

# CUBA, RACE AND NATION IN THE 20th CENTURY: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PRESS EDITORIALS

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## **Abstract**

This article presents a discourse analysis of 'race' and 'otherness' in press editorials published in Cuban newspapers during specific periods of the twentieth century. It analyses the discursive strategies used by newspapers to construct and legitimise their idea of national identity, especially with reference to argumentation and the representation of social agents. The corpus used for this study consists of editorials from *Diario de la Marina* for the first half of the century (1902, 1912, 1939–40) and the national edition of *Granma* for the revolutionary periods (1975–76, 1998–99). The article also examines how discursive strategies, and the idea of national identity they construct, changed over the course of the century. Finally, it will review the extent to which the conclusions of this analysis intersect with those from other studies in the fields of history or literature.

**Keywords:** Cuba, race, nation, national identity, press, discourse analysis

Throughout the course of the twentieth century, Cuba underwent a series of significant historical, political and social changes. It cast off its status as a colony to become a Republic and then later, a Socialist State. In parallel with these historical changes, Cuba's intellectual and political elites defined and redefined the national identity. Generally speaking, these proposed definitions attempted to respond to (at least) two challenges: firstly, an external challenge concerning the political and cultural domination exercised first by Spain and later by the USA; and, secondly, an internal challenge regarding the country's social and cultural identity with respect to the population of African descent.

Accepting that both national identity and the idea of nation are, just like the concept of race, socially shared constructs, not static, and both conceived from ideological discourses that tend to design power strategies, the intention of this analysis is to ascertain the various forms of national identity as proposed and supported by newspapers in their editorials at certain critical moments of the

twentieth century. Likewise, it will focus on some of the discursive strategies used in their attempts of persuasion in search of social assent and legitimisation. Editorials, unlike leading articles, champion positions that are not individual, but, the expression of prevailing and socially shared ideological frameworks and, therefore, representative of the social and institutional relationship, i.e., the status quo of the moments they are written (Van Dijk 1997).

Following the Critical Discourse Analysis method, we have focused on those strategies we view as constitutive of opinion discourse, more specifically the line of argument that will help us discover how the representation of social actors and their proposed identity are formulated, justified and ultimately legitimised. Equally indicative of the ideological discourse are the strategies of both lexical and semantic mitigation and emphasis within the polarisation in groups – ‘us’ versus ‘them’ – or what Van Dijk has called ‘ideological square’ (Van Dijk 1998, 2003; Martín Rojo 2003) which we have analysed from a semantic and lexical viewpoint.

For the study, we used the two national newspapers with the largest circulation: the conservative *Diario de la Marina* (analysed during first half of the century: 1902, 1912 and 1939–40) and *Granma*: the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party (studied during the Socialist period: 1975–76 and end of century). All these years were historically meaningful and, as such, likely to create debate in the press.<sup>1</sup>

After two wars of independence (1868–78 and 1895–98) and three years of US rule, the first Republic of Cuba was declared in May 1902. Nevertheless, the idea of the Cuban nation had been in gestation since the early years of the nineteenth century. Albeit disagreeing about the question of dependence–independence in relation to the metropolis, and about the issue of annexation or anti-annexation in relation to the United States, the various political groups and parties were in agreement in their view of the internal composition of Cuban society; identity was expressed as a discourse of exclusion and marginalisation of the black social component.

The ethnic diversity of the population was a matter of concern for rulers and intellectuals alike, for they considered that the lack of cohesion and the heterogeneity of the elements of the Cuban nation would prevent it from becoming part of the civilised and developed nations in the European style, a top priority for the elites. The ‘black problem’, as it was termed, or euphemistically, the ‘problem’ or the ‘social issue’, alluded to the tensions generated by the black presence in Cuban society, and the dilemma that presence posed when it came to forging a homogeneous and civilised nation.

In general our research shows that the definitions of national identity formulated throughout the twentieth century by the Cuban elites, using different political and cultural approaches, attempted to come up with a homogenising formula that

might overcome both social and cultural heterogeneity of their society.<sup>2</sup> Such a formula would be the necessary prerequisite for the realisation of the nation while at the same time maintaining the existing status quo.

## 1902–12

Accepting Martí's formulation of an integrated nation through citizenry, the Republic was founded on an idea of nation in consonance with the civic or Jacobinic model. In step with the main parties and politicians, the *Diario de la Marina* claims that it accepts a racially inclusive Republic, forged in the brotherhood brought about by the wars of independence, and in the equality of all the country's citizens as proclaimed by the 1901 Constitution. Nonetheless, in their discourse, lines of argument, and the support lent to certain policies, the editorials reveal certain contradictions, or rather a concept of nation far from the inclusiveness and egalitarianism that such an affirmation seemed to promise.

The general argumentation employed by the newspaper in the four editorials compiled from 1902, the first year of the Republic of Cuba, give intimations of the paper's main ideological thrust. The priority goal of the editorials is 'conservar el sello de origen' (*Diario de la Marina*(M),<sup>3</sup> 1-2-1902) and 'mantener la unidad étnica' (*Diario de la Marina*(M), 16-11-1902), in other words: to ensure a homogeneity that protects the nation from the two dangers supposedly hovering over it, namely: the 'absorción extraña' by the USA; and the 'empobrecimiento de la raza' that would take place should the country's black population increase instead of diminish, a circumstance that would allegedly hinder, among other things, Cuba's membership of the 'club' of civilised nations. In consequence, the ideological mission of the editorials was to promulgate the notion of Cuban identity preferred by the newspaper: a white identity vis-à-vis the population of African descent, and a Latin identity versus an Anglo-Saxon one.

The arguments proffered by the *Diario de la Marina* to validate such a goal and to legitimise the policies to achieve it which it put forward, are framed within the overall context of the racial theories of the time. The paper did not seem to find it necessary to explain anything with regards the racial impoverishment that would result from an increase in the black population, because, as the widely accepted evolutionist theories defended, it would mean moving away from civilisation and progress and closer to barbarism. Therefore, the increase of the white population by means of immigration of Spaniards fostered civilisation and ethnic – and therefore, social, economic and cultural – progress at a time when 'white' was synonymous with 'civilised'. This use of the term race with its blend of biological and cultural connotations both justified and legitimised this immigration policy even if it ran contrary to the idea of equality as set down in the Constitution, to

the benefit of the concept of nation championed by the elites while, at the same time, allowing the domination of one group over another.

no sería ocioso ir pensando desde ahora en los medios más adecuados de asegurar á Cuba durante mucho tiempo una constante corriente inmigratoria que mantenga y acentúe el predominio del elemento de origen hispano y establezca la armonía necesaria entre la población del país y la capacidad productora del mismo. (Diario de la Marina(M), 16-11-1902)

It is interesting to underscore at this point that the editorial dated 16 November 1902, explicitly voicing the paper's support for Spanish immigration, was published to coincide with a general strike convened precisely to protest against the preferential treatment given to Spanish immigrants in detriment to Cuban workers, and more specifically Afro-Cuban workers. The editorial makes absolutely no mention of the strike and supports the immigration policy, thus bestowing greater importance on what it terms ethnic progress and to its proposed definition of identity than to the stability of the nation and its laws.

The recommendation to confront the danger of 'absorción extraña', that is, of annexation by the USA, is to refrain from maintaining commercial or financial links with that country under the argument that relationships between 'razas diferentes' were not advisable. Even less advisable were links between the 'raza o civilización latina' (which Cuba belonged to, according to its posits) and the 'raza o civilización anglosajona', for they are depicted as mutually 'razas enemigas' (Diario de la Marina(M), 8-5-1902). Similarly to the previous instance and, through confusion and a mixture of the terms 'race' and 'civilisation' where the biological is mixed and confused with the socio-cultural, the newspaper legitimises, through the strength of blood, its political proposals defending stronger trade links with Spain.

The defence the newspaper makes of a white and Latin Cuba is also carried through into a strategy of polarisation into groups, 'us' versus 'them', established both on a macro-structural level of argumentation, and on a micro-structural level of lexis and rhetoric. The 'us' would represent a Cuban nation seen from the viewpoint and interests of the conservative hegemonic classes; a white and Latin nation depicted in the editorials as the upholder of the values of civilisation, law and order, progress and independence. Meanwhile, the external 'them', represented by the USA or the 'raza anglosajona', although also a bearer of values of civilisation and progress, is depicted as implementing a selfish, dishonest and ruthless policy. In the domestic realm, the 'them' alludes to the population of African descent, termed as 'raza o clase de color', that would not possess the values of civilisation and progress and that, on a personal level, is presented as lazy and unreliable in

opposition to the ‘us’, which would epitomise diligence and honesty (*Diario de la Marina*(M), 6-11-1902).

The newspaper champions a concept of nation based on the idea of association of human beings sharing the same ‘roots’ and, hence, ‘natural’. To use its metaphor (*Diario de la Marina*(M), 16-11-1902), the Latin civilisation or race, more specifically, Spain, would be a tree, and the Latin countries in America its shoots, its children, all of them springing from the same roots, which is to say, from the same blood. Hence, a proposed concept of nation is legitimised not only from cultural parameters, but also from biological, natural ones at a moment when everything is perceived from the viewpoint of biology. This idea satisfied the prerequisites of nationalism: culturally homogeneous state-nations, with no internal differentiations (Gellner 1998). The *Diario de la Marina* looked for this homogeneity in the Latin culture, and to further this goal it proposed a physical whitening by means of immigration, and a cultural one via the acceptance of, and compliance with, the values of ‘civilisation’ by the coloured population.

The second period under analysis is 1912, the year of the so-called ‘Guerrita del 12’. Following the ‘protesta armada’ of the Partido Independiente de Color (demanding the abolition of what was known as the *Ley Morúa*, a law banning the creation of political parties on the exclusive basis of race, as well as a number of political changes aimed at achieving greater equality), the government mobilised all its contingents against the participants in the revolt, and repressed the revolt in a true massacre of the Afro-Cuban population. The situation gave rise to 32 editorials from late May to early July, the time span of the conflict. The newspapers faced with a situation of crisis, made their views about the coloured population as well as the newspaper’s proposal for a national identity more explicit.

The editorials of the *Diario de la Marina* based their argumentation on the premise that the coloured population was virtually in a situation of absolute legal equality, and therefore it did not accept that the motives for the uprising were of a political order. They explain and interpret the protest using racial arguments: the criminal, passionate and ignorant nature of the coloured people, as demonstrated by the protesters’ actions, comprising arsons, destruction and looting of sugar refineries, murder and rape of white women. To add plausibility to their reasoning, they used descriptions that corresponded to the nineteenth century uprisings of slaves in Cuba and Haiti, images that had caused true horror in ‘white’ Cuban society throughout the whole of the previous century and that, obviously, would in the present case increase the sense of danger and fear in society. All supported by the use of socially shared stereotypes about the coloured population: lascivious, lecherous, prone to witchcraft, cannibal, coward, slave and antipatriotic by nature.

la necesidad de evitar los trágicos horrores de esta contienda sin ideales, por el asesinato y el pillaje, para que no sigan ardiendo con impunidad las casas y los campos que el trabajo y el progreso levantaron á costa de tantos sacrificios; para que los hombres blancos no mueran ahorcados y mancillados impunemente; para que las mujeres blancas no sufran la vergüenza, el dolor y el asco mortales de la violación; para que la horda salvaje no crezca y se extienda y enlute con sus abominaciones la tierra hermosa donde hay tantos hogares dignos y tantas familias y intachables. (Diario de la Marina(M), 7-6-1912)

This argumentation led the editorials to conclude that what was actually taking place was a racist uprising, a fight between races whose goal was to establish a black government and, subsequently, against the established order of the Cuban nation and, broadly speaking, against the civilisation the Cuban nation represents, therefore demanding the need for a definitive solution.

According to the picture drawn by the paper (and also by most of the press of the time) this was a fight of civilisation versus barbarism, 'la civilización está en peligro; unas hordas de bandidos la escarnecen' (Diario de la Marina(M), 8-6-1912) for which the insurgents were to be held solely responsible. For that reason, it did not see the need for any legal change to promote greater equality. The editorials accused the Independientes of being racist on the grounds that they divided the nation into racial groups, and also of antipatriotism given that the paper feared that they would appeal to the USA to intervene (which continues being seen as the 'other' in the outer domain) and that the power from the North could reinstate its rule.<sup>4</sup> In other words, because it believed that the rebels put their racial identity before the national one.

In line with the above, it recommended the extermination of the rebels, leaving no room at all for negotiation. This interpretation and assessment of the situation, together with the reasoning used to depict it, serves its ultimate goal: to legitimise the government's action against the uprising, as well as the established order and, in this way, the domination of the white group over the black one, contradicting the affirmations about existing equality. The black community must adapt and submit itself, refraining from making demands as a differentiated group, for that is racist and antipatriotic as it implies an attack on national unity and therefore deserves harsh punishment.

The newspaper's line of argument is basically supported by the notion that by reason of nature, of race, and therefore of culture, behaviour, etc., the black population do not deserve to belong to the Cuban nation or, as we have seen, to its notion of a white and Latin nation for they lack the values that, in the paper's view, represent the Cuban nation. The values of the Cuban nation, and of those fighting in this confrontation are, among others: civilisation, law and order, patriotism, equality, independence, unity, legality and justice. In turn, those



as the essence of all things Cuban at a moment when, on an international level, racial mixtures were no longer seen through the outdated optic of monstrosity and could offer an occasion for the reconciliation of two conflicting communities. The prevailing discourse shifted from that ‘Cubano más que blanco más que negro’ claimed by Martí, to a Cuban that was neither white nor black, but instead a mixed-blood Cuban. The Afro-Cubanist movement in the arts and the official discourses supported that idea of a national culture that was a blend of the two.<sup>5</sup> A discursive strategy once again tending to minimise the differences within a Cuban nation in search for homogeneity.

In its discourse, the *Diario de la Marina* supported a racially ‘harmonious’ idea of Cuba and Latin America in which all citizens would belong regardless of their race. It stated that it conceived Cuban society ‘como un todo armónico, dentro del cual cada parte contribuye, distinta, pero simpáticamente, al fin común’ (*Diario de la Marina*, 7-4-1940(A)). At that time, and unlike the previous period, the newspaper accepted contributions from other groups to the national identity although in the understanding that the contribution of each group to that new identity does not have to be identical, an affirmation that allows it to defend the hegemony of one of the groups and of its culture over the others: the culture of Spanish origin, to which the newspaper belongs and that it had been defending since its foundation. The main goal of the *Diario de la Marina* editorials (during this period, only six touched on racial questions) is to provide support and legitimacy to the status quo. And this is precisely what the paper argues in its editorial dated 12 October 1939, on occasion of the celebration of the *Día de la Raza*, proposing for Latin America, and logically also for Cuba, to maintain a ‘comunidad de intereses espirituales’ rooted in the glorious Spanish tradition, in the noble Spanish spirit, referring to it as a language, a religion and an ideology. For the newspaper, Spanish culture should be instrumental in uniting all those nations and foreclosing the introduction of alien or foreign practices (*Diario de la Marina*, 12-10-1939).

In the discourse of the *Diario de La Marina*, Spanish culture should be the backbone of the national identity, a basis which, in the paper’s view, could also comprise ‘las razas autógenas o los inmigrantes de otros pueblos, sin que para nada resulte obstáculo el pigmento de la piel’ (*Diario de la Marina*, 12-10-1939). This culture is, it claims, the ‘spirit’ that helped the creation of those new nations and should be preserved with its utmost purity so as to strengthen them just as a mother would do: the *Madre Patria*.

The aim of its argumentation is thus the preservation of the hegemony of Spanish culture, which would also supply the moral and intellectual values upholding the ideology and national identity of the dominant group; values that the other groups ought to adopt. An equally homogenising proposal that accepts



that the coloured population could belong to the nation provided it adopted the culture of Spanish origins, which it considers to be a true culture. A ‘whitening’ proposal implemented through the assimilation into Hispanic culture.

That would explain the stance of the newspaper in relation to two proposed changes submitted before the Constituent Assembly (for the passing of a new constitution, to be known as the 1940 Constitution). The *Diario de la Marina* declared its opposition to the alteration, considering it unnecessary, of the second paragraph of Article 23 from the 1901 Constitution, which made reference to the principle of equality and that intended to define and punish racial discrimination. The newspaper believes that equality is already a fact, and that the Republic never had to witness racial conflicts because the two races contributed jointly to independence and to its establishment (*Diario de la Marina*, 7-4-1940(A) and 4-5-1940). In Cuban national consciousness, the two wars of independence epitomise the foundational myths of the nation from which the national past is created and sanctified. These two wars of independence symbolise the end of social, ethnic and cultural differences in the discourse propagated by the elites through various genres of Cuban literature from the beginning of the twentieth century.

In consonance with said formulation, the *Diario* believes that racial differences do not exist in Cuba. And should the odd one arise, it says, it would be cultural rather than racial. As such, it advises the coloured population to demonstrate their love for the motherland, in other words, not to organise as a group to defend their rights, because instead of contributing to unity, the patriotic thing to do, it would create a split in Cuban society and therefore in the nation (*Diario de la Marina*, 4-5-1940). Any such attempt at division was seen as an example of racism by the *Diario de la Marina*, just like in the previous period.

With regards to another proposal presented to the Constituent Assembly, advocating the necessary changes to turn Cuba into a secular country, with a free education, the *Diario de la Marina* defended that the new Constitution should maintain the Christian content of the previous version, so that it could continue carrying out its task as a moral evaluator of Cuban mores and culture. Arguing that the Christian religion embodies the values of Western culture (‘civilización Greco-latina’) to which Cuba ‘por dependencia biológica y por tradición espiritual, pertenecemos’ (*Diario de la Marina*, 12-3-1940).

For the *Diario*, Christianity stands for a system of morals that would determine what rites are allowed and which are banned; which are civilised and which are barbaric and criminal, therefore drawing the boundaries of cultural identity (*Diario de la Marina*, 12-3-1940). The *Diario*’s editorials returned to their evaluation of one culture as civilised, and another as barbaric and criminal, through the strategy of polarisation of groups, with ‘us’ made up by those in favour of maintaining a Christian base in the constitution, ‘our culture’, versus ‘them’ and ‘their culture’,

in this case consisting of those who supported the notion of a secular constitution, as well as of those who practised rites others than those sanctioned by Christianity.

And even though it was fairly widely accepted that the nation's cultural identity was mixed, the notion underlying the rationale of the editorials of the conservative *Diario de la Marina* is a cultural identity dominated by a Latin or Spanish identity. It accepted the notion of coexistence of people of various origins, but with the caveat of assimilation to the source culture or Spanish tradition. Whereas in the past race was the argument for the domination by the white group, now it is culture or, using the newspaper's own words, 'spirit': one of the two cultures champions the values of civilisation and the other is still primitive. There has been a change from a discourse where the arguments were of a racial nature to another one in which those arguments are cultural, even though the confusion and mixture of nature and culture, one of the typical features of the racial discourse,<sup>6</sup> is maintained.

Taking into account that both concepts, race and culture, operate, evaluate and establish hierarchies in the same fashion, this culturalistic line of argument, just like the biologicistic one, preserves social hierarchies and the domination of one group by other. While in previous years the newspaper explained its position from the theories of racial supremacy prevailing at the time, now, in the late 1930s, the theories and also the reasons of the *Diario de la Marina* have changed, now grounding their postulates on cultural questions or on matters of cultural superiority.

## The Revolution

In 1959, a new government came to power, self-proclaimed first as Humanist and then, in 1961, as Marxist-Leninist, and which defined Cuba as a Communist Workers' Republic. This political system established the abolition of the system of social classes and reinstated, as in other moments of the twentieth century, the equality of Cubans of all races and thus the end of racial conflicts. Socio-political and economic changes introduced in the first two years helped to ensure a greater equality of rights for all citizens in working, social, educational and other realms.

The new system declared racism as anticommunist, counterrevolutionary and an ideological state of 'backwardness'. Already in 1962, the authorities stated that racial discrimination had been eliminated in Cuba and that national integration was, at last, a definitive reality, something that became the official discourse of the elites (De la Fuente 2001), as proven by some of the publications of that moment (Walterio Carbonell (1961) *Cómo surgió la cultura nacional* or later, Pedro Serviat (1986) *El problema negro en Cuba y su solución definitiva*).

From the period of 1975–76, which saw the first congress of the Cuban Communist Party and the approval of a new constitution, 16 ‘press articles’<sup>7</sup> dealing with racial or ethnic questions were compiled, although only three alluded to Cuba with the remainder addressing the situation of racism in the USA.

*Granma* newspaper claimed that the Revolution has given shape to a nation finally achieving the racial integration and cultural homogenisation it had been seeking throughout the whole of the twentieth century. The Cuban nation, it maintains, has gradually accepted all its core elements, thus giving rise to a fully integrated nation, devoid of majorities or minorities, and accepting both its African and its European-Spanish, black and white, origins, to which it is equally connected. Socialism is presented as a solution to racial problems and at the same time as the system that makes national integration possible (Granma, 26-6-1976).

The chief discursive strategy followed by *Granma*, and one that would grant legitimacy to the system and to the policies adopted by the Government, is that of the polarisation in ‘us’ versus ‘them’ groups, with ‘us’ now standing for the Revolution, the revolutionary government, the Communist Party, the communist nation and the socialist system. Now there is no internal ‘them’; the always foreign ‘them’ would correspond to the USA, the maximum exponent of capitalism and of imperialism, and also the previous Cuban governments, representing racism and exploitation. This polarisation emphasised the negative representation of ‘them’, therefore making it unnecessary to explicitly express the qualities inherent to ‘us’. By the very nature of their ideology, ‘they’ are racist, and subsequently, by the nature of ours, ‘we’ would be antiracist.

In general, the articles are based on the idea of an ‘absolute truth’ or statement: the issues of race and racism, of ethnic or national minorities and majorities, are the direct result of capitalism. The system itself is the creator of those situations. They are inborn to the system, for it is forced to fall back on exploitation in order to survive (Granma, 26-6-1976). The newspaper illustrates its claim with several articles demonstrating the institutional racism and the discrimination and segregation affecting ‘ethnic or national minorities’ in the USA. These examples serve the purpose of demonstrating the kind of practices carried out in capitalist countries but, above all, and without any need to make it explicit, what it is that ‘us’ socialists, neither are nor do. It also intends to legitimise the socialist model and the support of the Afro-Cuban population, that are now being spared the racist situations generated by capitalism.

The idea of race in this discourse holds a correspondence with that of class, in which racism is defined from a socio-economic viewpoint (Wallerstein 1988). The newspaper writes: ‘sólo el socialismo, sólo el comunismo, sólo una sociedad sin explotados ni explotadores, sólo la sociedad sin clases, puede resolver el problema del hombre, de las mayorías y las minorías nacionales’ (Granma,

26-6-1976). Therefore, *Granma* claims, thanks to socialism, Cuba is free from national majorities and minorities, as well as from classes or races, with only one nation integrating all citizens, in conditions of equality, as proclaimed by the 1976 Constitution.

The newspaper's narration of national history also helps to demonstrate that definitive integration and liberation. *Granma*'s discourse establishes a connection between the Revolution and the slave uprisings, the 'primer signo de rebelión contra los explotadores' (*Granma*, 9-3-1976), as well as with the wars of independence, the Ten Years' War (1868–78) and that of 1895–98. In those wars, Cubans fought to free themselves from their oppressors and against slavery, something the Revolution eventually managed to accomplish. *Granma* portrays the Revolution as a definitive solution, equalling its highest leader, Fidel Castro, with the 'fathers of the land': Martí, Maceo, Máximo Gómez, for he had put into practice their humanist theories and had finally succeeded in achieving a free, integrated and homogeneous Cuba.

For Moreno Friginals, author of the article 'Manuel de Angola' (*Granma*, 12-3-1976), the Revolution also achieved a solution of cultural homogenisation and integration. Friginals explains that, unlike previous governments, which in their racism and discriminatory evaluations only bestowed the status of culture on that with European origins, dividing the nation into two parts from its very inception, the Revolution accepts African culture and is connected to it, not only through common cultural elements, but also as a result of having shared the same exploitation. The author of the article argues that integration has been attained through Fernando Ortiz's 'transculturation' theory [1947], which defends that there has been a process of merging of the various cultural elements existing in the Cuban nation, resulting in a synthesis: '*Cubanía*', a 'color cubano' or Cuban national identity. This theory, which Moreno Friginals uses as the grounds for his article and which was largely adopted as official, fosters a feeling of belonging to the nation common to all citizens, for all their components are integrated in the process and contribute to the end result. In the words of Leclercq, this formula may prove useful in 'cimentar la hegemonía y la unidad nacional como una fórmula capaz de trascender las divisiones entre clases y etnias' (Leclercq 2004: 480), or in the words of Nancy Morejón, to create 'una nación homogénea en su heterogeneidad' (Morejón 1982: 29).

The theory of 'transculturation' advocates a nationalisation of the cultures and ethnic groups inhabiting the country. After that process of 'cooking' or mixture proposed by transculturation there would no longer be an Afro-Cuban or a Hispano-Cuban culture, but only the by-product of that process: a 'Cuban' culture, thus achieving the goal: the homogenisation of the nation through culture. And even if the notion of transculturation fosters belonging, it also dissolves ethnic

differences into the body of the nation, thus succeeding in creating a uniform whole: Cuban national culture. However, given that the union had already started in the times of the colony and therefore in a context of hegemonic inequality, some academics understand that the harmony described in the theory of transculturation is nothing but a myth concealing a cultural whitening and hence, the cultural domination of one group by another.<sup>8</sup>

Whereas of all the articles published by *Granma* in the 1975–76 period only three alluded to the question in Cuba, in 1998–99, the silence becomes absolute. We have not found one single press article in *Granma* touching on the subject. However, this silence does not imply that the ethnic or racial question was entirely resolved, as Fidel Castro (8-9-2000) recognised in his speech at the Riverside Church, Harlem, New York, racial discrimination had not completely disappeared in Cuban society, even though they had been fighting it for 40 years.

As Castro recognises, during the so-called ‘special period’ and the economic crisis, economic measures taken by the government to fight it uncovered some racial stereotypes and provoked social tensions and inequalities. Yet the question was not discussed in the newspapers. But, although the newspapers did not return to the issue during the remainder of the decade, in the late twentieth century the question did begin to be revised in some periodical publications, including the magazines *Temas*, *Catauro* and *Caminos*, which started a revision in this opening decade of the twenty-first century, a matter deserving of a separate analysis.

## Conclusion

In the various time periods selected, the coverage of racial or ethnic issues in newspaper editorials is rather scarce, excepting the period corresponding to the so-called ‘Guerrita del 12’, that is, only in relation to a situation of crisis or confrontation among the groups. This could be seen as a strategy responding to an attempt to diminish the importance of the racial or ethnic question throughout the century, that is, the coverage would be scarce because, given that in each one of the studied moments there are claims that this situation has been resolved, it would therefore not be necessary to talk about it. According to De la Fuente (2001), the approach followed throughout the whole of the century is that of considering that the problem exists only when it is discussed, and in the case of *Granma*, and given that the media were nationalised, that silence became institutionalised, thus avoiding the emergence of a debate about the subject in the media.

From the beginning of the Republic the absence of racial or ethnic problems in Cuba was declared, claiming that the various groups lived in harmony and enjoyed equal rights, a view which was upheld by the elites and reproduced in the newspapers throughout the whole of the century.

But notwithstanding the social diversity visible in reality, the various proposals for a nation defended by and legitimised by the two newspapers coincided in the conception of a homogeneous, civilised or modern, and united community, prerequisites seen as essential for the very existence of the nation.

Whilst the *Diario de la Marina* advocates a Creole, white and Latin national identity, defending this approach through racially-based arguments, grounded in the superiority of the white race over the black race, both from a biologicistic viewpoint, more prevalent during the first two time periods analysed, and from a culturalistic one, favoured in the last one. This racialised discourse allows for the merger between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, by which the term race includes both physical features and inborn and transmissible cultural ones, a discourse which the newspaper uses in its argumentation based on the prevailing racial theories at each given moment. To turn its definition of the national identity as white and culturally Hispanic into a reality, the *Diario de la Marina* supported measures of ‘whitening’, both physical, through immigration policies, and cultural, in its proposal for assimilation. And even though in its proposal it claims to accept the population of African descent as part of the Republic, such acceptance find no room in its idea of nation, therefore rendering necessary an assimilation or whitening, a racialised inclusive model where a dominant group coexists with a dominated group.

*Granma* goes a step further, stating the goal, which in its view is already achieved, of creating a homogeneous, integrated and united nation, whose identity is defined as *mulato*, containing and accepting, unlike the *Diario*’s postulates, the colour and culture of all its constituents under the umbrella of national culture. Through, on one hand, the socialist system of a society with no classes and no races and, on the other, a transculturation discourse which would provide a sense of uniformity to the cultural diversity of Cuban national culture, it demonstrates an attempt, similarly to previous periods, to create the notion of a homogeneous, united and socially harmonious nation.

Some form of idea of nation based on integration was maintained throughout the twentieth century, in the case of the model proposed by the *Diario de la Marina* through citizenry, in other words, through the Jacobinic or civic model in which, in the words of Smith ‘la comunidad étnica del nuevo Estado se convierte en el pilar fundamental de la nueva identidad [...] la cultura histórica de la *ethnie* dominante configura la identidad de la naciente comunidad política’ (Smith 1997: 110), and through the ‘nationalisation’ of the various ‘ethnic groups’ or ‘cultures’ in *Granma*’s discourse. Discourse strategies that allow it to overcome or resolve its racial and cultural heterogeneity, incorporating specific identities and cultures into the logic of the nation, not viewing them as different, in the name of the nation.

## Notes

1. Some of the analysis presented in this article follows a wider one for my PhD thesis. See Antón-Carrillo (2006).
2. This was also the conclusion of other academics who have researched into this issue from the field of history (De la Fuente 2001) or literature (Duno Gottberg 2003 and Leclercq 2004).
3. The (M) or (T) following the name of the paper alludes to morning (M) or evening (T) editions.
4. The Platt Amendments, passed in 1901, granting the USA the right to intervene in Cuba's internal affairs if the island entered into a state of turmoil or whenever American interests were threatened, continued in force. The USA had already put in place a government of intervention from 1906 to 1908, and could do so again.
5. For more information on this question, see Arnedo-Gómez (2006: Chapter 1, 'Redefining the Mulato Nation: The Rise of Afrocubanismo'), pp. 21–41.
6. A further development of this reasoning on the merger of the notions of 'nature' and 'culture' may be found in Wade (2002). On concepts of 'naturalisation' see Stolke (1992), and on naturalisation of culture and culturisation of nature see Young (1995) and Goldberg (1993).
7. We are referring to them in a general way as press articles. The editorial, which in the previous press model used to be published on a daily basis, is included on very few occasions under this name. There are unsigned articles that one could infer as the work of the editor, in the so-called '*Ideológicas*' pages (what would correspond to opinion pages in the capitalist model).

Also new in this model is what in the previous one we called opinion, that would be defined by the approach of its argumentation. The articles published in the (either signed or unsigned) '*Ideológicas*' or ideological pages do not follow an argument strategy, nor do the editorials occasionally published under this title on the front page. All the press articles have a didactic or exclusively informative intention. Therefore, here they are called 'information media'. As such, more than the discursive strategy of the argumentation, what is analysed here is the newspaper's approach concerning its proposals for a national identity. Included here are signed and unsigned articles, given the paper's institutional character.

8. For more information on this debate, see, among others, the studies by Moore (1997), Arnedo (2001), Leclercq (2004), Duno Gottberg (2003).

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## Editorials

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