



**CUBA
IS**

THE ANNENBERG SPACE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE

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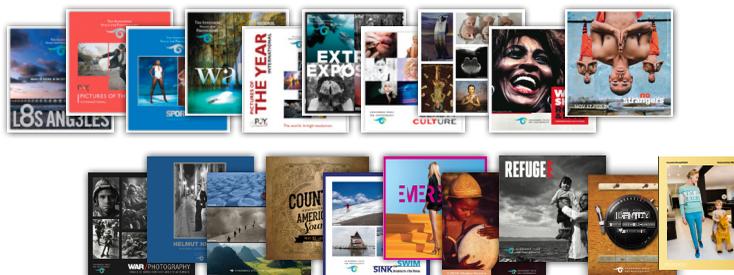
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ANNENBERG SPACE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

HISTORY • EXHIBITS • DESIGN

HISTORY The Annenberg Space for Photography opened to the public on March 27, 2009. It is the first solely photographic cultural destination in the Los Angeles area. The Photography Space is an initiative of the Annenberg Foundation and its board of directors. Its creation builds upon the Foundation's long history of supporting the visual arts.



EXHIBITS The Annenberg Space for Photography does not maintain a permanent collection of photographs; instead, exhibitions change every four to six months. The content of each show varies and appeals to a wide variety of audiences.

DESIGN The interior of the Space is influenced by the mechanics of a camera and its lens. The central, circular Digital Gallery is contained within the square building much as a convex lens is contained within a camera. The Digital Gallery's ceiling features an iris-like design reminiscent of the aperture of a lens. The aperture design also enhances the Gallery's acoustics.

The Print Gallery curves around the Digital Gallery, representing the way film winds within a camera. The curvature of the ceiling line in the Print Gallery mimics the design of a film canister.



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THE DIGITAL GALLERY

Our custom 13' rear projection glass screens are paired with the latest true 4K digital projectors to display photography with stunning clarity, brightness and contrast. The Digital Gallery allows for the display of thousands of images in a comparatively small location. In addition to showing images from the exhibiting photographers, the Digital Gallery screens short documentary films created to accompany the print exhibits.



THE CURRENT EXHIBIT

AGE RECOMMENDATION • OVERVIEW

AGE RECOMMENDATION

CUBA IS—at the Annenberg Space for Photography—is appropriate for all ages, but recommended for ages 10 and older.

OVERVIEW

Revealing complexities both on and off the island, *Cuba Is* explores aspects of Cuba not easily accessed by foreigners, and sometimes not even by Cubans themselves. Born from indigenous, African and European roots, divergent politics and limitations in communication and commerce, the Cuba seen in this exhibition goes beyond the folklore and offers new insight into its current reality. Over 120 photos feature subjects ranging from defiant youth known as “Frikis” to the hard-partying children of the 1%, the underground system of sharing digital content—“El paquete”—to Miami’s Chonga girls.

Cuba Is also includes archival images and work done on assignment by four featured photographers: Elliott Erwitt, Leysis Quesada, Raúl Cañibano, Tria Giovan and Michael Dweck. An original documentary film—produced by the Annenberg Foundation—follows these photographers as they capture unseen images of life in Havana and beyond.

Work from *Violet Isle: A Duet of Photographs from Cuba*, by Alex Webb and Rebecca Norris Webb, will be featured in an outdoor exhibit adjacent to the Photo Space. The photos bring together Alex’s exploration of the streets of Cuba along with Rebecca’s discovery of unique collections of animals throughout the island.

Complementing this rare, immersive look into Cuban life is a virtual reality experience that delves into Cuba’s current dynamic music scene, allowing visitors to virtually stroll along the storied Malecón.

THE CURRENT EXHIBIT

BIOGRAPHIES OF
THE FEATURED ARTISTS

ELLIOTT ERWITT

Elliott Erwitt was born in Paris in 1928. His formative years were spent in Milan, until the age of 11, when his family emigrated to Los Angeles. Erwitt's work has been featured in solo exhibitions around the world and his journalistic essays, illustrations, and advertisements have been featured in prominent publications for over half a century. In 1964, Erwitt was invited to Cuba as a guest of Fidel Castro. After the restoration of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba, Erwitt returned to the island in 2015 to document Cuban life nearly 50 years after his first visit.



LEYSIS QUESADA VERA

Leysis Quesada Vera was born on April 28, 1973 in Cienfuegos, Cuba. Her family settled in Amarillas, in the province of Matanzas, a place she would later explore in her earliest photographic work. It was not until January 2000 that she considered herself a "serious" photographer. By 2003, Quesada Vera's work began to center on her own family, friends, and the daily lives of those closest to her in her native Cuba.



RAÚL CAÑIBANO

After spending the early part of his career working as a welding technician, Raúl Cañibano met photographer Alfredo Sarabia while on vacation in Cienfuegos in 1990. He was inspired to become a photographer and, by 1998, Cañibano received the Salon of Photography's National Prize for his series "Tierra Guajira." His work has been exhibited worldwide and many of his photographs are included in the publication *CUBA: 100 Years of Cuban Photography*. He is a member of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC), where his work is part of the Cuban Image Fund and included in important international private collections.



TRIA GIOVAN

Tria Giovan's work—in places ranging from Cuba to the Philippines to the eastern end of Long Island—is defined by her diverse, in-depth, timely and thoughtful exploration of her subjects. In 1990, she began a project that would comprise 12 month-long trips to Cuba over a six-year period. Twenty years later, working to preserve the original 6x9 color negatives, Giovan began to re-edit her images. The culmination of Giovan's re-edited work is the subject of *The Cuba Archive: Photographs 1990-1996*, to be published by Damiani in Fall 2017. Exhibited internationally, her work is in permanent collections at the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Parrish Art Museum, and the New York Public Library.



MICHAEL DWECK

Michael Dweck is a contemporary American photographer, filmmaker and visual artist. Dweck's narrative photography explores ongoing struggles between identity and adaptation in endangered societal enclaves. He has a profound sense of place and community which is reflected in his work, usually situated in a vivid geographic and social context. Dweck studied Fine Arts at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, and began his career in advertising where he went on to become a highly regarded creative director. Among Dweck's notable works, *Habana Libre*, is a prophetic narrative that contrasts the privileged lifestyles of Cuba's creative class with the crumbling backdrop of a so-called "classless" society, which made him the first living American artist to have a solo museum exhibition in Cuba.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

Recommended for Grades 6-8

Title: Youth on the Edge

Connection to the Exhibit: Marginal life in Cuba can take many forms; Cuba's underground youth culture is one of them. "Friki" (derived from the English word "freaky") was a derogatory term that grew in popularity in the late 1980s to describe young people who listened to punk rock, wore tattered black clothing, abused drugs and sported long hair and tattoos. Living off the grid and enduring societal marginalization, the "frikis" longed for freedom and better opportunities under a regime that restricted their self-expression. Featured in *CUBA IS* are photographs taken in 2015 by photographer Michael Christopher Brown, who followed up with a modern version of this urban tribe and captured their daily lives in his series "Paradiso."

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts 6-12

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (CCR)

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting, or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Glossary of Relevant Terms and Concepts:

"Frikis," alienation, marginalization, exile.

Materials Needed:

- Enlargement of the three photographs included in Appendix I.
- List of Visual Thinking Strategies questions (for teacher use).

Large Group Activity:

- Introduce the lesson by giving a definition of Visual Thinking Strategies. This is an approach to understanding art through analysis by way of close examination of a piece of art. The viewer is invited to make meaning from the art based on their prior experiences and responses to it rather than waiting to hear the

artist's intent. During the students' visit to the Annenberg Space for Photography, they will be invited to participate in analyzing some of the photographs in the exhibition through the use of Visual Thinking Strategies.

- Show the students the three Michael Christopher Brown photographs (see Appendix I) from his series "Paradiso." Ask them to spend a few seconds studying the images and to come up with observations about what they see.
- Use Visual Thinking Strategies questioning to guide students through a study of the three photographs.
- After a group discussion of the image, share the following information about the subjects in the photographs with the students (see "Connection to the Exhibit" section above).
- Afterwards, ask students what (if any) lingering questions they still have about the photographs. What are some questions they wish they could ask the photographer? What are some questions they wish they could ask the subjects?
- Ask students to write down their own lingering questions, and some of the other questions asked by their fellow classmates, as they will be using these questions later in their individual work.

Individual Activity:

- As an individual assignment, ask students to take the three photographs that were discussed in their large group settings and use them to create a fictional narrative based on the observations and questions they had about the images.
- Students should prepare an outline of their narrative in order to collect their ideas; students may work together in pairs to accomplish this. The stated goal of this exercise should be that students will have a skeleton of their narrative ready by the end of their brainstorming period to use over the next three days to develop their full narrative.
- Over the next three days, students should create, edit, and refine their narratives. The first day of writing should be reserved for brainstorming and sketching out their narrative arc, the second day set aside for first drafts and editing, and the final day spent refining their narrative before turning it in to the teacher.
- An additional final exercise in editing and revising could be added by asking students to use teacher feedback as the final step in the editing process before creating a final draft of the narrative at home.
- Create an opportunity for students to publish their narrative in the classroom.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

Recommended for Grades 9-12

Title: When the Government Controls Rock 'n' Roll

Connection to the Exhibit: In 2015, photographer Michael Christopher Brown documented the lives of members of the urban tribe known as “Frikis” in his photographic series, “Paradiso.” Photographs from this series are featured in *CUBA IS* as a way to offer a glimpse into some of the counter-cultures present in Cuba today. “Frikis” (derived from the English word “freaky”) was a derogatory term that grew in popularity in the late 1980s to describe the young people who listened to punk rock, wore tattered black clothing, abused drugs and sported long hair and tattoos. Living off-the-grid and enduring societal marginalization, the “frikis” longed for freedom and better opportunities under a regime that restricted their self-expression.

Decades into their struggle for freedom through music, music production and performance remains under government control. The following pre-visit activity encourages students to consider the pros and cons of the Cuban government’s policy of state-sponsored music and its wider implications for life in Cuba.

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts 6-12

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (CCR)

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- Use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
- Conduct short, as well as more sustained, research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of the source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
- Draw evidence from literary and/or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting, or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Glossary of Relevant Terms and Concepts:

“Frikis,” alienation, marginalization, blockade, embargo, defection, solidarity, exile.

Materials Needed:

- Printed copies of the two articles in Appendix II for student use.
- Internet and/or library access.
- A/V system for playing audio file of *Radio Ambulante* piece (optional).

Large Group Activity:

- Show students the three photographs by Michael Christopher Brown of “Frikis” (Appendix I). While subcultures of young people worldwide are often not taken seriously by more dominant social groups, “Frikis” have a complicated history in Cuba that makes their case particularly significant.
- Ahead of a large group discussion, assign students the following reading assignments. Students should be able to read/listen to the following articles and radio stories in less than 30 minutes.
 - First, ask students to listen to/read an excerpt from a radio story on “Frikis” called “When Havana was Friki” which aired January 2017 on NPR’s *Radio Ambulante* (Appendix II). A Spanish-only translation is also available on *Radio Ambulante*’s website at radioambulante.org, along with audio versions and a short film of some of “Frikis” who participated in the interviews.
 - In your large group discussion, you may choose to have the students read the transcript while they listen to the radio piece. Please note that the content in this interview does make mention of subject matter that some people may object to, so it is encouraged that teachers listen to the material in advance.
 - Next, ask students to read “On a Changing Island, Cuba’s Punk and Metal Scenes Face an Uncertain Future,” written by Jhoni Jackson and published in May 2017 on *Remezcla*. This article explains the ways in which Cuba’s government controls the production and performance of music and how this poses a challenge to musicians in Cuba (Appendix II).
- In a large group setting, begin a discussion with students about their reactions and responses to both pieces. Some topics to consider: the concept of state-sponsored music, living in a cultural embargo, or the challenges that face independent musicians in Cuba, including the creation and dissemination of their music.

Small Group Work:

- Following a robust large group discussion of the two pieces, direct students to consider the following question: Why does the Cuban government want to control the music industry?
- Ask students to work in small groups (3-4 people each) to brainstorm a list of potential avenues of research to answer the question. Each student should end their group brainstorm with a minimum of three research objectives.

Individual Work:

- As a homework assignment, or an extended individual assignment, ask students to take their three points and conduct research on them using the library or internet. Students will then use their research findings to write a three-page essay on the topic of state-sponsored music in Cuba: What does it mean and what are the larger implications of this practice on Cubans?
- Student essays must present the information and findings from their research, along with supporting evidence that conveys an argument and distinct perspective on the topic.
- Essay requirements: Essays should include a topic or thesis statement, quotations, concrete details, and examples appropriate to a general audience's knowledge of the topic. Essays should conclude with a closing statement that includes a summary of the information presented throughout the piece.
- Provide students with a timeline for drafting their essay that culminates in the publication of their work in the classroom.

EXHIBITION ACTIVITY #1

Recommended for Grades 6-8

Entertainment is something that we all value and need in our everyday lives. Unlike the United States, Cuba is limited in their entertainment sources; lack of accessibility for various reasons plays a role in this. Because of this, the people of Cuba have to find different ways to get the same kind of entertainment we all find readily available.

Choose three photos from the exhibit and give one example of how people are spending their leisure time and what they had to do to make it happen.

IMAGE #1

1)

- Description of Image:
- Photographer Name:
- Type of entertainment:
- How do people use it?

2)

- Description of Image:
- Photographer Name:
- Type of entertainment:
- How do people use it?

3)

- Description of Image:
- Photographer Name:
- Type of entertainment:
- How do people use it?

EXHIBITION ACTIVITY #2

Recommended for Grades 9-12

CUBA IS shows several photographs depicting the lives of different youth cultures, groups and classes. For this activity, we are going to focus on the groups known as the *frikis*, the *nouveau riche*, *chongas*, political prisoners and *Fidelistas*.

Briefly describe the following Cuban youth cultures and classes using a photograph in the exhibition as an example.

1) *Los frikis*

- Description of Image:
- Photographer Name:
- Brief definition of *los frikis* culture:
- How is the definition of this culture represented in the content/composition of this photograph?

2) *Nouveau riche*

- Description of Image:
- Photographer Name:
- Brief definition of the *nouveau riche* class:
- How is the definition of this culture represented in the content/composition of this photograph?

3) *Chongas*

- Description of Image:
- Photographer Name:
- Brief definition of *chonga* culture:
- How is the definition of this culture represented in the content/composition of this photograph?

3) Political prisoners

- Description of Image:
- Photographer Name:
- Brief definition of what being a political prisoner means in Cuba:
- How is the definition of this culture represented in the content/composition of this photograph?

3) *Fidelistas*

- Description of Image:
- Photographer Name:
- Brief definition of what being a *Fidelista* means in Cuba:
- How is the definition of this culture represented in the content/composition of this photograph?

POST-VISIT ASSIGNMENT

Recommended for Grades 6-8

Title: Island Life Imagined

Connection to the Exhibit: *CUBA IS* features photographs that examine aspects of the island not easily accessed by foreigners and Cubans alike. The following writing prompts are designed to encourage students to look more closely at some of the photographs they may have overlooked during their visit to the exhibition, and to think creatively about the content of the photographs, even imagining themselves in the pictures.

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts 6-12

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (CCR)

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Glossary of Relevant Terms and Concepts:

Narrative, quinceañera.

Materials Needed:

- Enlargements of photographs in Appendix IV.

Post-Visit Recap Instructions (for Teachers):

Following your visit to the Annenberg Space for Photography, ask students to recall some of the broader themes of the exhibition. Examples of some of the themed sections include: Cubans in the arts, youth culture and race. While the exhibition does focus on a few broad themes, one of the overarching themes of the exhibition is documenting the “real Cuba” and its citizens.

The photographs that correspond to the following writing prompts are also available in larger format in Appendix IV.

Homework Prompt (for Students):

1. Choose one of the following photographs from the *CUBA IS* exhibition. Use the image of your choice to construct a brief narrative that tells the story of the photograph from the perspective of one of the subjects in the image. The narrative should be written as if intended for an audience who has not seen the photograph. Narratives should make use of dialogue, movement, descriptive language and details, and should be at least two pages in length.



(From left to right: Untitled, 2016/ Raúl Cañibano; Kids league baseball game in Baturi stadium, 2015/ Elliott Erwit.)

2. Choose one of the following photographs from the *CUBA IS* exhibition. Look at it closely for a minute or two and write down any initial thoughts or questions you have while studying it. Next, write a brief narrative that tells the story of this photograph—what happened before it was taken, what was happening in the moment, and what do you think might have happened after the photograph was taken? In addition, please include a brief reflection on the parts of the photograph that inspired your narrative. In total, this assignment should be at least two pages in length.



(From left to right: Quinceañera, 2005/ Raúl Cañibano; Boys and a horse, Cienfuegos, 2016/ Raúl Cañibano.)

POST-VISIT ASSIGNMENT

Recommended for Grades 9-12

Title: Living in the Hyphen

Connection to the Exhibit: Luis Gispert’s photographs of Miami *chongas* in *CUBA IS* offer a glimpse into a subculture that many outside of Miami are not aware of. Part of what makes *chongas* so interesting is that their existence is a visual representation of the melding of urban United States and Cuban immigrant youth cultures and one facet of the Cuban-American experience. The addition of the hyphen between a person’s country of origin and their country of ancestry—as is the case with Cuban-Americans—is an experience some have come to refer to as “living in the hyphen.”

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts 6-12

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (CCR)

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts 6-12

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (CCR)

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics, in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches that the authors take.
- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Glossary of Relevant Terms and Concepts:

Code-switching, subculture, somatic, diaspora, aesthetic, marginalization, discourse, *chonga*, *chola*, *chula*, *malcriada*, subvert, subaltern, empowerment, solidarity, multilingual, hyphen.

Materials Needed:

- Printed copies of the article/interview excerpts in Appendix III.
- Internet and/or library access.

Post-Visit Recap Instructions (for Teachers):

Following your class visit to the Annenberg Space for Photography, ask students to recall some of the photographs in the exhibition that specifically had to do with the subject of identity. Some of the identities depicted in these images represent or depict aspects of the identity and realities of being Cuban, while some are distinctly Cuban-American experiences. One such type of identity that is purely Cuban-American is the *chonga* culture of Hialeah, Florida in Miami-Dade county, represented in *CUBA IS* by the photography of Luis Gispert.

The following homework prompts ask students to consider the experience of Americans—like *chongas*—who live “in the hyphen” as multi-hyphenate identifying individuals in the United States. Students will use an excerpt from an interview with Dominican-American author Junot Díaz as a starting point for their written reflections.

The following article and interview excerpts are also available together in Appendix III.

Homework Prompt (for Students):

Luis Gispert’s photographs of Miami *chongas* in *CUBA IS* offer a glimpse into a subculture that many outside of Miami are not aware of. Part of what makes *chongas* so interesting is that their existence is a visual representation of the melding of urban United States and Cuban immigrant youth cultures and one facet of the Cuban-American experience. The addition of the hyphen between one’s country of origin and country of ancestry is an experience some have come to refer to as “living in the hyphen.”

Dominican-American writer Junot Díaz has written several books featuring characters who embody the experience of “living in the hyphen.” In interviews, Díaz has spoken candidly about how his experience growing up Dominican-American has influenced his writing, specifically his frequent use of Spanish words and phrases without translation. Like the Cuban-American *chongas*, Díaz’s characters often speak in “Spanglish,” a fluid mixture of Spanish and English words and phrases.

Díaz’s response to interview questions about his use of Spanglish in his books reveals not only the emotional value language and words hold on us, particularly multilingual speakers, but also the way “living in the hyphen” is an experience lived daily in seemingly small, personal choices.

“By the time [*The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*] Oscar Wao came around I was far more aware of the game I have with code-switching, with bilinguality, but also with the, I would call it, ancient somatic tension between English

and Spanish. The two languages have felt themselves threatened by each other for a very long time. The pivot of what we call the modern was around the eclipsing of Spain and the rise of England. The two languages circled each other. At any moment one could have collapsed or taken over far more quickly. For a very long time, the English went to sleep and had nightmares of the Spanish. The Spanish would go to bed and have nightmares about the English. This most ancient competition plays itself out in the New World in very interesting and novel ways.

[...]

I have absolutely no problem with being Latino as long as it doesn't eliminate the fact that I'm also Dominican, and African diasporic, and from New Jersey. We can use these names strategically, sentimentally, politically, collectively, and I don't see any problem in this.

Certainly I would argue that "Hispanic" is such a stupid name because it serves no real purpose, it's ugly. I'm just offended on an aesthetic level. Only someone who doesn't like to dance thinks Hispanic sounds good.

Because we are marginalized and subaltern, we take offense about generalities the way that people in power never will. Americans...there's no such thing as an American! They are so incredibly fractured, but because there's privilege in the fiction people have no problems with it. We, on the other hand, take offense at the fiction. I sometimes think it is because it would ask us to the occasion as a collective. Secretly we are afraid to identify as a collective."

-Junot Díaz

For your homework assignment, write a two-page response to the writing prompt below. Your response can draw upon personal experiences, or the experiences of family members, your visit to the Annenberg, and research from reputable online or written sources.

Writing Prompt:

Having read the above quotation by Junot Díaz, now read the following quotation from another interview with Díaz where the subject of the politics of language is addressed:

"We all know that there are language forms that are considered impolite and out of order, no matter what truths these languages might be carrying. If you talk with a harsh, urbanized accent and you use too many profanities, that will often get you barred from many arenas, no matter what you're trying to say. On the other hand, polite, formal language is allowed almost anywhere even when all it is communicating is hatred and violence. Power always privileges its own discourse while marginalizing those who would challenge it or that are the victims of its power."

Read the following excerpt from an article about *chongas* and their depictions and the connotations of the word outside of their communities.

Why Some Latinas are Reclaiming the Term ‘Chonga’

By Raquel Reichard

Latina Magazine, February 24, 2015

Jeanette Rivera has no problem wearing the negative connotations associated with the term on her sleeve. The 23-year-old Latina rocks a shirt that says "#chonga" and frequently uses the hashtag on her Instagram photos as a way to embrace all that society told her she should be ashamed of.

“Chongas are outgoing Latinas who are the life of the party,” said Jeanette. “She will wear her hair in a ponytail and have big bamboo earrings and know that she’s cute even if society doesn’t agree and looks down on her.”

Jeanette isn’t the only chonga wearing the identity across her chest. . . With the motto "you have to be a little malcriada to make it in America," the women’s streetwear brand Bandida celebrates all cholas, chongas and chulas. “Cholas and Chongas are beautiful to me,” said Jaime Balbuena, Bandida’s founder. “Bandida has always been about female empowerment and solidarity, and I feel like Latinas can find a sense of unity in the obstacles we face and the subcultures we create.”

“I think reclaiming negative perceptions is a proactive, political response. One that subverts mainstream ideas of what is acceptable. One that says ‘I’m not ashamed of where I come from, and I don’t see the mainstream as superior.’ I think it’s important to reclaim these negative connotations so we have control over them.”

In a two-page reflective essay, compare and contrast the perspectives mentioned in the *Latina Magazine chonga* article with the Junot Díaz quotation above. As an additional source, look up representations of “chonga girls” on YouTube.

How do you think these points of view relate to one another? What do you think Junot Díaz would have to say about *chongas*, their representation in popular culture and the way that they are discussed by outside groups? After watching video parodies of *chonga* culture, does that affect your interpretation of either of the above excerpts?

EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE
APPENDIX I





(From top to bottom: Helen and friends wait for their \$1.00 cheese pizzas in Playa neighborhood, Havana; Late night riding down Calle G, Avenida de los Presidentes, in Vedado neighborhood, Havana; Rene, Helen, Chino and their crew stay up all night walking on the streets of Vedado, Havana. Photographer: Michael Christopher Brown.)

Exhibit Caption: There are many forms of marginal cultures in Cuban society and underground youth culture is among them. “Freaki” (derived from the English word “freaky”) was a derogatory term that grew in popularity in the late-1980s to describe the young people who listened to punk rock, wore tattered black clothing, abused drugs and sported long hair and tattoos. Living off-the-grid and enduring societal marginalization, the “frikis” longed for freedom and better opportunities under a regime that restricted their self-expression. In 2015, Michael Christopher Brown followed a modern version of this urban tribe and captured their daily lives. Brown’s compelling images convey the disillusionment and small joys of these alienated youths.

APPENDIX II

Quando La Habana era friki / When Havana Was Frik

NPR/ *Radio Ambulante*: Original Air Date 1/24/2017

<http://radioambulante.org/en/audio-en/when-havana-was-friki-2>

Luis Trelles: The community center was far away from the colorful seaside Malecón and Old Havana. It was in the Timba neighborhood, where you don't see classical cars from the '50s, but old Russian models that had been patched up with rusty replacement parts. This was a marginalized community where older people sat on the sidewalks with their portable radios, listening to salsa.

And the cultural center stood in a corner of this neighborhood. The house is a little bit bigger than the other ones, and that makes it different. It also has a façade full of columns, which gives it the image of a grand old hacienda, and a big rectangular cement patio on one side.

It was there that the first concert took place in 1988.

María Gattorno: The patio was baptized with blood on September 17, the day of Saint Lazarus. Iconic. There was too much anxiety. There were a lot of expectations, it was... the rock scene of the aficionados, of the rock music followers, was very fractious and very orthodox. "I'm a fan of this group or of that style, and those people are retards because they don't listen to the music correctly. They don't understand me and they don't know anything."

Dionisio Arce: There were different manifestations because there was punk, symphonic, heavy metal, hard rock, trash, death metal... everything was there.

Luis Trelles: Plus, the people from the neighborhood who felt invaded.

María Gattorno: "And what are these people doing in my territory?" And it got ugly.

Juan Carlos Torrente: The concert ended in a giant fight, a spectacular fight with the locals.

María Gattorno: It came to blows, it was a terrible brawl.

Juan Carlos Torrente: I ended up with three machete cuts, 36 stitches that left a permanent reminder of my first night in María's Patio.

María Gattorno: I thought it was the end. I spent three days in bed with my head covered, "I failed, utterly."

Juan Carlos Torrente: But after that, everything went back to normal. The contending forces faced each other, you know? Suddenly, we joined forces. We communicated—and at the end—we all became friends.

Luis Trelles: After that, there wasn't another weekend without a concert, no matter how hard it was to get the instruments. In an island known for its shortages, especially after the fall of the Soviet Union in the early '90s, the bands would play the drums made out of X-ray prints and phone cables that replaced guitar strings.

Juan Carlos Torrente: We played with Russian guitars, German guitars and electric guitars from the Socialist Bloc—old and horrible. It was terrible. Sometimes bands would disappear because their guitar strings would break or they wouldn't have amplifiers. Or the speaker would break. And it was fixed, but then the amplifier would break, and then there was no way of getting another amplifier, or there weren't microphones to sing. So, it was very, very hard to start a band here.

Luis Trelles: All the music that was played inside the patio fell under the general rubric of rock, but what was heard the most was metal and punk. And they would sing in Spanish. In English. And in the universal language of death metal.

The center's official name—La Casa de la Cultura Roberto Branley—was slowly forgotten. Now, it was simply called El Patio de María. The outside walls were covered with graffiti, a small open-air stage was built and a sound system was installed. It wasn't much, but by the beginning of the '90s the "frikis" finally had a place in the city's cultural life.

Luis Trelles: It's Saturday night and hundreds of youngsters fill the Maxim Rock theatre. Some look younger than 15 years old and they fight for their place among the older "frikis," who are all in front of the stage's speakers, banging their heads to the rhythm of the music.

Dionisio Arce: You now have a room with air conditioning, with a roof, lights, great sound, with a bar to drink rum, soda or anything you want, and all that.

Luis Trelles: The Maxim was founded in 2008. It's the official rock and metal venue in Havana. It certainly didn't fall out of the sky. The bands had to make a lot of noise to get it, but the opening of the theater marked a huge transformation.

Dionisio Arce: We don't ask you for ID, you can have long hair and tattoos. We've had a 180-degree change for good because from Maria's Patio to the Maxim Rock theatre there is a huge improvement.

Luis Trelles: The Maxim is not only a concert hall; it is the also the headquarters for the Cuban Rock Agency, a government office that represents professional bands in Havana. And that means that the government now pays the bands that are part of the agency.

María didn't stay behind either. Her self-imposed exile ended earlier in the year, when she became the new director for the government agency. The challenges she faces in the immediate future are clear: now that the government supports the bands with salaries and a theater, there's pressure for the entire project to turn a profit. Everyone, even the "frikis," have to be profitable. It's the way of the new Cuban socialism.

Back on stage at The Maxim, Dionisio closes the night's concert with his band, Zeus. But before finishing, he pauses.

Dionisio Arce: We are directly from 37 between Paseo and Dos, from El Patio de María.

Luis Trelles: It's an important reminder: the "frikis" come from Maria's Patio, where there were no lights, no pressure to make money, no modern stages. And where the only thing that mattered was the music.

On a Changing Island, Cuba's Punk and Metal Scenes Face an Uncertain Future

By Jhoni Jackson for Remezcla.com 6/8/2017

<http://remezcla.com/features/music/cuban-punk-metal-post-castro/>

As complex as reactions to Fidel Castro's death were, there is one unifying sentiment: Change is not guaranteed. For Cubans living on the island, the day-to-day reality, whether they're content in the status quo or not, isn't poised to shift anytime soon. Castro's passing was intensely symbolic and meaningful for many, but it came with no promises.

Cuba's punk and metal community, at least, have expressed doubts about any improvements in their own particular condition. Issues of accessibility—most notably, access to the instruments and gear needed to make music, and the internet connection needed to circulate it—will likely continue to plague their progress.

After all, it's Raul Castro who's been president these past nine years, and when he steps down in 2018, as he's previously announced, his appointed Vice President, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, is expected to replace him. That means the U.S. embargo against Cuba will probably remain: The Helms-Burton Act of 1996, one of several statutes that enforces the embargo, requires a free and fair election in Cuba before trade can reopen.

Local Alejandro González Rodríguez, for one, has little hope for improvements that could benefit Cry Out For, the longstanding metal act he represents and organizes for.

"For metal and punk, everything will remain the same," he says. "Only maybe with a radical change we will improve access to media and we will be able to sell and be recognized. Others will prefer the underground. Although I do not think that the death of someone means a change, but on the contrary, it serves to secure a status."

Across the globe, punk and metal aren't necessarily known for seeking validation from

the government, of course. But in Cuba, musicians operating outside the mainstream or without formal training aren't considered professionals the same way those who play traditional Cuban folk genres are. What that distinction means under law is that punk and metal bands typically can't keep any of the money earned from cover charges at shows. Professional acts, however, are allowed a minor percentage, and the rest belongs to the government and its state-run Empresa de la Música organization.

"There is some [irrational] thing that the Cuban system made that some bands can get paid for play, some they call 'professional,' and... [other] ones just cannot get paid. Even the entrance of places that they fill," says Ricardo "Yoyo" Espinosa Manzo, guitarist for Santa Clara group Adictox, in an email exchange.

The road to that professional designation starts early in Cuba, with the Escuela Nacional de Arte training students aged eight through 18. While it's free for Cuban citizens, it's an audition-based program. A degree from there or another one of the country's professional institutions is a requirement in most post-secondary programs at Universidad de las Artes.

Another hurdle in their ability to earn is the difficulty in making and selling merch. T-shirts, buttons, stickers—how a lot of independent acts make ends meet—simply aren't viable options for most. In 2015, Cubans earned an average of \$25 USD each month, though some recent reports count that number slightly higher. The system in which they live, of course, is different; it includes subsidies, like health care and education, at no charge to citizens. Still, it leaves DIY merch-making as a luxury most bands cannot afford.

Delvis Díaz, bassist for the metal band Resistenzia, echoed the complaint about earnings from gigs, noting via email that it's "difficult to dream of T-shirts or any other type of merch."

"Flyers are something we can manage, but with a lot of effort," they wrote.

It's widely reported that internet access is scarce in Cuba, and while the typical hourly rate has gone down to \$1.50 USD, that remains pretty steep considering the average income. Home access has increased, but internet cafés remain the primary means of getting online. Uploading music to YouTube, Bandcamp, SoundCloud and the like, or even managing a band account on Facebook, are pricey endeavors in Cuba.

"Internet access is really fucked up," Ricardo says. "Now we have Wi-Fi points, but it's so fucking expensive...I'm [an] Information Science Engineer and I work at a company that [pays] a pretty good salary...and I need to work two days to pay one hour of internet on our internet company."

Although universities and some companies afford their students and employees access, in general, it's "internet for rich people and business people and tourists," Ricardo says.

Ricardo is able to use the internet occasionally at work. He's lucky in that respect, and in the fact that his band was able to tour outside the island—yet another area of band economy and growth that, for most, is blunted by policy.

That tour was made possible by Solidarity Rock, a Canadian nonprofit founded by Drew McIntosh a decade ago, working in conjunction with the Asociación Hermanos Sainz, a more than 30-year-old Cuban agency dedicated to promoting and supporting arts and culture, with particular emphasis on youth.

Joined by fellow Cuban band Arrabio, Ricardo and the rest of Adictox plowed through 15 different cities last year. Their jaunt included Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Vancouver, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Seattle. It wasn't their first visit to the general area, either: They'd already run through some of those cities in 2012.

McIntosh first visited Cuba with an Edmonton band in 2007, he says. The AHS helped organize a show in Havana, but most took place in the center of the country, where he realized there was a thriving punk scene.

"That was right before any notion of Fidel Castro resigning, so it's still firmly in the pre-change time of Cuba, so there was no—absolutely no—commercial access to any kind of guitar strings or picks, let alone amplifiers or guitars, those sorts of things. But it was a curious thing, because there were still punk bands playing music...but without any kind of logical access to the things that you would need to do it," he says.

Back then, well before any talk of touring, McIntosh decided he could help fill that void. First two boxes, sent along with a Cuban who'd been in Miami visiting, sent with money raised by a benefit show in Canada. For additional rounds of supplies, however, McIntosh brought them in personally.

"There's no blockade for Canadian people of any description, but at the same time, in Cuba, you can't just import whatever you want to import," he says. "So that was a tricky situation: How do we actually get stuff into that country? So we booked another tour with a band called Slates, and that was the first tour that was a Solidarity Rock tour."

"As long as there is no radical change of policy in Cuba, we will continue, same as we have for 60 years."

Over the course of these 10 years—in which McIntosh has visited a total of 24 times—they've managed to complete an entire backline—drums, amps, the whole shebang.

"We've done tours with nine or 10 different bands, and every time we've added to what's down there. Through what we've sent down or brought down or who we've been involved with, there's definitely been a growth in the punk scene in the center of the country. Primarily the bands that we've worked with are in Santa Clara, Sancti Spiritus, Trinidad and Cienfuegos," he says.

In Santa Clara, one go-to spot for punk and metal shows is El Mejunje, a cultural space that in the 90s was a hub of the frikis movement. Back then, it was El Patio de María, named for María Gattorno, who's largely credited with keeping its doors open and the scene supported during that era. (She also made huge efforts to stop the spread of HIV after many frikis self-injected the virus to gain access to sanitariums where food, which was especially scarce after the fall of the Soviet Union, was free and abundant.) It was shuttered by the government in 2003, though, and Gattorno backed away from the scene for some time. Finally, in 2014, she returned, accepting an offer to head up the Cuban Rock Agency, which was founded in 2007. Under her direction, they've built on their existing foundation of annual festivals, now hosting several shows a week at Maxim, the venue in which the agency is headquartered.

Between the Asociación de Hermanos Sainz, Solidarity Rock (and its Cuban-based counterpart, Rock Solidario) and the Cuban Rock Agency, however, some feel it's not enough.

Eztafilokoko, a Havana band formed in 2013, isn't on board with the Cuban Rock Agency. In an email—in which they asked to be called Punk Radikal Kubano (PRK) rather than single out a member—they likened the organization to a musical mafia. (They did give some love to Solidarity Rock, though, pointing out that they hooked the band up with two guitars and a drum kit, plus other supplies sporadically.)

"They're the ones who keep all the money and they don't do anything," they wrote of the Cuban Rock Agency.

Delvis Díaz of Resistenzia wasn't so extreme, but expressed some disappointment in the capabilities of the various organizations.

"The festivals are done with a lot of work and the members of bands of each provide support to make it happen," he wrote. "These festivals have fewer and fewer resources, they are less and less supported by the state and the fact that it is still done is thanks to the efforts of Cuban rockers, that we are tireless—and the AHS non-profit association [that is] dependent on state budgets, who do what they can with what they have. In conclusion, we keep going against a lot of resistance."

Solidarity Rock and the musicians of Arrabio and Adictox experienced a mighty dose of that resistance as they organized the 2015 tour. They were tangled in a web of red tape—visa denials, forms paid and submitted but ignored, a loss of their Canadian political support—that ultimately resulted in all of the Cuban musicians getting branded as "possible migrants."

"Something that I felt really strongly about was that I could help people get out and experience the world...and all of the sudden, the very thing I'm trying to do is potentially going to result in these people being blacklisted for immigration anywhere, ever,"

McIntosh recalls.

He was able to get eight out of the 10 applications reversed — he’s still working on the remaining two for Cubans who aren’t musicians, but were vital to the tour — and finally realize it. During it, however, Arrabio’s new drummer defected.

“Montreal’s right on the border, so he defected, in the middle of this tour after playing two shows,” he says. “I don’t have any way to judge anyone’s motivation or their life in a context like that, but I do know that really, really affected this tour that we had put everything on the line for.”

A Canadian friend filled in, and despite travel issues after having postponed the tour while they secured travel arrangements, Arrabio and Adictox completed the tour without missing a single date. They scored interviews with the punk zine standard-bearer *Maximum Rockroll*. They played with bands from all over, including Australia and Colombia, and even shared the stage with Vancouver hardcore punk legends D.O.A.

“If this movement is going to continue in Cuba, it can’t be directed by someone that doesn’t live there.”

McIntosh laments, however, that the issues with that tour downgraded Solidarity Rock’s reputation in terms of fundraising. People can’t support something they’re not sure will happen, he explains. How to recover from that, as well as how to better streamline the process of flying bands out of Cuba, is something he’s still figuring out. Giving more voice to Rock Solidario, he thinks, will help.

“At a certain point, you realize that you have to...relinquish direction, control, ideas, and just support, you know what I mean? If this movement, this being punk rock, that sort of individual expression, is going to continue in Cuba, it can’t be directed by someone that doesn’t live there, who’s not from there, who isn’t of there,” he says. “Pretty much all of my aspirations have now been sort of check-marked, so it’s a great time for me to say I want to support this, but I can’t lead it anymore, because I’ve already played my ideas out for everyone. We’re in these discussions of how do we dial back, how we can organize the structure here while still being able to meet credibility tests and all that... We’re basically, the side in Cuba, is ready to keep going and keep doing things. We’re just figuring out how to reshape our support of that in order to be of actual help instead of entrenching ourselves as a needed dynamic.”

While he’s reworking his involvement, McIntosh is nonetheless still very present: He’s in the process of founding what he’s dubbed a punk rock coffee roasting company, which will likely be used as a conduit for Solidarity Rock funding. He’s also readying the release of two albums from Cuban punk bands, both recorded in a makeshift studio in a former video club, where families used to rent rooms with TVs and air conditioning.

On the island, Rock Solidario continues its work, and is now officially associated with

the AHS. Paquiderma, a band from Mexico, was recently brought in through the AHS to perform. In December, Rock Solidario hosted a photography exhibit celebrating the work of the organization, and has maintained a generally thorough reportage on Facebook of shows they've assisted.

They most recently posted about a new bunch of U.S. punks and rock 'n' rollers who headed to Cuba. On April 17 through 24, two Oakland-based organizers took their long-running BOB Fest to Cuba. Established in 1996, the event has rotated between Oakland, Bremen, Germany, and Bath, England, where its first edition was held. Founding duo Paula and Pete took one installment of their 21st edition events to Santa Clara and Havana. Pete's own band Kicker was on the bill, as well as several others, and Adictox and Eztafilokoko were also slated to play. They collected gear to take, too.

Certain impediments for the Cuban punk and metal underground, like door money policies and internet access, feel rigidly immutable — but there are ways to better some circumstances. “The number one thing people can do to help, for real,” McIntosh says, “and it's not in everyone's power to do that, is to go there.”

For those who can't, pre-orders for Adictox's album are slated for June 15 through Solidarity Rock. McIntosh has also lined up another trip to Canada for the band, this time around the western half from Winnipeg to Vancouver with Guadalajara band Canibales.

Donating gear, big or small, through DIY initiatives like BOB Fest is another helpful route. Staying in tune with the scene—following it as best you can, reaching out to musicians—is a given, and it's the best way to truly understand what its musicians need.

“The truth is, as long as there is no radical change of policy in Cuba, we will continue, same as we have for 60 years... We will see what happens, and believe me, all the Cubans want, and we shout in silence, some of us, for a change,” Alejandro González Rodríguez wrote.

Existing despite those obstacles, though, is an audible shout in itself. The issues facing the punk and metal underground may not change anytime soon, but the degree of exchange and support from outside Cuba could. With enough work, those shouts could be so much louder.

APPENDIX III

Excerpts from interview, “Junot Díaz: ‘We exist in a constant state of translation. We just don’t like it.’”

Interview by Karen Cresci, *The Buenos Aires Review*, 5/2013

<http://www.buenosairesreview.org/2013/05/diaz-constant-state-of-translation/>

“By the time [*The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*] came around I was far more aware of the game I have with code-switching, with bilinguality, but also with the, I would call it, ancient somatic tension between English and Spanish. The two languages have felt themselves threatened by each other for a very long time. The pivot of what we call the modern was around the eclipsing of Spain and the rise of England. The two languages circled each other. At any moment one could have collapsed or taken over far more quickly. For a very long time, the English went to sleep and had nightmares of Spanish. The Spanish would go to bed and have nightmares about the English. This most ancient competition plays itself out in the New World in very interesting and novel ways.

[...]

I have absolutely no problem with being Latino as long as it doesn’t eliminate the fact that I’m also Dominican, and African diasporic, and from New Jersey. We can use these names strategically, sentimentally, politically, collectively, and I don’t see any problem in this.

Certainly I would argue that “Hispanic” is such a stupid name because it serves no real purpose, it’s ugly. I’m just offended on an aesthetic level. Only someone who doesn’t like to dance thinks Hispanic sounds good.

Because we are marginalized and subaltern, we take offense about generalities the way that people in power never will. Americans...there’s no such thing as an American! They are so incredibly fractured, but because there’s privilege in the fiction people have no problems with it. We, on the other hand, take offense at the fiction. I sometimes think it is because it would ask us to the occasion as a collective. Secretly we are afraid to identify as a collective.”

“We all know that there are language forms that are considered impolite and out of order, no matter what truths these languages might be carrying. If you talk with a harsh, urbanized accent and you use too many profanities that will often get you barred from many arenas, no matter what you’re trying to say. On the other hand, polite, formal language is allowed almost anywhere even when all it is communicating is hatred and violence. Power always privileges its own discourse while marginalizing those who would challenge it or that are the victims of its power.”

-Junot Díaz

Excerpts from article, “Why Some Latinas are Reclaiming the Term ‘Chonga’”

By Raquel Reichard, *Latina Magazine*, February 24, 2015

<http://www.latina.com/lifestyle/our-issues/why-latinas-reclaiming-term-chonga>

Jeanette Rivera has no problem wearing the negative connotations associated with the term on her sleeve. The 23-year-old Latina rocks a shirt that says “#chonga” and frequently uses the hashtag on her Instagram photos as a way to embrace all that society told her she should be ashamed of.

“Chongas are outgoing Latinas who are the life of the party,” said Jeanette. “She will wear her hair in a ponytail and have big bamboo earrings and know that she’s cute even if society doesn’t agree and looks down on her.”

Jeanette isn’t the only chonga wearing the identity across her chest...

With the motto “you have to be a little *malcriada* to make it in America,” the women’s streetwear brand Bandida celebrates all cholas, chongas and chulas. “Cholas and Chongas are beautiful to me,” said Jaime Balbuena, Bandida’s founder. “Bandida has always been about female empowerment and solidarity, and I feel like Latinas can find a sense of unity in the obstacles we face and the subcultures we create.”

“I think reclaiming negative perceptions is a proactive, political response. One that subverts mainstream ideas of what is acceptable. One that says ‘I’m not ashamed of where I come from, and I don’t see the mainstream as superior.’ I think it’s important to reclaim these negative connotations so we have control over them.”

EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE
APPENDIX IV





(From top to bottom: *Untitled*, 2016/ Raúl Cañibano; *Kids league baseball game in Baturi stadium*, 2015/ Elliott Erwit; *Quinceañera*, 2005/ Raúl Cañibano; *Boys and a horse*, Cienfuegos, 2016/ Raúl Cañibano.)