




6-12-2017

H.V.: The Cuban Revolution through One Man's Life

Isabel Valiela
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/spanfac>

 Part of the [Caribbean Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Latin American Studies Commons](#), and the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Recommended Citation

Valiela, Isabel. "H.V.: The Cuban Revolution through One Man's Life." Paper presented at the Bridges Across Culture Conference, Vasto, Italy, June 2017.

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/spanfac/23>

This open access conference material is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

H.V.: The Cuban Revolution through One Man's Life

Abstract

This paper aims to illustrate the many ways in which the Cuban Revolution shaped the lives of the Cuban people by focusing on one man's life from his childhood in the early part of the revolutionary period to his final departure from Cuba in 2006. H.V., as I call him, now lives in Barcelona, Spain. He is a man of humble rural origins who moved to Havana in his youth, where he benefitted from various government programs related to education, sports and job training. He and his family were initially very pro-revolutionary, but in the 1980's he began to observe events that changed his mind about the Castro regime. A significant aspect of this project is that it also reveals how a person's experience can reverse his understanding of the historical period through which he is living. I will organize my presentation around key historical moments described by H.V., ending with his reaction to the death of Fidel Castro and his final thoughts on the Cuban Revolution. The paper ends with a reflection on the value of gathering oral histories from individuals who have lived through significant historical transformations in their societies.

Keywords

Cuba, Cuban Revolution, Fidel Casto, oral history, cultural transformation

Disciplines

Caribbean Languages and Societies | Latin American Studies | Politics and Social Change

Comments

Presented at the Centro Europeo di Studi Rossettiani [Bridges Across Cultures Conference](#) in Vasto, Italy on June 12, 2017.

Bridges Across Cultures Conference

June 11-14, 2017 - Vasto, Italy - Centro Europeo di Studi Rossettiani

Panel: History, Literature, and Epistolary Connections

Monday, June 12, 2017 - 4:30-6:30pm

“H.V.: The Cuban Revolution through One Man’s Life” – Isabel Valiela

Valiela, Isabel

Gettysburg College

Title of paper: H.V.: The Cuban Revolution through One Man’s Life

Abstract:

This paper aims to illustrate the many ways in which the Cuban Revolution shaped the lives of the Cuban people by focusing on one man’s life from his childhood in the early part of the revolutionary period to his final departure from Cuba in 2006. H.V., as I call him, now lives in Barcelona, Spain. He is a man of humble rural origins who moved to Havana in his youth, where he benefitted from various government programs related to education, sports and job training. He and his family were initially very pro-revolutionary, but in the 1980’s he began to observe events that changed his mind about the Castro regime. A significant aspect of this project is that it also reveals how a person’s experience can reverse his understanding of the historical period through which he is living. I will organize my presentation around key historical moments described by H.V., ending with his reaction to the death of Fidel Castro and his final thoughts on the Cuban Revolution. The paper ends with a reflection on the value of gathering oral histories from individuals who have lived through significant historical transformations in their societies.

Introduction

The title of my presentation is “H.V.: The Cuban Revolution through One Man’s Life.” H.V. is a mutually agreed upon name to refer to the subject of this study, a Cuban man born in 1954. He lived most of his life during the different stages of the Cuban revolutionary regime, which took power in 1959, up until 2006, when he moved to Europe and settled in Barcelona, Spain. I do not use his full name because he sometimes returns to Cuba to visit family, and some of the information from my email correspondence and interviews with him may put him in a sensitive situation with the current government.

The second part of this title, “The Cuban Revolution through One’s Man’s Life” has various possible interpretations. First, there is the idea that one can summarize the Cuban Revolution by going over the life of one man, which is not possible. There is another way of interpreting the title so that the collective history and the individual history implied by this title can be understood to be co-joined. My analysis foregrounds the preposition *through* meaning “in at one side or point and out another” (*Webster’s Dictionary*). In other words, the intention of this project is to highlight the points at which the Cuban Revolution impacted the life of H.V., from his early childhood to the present moment.

My interest in doing this work was inspired by many testimonial works based on interviews, such as the *Biografía de un cimarrón* (1966) (*Biography of a Runaway Slave*) by Cuban writer Miguel Barnet. Roberto González Echevarría describes this work as a “trend-setting book that inaugurated and then became the standard for what was to be known as *testimonio*, or testimonial narrative, in Latin America. In these works, a subject who has been interviewed on tape by the writer tells his life in the first person. The author transcribes and edits the material to give it final form. Subjects are usually marginalized members of society, such as the centenarian former slave, Esteban Montejo, whose story is told in *Biografía de un cimarrón*” (González Echevarría). Another famous example of the genre is Elizabeth Burgos Debray’s collaboration with Rigoberta Menchú that produced the book *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983) [*I Rigoberta Menchú, an Indian Woman in Guatemala*, (1984)]. Debray and Menchú’s project intended to represent the circumstances of the indigenous communities in Guatemala by collecting Rigoberta’s memories of her family and her community’s harrowing experiences during the 1970s and 80s. Also, there are books that are based on a gathering of many voices, with the purpose of representing a sociological portrait of a particular group of people with similar issues. An example of such a study is Daphne Patai’s *Brazilian Women Speak: Contemporary Life Stories* (1993). Patai has an introduction to her book titled “Constructing a Self,” in which she wrangles with the concept of representing someone’s else’s life through the interview process. Patai says “Over time, I came to see that, given the structural inequalities that typically exist between the researcher and the researched, important ethical problems are raised by and about the process of doing oral history or collecting personal testimonies.” (p.6). One example of an ethical problem would be the consideration of the fact that I became acquainted with H.V. and his family during the height of the economic crisis in Cuba called the Special Period, in the early and mid-90s. I could come and go as a scholar, in relative comfort, and they were struggling to put food on the table, along with most everyone else on the island. One could reflect on the various ways in which such circumstances could influence many aspects of such a relationship. But it is also true that by the time these emails and interviews between H.V. and me took place in 2016, he was no longer living in Cuba and his circumstances had improved considerably.

The H.V. project has its unique trajectory. My friendship with him began in 1992 during a series of scholarly visits to Cuba. One day, after H.V. had been released from prison after trying to leave the country illegally, he said: “*Alguien tiene que contar esta historia*,” someone has to tell this story. At that

point, I had no idea that *alguien* would be me, many years later. About two years ago, I decided that it was time to tell H.V.'s story. I sent him an outline of questions related to his life story and he responded with emails.¹ Then, in the summer of 2016, I had the opportunity to go to Barcelona and interview H.V. in person.² Aside from the personal interest of his story, the larger point of this project is that a significant historical period may be understood in its deep nuances through the individual perspectives of those who have lived that history. What kinds of memories stand out in the minds of people who have lived through such an experience? Some of H.V.'s memories are very personal, and others are told in a more collective voice in which he uses the pronoun "we" to speak about a moment in which Cubans were watching history in the making. His anecdotes and reflections are rich in detail and they add a singular voice to the collective portrait of an era.

Part 1. Early life of H.V. and his family

H.V.'s early childhood was spent in his native town of Buenaventura, in the province of Oriente. He describes the hardships endured by his mother in trying to maintain him and his siblings while his father would often leave for long periods of time:

...I remember that my house had a dirt floor and thatched roof, 2 rooms, and the kitchen was separate from the house...the few years I lived there were of a very poor childhood, you get up and barefoot and without a shirt, go join the other children to play...some of us would go to bathe in the river or rob fruit from a neighbor.... I was the poorest kid in the neighborhood...at that time we were 5 siblings, 3 males and 2 females...my mother always had some chickens...that were not for eating, but rather to buy other things in exchange for their eggs, such as coffee, sugar, salt...since I was the youngest one, I was the gofer of the house...who would take 5-6 eggs to the store where the owner would give me half a cent for each egg. For 3 cents from 6 eggs I could buy coffee with 2 cents, and sugar with one....(Email, November 23, 2015)

This early life of poverty in a rural setting took place between the year of his birth, 1954 until the early 1960s. At no point does he mention here any national event, even though these were significant years of national turmoil and a reshaping of Cuban society. The triumph of the Cuban revolution occurred in 1959, and the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, two historical markers of this period worth mentioning. The obvious reason for not mentioning any historical events is that H.V. remembers only what a young child notices: the immediate reality that surrounds him, and we can see by the conditions of poverty endured by his family that Cuba was ripe for revolution, even though H.V. does not say this in his email.

By 1965 the family had moved to the neighborhood of Delicias, in Puerto Padre, a coastal town in the eastern part of Cuba known for its sugar mills. H.V.'s third email involves personal events, but begins to reveal memories that reflect a broader awareness of what was happening in Cuba at the time:

We moved to Delicias, this is a town that was created by Americans, [I remember] the train station, the park, the church, around these the houses and the sugar mill...this area was very alive since there were two sugar mills right next to each other and a port where the sugar would be loaded, which provided many jobs in the area,...the first years there were not easy, since more than once I had to fight with someone from the neighborhood, I was the new kid in town

¹ The email exchanges began on October 8, 2015, the date in which I sent him an outline of questions for him to answer, and continued until January 26, 2017. Translations by author.

² The interviews were conducted in Castelldefels, a town near Barcelona, on June 29, 30 and July 1st, 2016. Translations by author.

and more than one tried to beat me, and to avoid this I had to show that I was not afraid.... It was a very American town, the houses, the gardens, everything was really American, when they constructed the mill the owner and all the managers of all the departments were American, and they had their families that lived with them.... I always heard that the owner was a good person and that his relationship with the workers was good too, and he also said that English is not a language, it's a career.... I remember that even in the 1970s people in the town still spoke in English, it also had to do with the number of Black people from the old English colonies, before the 1960s....(Email, January 22, 2016)

Here he combines a description of the new town and how it was built up by Americans who had dominated the sugar industry in Cuba for a long time, while also including his very personal battle with fitting in as a new boy in town. This combination of memories reveals a growing consciousness as he matured from child to young adolescent.

As I mentioned before, H.V.'s email narratives were generally of a personal nature, but if I asked him specific questions about his family's political leanings and his memories of political figures, he responded with clarity. The following excerpts illustrate this point:

... my family did not look the other way when Fidel triumphed.... I was very little at the time, but I do know that the entire family, except one of my brothers, immediately identified with Fidel and the revolution, I remember that during Girón [The Bay of Pigs invasion], my mother offered to go there, not to fight, but to cure the wounded or cook or wash uniforms...there were so many of us Cubans who believed in Fidel, my parents died adoring him....(Email, April 3, 2016)

Another quote reveals how H.V. remembers the most significant figures of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel, Che Guevara, and Camilo Cienfuegos, as well as what to H.V. were the most significant events of the early revolutionary period:

...what happened in Cuba not only had an impact on me and my family, but on almost all the Cuban people. I may not tell you about these events in a chronological manner, the loss of Camilo Cienfuegos, when the revolution triumphed there were two maximum leaders, Fidel and Camilo. They called Camilo *el comandante del pueblo*, the People's Commander...when the revolution triumphed people talked, more about Camilo than about Fidel and Che.... On the 28th of October, '59, news breaks that Camilo has disappeared. This had a great emotional impact on the country... then came *Playa Girón*, which for the Cuban people was a heroic feat, since it was the first great defeat of Yankee imperialism in America, I'm telling you this in the exact manner in which the Cuban media of the time reported it...in 72 hours they defeated, I remember the word mercenaries, which was what they were called, then the euphoria of victory, the trial of the prisoners, how people went over to the houses of the neighbors who had TVs Fidel was highly praised for his decision to negotiate with the U.S. to exchange all of these prisoners for medicine for Cuba, at that moment we lacked almost all kinds of medicines....(Email, April 10, 2016)

In this last account H.V. expresses the emotional collective experience of those moments, Camilo's death and the events of the Bay of Pigs invasion. But he also uses the first person to say that he remembers key words he heard when he was a young child, the word mercenaries, the image of neighbors going to each other's houses to watch the events unfold. The fact that he says he cannot tell me about these events in chronological order is an indication of how these memories stumble upon each other in the rush of both an emotional and historical upheaval. There is also, from the perspective of an adult re-telling an account, a distancing from the official line, by clarifying that he is repeating the

account exactly as the Cuban media reported it at the time, stating that the invaders of the Bay of Pigs were called mercenaries and then saying “which is what they were called.”

The last part of this politically charged email reveals a significant part of the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion: the arrival of Russians in Cuba: “After Girón we began to see Russians in Cuba, trucks with soldiers, since at that moment I was still living in Buenaventura and the main central highway goes through this town, it is the main transportation route in Cuba from west to east, this thing about the Russians was difficult to digest.”(Email, April 10, 2016)

I asked him to explain why the arrival of the Russians was “difficult to digest.” This was his next email:

...look, up until this moment most of us Cubans didn't even know that a country called Russia existed. To suddenly see people who have a totally different way of being, was why I say it was difficult to digest.... For us Cubans, not all of us, but for the majority, our world was Europe, Spain, and a few other countries from America, US, Mexico, Venezuela, Jamaica, Haiti, these were all countries from which we received immigrants...but Russia? Many of us didn't even know what part of the world they were from, plus, Russia was always synonymous with communism, and this was taboo. During the first months of the revolution, a journalist asked Fidel if the color of the revolution would be red, and his response was that our revolution is and always will be green like our palm trees.... With the arrival of the Russians there was a government campaign to vaccinate children against a series of illnesses, but in the midst of our total ignorance at the time, which was a lot, the counterrevolution used this campaign to say that the vaccinations made the children turn into Russians, to make them Cuban communists, more than one parent refused to have their child vaccinated...so, we were coming out of the Americans and suddenly taken over militarily by a communist army of which we had no damn idea who they were, let alone how this new story would end, and this caused a great unease in the population.(Email, April 17, 2016)

This account of the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs highlights those aspects that had the most impact on Cubans, exposing the ignorance that prevailed, how it was manipulated by counter-revolutionary propaganda, and the serious consequences for the health and wellbeing of the population.

Part 2. H.V.'s youth and participation in revolutionary activities

One of the significant aspects of H.V.'s life trajectory is that he is a product of the revolutionary system. We can see through his progression through the system that he is a true son of the revolution, not in an ideological, but in an experiential sense. Here is his quick summary of his youth:

Up until 1968 I am in my town of Puerto Padre... [year in which] I go to Havana for the 8th National School Games to play water polo. Because of my achievement, I was selected to attend the Marcelo Salado School of Aquatic Sports in Havana. [I was there] until I fell in love with the wrong girl and I was expelled. I didn't want to return to my hometown, so I enrolled in an *escuela de oficios*, a vocational school. In 1973 I graduated from that school.... I was called by the army in 1974 to prepare to be a chief radio telegraph operator of a radio station. [I trained] in a school called Balboza...for 2 years. Around that time many Cubans were secretly leaving the country to help guerrilla movements, in the Americas as well as in Africa, the war in Angola was already going on...in the period between 77 and 79 I formed part of incursions in Nicaragua, we'd leave Cuba in a fishing boat in which we could just as well be transporting arms or medicines or whatever was needed, retrieve the wounded or substitute military personnel.(Email, November 10, 2015)

Here we see how his life was linked to developments in the new revolutionary Cuba, its educational and vocational system, and the military activities in which the country was engaged at the time.

After his involvement in Nicaragua, he was sent to Africa in 1982, where he served as a telegraph operator in Angola and Ethiopia, all part of the Cuban government's involvement with international leftist guerrilla movements in the 1970s and 80s. In Ethiopia the Cubans were caught between two or more warring factions, and as they flew over the Nile River they would be shot at from both sides. The Nile river was often their flight path, since they had no permission to enter the countries they had to pass over to get to their destination. Besides the danger of being shot, H.V. also contracted a serious skin ailment. When I asked him how he felt about the experience, he responded that: "...for me it was a stage in my life of enormous importance. Thank God I did not return with the medallion under my tongue [dead]...many Cubans died in Angola... according to our comandante 'to pay our debt to humanity' ...if I were Argentine, I would say "¡Boludo!" [idiot!]." (Interview, June 30, 2016). This response shows an appreciation for the experience, at the same time great relief at having survived it, concluding with a final sarcastic remark at Fidel Castro's noble words for this military endeavor.

Part 3. A Rude Awakening: The Ochoa Case

In 1984 H.V. ended his military service and returned to Cuba to begin a new life. He returned with high ranking and convinced the government to let him do something different. He began to work at hospitals, conferences, and cultural exchanges. This was the life he led until an event occurred that changed his perspective on the way things were run in his country. This event was the 1989 trial and execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa based on charges of drug trafficking and treason. Ochoa had been H.V.'s commander in Angola and H.V., as well as the other Cubans who served under him, respected him very much. When this scandal happened, H.V. began a process of doubting many aspects of his society that he had previously refused to question. (Interview, June 30, 2016)

Part 4. The Special Period and a Yearning to Escape

The Ochoa Case happened on the same year as the fall of the Berlin Wall, signaling the end of the Soviet Union, the withdrawal of its support of Cuba, and the beginning of hard economic times in the island. This was officially called The Special Period. In the early 1990s Cuba was pressured by the U.S. embargo and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Its main source of economic support had been through COMECON, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, an economic organization under the leadership of the Soviet Union that included Eastern Bloc countries and other communist states. Cuba had been a member since 1971, but it ended in 1992. Cubans struggled to meet the most basic needs of daily life, with a shortage of food, medicines, petroleum, soap, paper, and many other necessities. H.V.'s family was not immune from the hardships created by this sudden change of national fortune.

During this very difficult situation in the country, H.V. met an American woman while assisting in a conference that she and I attended in the summer of 1992 in Havana. They fell in love, and this became another motive for his yearning to escape from Cuba. Up until then the idea of leaving had not crossed his mind, but the combination of a national and a personal crisis led him to try this dangerous path.

Part 5. Three attempts to leave the island (1994,1995,1998)

His first attempt to escape was in 1994, at the urging of his younger brother, along with his cousin and two other young men. He was the least decided one of the group. They slowly collected material they would need to put together a raft, using tractor tires and wooden boards. When they were ready, they decided to sneak the raft out of the house balcony just at the time when they would be least

noticed, when Cubans were watching their favorite soap opera. The plan was to have 4 men paddle and one out either to rest or to provide water for the others to drink. They also carried a can of oil to repel sharks. This first escape was short lived, since they were caught by the Cuban Coast Guard the next day in Guanabo, not far from Havana. After they were caught, they were fined 700 pesos and allowed to return home to await trial. Two of them did not await trial and escaped on another raft. (Interview, June 30, 2016). In August 1994 there was a great surge in this type of escapes, and the phenomenon was called simply *los balseiros*, the 4th great wave of Cuban emigration. To resolve this issue, the Cuban government and the Clinton Administration agreed in 1995 to a new policy towards Cuban immigration, the “wet foot, dry foot policy.” The new policy stopped admitting people intercepted in U.S. waters, returning them home to Cuba or to other designated places. If they managed to touch U.S. land, they could stay.

After the first attempt H.V. was approached by various prospective *balseiros*, inviting him to join them in another attempt. But by then he had been reported to the neighborhood watch committee, the *Comité para la Defensa de la Revolución* or CDR, so it was difficult to organize any secret plan to escape without calling attention to yourself. If you did engage in such an activity, it had to be in complete secrecy because anyone could report you. The second attempt to escape was in 1995, this time with a boat that had a motor. They were caught again and sent to jail. By the second failed attempt, he said to himself: “OK, I’ve tried two times, it’s all over...but,” as he says, “*el bichito seguía*,” (Interview, June 30, 2016) likening his urge to leave to a bug that keeps biting you and won’t stop. All around him people were leaving.

The final attempt was in March of 1998, leaving from Puerto Padre, passing through the Bahamas for the duration of 6 days, and getting very close to the U.S. They ran out of fuel and were caught by the U.S. Coast Guard and sent to Guantanamo and then handed over to Cuban authorities. After this last attempt, he went back to Havana and lived a relatively normal life from 1999-2006, working as an ironsmith. (Interview, July 1, 2016)

Part 6. A Way Out

Sometime in the early 2000s H.V. met a German woman and emigrated legally to Europe. Their relationship did not work out and he left for Barcelona, where he had Cuban friends who could assist him upon arrival. He now has a new life in Barcelona, highlighted by the fact that he has managed to bring his two daughters to live with him. The Barcelona chapter of his life is also interesting because of the way he has acquired a new identity as a *Cubano-catalán*. During the interviews, H.V.’s speech contained certain Catalan expressions that revealed the extent of his assimilation into the Catalan culture.

Part 7. H.V.’s Reflections on Fidel’s Death and the Cuban Revolution

I would like to conclude with two emails containing H.V.’s reflections on the Cuban Revolution. The first one describes his reaction upon learning of Fidel’s death in November 25, 2016. He was sleeping on the sofa of his house in Barcelona when a friend from Miami called him to tell him the news:

...at that moment you have no idea how many emotions I felt...I got very nervous and my daughters woke up because I was pacing all over the house. I went out to the balcony and yelled ‘FIDEL DIED...***!!!!’...then I thought about how I was glad that my parents were not alive to see this, because it would have been a tremendous blow to them, they died adoring him. I went down to the bar and bought drinks for whoever was there, and I had a double rum...Jose María, an acquaintance of mine, was there, and said ‘you know I’m a socialist, but I’m going to drink with you since it’s the same thing I did when Franco died.’ I felt the same sensation of relief as

when my Spanish documents were approved and I would be a legal resident, ... it's like a weight lifted...so many things go through your head: you think about Cuba and your people there, what could be happening there, about the time you were a true believer in Lenin, and the times you were willing to risk your life, and about the day that you started to see things differently...there were many phone calls from and to friends, some saying they are not happy about his death, and others, like me, super happy, not happy for his death, but for the beginning of a possible change in Cuba, because we all know that until they all disappear there won't be the change that Cuba needs. (Email, January 15, 2016)

The last email H.V. sent were his final thoughts on the Cuban Revolution:

Yes, ... the revolution that Fidel brought on in 59 was more than necessary. It came at the right time because of the precariousness that we all shared, because of Batista's submission to the U.S., and the misery in which we were all living. It was 4 people that had fortunes and millions of us who were dying of hunger and misery, especially the Cuban peasantry. Fidel made the revolution at the right time and it was a beautiful revolution... *una revolucion linda*... these were the words of my mother when referring to this first stage of the revolution. Fidel gave us hope, he made us believe that we were finally and truly free...there were so many promises that we were willing to do anything to defend those ideals, even give our lives to defend them, whatever was necessary for Fidel and the revolution...every new law, every speech by Fidel, everything was beautiful...you get full of illusions and they get into your veins in such a way that you stop seeing, you even stop thinking for yourself. Everything is directed towards the needs of the system. You don't stop to analyze anything, you are like a robot, and if at any time you have a doubt, you stop yourself and say: 'you are being weak, look, this is your commitment to the revolution, to Fidel...' In his speeches, Fidel never gave us any good news, everything was sacrifice, we have to sacrifice for the revolution, push forward in the face of difficult times, we have to do more with less...I see these things clearly now, and I didn't see them then, I even magnified them in favor of the government. YES, EVEN NOW I BELIEVE THAT THE REVOLUTION WAS NECESSARY...the way I see things, Batista was an S.O.B, and if Fidel hadn't come along, there would have been 3 more Batistas...the last 50 years with this system imposed by the current government, they have destroyed the country...right now we are 200 years behind...and not only have they destroyed the country, they have divided us as persons, have made us hate each other among brothers and sisters, ...and still, yes, I believe in the Revolution of 59, but not in what they did to us after that.(Email, January 26, 2016)

In these two final statements, H.V. expresses a complex set of emotions: an appreciation for the revolution and Fidel in bringing down the misery and political oppression that Batista's government had brought upon Cuba, while recognizing that over the span of over 50 years, the sacrifice for those ideals was too great a burden for the Cuban people. His many years' experience of living and participating in the revolutionary process led to his own internal revolution as he faced challenges to his long-held beliefs. His ambivalence is evidence of a deep understanding of the conditions that produced the Cuban Revolution, while recognizing that certain events and policies that followed the initial stages of the revolution had a negative impact on the Cuban population. His memories and reflections provide us with a glimpse of how he, and many Cubans, lived through this significant moment in Cuban history.

A broader perspective that I could reach from this project is best expressed in the words of Amy Goodman, host of *Democracy Now*, in a speech directing her words to the media, but they could apply to my experience of listening to H.V.:

We need a media that allows people to speak for themselves. There is nothing more powerful than hearing a Palestinian child, and Israeli grandmother, a native elder from Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota, or an uncle in Afghanistan. When you hear someone speaking from their own experience, it changes you. I wouldn't say you would agree with it...But you begin to understand where they're coming from. That understanding is the beginning of peace... (Goodman 00:02:10–00:02:44)

References

González Echevarría, Roberto. "Miguel Barnet." *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Miguel-Barnet>. Accessed 31 May 2018.

Goodman, Amy. "Amy Goodman on AJ+: How the Media Fails in Covering Trump." *Democracy Now!*, uploaded by DN! In the News, 22 May 2017.

https://www.democracynow.org/2017/5/22/amy_goodman_on_aj_how_the_media.

Merriam Webster Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dictionary>

Patai, Daphne. *Brazilian Women Speak: Contemporary Life Stories*. Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick (1993).