonwhites, although overall only 40.3 percent of such persons belonged to elite categories due mainly to a minuscule 7.1 percent garnered by state cadres. The comparable figure for ex-members from the elite categories was 48.2 percent, shaped by a 70 percent replacement rate for blacks representing state organs and one of 42.9 percent for military officers. Therefore, unlike the general pattern, even among elite categories, blacks could expect to lose more members than were elected.

Surprisingly, the military involvement in Angola and Ethiopia produced little mobility for black officers, despite the disproportionate participation of black Cubans in these campaigns. Excluding the 1965 Central Committee, FAR officers overwhelmingly belong to the more senior ranks—brigadier-general or higher—composing 85.1 percent of all elected military personnel with blacks composing only 10.5 percent. However, of fifteen lower-ranked officers, six officers or 40 percent were black. Thus, compared to whites, nonwhites were nearly four times as likely to be elected as a lower-ranked officer. A study of race and the Cuban military had revealed blacks were concentrated among enlisted troops and under-represented in the officer corps (Domínguez, 1976). It may be that participation in FAR overseas campaigns by itself cannot eradicate these pre-existing disparities and any attendant progress has occurred primarily at the junior and mid-level of the officer corps. Another explanation for the paucity of senior black officers on the Central

Committee could be the remarkable stability of military personnel with holdovers from the 1980 Second Congress composing 66.7 percent of its membership at the Fifth Congress. Whatever the reason, the absence of senior black officers suggests that Raúl Castro should not have confined his criticism just to the civilian sector, as the FAR itself has failed to exhibit the inclusiveness championed by its commander.

CONCLUSION

After more than four decades of socialist rule, black Cubans continue to exist on the margins of political power. However, this state of affairs should no longer be seen exclusively as the result of a limited access to political power; the under-representation of nonwhites among Cuba's leadership can be understood only by recognizing the crucial effect of the rates at which nonwhites are retained and replaced during periods of elite turnover. Because few blacks are members of the Politburo or Council of Ministers, and also have a proportionately greater presence among the Central Committee and Council of State's lesser categories, nonwhites tended to be disadvantaged during membership rotations. The reason for this stratification is unknown, and though merit and performance, alongside loyalty, determine promotion, such considerations have not worked for blacks. In fact, one of the more visible avenues for acquiring reward, internationalist service in Africa, has not benefited nonwhites significantly as measured by their invisibility among the upper echelons of the FAR.

Although Raúl Castro's speech appears to have resonated on the ANPP, by no means has the issue of black under-representation been addressed. This can only be resolved with further integration of the Politburo and Council of Ministers. However, Cuba's second-ranking figure has conferred an imprimatur on this topic that had been missing, legitimizing it as a topic for discussion inside Cuban society. Moreover, the speech heightens pressure on the government to demonstrate good faith efforts to resolve this condition or face disquieting questions about its sincerity, especially to a younger generation of blacks already complaining of racial marginalization.

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