

## PROSTITUTION AND SEX TOURISM IN CUBA

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For the first thirty years after the triumph of his revolution, Fidel Castro championed Cuba as a model socialist society. Gone were the casinos, the bootlegging Americans, the mafia, and the brothels they frequented. Socialist society, he claimed, is superior to capitalism. Girls do not have to sell themselves for money in Cuba's new society. Women gain liberation through socialism. They have equal opportunity for employment, share the responsibilities of the household, and have the same access to education as men. Propped by \$ 4 billion in annual Soviet subsidies, the Cuban economy allowed women (and men) to meet their basic needs without needing to trade in their bodies.

Over the past decade, however, Soviet subsidies disappeared and trading partners were lost. Prostitution has come back. Despite government claims that it remains committed to eliminating the sex trade, prostitution continues, albeit at reduced levels from several years ago. Increased prostitution in Cuba is a byproduct of the economic crisis precipitated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic reforms initiated in 1993-94. These reforms, intended as temporary measures to save socialism, have encouraged many types of behavior contrary to socialist ideology. With the planned socialist economic infrastructure cracked at the seams, Cubans are forced to find new ways to survive. Prostitution's ability to tap coveted U.S. dollars makes it one of the most effective means of survival.

Prostitution presents a problem for Castro: it shows the outside world that socialism has failed. The rhetoric of the Revolution cannot convince the population to adhere to the norms of socialist behavior. On the other hand, the government's attempts to curb prostitution, which have had only moderate success, appear ambivalent. This is not surprising, since prostitution allows Cuba to capture millions of tourist dollars annually. Furthermore, it provides income for thousands who would otherwise need to turn to the State for jobs or assistance. Thus, the government's commitment to combat prostitution may be less firm than it proclaims.

This paper will analyze the re-emergence of prostitution as a result of the Cuban economic crisis. The aim of this paper is not just to analyze the business of Cuban prostitutes, but also to examine the political, social, and economic conditions that allow prostitution in a society that for thirty years managed to keep it under control. The paper is divided into four sections. The first section will analyze the link between prostitution and tourism, both before 1959 and today. The second section will describe the re-emergence of prostitution in the 1990s and the conditions that allow it to operate. The third section will examine the government's policy towards prostitution and the steps taken to control it. It will also discuss why the government has not been able, nor has had the incentive, to completely eliminate prostitution. The

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fourth section will assess the impact that prostitution has on Cuban society.

This paper is largely based on field research conducted in Cuba in February 2001. Many of the men and women interviewed by the author were met at random. The interviews included conversations with people in various other professions besides prostitution. Interviewees included male and female prostitutes, taxi drivers, apartment renters, hotel workers, bartenders, economists, lawyers, and policemen. In addition to the field research, the author reviewed a number of articles on the subject in Cuban publications such as the *Granma* and the *Juventud Rebelde* newspapers.<sup>2</sup>

### PROSTITUTION AND TOURISM

Prior to 1959, Cuba was an overwhelmingly male-dominated society. Men were the providers for the family, the better educated, and the rulers of society. Women were supposed to be motherly, submissive, and chaste. Women were expected to stay at home, do housework, and raise the children while their husbands were at work. In 1959, women made up only 17% (262,000) of the work force, and around 70% of these women worked as domestic servants (Smith and Padula, 1996). Before the Revolution, prostitution often occurred when young women from the countryside migrated to Havana in search of work. Many of them failed to obtain other employment and eventually turned to prostitution (Smith and Padula, 1996).

It has been estimated that before the Revolution, there were 40,000 prostitutes in the country, although the government claims that number may have been as high as 100,000 (Department of the Army, 1985). Thousands of businessmen and tourists—largely from the United States—flocked to Cuba, many to gamble and have illicit sex. Havana's Tropicana nightclub, the world's largest outdoor cabaret, flaunted women in g-strings and flowery headdresses, exemplifying the sensual atmosphere in the nation's capital. Cuba sold sexuality as a natu-

ral resource. Smith and Padula (1996, p. 21), authors of *Sex and Revolution*, noted: "visitors disembarking from steamships in Havana were given business cards by young men advertising the availability of their sisters." Tourists also frequented the numerous brothels that were scattered throughout Havana.

It is a misconception, however, to think that prostitutes catered solely to foreign tourists. Cuban men were the largest consumers of the prostitutes' services. In Cuban society it was accepted that men were naturally driven to sex. Men could pursue their sexual desires in brothels, leaving the honor of "nice" Cuban girls intact. Smith and Padula (1996, p. 26) state that "at the onset of puberty, boys were taken by their fathers to the neighborhood brothels to be initiated into the mysteries of sex." Prostitution also existed outside of Havana. Many young women followed the sugar harvest and offered their services to migrant workers, farmers, or townsmen.

Castro brought the sex business to a virtual halt. He announced as a revolutionary goal to end prostitution and incorporate Cuban women into working society. By liberating women from the bounds of the *machista* society, Castro hoped to capture their support. The government also anticipated that the addition of women to the work force would help increase production and boost the economy.

In 1961, the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) was founded and Raúl Castro's wife, Vilma Espín, was named president. The FMC worked to rehabilitate ex-prostitutes and assimilate them into society. The FMC touched every part of women's life. It proclaimed a new family code that gave women more freedom from household chores. It initiated literacy campaigns for women, trained housewives to become seamstresses or tobacco rollers, and organized day care centers so women could go to work (Smith and Padula, 1996).

As a result of these reforms, many women gained access to education and employment and did not turn

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2. Since the re-emergence of prostitution in Cuba is a recent phenomenon, academic studies on Cuban prostitution have been limited. Thus, the principal written sources on the subject are official Cuban periodical publications.

to prostitution. Over the last 25 years, the number of working women has increased by one million. By 2000, females represented 43% of the work force and occupied a majority of technical jobs (World Bank, 2001).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the absence of tourism reduced the demand for, and financial attractiveness of, prostitution.

In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and Cuba fell into an economic crisis. Two years later, the government instituted several structural reforms intended to keep the economy afloat. Cuba encouraged foreign investment, especially in the tourism industry. The government broke up state farms and gave the land to farmers who formed smaller cooperatives. The government legalized the possession of U.S. dollars and legalized self-employment in certain fields<sup>4</sup> (Pérez-López and Travieso Díaz, 1998).

These reforms had their greatest impact in the area of tourism. Joint ventures between State enterprises and European firms such as Sol Meliá, constructed hotels throughout the island and promoted tourist trade. The legalization of the dollar made it easy for tourists to spend money in the island. The liberalization of self-employment allowed Cubans to provide services such as transportation, apartment rental, food sales in restaurants and in the streets, etc., to foreign tourists.

The rate of growth in the tourism industry has been remarkable. Since 1995, tourism income has grown at 18.6% annually. Foreign investment has increased the number of hotel rooms on the island to over 35,000. The number of tourists has increased from several hundred thousand in 1991 to 1.85 million in

2000. Tourism directly employs 81,000 workers and indirectly generates 2.7 jobs for each direct job, effectively providing 300,000 new jobs (CEPAL, 2000). The total income from the tourism sector in 1998 was 1.8 billion dollars. By 2010, Cuba expects 6-7 million tourists to arrive, bringing about 10 billion dollars to the economy (Figueres, 2000). Cuba has accomplished this growth without the presence of American tourists.<sup>5</sup>

The dollars that tourists spend in Cuba create new unofficial opportunities for Cubans to make money (Pérez-Lopez, 1995). Many work as *jineteros* (hustlers: the word literally means jockeys), they panhandle from tourists, offer their services as guides, and sell stolen merchandise such as cigars at below-market prices. Other *jineteros* of both sexes have turned to prostitution and, as a result, Cuba is now one of the prime destinations for sex tourism.

Sex tourism is an increasingly controversial subject. Although tourism and sex have always been linked, the sex tourism industry has exploded in the past decade. Sex tourism occurs all over the world, but it is most pervasive in third world countries where poor women turn to prostitution for survival<sup>6</sup> (Oppermann, 1998).

Sex tourism exists in Cuba. Thousands of men travel to Cuba to have sex with Cubans. Travel agents flaunt pictures of scantily clad women on white sand beaches. In 1990, *Playboy* did a photo shoot of Cuban women on the famous beach resort, Varadero. In 1995, the Italian magazine *Viaggiare* claimed that Cuba was the "paradise of sex tourism," beating

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3. As I will show later, these reforms also changed Cubans' attitudes toward sex. Pre-marital sex became more common and acceptable for both sexes.

4. Self-employment is legal in over a hundred fields, however one cannot be self-employed in the field in which one received professional training.

5. American tourists are prohibited from visiting Cuba by the U.S. trade embargo. Cruise ships, which account for 12 of the 18 millions annual tourist arrivals to the Caribbean, generally do not stop in Havana because of the embargo (Figueres, 2000, pp. 3-5).

6. Over the past decade many third world countries such as Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Cuba, which were previously inaccessible to Westerners, have opened up to tourism. These countries need the dollars generated by tourism, and are often encouraged by the IMF and the World Bank to develop the industry. However, they are not prepared or able to fight the problems associated with it. The sexual exploitation of minors is now a global concern. Children are sold into prostitution by their families, or kidnapped and forced to work in the sex trade. ECPAT, an organization that fights child prostitution estimates that 500,000 children work in the sex industry in Brazil, 400,000 in India, 200,000-850,000 in Thailand, and 100,000-300,000 in North America (www.ecpat.net).

Thailand, Brazil, and the Philippines for this top honor ([www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com)). The next year Cuba saw a 68% increase in arrivals from Italy.<sup>7</sup>

The profile of tourists is a strong indication that sex tourism is a factor in the increase of arrivals to Cuba. The majority of tourists in Cuba are male, 58.3%.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the number of male tourists between 25-60 years old, is almost twice as large as that of female tourists of the same age (CEPAL, 2000).

Nevertheless, Cuban tourism officials deny that there is any organized sex tourism on the island. Isabel<sup>9</sup> is an executive at the Centro de Inteligencia Corporativa, a consulting firm that works with Cuba's state owned travel agency Cubanacán. She says that "under no circumstances do we organize any type of sex tourism. The government would never encourage women to sell their bodies. It wouldn't even be profitable to promote prostitution. Unlike the U.S., Cuba provides free health care. Any money generated would be offset by the rise in HIV and Sexually Transmitted Diseases cases." She also denies that prostitution has led to growth in the tourism industry. "Tourism is increasing in all sectors of the industry: health, cultural, beaches and sun, etc. We receive more tourists each month and from all different countries. You can't attribute this success to prostitution. The advances in the hotel services are the main reason."

Even if the government does not promote sex tours, the Internet has encouraged the flow of sex tourism to Cuba. [www.WorldSexGuide.Org](http://www.WorldSexGuide.Org), [www.alt.prostitution.com](http://www.alt.prostitution.com), and [www.worldsexarchives.com](http://www.worldsexarchives.com), for example, are three sites that promote prostitution in Cuba. In these sites one can find information on where to meet prostitutes, how much to pay, where to take them, and advice on dealing with police. Each

site offers bulletin boards so travelers can exchange advice or stories on their trips. Other sites such as [www.allforeignbrides.com](http://www.allforeignbrides.com) or [www.asianhearts.com](http://www.asianhearts.com) specialize in Cuban mail order brides.

In the article, "Sex Tourism on Rise," by ABC News, Christine Beddoe, Program Director for the ECPA, declared, "the Internet has become the greatest tool for sex offenders to exchange information on places to go where they won't get caught or where laws are weak." Despite the government's claim that it does not advertise Cuba as a sex destination, these Internet sites that cater to sex tourists, promote Cuba as a sexual playground.

### CONTEMPORARY PROSTITUTION IN CUBA

The focus of prostitution in Cuba is somewhat different now than it was before the Revolution. Today, Cuban prostitutes, or *jinetteras* as they are called, cater primarily to foreign tourists. Julia O'Connell Davidson notes in her article "Sex Tourism in Cuba," that "in Cuba there is no network of brothels, no organized system of bar prostitution: in fact third party involvement in the organization of prostitution is rare" (Davidson, 1996). Prostitutes are not sold into prostitution by their families and do not work in oppressive conditions as they do in other countries. They do not prostitute themselves because they are alcoholics or drug addicts (*The Economist*, August 24, 2000). Most of the prostitutes interviewed for this paper decided to go into the business on their own accord, driven by economic need.

As was the case before the Revolution, many women come to Havana from the interior of the island to earn money for their families. Residents in Havana have easier access to dollars because of tourism. It is much more difficult for residents from other provinces to earn the dollars that they need to survive.

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7. However, towards the end of 1996 and into 1997, Castro started to crack down on prostitution, especially in Varadero Beach. From 1997-1998 and from 1998-1999, the number of Italian tourists dropped 7% and 15% respectively (Centro de Inteligencia Corporativa, 2000).

8. The link between prostitution and the number of male tourists has been established in other countries. In 1993, 64% of the 5,760,000 tourists in Thailand were male. Thailand, at the time, was the most notorious destination for sex tourism and hosted over 200,000 prostitutes (Opperman, 1998).

9. To protect the identity of the sources, this paper uses fictitious names.

The money that a woman sends back every month can feed the entire family for several weeks. This puts enormous pressure on them to remain in the business. Julia, a twenty-year-old mulatta from Camagüey said, "Every month I send \$50 back to my mother. I've never told her what I do, but she doesn't ask either."

There are three main reasons that Cuban women turn to prostitution. The first and main reason is economic necessity. Many women turn to prostitution because they see no other way to survive. Once they turn to prostitution, they become trapped because they are away from home and have no other way to pay for their living expenses. (They cannot legally obtain a job in the city, because of the internal migration laws, so the only way they can support themselves is through prostitution.)

Esperanza is a 23-year-old single mother from Camagüey. She has a twenty-month-old baby and works in a state-owned drug store for 200 pesos/month. "I can't pay for him to go to daycare and I don't even have enough money to buy him shoes." The author met her on her second night in Havana. A few days before, she had spent her vacation money on a bus ticket to Havana. "I have some friends here who are helping me with a place to stay. I am going to do this for two weeks and then return to Camagüey with enough money to help us out. I am ashamed, but what else can I do?"

The second reason that women go into prostitution is so they can finance their studies or work in a chosen profession. Salaries are extremely low in Cuba. The average salary is around 250 pesos (\$12) per month, and even a doctor or lawyer would not make more than 600 pesos (*Granma*, December 23, 2000). Even highly educated Cuban workers must find an alternative or additional source of income. In many families, one of the professional workers will quit his/her job in order to obtain a self-employed license. This self-employment often times provides enough income for the entire family. Other professionals quit

their state jobs to work in the tourism sector as taxi drivers, waiters, bartenders, or doormen.<sup>10</sup> Some professionals and students turn to prostitution instead.

Professional women normally engage in prostitution only part time, as a way to supplement their income. They do not work the streets every night, and sometimes will only accept clients a couple times a month. As Davidson points out, "those (women) that are legitimate residents of a tourist center can often elect to supply their sexual labor on a casual, infrequent basis and/or for very specific and focused ends" (Davidson, 1996). These women do not have heavy overhead costs; they live at home and do not have the transportation costs that many women from the interior incur.

Francisca and Gabriela are two eighteen-year-old mulatta girls. They study nursing at a medical school during the day and work the streets at night. If they sleep with one customer a month, they will make over twice their monthly salary as nurses. "We just study nursing for fun. We cannot make enough money as nurses to live."

A retired high school teacher from the United States remarked at the education levels of Cuban prostitutes. "I was with a beautiful girl last night. After we were finished she told me she was an architect. Where else can you find prostitutes that are architects!"

The third reason for going into prostitution is that some prostitutes see prostitution as a means to live a better life. Prostitution allows them to go to clubs, eat at good restaurants, and buy nice clothes. A friend remarked as we passed a fashionable clothes store on Obispo Avenue, the main shopping district in Havana Vieja, "those stores were opened to sell clothes to prostitutes. Who else besides tourists has enough money to shop there?" The concierge at the five-star Meliá Varadero agrees that prostitution can give girls an easier life. "About 90% of the girls that came (to Varadero) did so because that is the life that

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10. Official salaries for tourism workers are low also. However, they have regular access to tips, bribe money, and can embezzle dollars easily.

they wanted to lead. They wanted to go out to eat, party, and sleep with different men. Only a small percentage of women did it from extreme economic necessity.”<sup>11</sup>

Prostitution in Cuba is a lucrative business. Most prostitutes charge \$25-\$40 a night. In the fancier clubs, such as the Palacio de la Salsa or El Comodoro, they charge \$80-\$100. It is not uncommon for a man to leave a woman several hundred dollars for spending a couple days with him. Judy is a 24-year-old ex-prostitute who came to Havana six years ago. She graduated from high school but did not go to college because she knew she could make much more money sleeping with men. She never works the streets, but meets men through friends, at bars, or by chance as she walks in her tourist-heavy neighborhood. “I always make it clear that they have to pay. Many times they want to spend the whole week with me. They buy me clothes and take me out to eat as if I was their girlfriend. One man left me \$600 dollars after I spent four days with him. Another man, who I was engaged to marry, sent me \$1000 in the mail!” In the past two years, working only several times a month, she made \$3000-\$5000. She recently gave up prostitution and currently dates a 40-year-old German. He comes to Havana several months a year on business and provides for her financially.

The type of prostitution that Judy practiced, referred to as “open ended prostitution,” is generally accepted by many governments and is practiced around the world. Ed Cohen remarks in a study of Thai prostitutes that, “although the relationship might commence as a neutral service, it could be readily extended into a more protracted, diffused, and personalized liaison, involving both emotional attachment and economic interest” (Cohen, 1982). These relationships are viewed as authentic and, in many cases, even lead to marriage. A Cuban policeman told me that this was not illegal. “If you pay a girl for sex, that is prostitution. But, if you like a girl and take her out

to eat, go dancing, and then maybe later have sex....That is natural.”

The majority of female prostitutes are blacks or mulattas.<sup>12</sup> This is not due to racial discrimination, or even necessarily due to their lower economic situation. The demand for sex with black women is greater than for white women in Cuba. Many European men have racial fantasies and come to Cuba specifically to fulfill them. Julia Davidson writes in her article “Sex Tourism in Cuba” that “many sex tourists are fascinated with black sexuality, which is imagined to be untamed and primitive and therefore more uninhibited, exciting and abandoned than white sexuality” (Davidson, 1996). A British tourist told me, “When I travel, I look to have sex with girls that I can’t have sex with back at home. There aren’t very many black women in Britain.” The beaches of Playas del Este, a popular vacationing spot for Italians, are frequented almost entirely by black women.

Female prostitutes can be found all over Havana but concentrate in locations frequented by tourists. Until 1999, Quinta Avenida, which runs through Miramar, was infamous for its streetwalkers. This street, however, is now heavily patrolled and only a few women can be found there. La Rampa, a street that runs perpendicular to the Malecón and the famous five-star Hotel Nacional, boasts the most prostitutes in the once-swanky area of Vedado. Many women can be found in Parque Central and along Obispo Street in Havana Vieja. Nightclubs such as the Comodoro, the Palacio de la Salsa, Havana Café, and Papa’s are often filled with prostitutes. New laws, intended to control the number of prostitutes in these clubs, prohibit Cuban women from entering unaccompanied by a foreigner. This, however, does not deter many prostitutes,<sup>13</sup> who offer to pay an escorts’ cover charge just to get in. Prostitutes that cater to Cuban clients remain in less frequented areas such as Centro Havana and Cayo Hueso. These women offer their services for \$1-\$5.

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11. This is said by a lady who has regular access to dollars, not a worker at a state store.

12. Mulattos represent 51% of the population, whites 37%, blacks 11%, and orientals 1%.

13. At the entrance to El Comodoro nightclub in Miramar, the bouncer asked if the author and a friend whether we would accompany two young women inside. We agreed, and they each paid the \$5 cover charge.

Male prostitution is also present in Havana. In Cuba, unlike in other Caribbean islands such as Jamaica,<sup>14</sup> gay men dominate male prostitution. Hustlers and other gay men congregate nightly at the corner of the Cine Yara, in Vedado. Many gay men also congregate outside the Fiat Cafeteria on the Malecón. According to Carlos, a gay 27-year-old, about 65% of the several hundred gay men that frequent these two spots are prostitutes. Carlos himself is not a hustler. He lives with a 50-year-old Spaniard who imports auto parts. He assures that this is a legitimate relationship. "If I didn't like him, I wouldn't be with him, no matter how much money he had."

Gay prostitution is similar to heterosexual prostitution. Hustlers cater mainly to European men, especially Italians. They charge between \$30-\$50. They see prostitution as a good way to make money, and generally do not prostitute themselves out of desperation or to support a drug or alcohol addiction. These gay men dress in name-brand clothing, including Tommy Hilfiger, Versace, and Calvin Klein. Raymond, who refers to himself as Donatella, proudly showed the author his new Versace tee-shirt: "This was a gift from my friend. He just brought it to me from Mexico." When I asked if he had another job, he stated: "I've looked for jobs. But why should I work for 200 pesos a month when I can do this?"

There are no clubs for gay men in Havana. Monday through Thursday, the hustlers remain on the streets. The gay scene in Havana is inextricably tied to the hustling scene. Gay men who do not hustle frequent the same spots as the hustlers. Thus, gay pick up spots are more social than the areas female prostitute frequent. Many gay men go to the Cine Yara to hang out with their friends and boyfriends, and accept customers only if the situation arises.

Every Friday and Saturday night there is a party for gay men. The location of the party changes each time, and is only revealed on the day of the party. Unlicensed taxi drivers take carloads of men to the party, often outside the city, for 20 pesos per person. A gay man, who rents a location from the govern-

ment, organizes the party ostensibly for straight couples. It accommodates around 500 people. The party costs \$1 and the State takes a large cut of the proceeds. This party is the most common place for foreigners to look for gay hustlers.

Transvestites are common within the gay community. Some transvestites simply dress in women's clothes at night. Others are transsexuals, who have had operations to change their gender. A 6'3" black man proudly showed off his new breasts: "My lover brought me silicone implants from Italy. He paid \$1500 for the operation, but now I have C cups." Another transsexual indicated that the operation only costs \$300-\$400.

Monica is a 34-year-old transvestite. Every night he stands at the corner of the Cine Yara and socializes with the hundreds of gay men found there. He rents his one bedroom apartment to other prostitutes and their clients for \$10 an hour. To supplement his income he works one or two days a week as a prostitute. "Italian men love me. I look like Italian women. I'm much more sexual though." He wears a bleached blonde wig and a tight green miniskirt. He injects fluid into his chest to increase his bust. "I do lesbian love shows with my friend Shelly (another transvestite) for a hundred dollars. And then I will make love to my client for another \$50. I know what I am worth. I won't do anything for less than \$50. I don't have to work the streets either. I have a fixed clientele. My last lover wanted to take me back to Italy with him. He said that he would pay for the operation, but I didn't want to go. I love Cuba."

Discrimination against homosexuals still exists but is declining. The government persecuted homosexuals after it came to power. The newspaper *Revolución* declared, "No homosexual represents the Revolution, which is a matter for men, of fists and not feathers, of courage and not trembling..." Castro considered homosexuals as common criminals and encouraged homosexuals to escape the island in the Mariel Boatlift in 1980 (Arenas, 1992).

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14. Jamaica is famous for beach boys, i.e., black males that provide services for single white females, usually from Canada or Britain.

Today, homosexuality is more accepted. Homosexuals are no longer seen as an enemy of the state. Mayra Rodriguez, a coordinator at the Center for Sex Education, states, "I can see changes in the attitudes toward homosexuals. People don't consider them as strange as they used to" ([www.ilga.org/information/legal-survey/americas/cuba](http://www.ilga.org/information/legal-survey/americas/cuba)). Many gays attribute this new tolerance to the success of the 1995 Cuban film "Strawberry and Chocolate." The film, about the relationship between a Cuban homosexual and a straight University student, was nominated for an Academy Award in the Best Foreign Film category and most Cubans credit it with opening up a whole new dialogue on the subject within Cuba. Homosexuals, however, still suffer from discrimination. Article 303a of the Penal Code of 1988 states that publicly manifested homosexuality is punishable with three months to a year in prison ([www.ilga.org/information/legal-survey.america.cuba](http://www.ilga.org/information/legal-survey.america.cuba)). The interpretation of this law is vague, and homosexuals are sometimes fined or imprisoned unjustly by the police.

### GOVERNMENT ACTION

The government denies that prostitution is a major problem. According to governmental estimates, there are only 700 prostitutes in Havana. (The author counted almost 200 in a single nightclub. In the early 1990s, Castro did not have the resources to control prostitution. He claimed, "Cuba has the cleanest and most educated prostitutes in the world," in an attempt to ameliorate the negative press that Cuba received. Today, the government openly criticizes prostitution and promises to eliminate it. In 1996, Castro claimed that prostitution was "inadmissible in socialist society" ("Cuban Hookers," 1996). Magalys Arocha, head of international relations for the FMC, elaborates that the focus of the government should be to eradicate the social conditions that cause prostitution. "Our mission consists in preventing and eradicating, it isn't a war on prostitution, but one against what promotes and encourages it."

The government's largest concern with prostitution is the image that it portrays to the outside world. Prostitution shows that socialist institutions and socialist morals are crumbling. Castro denounces the exploitation of people in the capitalist world. However, these condemnations are hypocritical as long as Cuba remains a destination for sex tourism. *Granma*, the official state newspaper, frequently reflects Fidel's concern over the image that tourists have of Cuba. "The practice of prostitution and the phenomenon of pimping, the infamous business associated with prostitution, can create false paradigms as much within the country as from the exterior that damage the true image of a heroic people" (*Granma*, September 1, 1998).

An article in *Juventud Rebelde* on September 23, 1998 demonstrates the concern developed by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (Comités de Defensa de la Revolución, or CDRs) about prostitution:<sup>15</sup> "Members of the CDR work along with the Committees for Prevention and Social Attention against all scars that damage the image of our society, such as prostitution, pimping, and other reprehensible activities" (*Juventud Rebelde*).

Another concern with prostitution is that some tourists will see Cuban women as objects of exploitation and this will damage Cuba's image to the eyes of potential visitors. This concern led the government to clamp down on prostitution in Varadero beach, Cuba's most popular beach destination for foreigners. By 1996, thousands of women worked as prostitutes in the 19-kilometer peninsula. Women came from all parts of the island and rented rooms in the town of Varadero or in Matanzas, 40 kilometers away. Competition for customers was strong and men were frequently solicited and even harassed on the streets. In the first months of 1996, authorities returned 7000 women to their homes, investigated over 400 houses suspected as brothels, and shut down a pornographic movie ring (CubaInfo, 1996). It is now illegal for Cubans to rent rooms in Varadero. Additionally,

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15. CDRs are committees of residents that were created in 1960 to guard against anti-revolutionary behavior in the neighborhood. Today, they continue their vigilante activities but also organize blood drives, day care centers, support groups, etc. According to one CDR president, the CDR is the building block of Cuban socialist society.

anyone accused of housing a prostitute will lose his or her house.<sup>16</sup> According to Ralph, a retired bus driver, 17 houses have been confiscated in the past several years.

The government's actions successfully eliminated much of the prostitution in Varadero, but also threatened the future of the tourism industry on the peninsula. In an article dated June 10, 1996, the *Dallas Morning News* quotes a Varadero hotel employee: "There are very few *jineteras* around...The bars and beaches are almost empty. This is very sad."

Cuba has promoted the development of all-inclusive resorts in Varadero to combat the loss of sex tourists. Resorts such as the Gran Caribe, or the Meliá Varadero, provide all meals, beverages, watersports, and entertainment for their guests, who seldom leave the grounds. Varadero has seen an increase in honeymooners, retired couples, and families. Despite the drop in single men looking for sex, tourism continues to grow in Varadero.

Papito, a CDR president, applauds the change. "Sure, prostitution encouraged tourism in some ways, but that is not the type of tourism that we want. We didn't want Varadero to be a center for prostitution and the drugs, pimps, and alcohol that come with it. We have a good tourism now. Old people, young people, and families come here. In fact, we have about 19,000 tourists a day in Varadero. We don't need prostitution to do that."

The government has toughened penalties for pimps, who are regarded as unproductive people who earn money off the labor of others, do not attract tourism, or create revenue. Furthermore, pimps represent exploitation of women for capitalist gain. Article 17 of Law Number 87 of 1999 modified the penalties for promoting prostitution. Under the modified law, "the prison term increases to 4-10 years for inducing, in any way, or promoting another person to engage in prostitution or bodily commerce." The sentence is

for 10-20 years for anyone who threatens or forces another to engage in prostitution. A 20-30 year sentence is given to anyone who habitually promotes prostitution, or has been convicted of pimping in the past (*Gaceta*, 1999).

An article in *Granma* in October 1998 reports one of the first cases under the modified law. Five men and one woman were convicted of *proxenetismo*, pimping. Over an eight-month period they brought eight women, three of whom were minors, to Havana. They promised the girls "quick economic improvement," and used intimidation tactics to keep control over them. One of the men received a 25-year sentence; the others received 5-12 years. The article concludes, "the society has the responsibility to prevent, at all cost, that prostitution becomes a sector controlled by pimps." The article does not call for the elimination of prostitution, but an end to the exploitation of prostitutes by middlemen.

Pimps continue to peddle sex despite the increased penalties. A middle-aged man in Havana Vieja approached the author on a dark street, saying: "You want my two girls? They are identical!" In Regla, a *barrio* across the harbor from Havana, a woman offered the author five girls. When asked what could one do with five girls, she responded, "enjoy them."<sup>17</sup> Judy, an ex-prostitute, claims that many girls have pimps. "These girls come from the country's interior. They don't know anyone and are scared. Pimps get them a place to live, contacts, nice clothes, etc."

Technically, there is no law against prostitution. On November 1, 1979, a new penal code deleted several acts, such as prostitution, that had been considered criminal offenses (Department of the Army, 1985). This change in the penal code reflected the government's official position that prostitution had been eliminated. The government's official position was that Cuba had successfully overcome the social con-

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16. This information comes from conversations with residents of Varadero.

17. This woman would not be considered a madam under American standards. The girls she works with are not under her contract nor do they have any obligation to work for her. She simply matches buyers and sellers for a commission. However, under Cuban law she is considered a *proxeneta* (procurer).

ditions that promoted prostitution, and thus it was no longer necessary to criminalize it.

Although there is no law that specifically outlaws prostitution, the legality of exchanging sex for money is questionable and a potential source of law enforcement action. A lawyer at the Ministry of Justice states, “one is free to do what she wants with her body.” However, many of the acts associated with prostitution are illegal under the “indices of dangerousness” laws. Under those laws, police are allowed to arrest anyone considered to be potentially dangerous before he or she commits a crime. Article 73 of the Penal Code declares, “a state of dangerousness exists when a subject engages in one of the following acts: habitual inebriation, drug use, and antisocial conduct.” Article 73 further defines antisocial conduct as follows. “It is considered a state of dangerousness through antisocial conduct if one habitually breaks the rules of co-existence through acts of violence or through other provocative acts violates the rights of others, or through general behavior damages the rules of co-existence, or disturbs the order of the community, or lives, as a social parasite, from the work of others, or exploits or practices socially reprehensible acts” (*Gaceta*, 1999).

A prostitute can be arrested under a variety of legal prohibitions. Everyone who earns money must be either employed directly by the state or be registered and pay taxes as a self-employed worker. Prostitution is not an activity qualifying for self-employment. Thus, a prostitute who is unemployed cannot explain her income and is technically a “social parasite.” Also, loitering and street walking are considered “antisocial conduct” and may also provide the basis for an arrest.

Several years ago, the government enacted the Law of Internal Migration to halt the influx of people to Havana from the interior. Police frequently ask Cubans for their identification cards. If a prostitute is discovered in Havana without the proper authorization, she is immediately sent back to her province. Police also ask for identification to record the movements of Cubans. Every time a policeman asks a Cuban for identification, he records the time and location in the police database. If a man or woman is recorded vari-

ous times in the same location late at night, he or she can be accused of antisocial behavior.

If a policeman suspects someone of prostitution, he will issue him or her a *carta de advertencia* (warning letter), a fine of a couple hundred pesos, and possibly has him or her spend a night in jail. The letter is given to the family of the prostitute as well, and to the local president of the CDR. After three warning letters, a prostitute receives a jail sentence of four years for antisocial behavior.

The police also organize infrequent raids on prostitutes. I witnessed a raid on La Rampa, the popular gathering spot for prostitutes of both sexes. At 11 PM, several police patrol cars drove up La Rampa to the Cine Yara followed by three police vans. They arrested several prostitutes, while others ran for the cover of side streets. For several days, La Rampa was empty; however, by the next weekend the street was filled with hustlers. Carlos, a 27-year-old homosexual, complained about the raids. “The police come down in vans, round up all the gays, and make them sleep in the police station. I don’t let them do it to me. I know my rights.”

Ilda, the president of a CDR in Centro Habana, who is retired after thirty years of military service, explained her role in the fight against prostitution. “If a girl is involved with prostitution, I sit down with her and the family. I find out why she is doing this. If the family needs money we help her out. If she has dropped out of school we re-enroll her. These girls have an alternative. They can look for a job. What happens is that they don’t want to work hard. They want to find the easiest way to make money. In this country we have to work. We can’t permit prostitution.” Ilda is optimistic about the future. “Today there is barely any prostitution. It has decreased and it will continue to decrease.”

Over the past few months, the government has particularly cracked down on transvestites that congregate in tourist locations. On February 4, 2001, Angel Rodríguez Alvarez, editor of the official weekly local Havana paper, *La Tribuna*, encouraged the community to drive the transvestites away from the Malecón. He writes, “many meters of the Malecón are

occupied every night by a new species, different and very foreign to the spirit of the Havana family. There cohabit pimps, prostitutes, and other outlandish people, among others a figure unfortunately spread across the world, but almost unknown in Cuba, the transvestite.” He adds, “the families of Havana have the right to rescue the Malecón, this site of dreams that for more than a century forms an inseparable part of the most Cuban images.”

The article, according to one transvestite, is a response to a story that CNN ran on gay nightlife. The story, which was aired on the Internet, displayed images and interviews with gays and transvestites. The *Tribuna* article reaffirms the government’s concern with the image of the country. Transvestites convey an image of counter-revolutionary activity and of social deviance. Additionally, whether it is merited or not, transvestites are associated with drugs, prostitution, and other antisocial behavior.

The government’s policy has been to limit prostitution but not eliminate it, and to keep prostitutes out of sight of foreigners to foster a good image of the revolution. However, it does not want to lose the tourists that prostitution attracts. Ideally, Cuba would like to keep prostitution readily available to the sex tourist, but out of the way of the retired couple vacationing in Varadero.

In Cuba, the incentive to combat prostitution is not the same as it is in other countries. The sex trade in other countries, especially in Eastern Europe and Africa, is run by organized crime. Women are tricked, kidnapped, or forced into prostitution. These women are physically and emotionally abused, both by their “employers” and by the men with whom they

are forced to have sex. Furthermore, these women cannot voluntarily leave the business and receive no personal gain from prostitution (Altink, 1995).<sup>18</sup> A recent article in *The Economist* (“In the Shadows,” 2000) states, “The corpses of several hundred trafficked women, strangled, shot, or beaten to a pulp, fetch up around Europe each year. Many more bodies are never found.” The governments of these countries fight prostitution to protect the women that fall victim to it.

In Cuba, however, the majority of the prostitutes are not kidnapped, beaten, or exploited. They are educated individuals who rationally choose to engage in this business. Furthermore, many of these women work independently and retain the profits of their endeavors. This money allows them to provide for their family, continue studying, buy nicer clothes, etc. Prostitution in Cuba is, for the most part, a victimless crime.

Prostitution is more valuable to the Cuban economy than it first appears. The link to tourism has already been established. However, there are other reasons that the government does not have a clear incentive to end prostitution. A Cuban worker cannot live off his state salary of 250 pesos a month. According to what many Cubans say, one needs at least \$25 a month (500 pesos) just to survive. Forty percent of the population has legal regular access to dollars through remittances, self-employment, tips, or cooperative farming.<sup>19</sup> The other 60% of the population have to find illegal means to make dollars.<sup>20</sup> Families run undercover paladares, apartment owners rent out extra rooms, waitresses overcharge their customers, tobacco rollers steal boxes of cigars from

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18. At a summit on the International Trafficking of Women and Children hosted by the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Chairman Brownback reports on the ways that women are forced into prostitution. He claims that many young women and children, often times from small villages in Third World countries, are offered jobs in the city as domestic servants or factory workers. The women readily accept these jobs to escape the poverty of the countryside and to be able to send money home to their families. Once they leave their homes, they are kidnapped and smuggled across an international border. They are raped, abused, and stripped of their passport. As an illegal alien in a foreign country they are without support and often submit to the will of their captors. They continue as prostitutes for fear of death and in order to protect their families from retaliation. The U.S. State Department estimates 1 million women and children are forced into prostitution each year.

19. About 25% of the working population is not directly hired by the state. This includes cooperative farmers and self-employed workers. Additionally, 15% of the population receives dollar remittances from relatives in the United States (Rivera, 1998, p. 107). Finally, about 2% of the working population is in the tourism industry (CEPAL, 2000).

the factory, mechanics use tools from the shop to repair cars at home, etc. This illegal activity, which is crucial to survival, hurts the state.<sup>21</sup> Prostitution is the only illegal activity that does not hurt the state financially, but helps it. Prostitutes attract tourists and encourage them to spend more money. Men buy prostitutes drinks, food, clothes, and give them money that is eventually spent in state owned stores. Castro knows that if prostitution were eliminated these women and men would have to resort to some other type of illegal activity, and this other activity would hurt the state.

Prostitutes also create a multiplier effect within the economy. In October, 1998, *El Nuevo Herald* reported that four people live off each prostitute (“Cuatro personas,” 1998). This multiplier effect of prostitution is not just limited to Cuba; it happens in most countries where sex tourism exists. In her book *Prostitution, Power, and Freedom*, Julia Davidson writes, “it is certainly not prostitutes who get their hands on the largest share of these funds, for the proceeds of sex tourism are dispersed among all manner of people, many of whom take no direct part in organizing the prostitution of local people” (Davidson, 1998).

Taxi drivers, apartment renters, and middlemen, make their money from prostitution. Consider this example. Prostitutes are not allowed to enter hotels. A man who wants to spend time with a prostitute must rent a room in a private house. These rooms are rented illegally; the majority of *casas particulares* that have licenses will not rent to men with prostitutes. At the Hotel Nacional, the author asked the doorman if he could take a girl up to his room. The doorman immediately whistled to a man standing on the corner, who offered a private room for \$25/night. Five dollars of this fee would go to the doorman for his services.

Taxi drivers and middlemen also provide services to men looking for prostitutes. With the recent crack-down on prostitution, prostitutes are less aggressive and wear more conservative clothing. It is not as easy to tell who is a prostitute. Many girls stay off the streets and rely on the services of middlemen. They pay \$3-\$5 commissions to taxi drivers who bring them clients. Clandestine *paladar* owners often serve as matchmakers. A friend reported that his barber was in fact a pimp.

If it is true that four people depend economically on each prostitute, then Cuba clearly cannot afford to eliminate the trade. During the first years of the crisis, the government had to fire 300,000 workers from inefficient state jobs. Workers who were laid off were guaranteed a new job or given a severance pay of 60% of his or her salary (CEPAL, 2000). As long as the worker continues to look for a job he is provided with a monthly stipend of a couple hundred pesos. If, however, he ceases to look for a job, he does not receive this stipend. If there are 5,000-6,000 prostitutes in Havana the multiplier effect means that 20,000-24,000 jobs are created. These are people for whom the state does not have jobs or cannot provide for.<sup>22</sup> Official unemployment is between 5.5 and 6%, but this does not include people, like prostitutes, who are not looking for jobs.

If Castro eliminated prostitution he would face several problems. First, the elimination of prostitution would create a rise in unemployment. Many of the prostitutes who depend solely on prostitution would have to look for a state job. Others, who are already employed, would have to subsidize their incomes through other sources in the alternative, illegal economy. The displacement of 20,000-30,000 workers into the already saturated black market and second economy would create instability. These workers, formerly dependent on prostitution, would most

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20. The government limits the ways that Cubans can obtain U.S. dollars. The government has only issued 200,000 self-employed licenses even though the demand for these licenses is much greater. The state forces the vast majority of workers to keep their state jobs, but does not pay these workers adequate salaries.

21. For example, *paladar* owners direct potential customers from the state-owned restaurants.

22. As noted above, not all prostitutes are unemployed. Some in fact are highly educated professionals.

likely earn their income in ways that would hurt the state financially.

Finally, tourism would decline. Although the arrival of tourists might continue to increase, Cuba would see a drastic decline in sex tourism. Naturally, it is beneficial to promote socially acceptable tourism. However, Cuba is presently more concerned with bringing in U.S. dollars. As a country recovering from economic crisis, Cuba appears to have traded socialist morality for economic benefit.

### PROSTITUTION AND SOCIETY

Cuban society's reaction to the increase of prostitution in the last decade is mixed. Many people see prostitution as a reprehensible phenomenon that needs to be reversed. This view is especially common among older Cubans who were alive in 1959 when the revolution triumphed. They believe that prostitutes do not want to work, and that they refuse to make the sacrifices that socialism demands. It is difficult for those who have remained loyal to the goals of the revolution to see the younger generations abandon their education and jobs for prostitution. A self-employed apartment renter said, "These women do not have to turn to prostitution. There is food, there is clothing, and there is medicine. They are not the best food or clothes, but prostitution is never necessary."

Other people are more ambivalent. The constant fight for economic survival has blurred their opinions of right and wrong. Cubans have been trained to report the illegal activity of their neighbors to the CDRs. In the past, the network of neighborhood spies deterred much illegal activity. Today, however, the vast majority of the population engages in some form of illegal activity. The government is not seen as the provider for the people, but as the hand that takes away. Cuban people understand the need to engage in illegal activity to survive, and even the police will often turn a blind eye if the illegal activity is not disruptive or too lucrative (Trumbull, 2000). Many Cubans find it difficult to condemn prostitution when they themselves accept bribes, embezzle money, or steal state-owned products and services. Prostitution is just another way of survival. A middle-aged cafeteria worker conveyed this attitude: "Those

women aren't prostitutes. They are *luchadoras* (fighters). They are fighting to help their families."

Sex for money is so common that many ordinary women are mistaken for prostitutes. Dixie Edith, a journalist for *Juventud Rebelde*, reported being propositioned by a balding tourist with a \$50 bill on the Malecón. She writes, "the majority of us are not as you think" (September 20, 1998). Any single woman that enters a nightclub will likely be propositioned. After leaving Papa's nightclub, a female hailed a taxi and asked what the fare was. The driver responded, "the better question is how much do you charge?"

The re-emergence of prostitution ultimately is symptomatic of deeper changes in Cuban society: namely, the disparity between dollar holders and peso holders. The legalization of the dollar has created a dual economy and with it increasing social tensions. Cubans with dollars have access to goods and services that peso holders cannot obtain. The need to obtain dollars has led to a demoralization of Cuban society. People steal from the government. Waiters overcharge their customers. Managers of hotels, restaurants, and businesses accept bribes from employees who engage in illegal activity. "*Hay que resolver*" has replaced socialist rhetoric as the new Cuban code of morality.

Isabel Holgado Fernández, author of the book *No es Fácil*, correlates this economic development to a change in relationships. In an article in *El Nuevo Herald* she says, "the economic needs carry a great weight in the formation of new couples, especially among women with lower salaries." She adds, "there are women who match up with men that can help them get by. There are others that match up because they want to, but you see this in fewer cases" (August 22, 2000). Sex in Cuba is becoming a transaction. Economic need often plays a role in sexual relations. If a woman has sex with a man who is economically more stable, she may expect financial help in return. A homosexual man complained, "it is tough to find a normal lover. Many people are interested in what I can give them, and not just in me. I gave my last lover a pair of jeans because he didn't have that many clothes. But I don't have that much either."

As the polarization of wealth increases, a new social phenomenon has arisen. Cubans, who for thirty years lived in relative economic equality, now desire to show off material wealth. The Cuban publication *Cultura y Sociedad* refers to this new phenomenon as *especulación*. "The street language recognizes with this word the mania of showing off what one has, and even what one doesn't have, to make others understand that he has a superior life style" ("Vanidad," 2000). *Especulación* encourages illicit behavior. A worker who remains loyal to the state cannot afford material luxuries. With a salary of 250 pesos a month, he will never be able to buy designer clothes, jewelry, or nice electronics. In a society that now rejects an equal distribution of wealth, people are rushing to distinguish themselves by any means possible. Within this demoralized society, prostitution can be an attractive business. It allows participants the luxury of *especulación*. It gives men and women economic independence. Prostitutes do not have to enter a relationship out of economic necessity. They do not have to engage in other illegal activity. They can be university students without worrying about how to make enough money to eat each night.

Prostitutes in Cuba do not carry the same stigma that prostitutes in other countries have. They are not runaways, uneducated, drug abusers, or otherwise perceived as antisocial or deviant people (*The Economist*, January 4, 2001). The community does not see them as whores or sexually damaged people. Cuba is a very sexually liberated country.

According to what many Cubans have told me, it is fairly common for a male to have sex with many different partners before he marries. Although a double standard still exists for women, a female can have many sexual partners before she marries as well. The image of prostitution is further complicated by the fact that Cubans see themselves as a sexually desirable population and are not afraid to express this sexuality. An article in *Juventud Rebelde* exclaimed, "We are the maximum, amazing lovers. It is not just for our

own pleasure that we are famous for being great in bed. Who knows if it is the tropical heat or the beauty of our women?" ("Sexo a lo cubano," 1998). A survey reported in the same article that Cubans ranked themselves as the sexiest country in the world. Some claim that Cuban prostitutes simply capitalize on their sexuality to make money. They are not degrading themselves or becoming sexual outcasts in the process. Many Cuban prostitutes have normal sexual relations with Cuban men, and have healthy sex lives outside the profession.

The government is deeply concerned that this new Cuban society will undermine one of the revolution's greatest achievements: its health care system. Cuban health care officials worry about the impact that prostitution and the increase in tourism will have on the incidence of sexually-transmitted diseases (Márquez, 2000). As countries around the Caribbean suffer from AIDS epidemics, Cuba has remained almost intact. Only .02% of the Cuban population is afflicted with the virus. In Haiti, 190,000 people (5.17%) and in the Dominican Republic 83,000 (1.9%) suffer from the disease ([www.webster.edu](http://www.webster.edu)).<sup>23</sup> In the 1980s and early 1990s, Cuba took an aggressive position to limit the disease. In 1986 the entire blood bank was destroyed and replaced with new, tested blood. By 1994, 96% of the population had been tested for AIDS. Thirteen AIDS sanatoriums were set up for afflicted patients. HIV patients are requested to spend 3-6 months at these sanatoriums where they receive medical care and counseling on how to live with the disease. By 1999, only 577 people had died of AIDS and 2142 were infected with HIV (<http://www.cubasida.net>).

Over the past several years, there has been an increase in new HIV cases. According to Doctor Jorge Pérez, director of the Los Cocos sanatorium, gay men, who constitute 56.3% of the afflicted population, are more prone to contract the disease. The *El Nuevo Herald* reported that many gay hustlers would have sex upon request without a condom. One hustler

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23. Webster University is located in St. Louis, MO. This data is taken from UNAIDS-WHO report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic.

claimed that he would have unprotected sex, but would charge \$100-\$150 for the added risk ("La prostitución," 2000).

The government relies on sex education and AIDS awareness to stop the further spread of the disease. Sex education is mandatory for students and begins in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Condoms are widely available and very affordable.<sup>24</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Over the next decade, Cuba expects to triple the number of annual tourist arrivals. As Cuba opens up to the outside world it becomes more difficult for the state to control its citizens. Tourists bring in new styles of clothing, different ideas, and U.S. dollars. As economic disparity grows throughout the world, third world countries become more attractive to tourists. The Internet, despite the government's disclaimers, promotes Cuba as a sexual paradise, and it is ideal for many sex tourists. Sex in Cuba is tropical, and safe; healthy, educated women voluntarily offer their services at fairly cheap rates. Thus, there is a continuing demand for prostitutes to service the sex tourist trade. As a result, prostitution is likely to continue on the island.

Cuba cannot afford to lose sex tourists altogether. They provide income for thousands of young men and women, and indirectly employ up to four times more. Prostitution in Cuba is very different from prostitution in the rest of the world. Cuban women are not kidnapped and forced to be prostitutes, as they are in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. Cuba is, however, concerned about the image that prostitutes send to the outside world. Thus, prostitution is confined to certain areas and controls the amount of men and women who work in this business. Sex is accessible to those who look for it, but it is not thrust upon the average tourist.

Prostitution in Cuba is the result of the transition in society to a capitalist mentality, even as the government affirms that it is still a socialist state. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the state could no longer provide for its citizens. The economic reforms of 1993-94, intended to save socialism, encouraged Cubans to become economically independent from the state. With the legalization of U.S. dollars, a dual economy emerged creating the largest contradiction in Cuban society. People that remained loyal to the revolution were paid in almost worthless Cuban pesos. People who abandoned their jobs for self-employment, or worked on the black market, could earn valuable U.S. dollars. This contradiction led to a demoralization of Cuban society. One must break the law to survive. No one can afford to make personal sacrifices for the state because the state can no longer play the role of the provider. Out of this dichotomy prostitution re-emerged.

When Castro ended prostitution after the Revolution, he attempted to change the social conditions that encouraged prostitution. He expanded education and provided new jobs for women. Today, however, the face of the Cuban prostitute is different. Unlike the prostitute of the 1950s, she is educated, independent, and sometimes the provider for the family. Once again, if Cuba wants to end prostitution, it has to combat the roots upon which it grows. State salaries are insufficient and Cubans are forced to rely on the black market for survival. With the recent influx of tourists, prostitution is one of the easiest and most lucrative businesses in the black market. It is impossible to combat prostitution in a society where a prostitute can make more money than a doctor. Economic reforms are the only way to confront this social problem. As long as the State limits the economic opportunities of the Cuban people, prostitution will continue.

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24. These condoms tend to be cheaply made and sometimes unreliable.

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