

MISSIONS ATLAS PROJECT
MIDDLE AMERICA AND CARRIBEAN

CUBA

Snapshots Section

Country Name:

Republic of Cuba (Cuba)

Republica de Cuba (Cuba)

Country Founded in:

December 10, 1898 (Independence from Spain)

May 20, 1902 (Independence from United States)

Population:

11,423,952

Government Type: (national, regional and local)

Communist State

Geography/location in the world:

This is a Caribbean island located in the Caribbean Sea and is about 150 km south of Key West, Florida. It is also the location of a US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay and is the largest island in the West Indies.

Number of people groups:

14

Picture of flag:



Religion Snapshot

Major Religion and % of population:

Roman Catholic/ Santeria: While about 45% of the population identify themselves as Roman Catholic, it is often practiced alongside Santeria which would include up to 70% of the population.

All religions and % for each:

Santeria: up to 70%

Catholic: 45%

Evangelical: 5.29%

Orthodox: 1%

Islam: 1%

Jews: 1%

Spiritist: 17.2%
Non-religious: 18.7%

Government interaction with religion:

The International Religious Freedom Report from Cuba in 2007 states that the constitution of Cuba allows for citizens to practice any religious belief as long as it is respectful to the law. However, in law and practice the government still places restrictions upon freedom of religion.

Tolerance of religion is present in Cuba, but that is not to say that it is very supportive of it through legal means. All religious groups must register with the Ministry of Justice, through the Office of Religious Affairs, so that their meeting places and future activities are documented. In addition to this, religious materials can only be imported into the country through these religious organizations and can only be distributed to those within the recognized religious group. Further legal obstacles include the times when a church is allowed to congregate, the location of the church, and the acquiring of permission from neighbors in order to use musical equipment.

In spite of these difficulties, most churches are able to meet in private homes. And though permission to proselyte (evangelize) is granted on a selective basis, there have been cases where spontaneous testimonials were given in public and no one was reprimanded.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the government does meet with leaders in the religious community but the government is not in the habit of doing so on a regular basis. So although religious activities are heavily regulated, there is room for compromise so long as the law is abided by.

http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_63_1.asp

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christian.house.churches.in.cuba.facing.new.restriction.laws/4019.htm>

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90249.htm>

<http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/226.htm>

Country Profile

Basic Facts

Country Name:

Republic of Cuba (Cuba)

Republica de Cuba (Cuba)

Demographics:

The July 2008 estimate for the population of Cuba is 11,423,952. This estimate is based on a population growth rate of 0.251% per year.

Of this population 18.5% are under the age of 14 with slightly more males than females. The majority of the population (70.5%) is within the age range of 15-64 years of age with no real distinction between the genders. Only 10.9% of the population is 65 years of age or older of whom women make the majority by almost 100,000 people. The current median age for Cubans, regardless of gender, is 37.5 years.

Life expectancy at birth is 77.27 years with a difference of a year or more between the genders (women tend to live longer and have longer life expectancy at birth). There are 11.27 births per 1000 and, on average, there are 1.6 children born per woman in Cuba. The death rate is 7.19 deaths per 1000 Cubans.

Less than 1% of the population is living with HIV/AIDS and fewer than 200 deaths have been attributed to it. Other major infectious diseases include bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A and dengue fever. The risk of getting any one of those major infectious diseases is small with the exception of dengue fever whose degree of risk is intermediate.

Most of the Cuban population is mulatto (51%). Other ethnic groups include White (37%), Black (11%) and Chinese (1%).

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cu.html>

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107443.html>

Language:

Spanish is the national language of Cuba which is used for trade, government and for teaching in schools. Other languages include Cuban Sign Language and Lucumi.

The Spanish that is spoken in Cuba is a dialect of Spanish which has evolved from the form that the Spanish brought with them in 1494 and is closer to the versions of Spanish of the islands surrounding it. Even then, there are subtle differences in pronunciation and spelling within Cuba itself. For example, the letter "h" may be dropped in the pronunciation of any given word. For more information regarding the differences in the Cuban dialect of Spanish follow the link below.

<http://www.cal.org/CO/cubans/SPAN.HTM>

Cuban Sign language is a dialect of Spanish sign language which is used by those who are unable to speak. Although its primary religious use is in Christianity, there are no Bible portions written for this group. In fact, the first digital sign language dictionary was just recently made in 2007. This should make this language dialect more uniform so that teaching and communicating with the deaf of Cuba will be easier.

<http://www.deafness-and-hearingaids.net/2007/03/05/digital-dictionary-created-for-cuban-deaf/>
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/languages.php?rol3=csf>
<http://deafness.about.com/cs/signfeats2/a/spanishsign.htm>

Lucumi is a Spanish version of the language of Yoruba (an ethnic group of Nigeria), whose people were taken to Cuba in the slave trade to the Americas in the 1820s-1840s. The name Lucumi is ascribed to both the Yoruban people and their language because in the Yoruba language Lucumi means “friends.” As of right now, Lucumi is mainly used for religious purposes in Santeria. For more information on the Lucumi language, it’s history and it’s relation to religion, the following links would be most helpful.

<http://www.123exp-beliefs.com/t/00804337923/Lucumi.Lucumi>
<http://www.cwo.com/~lucumi/history.htm>

Society/Culture:

Due to the fact that Cuba was originally used by Europeans as a depot for trade, military outposts and even as a point of rest between the eastern and western hemisphere, Cuba’s culture is a melting pot influenced by European, African, Amerindian, and continental North American cultures. However, due to the political atmosphere, daily life in Cuba can vary inside these cultural groups.

As of right now, economic strife makes the daily lives of Cubans challenged in providing means to sustain themselves. All people are really employed by the government and working any other job (moonlighting) in addition to the one that is documented is illegal. This provides us with the view of a society under stress.

Cuba suffered greatly with the fall of the Soviet Union which provided grain to feed cattle and chickens. Since 1991 beef, chicken, milk and eggs have become scarce. The crops of Cuba have also begun to be harvested by hand which has greatly decreased the amounts which are harvested for the people. Ration cards allow a means of attaining food for many. In addition to the ration cards, some who operate restaurants often bring food home from work (which is seen as illegal by the Cuban government).

<http://video.aol.com/video-detail/an-easier-way-of-life-in-cuba/3193041831>
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/08/photogalleries/cuba/index.html>

Transportation in the cities is not unlike the Western world, but in the rural areas it is usually provided by means of a bus, called the “*guagua*,” and other vehicles that have been altered to serve the same purpose. Because of the conditions of some streets, bicycles and horse and carriages are still used to get around locally in the rural areas. Transportation between cities is a somewhat coordinated event between groups of those that wish to travel.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/27/AR2006092701878.html>
<http://www.cartadecuba.org/Life%20in%20Red.htm>

Housing in Cuba is both managed and owned by the government. A person cannot sell their house and if they wish to move they must first apply for housing. The Cubans are able, however, to exchange houses. This is difficult because a Cuban has to find someone willing to exchange houses and who, by government standards, has the right type of home to exchange. Taking this into account, it is not hard to see why families do not move or change homes often.

Currently, there is a housing shortage on the island and those that do have housing live in places that are in fair to poor condition. So far it is estimated that more than 100,000 people living in Havana alone are living in unsafe housing which may be on the verge of partial or complete collapse.

This issue is further helped along by the amount of divorces that occur in Cuba. 64% of marriages on this island will end in divorce, but moving from the house which was shared is not as easy as acquiring the divorce papers. So what follows may be years of living with an estranged spouse, which is not at all uncommon in Cuba.

http://ctp.iccas.miami.edu/FOCUS_Web/Issue59.htm

http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/nationworld/2004102242_cubasplit01.html

Weddings in Cuba are civil ones and usually do not take a long time to perform. It is the procession to and from the wedding that is the most memorable part of the occasion. Most of the finances of a wedding go towards the reception. This is a major fixture at weddings and is seen by many as more important than the marriage ceremony itself.

Anyone can get married in Cuba. However, if the person is divorced or widowed, there is some extra paperwork required. It is easy to see that this does not deter those that wish to get married who are divorced. Many people at thirty years of age are already signing off on their third marriage vows.

<http://www.islandbrides.com/destination/Cuba/requirements/12/>

<http://www.cubacuban.com/culture/customs.shtml>

The view of women, in general, is like that of the western world. Cuban women received their right to vote in 1934 (before the revolution of Fidel Castro). Cuba had one of the highest rates of abortion, use of birth control, and divorce amongst Latin American countries. The level of education for females is almost equal to that of male students between ages five to fifteen.

In pre-revolutionary Cuba, women were allowed to hold office in the government, and no discrimination, based on gender was allowed. At the same time, those women who did elect to run for any government position were directed to subsidiary roles. As of right now, post-revolutionary Cuba, about half of Cuba's workforce is made up of women, over 40 % of the parliament is made up of women, and over half the doctors are also women.

A double standard currently exists between the men and women of Cuba. Men are encouraged to show "machismo," or superiority by demonstrating virility, power, courageousness, and self-reliance, while the women of Cuba are expected to be gracious, compliant, gentle of spirit, and moral. So while great bounds have been made in relation to women's rights some societal differences are still present between the genders.

<http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/women1.htm>

<http://homepage.eircom.net/~csg/womenInCuba.html>

http://www.workers.org/2008/world/cuban_women_0320/

Other societal issues in Cuba are human trafficking, prostitution/child prostitution, race, and gay rights. Presently, Cuba is in a worse economic slump than before the depression of the 1990s, and because of this, women and children are trafficked mostly for sexual purposes. Some children are actually pushed into the life of prostitution or slave labor to supplement family income; however, it is difficult to monitor because of the nature of the government. Trafficking to other countries is also underway as Cuba serves as a port to traffic those from East Asian countries.

In addition to human trafficking, Cuba has a history of societal issues with race. This has always been a matter of debate in this country where the Spanish used it to differentiate themselves from the natives. There was even a Race War in 1912!

Most Cubans associate themselves with three types of race which have their roots back to the time of slavery: White, Mulatto, and Black. While all three groups are subject to stereotypes, the main arguments concerning race revolve around their views on war, sexuality, and the religion and culture of the three groups.

Another major societal change that is currently taking place is that in the area of gay rights. Attempts are being made that would institute the most liberal gay rights laws in Latin America. These new laws would include transsexuals and would provide ways for them to have gender operations free of charge. In addition to this would be the allowing and recognizing of same sex unions. Something that is important to note is that the laws being put forth do not mention the word marriage.

For further information on societal issues in Cuba, use the following links to start your research.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7314845.stm>

<http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/race/RaceFear.htm> <http://www.gvnet.com/humantrafficking/Cuba.htm>

<http://www.gvnet.com/childprostitution/Cuba.htm>

One of the things that Cuba is most known for is its health care system because it has one of the best possible healthcare systems in Latin America and the Caribbean. What is amazing about this program is that Cuba's population is as healthy as some of the richest nations of the world, but provides this service at the fraction of the cost that other nations spend on healthcare.

There is practically a doctor in every neighborhood, and house calls are a regular occurrence. In regards to AIDS, Cuba has the lowest rate of the Americas.

On the other hand, some common complaints from this system are that the securing of medicine is often difficult. There is a shortage of medication and when those that are able to sell, or distribute it, receive a shipment it is used up quickly. So, those that are prescribed medicine may have to return to their doctor once a week to have a prescription refilled.

Another concern is that some of the medicines that are needed are not included in the health program like antibiotics. In order to obtain some necessary medicines, they must be bought on the black market or purchased with US currency which is rather challenging for the everyday worker in Cuba due to economic hardship.

<http://www.alternet.org/healthwellness/53087/>

http://ctp.iccas.miami.edu/FOCUS_Web/Issue59.htm

Cuba is well known for its education system whose fiscal school year starts in September and lasts until July. Children start in Primary School at the age of 6 and continue until the age of 11 and are then admitted to Basic Secondary school from ages 12 to 15. Upon finishing Basic Secondary, they are awarded a diploma and may go to Technical Secondary school which is of three years duration (ages 15 to 18) or they can go to an Upper Secondary school which is a pre-university school and receive a Bachillerato (literally meaning little Bachelors).

Following this, students may choose to go to a university for four to five years where they can get a professional diploma called "Licenciatura." There are four stages of the university system in Cuba and all

require 3 to 4 years of instruction. The professional diploma is followed by a Master's which is followed by a Doctorate in a special field, followed by a Doctorate in Science.

These different levels of education reflect the national education of those that live in Cuba. Nearly all adults are literate. Cuba is ranked first in both math and science achievement in all of Latin America regardless of gender or educational school level. Education is available and free to everyone up to secondary schooling.

What is most effective about the educational programs is that they focus teaching methods on the particular needs of the students in a structured way. In addition to this, Cuba's education system allows for fluid entry into the workforce upon completion of school requirements so that those who finish their school have a place in society and know how to function in it.

For a more in depth insight into the education system of Cuba, follow the links below:

http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:4fYlZNLmiz0J:www.unesco.org/iau/onlinedatabases/systems_data/cu.rtf+Cuban+education+system&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us
<http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:KYnvD-CtpakJ:www1.worldbank.org/education/est/resources/case%2520studies/cubastudy.doc+Cuban+education+system&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=23&gl=us>

Cuban cuisine has been influenced from Spanish, African, and Caribbean cultures and because of that, the variety and the integration of culture in terms of food is evident. To add to the native Caribbean cuisine of maize and roots like sweet potato and yucca, the Spanish supplied vegetables, citrus fruits, rice, and meats. A lot of the African contributions to Cuban cuisine are found in the variety of roots that were added. As of right now, the basic staples of a Cuban kitchen would be rice, beans, fruits, pork, and corn.

For breakfast a common meal would be that of pan tostada and café con leche, which is bread which has been buttered and partially grilled and is eaten along with a concentrated coffee mixed with warm milk. Generally, the bread is dipped in the coffee before it is ingested.

In reference to lunch, the Cuban cuisine usually consists of a Cuban sandwich also known as an *empanada*. A Cuban sandwich usually consists of pan tostada which has a mixture of pork, vegetables, and Swiss cheese with mayonnaise or mustard. This is usually eaten with a side of fried plantains (bananas). A following snack would be found at a local bakery where *pastelitos*, pastries that are filled with sweet meats, guava, and/or cheese, could be found.

A typical dinner dish in Cuba is called "*conгри*," which is a plate of rice and either red or black beans. This is normally served with a side dish of meat or fish and possibly with fried banana slices. This is followed by a dessert of rice puddings, breads or flan (a caramel custard), accompanied by Cuban coffee or café con leche.

The difference between café con leche and Cuban coffee is that café con leche is really a shot of coffee, which may or may not be Cuban coffee, mixed with warm milk. The milk in the café con leche takes up about 3/4th of the cup of coffee. Cuban coffee is so strong that it is served in shot glasses and is much more concentrated than regular coffee thus a higher content of caffeine.

In addition to the drinking of coffee as a societal norm, the drinking of rum is commonplace. Rum is usually drunk alongside either lunch or dinner and a midday drink may be in the form of a fruit daiquiri.

<http://www.tasteofcuba.com/cubanmaindishes.html>

<http://www.sprachcaffe-cuba.com/ingles/gast.html>

http://www.education.miami.edu/ep/LittleHavana/Cuban_Food/Cuban_Cuisine/cuban_cuisine.html

The multicultural aspect of Cuba can be found in their styles of dance. Two types of dance that are associated with Cuba are the mambo and salsa. The mambo centralizes around African and Cuban rhythms and gets its name from the name of a type of drum that is used in the music. Literally, mambo means “conversation with the gods.” The dance itself involves the movement of the hips in quick and slow beats. Different forms of the mambo are the cha-cha (a faster version), and the rumba (a medium paced version).

Salsa, on the other hand, had its influences in Caribbean culture and American jazz which accumulated in the 1970s. Unlike the mambo or its subsequent versions, this dance focuses primarily on the hips without the movement of the upper and mid-back. However, like the mambo, it is quick paced and very lively in its nature.

<http://users.wpi.edu/~arivera/music.html>

http://www.essortment.com/all/mambodance_rmccq.htm

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wb35M43Keds>

Once the revolution took place in Cuba the government chose to support many theatres, museums, and arts schools. Musicians were then able to count on a salary and a national film industry began. The Cuban government chose to support the Afro-Cuban cultural groups and performing ensembles so that the Cubans might receive more influence from them rather the American culture.

Original Cuban music was formed through African slaves bringing together rhythms and ritual dances and marrying it with Spanish guitars and melodies. The first stride in attempting nationalism through music was made possible by Ignacio Cervantes (1847-1905) who mixed traditional piano styles and Afro-Cuban elements in his compositions.

The most popular Cuban music today is called *son* which was created in the hills of the Oriente and has its roots in the late 1800s. This type of music was primarily performed by the blacks and mulattos of Cuba and the words of this music cover topics ranging from love and nationalism to humor and politics. *Son* is produced using the *tres* (small stringed Cuban instrument with three pairs of strings), double bass, bongos, claves, and maracas in cut time. Forms of music which were birthed by *son* are Mambo, bolero, salsa and chachacha.

Right now, Cuban hip-hop has become the voice of the new generation. The government of Cuba realizes that rap music is how they can understand the hearts and minds of young Cubans and through this venue, young Cubans are able to express ideas on relevant political and social issues.

Possibly the most famous singer in Cuban history would be Celia Cruz of Havana, Cuba. She is known for yelling “Azucar!” (Literally: sugar) when getting up on stage to sing anything from salsa to rumba and mambo. Her career spans decades and was made possible through her willingness and interest in the changing culture around her. She has even been known to dabble in rap, hip hop and *son* after 40 years of age! For her accomplishments, she was been awarded from both the Smithsonian and the Hispanic Heritage Organization and has received a National Medal of Arts award from Bill Clinton (president of the United States from 1992-2000).

To listen to Cuban music or learn more about the history of Cuban music and popular musicians, use the following links to jumpstart your research.

http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/worldmusic/view/page.basic/country/content.country/cuba_11
<http://www2.cedarcrest.edu/academic/soc/ccameron/soc215/cuba/cuba.htm#Mambo>
<http://latinmusic.about.com/od/artists/p/PRO01CCRUZ.htm>

In regards to other forms of media, key literary figures would include Cirilo Villaverde y de la Paz, Alego Carpentier, Nicolas Guillen, and Guillermo Cabrera Infante. The most important literary figure of Cuba is Jose Marti who is known for his ideas, his life and for his martyr's death by dying in battle.

Jose Marti was a revolutionary who pushed for Cuba's independence through the Ten Year War and the Third War of Independence and is now known as the father of the Cuban Revolution. He was one of the first people to support the Cuban Revolution and as such, he was the first to start the Cuban Revolutionary Party thus founding the basis for the present future government of Cuba.

One of the most important film directors was Tomas Gutierrez Alea who used his films as a way to portray Revolutionary Cuba's daily life while also focusing on the political climate around him. His films greatly contrast the stereotype of communist art as a tool for the government to use in propaganda and the integrity of his films jump-started the new Latin American Cinema. Some of the films that he produced are: *Stories of the Revolution (1960)*, *Death of a Bureaucrat (1966)*, *Memories of Underdevelopment (1968)*, and *Strawberry and Chocolate (1993)*. Other important film directors of Cuba include Fernando Perez, Humberto Padron, and Juan Carlos Cremata.

At the same time, where would the film directors be if not for their actors and actresses? One of the actresses that Tomas Gutierrez Alea worked with on a number of occasions later in his career was Mirta Ibarra who had roles in *Guantanamera(1995)*, *Mararia(1998)*, *Strawberry and Chocolate (1993)*, and *Up to a Certain Point(1983)*. She has won three awards in the area of Cuban film festivals one of which was for her role in *Strawberry and Chocolate (1993)*.

<http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/havana/Marti.htm>
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569844_4/Cuba.html#s104
<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/alea.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Cubans#Actors

Important painters in Cuba include Wilfredo Lam, and Mariano Rodriguez along with Manuel Mendive who is Cuba's foremost living painter. All three of these men's styles are very different which also reflects the art era in which they flourished.

Wilfredo Lam was born in Cuba but spent his youth in Paris as a contemporary of Picasso. Spending his life between the two countries of France and Cuba, he continued to incorporate his Cuban and Afro-centric roots into his artwork. He was a renowned surrealist, which can be seen in his paintings that reflect a dream-like quality as one would see in some of Picasso's paintings.

Like Wilfredo Lam, Mariano Rodriguez was born in Cuba but also spent a good part of his life outside of the country, in this case, Mexico. What is interesting about Mariano Rodriguez is that while he is an abstract artist, and could be associated as a surrealist or a painter of cubism, he preferred to be known as an expressionist painter. This mainly attributed to his search and need to express himself within the context of a Cuban society.

Manuel Mendive was born into a family in Cuba who practiced Santeria and his Afro-Cuban background is very present in his artwork. His entire career and schooling occurred in Cuba and was well educated in the arts. He is well known for combining the concepts and spirits of Santeria and other African religions with nature in his paintings.

<http://www.spaightwoodgalleries.com/Pages/Lam.html>
<http://www.matta-art.com/lam/lam.htm>
<http://www.artnexus.com/ANnewsdetail/13242>
<http://www.artnet.com/artist/657203/mariano-rodriguez.html>
http://www.indigoarts.com/gallery_cuba_mendive.html

In Cuba, as well as many other countries across Central and South America, carnivals are held annually which allows one another glimpse into Cuban culture. The tradition of the first carnival began in Italy the final night before lent began. The people were allowed to celebrate and eat meat before they were to fast from it for the following 40 days.

Costumes were created in conjunction with the carnival to help appease a deceased family member's spirit. If the spirit was angry, the costume would relieve them of that anger so that they could let go of this world and move on to the next.

The carnivals which take place serve many purposes, but especially for the individual it can allow self expression. Carnivals also provide new ideas of how to look at cultures throughout the world, and also serve as a means to unite the world.

With the other religions present in Cuba such as Santeria there are several different religious holidays that are celebrated which honor patron saints or the Madonna. The Afro-Cuban religion called Santeria has the important element of dance. Several other elements which are important to the Santeria religion are that each deity is paired with colors, emotions, Roman Catholic saints and drum patterns called toques.

The public holidays which take place in Cuba are centered on political and historical events. For example, Independence Day is celebrated on May 20th and marks the day they won their independence.

www.sprachcaffe.com/english/study_abroad/countries/cuba/cuban_events_and_celebrations.htm
<http://www.allahwe.org/History.html>
http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/69/public_holidays/Caribbean/Cuba.html

Two of Cuba's most political figures are Antonio Maceo and Fidel Castro. Antonio Maceo was a brilliant strategist and was a contemporary of Jose Marti. He was also very active in the Cuban Revolutionary Party and was known as "the lion" in Spain. Out of the three wars that Cuba fought for its independence against Spain, he fought in two of them, suffered 24 battle wounds, fought in over 500 battles and was titled the Bronze Titan after his death in the late 1800s.

While most would think that it was Fidel Castro who ended democracy in Cuba, it was really Fulgencio Batista who committed the first act against democracy in Cuba. Only after this did Fidel Castro amass a small army to move against Batista. For this, Castro was jailed and then exiled to Mexico. There he was able to freely assemble those who were sympathetic to his cause.

In 1956, Castro invaded Cuba with his forces and won the support of the people which forced Batista out of power and Castro into the leadership role, dictator of Cuba. Since then, he has strived to help a struggling economy by focusing on bettering the health and education system of Cuba.

<http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/havana/maceo.htm>
<http://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/index.htm>
<http://library.thinkquest.org/11046/people/castro.html>

For more information about the Society and Culture of Cuba, please follow the links below:

www.gypsylounge.com/x/cam/history_lesson/cub.htm
<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/cuba-society.htm>
<http://www.cubacuban.com/culture/customs.shtml>
<http://www.danheller.com/cuba.html>

Government:

The government in Cuba is a communist state, which means it is based on the principle of common ownership by all people which results in a classless society where most everything is shared. This also means that everything from the health system to housing is managed by the government and that there are no political pressure groups or leaders within Cuba.

The Cubans accepted their constitution on February 24, 1976 which has since then been amended twice (July 1992 and June 2002). The legal system, although influenced by American concepts, is based on a Spanish civil law and a large amount of Communist legal theory and is a one-party government in which the public is able to participate at various levels. The right to vote is granted to those 16 years of age or older with the exception for those who have applied for permanent emigration.

There are three different branches of the government in Cuba which are Executive, Legislative and Judicial.

The executive branch consists of the President, the Chief of State offices and the Cabinet. The Offices of the Chief of State include the President of the Council of State, First Vice President of the Council of State, President of the Council of Ministers, and First Vice President of the Council of Ministers. The President of Cuba is both the President of the Council of State and the head of the government.

The Council of State is made up of 31 persons and is responsible for legislation when the National Assembly of the people is not in session. It is headed by the President of the Council of State who is also the President of Cuba.

The Council of Ministers is made up of nine people who are elected to that office and headed by the President of the Council of Ministers so as to handle the management of the economy. The Cabinet consists of those who are not the president or vice president of the Councils.

As of right now, Raul Castro is the President of both the Council of Ministers and the Council of State while the vice presidency of both Councils belongs to Jose Ramon Machado Ventura. Both of these leaders are elected by the National Assembly for a term of five years.

The legislative branch is known as the Unicameral National Assembly of People's Power or "Asemble Nacional del Poder Popular." The number of seats in the National Assembly is based on population and currently is made up of 614 seats. This body convenes twice a year for a few days.

Those that are elected to this post serve for five years and are elected directly from approved lists by the special candidacy commissions. It is because of this, and the fact that Cuba's Communist Party is the only legal party, that those who are the officially sanctioned candidate are able to run unopposed.

In terms of the judicial branch the People's Supreme Court, or Tribunal Supremo Popular, is again headed by the president, and vice president and the other judges are elected or dismissed by the National

Assembly. It is the People's Supreme Court's job to ensure that the laws set forth by the legislature are being enforced and regulated.

The court system is based on three levels: the municipal courts, the state courts, and the national courts, the highest being the national courts (also known as the Supreme Court system). Procession through these legal courts is highly dependent on one's status through prosecution. For example, should one raise an outcry against the government, the constitution states that those found opposing the government's wishes can be denied all civil liberties which include due process.

All legislative proposals put before the Assembly of People's Power must have at least 10,000 people backing it up with their signature. Being able to put a proposal forth, however, does not always mean that it will be written into law. On the contrary, some of the leaders who start proposals, for example human rights activists, are arrested for three years or more and their proposals are thrown away.

Cuba has been divided into 14 Administrative Divisions: Camaguey, Ciego de Avila, Cienfuegos, Ciudad de La Habana, Granma, Guantanamo, Holguin, Isla de la Juventud, La Habana, Las Tunas, Matanzas, Pinar del Rio, Sancti Spiritus, Santiago de Cuba, and Villa Clara. La Isla de la Juventud is a special municipality, meaning that there is a treaty recognizing that Cuba is sovereign over it. This happened in 1904 and is one of the least populated areas of Cuba.

For more information on the divisions or government of Cuba in general follow the links:

<http://www.cuba-junky.com>

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/au..html>

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm>

<http://uk.oneworld.net/guides/cuba/development#Health%20and%20HIV/AIDS>

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0857654.html>

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569844_8/Cuba.html

Economy:

The economy in Cuba is running on a dual currency system meaning that two types of currency systems are used at the same time. The first system is the socialist peso economy. This is the more prevalent among most Cubans, which allows them to have free education, free health care, universal employment, unemployment compensation, and disability and retirement benefits. This also provides them with food, utilities and the basic necessities of life in their day to day lives.

The second currency system is that of the free dollar market economy. This mostly operates in the areas of tourism along with international and export sectors which help to maintain the socialist economy.

There are three types of currency in Cuba at the moment: the Cuban peso, the Convertible peso and the American dollar. In order to trade pesos for the free market dollar, one must first exchange 1.08 Cuban pesos for 1 Convertible peso and then change 25 Convertible pesos to receive 1 dollar.

78% of the labor force in Cuba is employed by the state according to the government; however, the actual figure is closer to 90% with only about 200,000 farmers and 100,000 private business owners. If one is an out of country employer they are only able to gain employees through the government of Cuba. Then, in order to pay the workers, the money goes directly to the state. They in turn pay the workers about 5% of the pay which was given to the government by the foreign company.

With the loss of the Soviet monies there was a 35% loss of gross domestic product which greatly hindered the Cuban economy. In an attempt to help the economy move on the upswing, the government allowed a few market-oriented reforms. These reforms included opening to tourism, allowing foreign investment, legalizing the dollar, and authorizing self-employment for 150 occupants.

The positives that Cubans saw in their economy were hurt by lower nickel and sugar prices, increase in petroleum costs, post 9-11 tourism slow down, and seasonal hurricanes. Therefore, the increases which were seen during the early to mid 1990s were not seen in the late 1990s which caused people to question if there was a difference at all between the pre- and post-depression.

At the same time, tourism picked up in 2000 as seen through the 1.7 million tourists who came to Cuba generating 1.9 billion dollars of revenue for the country.

In 1993 the Cuban government allowed the use of the American dollar in Cuba. Since that time, dollar stores have been set up so that the government could also make a profit from the money being spent or exchanged.

There is a large gap now between those in the country who are able to use the dollar bill and those who have no access to it. So now, within the country of Cuba, it is more desirable to have a job in which one can receive the dollar, by tip or by pay. What this means is that a person will actually find doctors, engineers, etc working on the side as a waitress or driving a taxi cab.

In addition to this, it is not at all uncommon for family members in the United States to send financial aid to those in Cuba. However, there is a \$1,200 per year limit. It is due to this gap and the fact that basic needs, even with the help given by the government, are not being met. The people of Cuba have turned to doing business on the black market.

Another way the Cuban people provide for themselves is by moonlighting at another job that the government does not monitor (which is illegal). Nevertheless, this allows them the opportunity to be able to gain the needed food, clothes, and supplies needed to survive on a daily basis.

In any given year, Cuba has the ability to produce \$51.11 billion in goods and services. According to foreign exchange rates this amount would be valued at \$45.1 billion. Broken down and divided on an individual basis, each person in Cuba has the ability to purchase \$4,500 dollars a year.

Of the \$51.11 billion in goods and services 5.2% is agriculturally based, 25 % is produced by industry and 69.8% is produced through services that Cuba provides. The current budget that Cuba has set is \$41.84 billion. Cuba plans to spend about \$43.9 billion and the inflation rate has been set at 3.6%.

A major part of keeping the economy level is by internationally investing in joint ventures so that Cuba holds half of the equity where tourism and agricultural investments are made. At the same time, it is hard for Cuba to invest or borrow monies internationally because of its poor credit rating in paying others back on the debts. Their debt amounts to \$16 billion American dollars while another \$15-20 billion is owed to Russia. On the other hand, almost \$11.5 billion dollars of foreign investment is situated in Cuba.

Another issue that Cuba had was providing the country with enough energy to function. This was an issue that Cuba has dealt with in an economically and environmentally safe way. Instead of endlessly importing petroleum from other countries (although petroleum is still needed), or extending cables throughout the mountain ranges and countryside, Cuba has invested in solar energy.

They found that importing only the items that they cannot manufacture in Cuba to make solar panels and then assembling them in the country was more than half the cost under other means of transporting energies. In fact, this country actually produces more than it consumes! And though this country imports almost 100,000 barrels of oil per day, they have over 236 million oil barrels in reserve.

The labor force of Cuba is currently made up of 4.956 million people, of which 78% are employed by the state and 22% are considered a “non-state sector.” 20% of the workforce is agriculturally based, 19.4% is industrially based and the other 60.6% earn a living by providing various services while the other 1.9% is unemployed.

To help buffer the unemployment rate, the Cuban government, since 1993, has allowed for 150 job categories to be considered self-employed though these venues are still highly regulated and heavily taxed. An example of a self-employed job would be being a restaurant owner. However, they are only allowed to seat 12 in their restaurant at any given time.

Agriculturally speaking, Cuba mainly produces a combination of sugar, tobacco, citrus, coffee, rice, potatoes, beans and livestock. Other natural resources include cobalt, nickel, iron ore, chromium, copper, salt, timber, silica, petroleum, and arable land. What is interesting is that the economy, in reference to agriculture has seasons just like the seasons of the year, and the most important by far is called, the *zafra*.

The *zafra*, which starts at the beginning of each year, is the time when sugar cane is ready to be cut and processed which requires a stunning workforce of hundreds of thousands of people. It was actually for this reason that slaves were imported to Cuba so long ago. *La zafra* is not only an important season in the economy of Cuba, it is a symbol of richness and economic revival for the Cuban community.

This season in Cuban agricultural life allows for a relatively large inflow of cash so that hired hands can pay their debt to the grocer, from the debts accumulated throughout the year. Through these payments, the grocer can then pay back the banks on which they relied to provide food and sustenance for, not only themselves, but for others in their communities.

Because of the agricultural sector of Cuba making up 20% of the workforce, industry also follows in being somewhat agriculturally based. Industry in Cuba is made up of sugar, petroleum/energy, tobacco, construction, nickel, steel, cement, pharmaceutical and agricultural machinery industries.

Both agricultural and industrial goods are exported in addition to services provided by those that Cuba allows to work in other countries in sectors such as the medical sector. The main export commodities center on sugar, nickel, tobacco, fish, medical products, citrus and coffee.

28% of what is exported from Cuba goes to Canada closely followed by China at 27.8%. The Netherlands (11.1%) and Spain (4.7%) follow behind these two countries in what is exported from Cuba. All this exporting comes down to a grand total of \$3.702 billion per fiscal year.

Cuba generally imports goods to the value of \$10.08 billion per fiscal year which includes petroleum, food, machinery/equipment, and chemicals. These imported products are used to help make the products and services that Cuba exports to other countries.

28% of the goods imported come from Venezuela, 13.2% from China, 9.8% from Spain, 5.5% from Canada, 4.8% from the United States and 4.6% from Brazil.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/cuba/economy.htm>
<http://www.globalexchange.org/countries/americas/cuba/936.html>

<http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/havana/Sugar2.htm>
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0724/p01s01-woam.html?page=3>
<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/06/08/news/CB-FEA-GEN-Cuba-Farming-Havana.php>
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cu.html>

Literacy:

Due to the fact that education is free to all who want it and is mandatory up to the age of 15, Cuba has one of the largest literacy rates in Latin America. Cuba made it a goal to rid the country of illiteracy in 1961 and the rewards of that decision are seen today in almost all those 15 years of age or older. Regardless of gender or economic/social status, 99.8% of the population is literate and can read and write.

At the same time, to balance the goal of literacy, Cuban children, when home on vacation from school, are required to work outside of the home in the fields so they do not become blind intellectuals. Actually, part of their school time during the year has to be spent on working on the land.

<http://www.cubacuban.com/culture/customs.shtml>
WorldMark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life, Volume 2, 1997.

Land/Geography:

Cuba is located in the Caribbean. It is an island between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. Though slightly smaller than the state of Pennsylvania, at 110,860 square kilometers in area, it is the largest country in the Caribbean and the westernmost island of the Greater Antilles. Cuba is located 150km south of Key West, Florida and the Guantanamo Naval Base is located at the far Southeast side of Cuba which is leased by the United States but remains a part of Cuba.

The coastline of Cuba is 3,735km long and the sea can easily be found within 29 km from any location on the island. Water boundaries are often marshy and may have corals and cays before reaching the open sea. This allows for good harbors which has lead to Cuba having many seaports along their coastline.

The climate of Cuba is tropical which is moderated by trade winds which allows for a dry season from November to April and a rainy season from May to October. Annually, the average temperature is 24 degrees Celsius.

In addition to the regular seasons, Cuba also has what is known as a hurricane season which stretches from August into November. During this time Cuba averages one significant hurricane every other year. On another note, droughts are also common in Cuba.

The terrain of Cuba is flat to rolling plains, with rugged hills with mountains in the southeast which help to buffer the country from hurricanes coming from the Atlantic Ocean. There are three main mountain chains: the Sierra Maestra in the east, the Sierra de los Organos in the west, and the Sierra de Trinidad which is composed of rolling hills in central Cuba. The highest point in Cuba is found in the Sierra Maestra at Pico Turquino at 6560 ft above sea level.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0857652.html>
http://www.classbrain.com/art_cr/publish/cuba_geography.shtml

In reference to foliage, Cuba has two types of forests: moist and dry. The moist forests are very wet and ferns, among other bush type plants, cover the forest floor. These forests scattered throughout the lowland areas.

These sub-tropical and tropical broadleaf forests cover about 8,300 square miles of Cuba's area which is comparable to a little over the size of Massachusetts. They are home to many exotic species of birds and other wildlife. Foliage and canopy cover are heavily dependent on the amount of rain received in any given year.

The dry forests, although also broadleaf and tropical, do not receive as much rain as the wet forest and are located throughout the lowland areas but at slightly lower elevations. This area takes up a little over 25,000 square miles of Cuba's area which is comparable to the size of the state of West Virginia. Another important difference is that this type of forest is an evergreen forest meaning that they only lose about 30% of their leaf cover at any one point in the year.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/nt/nt0120.html>
http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/nt/nt0213_full.html

The country of Cuba is littered with many rivers and tributaries, but of the over 200 rivers, only two are actually navigable. Those two rivers are the Cauto, which is in the southeast, and The Sagua la Grande, which runs through central Cuba.

While the Cauto only serves as a transport waterway, the Sagua la Grande serves as a transport and a source of hydroelectric power. The downside is that it is only navigable for short distances. However, both rivers serve as good stock for the fishing industry. Other rivers in the area include the Zaza, Caonao, Toa, and San Pedro rivers.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569844/Cuba.html#s91
<http://www.hicuba.com/eng/geography.htm>

Some of the current environmental issues are air and water pollution, biodiversity loss and deforestation. The government is trying to rectify these issues though its main focus is on the economy.

Water pollution is a major concern in Cuba because about 59% of all water contaminant sources recognized by the United Nations Environmental Program are found untreated in the water supply. These contaminants are found around and in the waters surrounding the country of Cuba, and 20% of these contaminants are found in partially treated water.

In addition to this, water is being overdrawn due to poor sewage/plumbing systems. What this means is that when pulling more water out of resources issues with leaky pipes causes more than a quarter of that water to be spilled on the way to its destination.

Although water conservation is a big issue in Cuba, the most important by far is that of desertification. Desertification is the damaging of the soil to the point that it no longer holds nutrients and is no longer arable or useful for farming.

In 2001 the most intense desertification was found in the Eastern province and it was estimated that almost 76% of the potentially arable land had some level of damage that would effect the production of crops. This issue is only compounded when the consequences of deforestation arise because the forest is no longer holding the soil together. Another factor that adds to the problem is the constant hurricanes that occur in the region.

In addition to the above issues is the issue of hazardous waste. Cuba's system for disposing and regulating hazardous wastes is the Environmental Inspection and Control Center. Most of the hazardous

waste created in Cuba has to do with metal wastes that contain cadmium, mercury, arsenic, chlorides, lead and other waste created through use of batteries or electronic equipment.

In order to help with these environmental concerns Cuba has signed on to a series of treaties to help make themselves accountable and to set goals for a cleaner and environmentally friendly future for Cuba. One of these treaties would be the Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol. The major reason for this treaty was to internationally recognize that global warming is occurring and to set goals, so that the reduction of greenhouse gasses would be possible before 2012.

For more information on environmental issues follow the links below:

http://ctp.iccas.miami.edu/FACTS_Web/Cuba%20Facts%20Issue%2026%20November%202006.htm
<http://www.waterconserve.org/shared/reader/welcome.aspx?linkid=20761&keybold=desertification%20landscapes>
<http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:IEW3hQEAY10J:www.bvsde.paho.org/bvsacd/cd43/control.pdf+Hazardous+Waste+Cuba&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us>
http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php

For pictures and maps in regards the geography of Cuba, follow the links below:

http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.fiu.edu/~gebelein/Cuba_website/cuba_physical_geog/photo_pages_write_to_CD/regions/all_Cuba_classified.jpg_new.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.fiu.edu/~gebelein/Cuba_website/cuba_physical_geog/photo_pages_write_to_CD/regions/cuba_regions.htm&h=259&w=740&sz=34&hl=en&start=13&usq=CHRlqy-cMjigRaiq-WnbUqeiS1Y=&tbnid=j-7soMNzDdas6M:&tbnh=49&tbnw=141&prev=/images%3Fq%3DCuba%2Bgeography%26gbv%3D2%26hl%3Den%26safe%3Dactive
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/cuba.jpg>

History

The first peoples to inhabit Cuba were 50,000 Coboney and Taino who were agricultural Native Americans related to the Arawak peoples of the Americas. Known as the Indocubans, the people lived peaceably and sustained themselves through fishing and farming.

Although the island of Cuba was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492, it wasn't until 1510 that Diego de Velazquez actually brought an army with him to conquer the island. Battles ensued between the Indocubans and the Spaniards, but the diseases the Spaniards brought with them were unknown to the Indocubans who therefore had no immunity. Because of this, the Indocubans started to die out and the Spaniards eventually conquered the island.

The Spanish authorities forced the Indocubans into labor for the purpose of obtaining sugar. The forced labor and the diseases lowered their number to the point that in 1523, the authorities had to bring slaves to cultivate the land. This practice instituted the African slave trade. After a time, the Indocubans acclimated to the new culture and their numbers grew once again.

During the beginning of the early colonial years, Cuba was used as a point of take off by such explorers as Hernan Cortes and Hernando De Soto to further discover the Americas. At the same time, Havana was seen as a target for French and English pirates after the discovery of treasures found in Mexico.

In 1762 Havana was taken over by the English and they remained in control of Cuba for a year until the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. The Treaty of Paris gave control of Cuba to Spain but in return,

Spain would give the English control of the Florida territory. During the time the Spanish were in control of Cuba, the Cubans endured harsh mistreatment and though they tried to revolt, their attempts failed time and time again.

Carlos Manuel de Cespedes was a wealthy planter who, in 1868, took a public stand by freeing his slaves and called for a revolution against the Spanish. The next ten years brought guerilla wars against the Spanish, but little was accomplished in moving towards freedom and defeating the Spanish. Cespedes is considered to be the father of Cuban Independence although he was prevented from having a bigger impact.

A second important figure in Cuban independence was Jose Marti who, in 1890, formed the Cuban Revolutionary Party during his time of exile in the US. On February 24, 1894 there was a call to pick up arms and to begin a new war. Unfortunately, Marti was killed at Dos Rios where he had gathered with a group of recruits in Eastern Cuba. After this defeat, the uprising only lasted for about a year. Upon the collapse of the revolt, the Spanish assumed control once again.

Eventually, the Cubans ultimately became dependent upon the Americans to come in and defeat the Spanish. On February 15, 1898 the battleship Maine was blown up in the Havana harbor. The event resulted in intense anti-Spanish feelings which were encouraged through the newspapers in the United States. On April 25th the United States declared war on Spain and within a few short months the war was over.

The Treaty of Paris, which was signed on December 10, 1898, gave Cuba independence. Nevertheless, the United States army stayed and controlled Cuba from 1899 until 1902. The United States set a program designed to rid Cuba of yellow fever as they sought to establish a US political and commercial dominance over the island.

February 21, 1901 brought about the adoption of a new constitution which allowed Cuba to be a nominally free nation. However, the United States encouraged Cuba to place in their constitution the Platt Amendment which allowed the United States the opportunity to intervene into their affairs at any time deemed necessary. The amendment also allowed the United States to maintain a naval base at Guantanamo Bay.

As the government continued to form, the United States kept a watchful eye over Cuba. The United States possessed control over half of Cuba's cultivated land, utilities, mines, and other natural resources. The Marines intervened in Cuban affairs during the years of 1906-9; 1912 and 1920. The superseding of the United States was put to a stop when Gerardo Machado y Morales became the brutal dictator of Cuba from 1925-33.

The year 1933 brought instability to Cuba which is shown through an uprising that took place among the Nationalists causing Machado to be removed from office. The United States attempted to step in and establish a regime, but there was a "sergeants' revolt" lead by Fulgencio Batista y Zaldivar. The outcome was they chose to name Ramon Grau San Martin as the intermediate president of Cuba. Martin, who was a physician and professor, was only in power four months. The United States did not take any steps toward acknowledging his power or the power of the Cuban government.

From 1934-1940 Batista ruled over Cuba by using several men as his puppets. He accomplished two crucial actions while in power in Cuba. In 1934 President Franklin D. Roosevelt allowed Cuba to do away with the Platt Amendment. However, the U. S. was able to retain their possession of the naval base at Guantanamo Bay. Batista also allowed for a new constitution to be written for Cuba in 1940. This constitution provided an opportunity for him to take over and rule the country.

In 1944 Batista allowed Grau San Martin to take the presidency although they were political enemies. The eight years that followed while Grau and his ally Carlos Prío Socarras were in power were corrupt and not effective. In 1952 a reformed party was expected to win the election but instead on March 10, 1952 brought about Batista taking power.

During that time Batista did almost anything necessary to remain in office but the economy slowly but surely made itself dependent on the United States which led to the U.S.'s domination of the economy. The country then saw a downward spiral of social services, poverty, and illiteracy which was the setting in which Fidel Castro found himself.

Castro was able to slowly begin his take over in July of 1953 when he raided the Moncada Army Barracks in Santiago which led to his exile to Mexico. Castro collected supporters in Mexico and came back to Cuba in 1956 and escaped the army of Batista by heading to the Sierra Maestra. He was able to stand up against Batista's army with guerilla fighting tactics. Even though Castro never had more than a few thousand supporters, he was able to keep these tactics in place which eventually made headway in Cuban politics.

While these events were unfolding, the United States backed out its support of the government of Cuba.

Batista's rule ended in 1959 and many people who had supported him withdrew and fled from the country. July 26, 1959 was the day that Castro was able to take control of the government of Cuba ruling by decree. Castro attempted to implement a revolutionary government to help with financial and economic problems by use of large-scale land, economical, and social reforms.

In 1960 the ties between Cuba and the United States dwindled and Cuba chose to nationalize \$2 billion in land which was owned by the US. This act cut all diplomatic ties that Cuba had with the United States. Following this, the United States chose to do away with Cuba's sugar quota and boycott its economy altogether.

In April 1961 a group of people trained, financed, organized, and equipped by the CIA invaded the Bay of Pigs on the Southern coast. The forces were defeated 72 hours after the invasion and they were captured. The United States and other sources were able to retrieve the remaining people due to the payment of a ransom to Cuba amounting to \$50 million dollars. This payment included food and medical supplies along with money.

In 1961 Castro, claiming to be a Marxist-Leninist, helped the country of Cuba enter the Socialist world. This required that all of Cuba's production, distribution, communication, and services become nationalized. In 1962 the trade and other relations transformed so that they would emulate the Eastern way instead of the Westernized way.

The United States blocked Cuba until an agreement was made, with the help of the Soviet Union, to remove missiles in Cuba as long as the United States would start no more offensive operations against Cuba. The United States went beyond this agreement and did its best to isolate Cuba from the rest of Latin America both politically and economically. Cuba's response to this was to attempt to change Central and South American governments to reflect their own by way of guerilla invasions.

Relations with Cuba became a little more relaxed when Carter held the presidency of the United States which made it easier to consent to fishing and maritime agreements. With the election of Ronald Regan to the presidential office of the United States strained relations between Cuba and the United States developed, again.

In the 1960s and 70s Castro was able to establish a social welfare system including free healthcare and subsidized housing. The economy of Cuba was under a hard strain due to choices made by the government. People of Cuba had to be very careful with how and where they spent their money.

One of the choices that created such duress occurred when Castro attempted to have the island produce 10 million metric tons of sugar by 1970. Another event that compounded economical strain was the fall of the Soviet Union. Cuba was hit very hard due to the loss of military and economic help they had become dependent upon over the years. For Cuba, the USSR was crucial to their sugar market and with the fall the market was gone.

About 75,000 people fled the country of Cuba upon Castro coming to power. Many of them reside in Florida and are anxiously waiting for a when they can return to Cuba. At one point an attempt was made to help Cubans reunite with one another upon reaching Florida. Despite attempts, however, it has not worked out the way it was intended.

In 1992 the United States signed the Cuban Democracy Act which further hurt the economy of Cuba by notifying other countries that their relationship with Cuba's government would cause some unease in their relationship with the United States.

Emigration once again took place when the United States opened the door for Cuban refugees fleeing in 1994. This led to rafts from the Cuban isle bound for Florida. In 1995 Cuba and the United States made an agreement that the U.S. would only allow 20,000 people into the states each year. To help slow the influx, the Cuban government was to take steps to ensure that the limit would not be passed. Cuba then began to move towards a more pro-democratic make-up.

Those movements toward a pro-democratic Cuba were destroyed in 1996 which brought about the signing of another act, the Helms-Burton Act. This act strengthened the embargo against Cuba which caused even more of a strain between Cuba and the United States.

The U.S. met criticism from Canada and the World Trade Organization who attempted to strengthen trade ties with Cuba to try and rebuff the decision made by the U.S. The situation was made worse when the Cuban Air Force shot down two civilian airplanes flying over international waters and carrying medical and computer equipment and supplies. Four persons were killed in the act.

Relations between America and Cuba were additionally strained during the end of 1999 and the beginning of 2000 over the controversy surrounding Elian Gonzalez. Elian Gonzalez was traveling over to the United States with his mother and 10 other Cubans when everyone on the raft drowned except for him. The father, who was in Cuba, wanted the boy to be returned to Cuba and while the family in Florida wanted to child to be able to stay in Florida.

The two sides of the dispute were the Castro regime in Cuba and the anti-Castro Cuban community in southern Florida. Now years following the unsure time in Elian's life he is back home in Cuba where he and his father live. Elian has recently been admitted into the National Assembly and has taken his place in Cuban society and government.

No one is allowed to visit their house because next door the Cuban government officials are always on the lookout for each person going by and what they are doing. If tourists come to the town then they are directed to a museum which tells about Elian's story.

The Castro government still affirms socialism as the correct way of running the country. The portion of the economy related to agriculture has been helped through an increase in tourism, mining, cigar, and fish

exports. However, even with the improvements to the economy the people of Cuba have not experienced a better lifestyle for which Castro blames the US embargo's effect on the economy.

Cubans in January 1998 were given the opportunity to take part in the second direct election for the National Assembly. The people were given the opportunity to vote either *yes* or *no* to a list of pre-approved candidates from the Communist Party. The month following the election the Assembly chose Fidel Castro as Chairman of the Council of State for five more years. The Assembly elected Castro to once again be in office which would extend his leadership role in politics for a span of over forty years.

As the United States declared war against Terrorism in 2001, Castro claimed that the United States would declare war on Cuba. He began to prosecute the political opposition more heavily. Castro also chose to increase pressure on opposition by executing political dissidents.

January 2003 brought another opportunity for the people of Cuba to hold another open election for members of the National Assembly. Once again the only vote the people were able to have was a *yes* or *no* on an already approved list of candidates by the Communist Party. A few months later the assembly appointed Fidel Castro to once again rule in the position of chairman of the Council of State for five more years.

In 2005 Castro had been ruling the country of Cuba for 46 years which was the most in recent Latin American history. As of right now (2008), Raul Castro, Fidel Castro's brother, now holds the leadership position of Cuba and he follows the lead of his elder brother.

Major changes have already occurred in the area of rights and freedoms. For example, some land was given to those who were in need to farm in the city, and people are allowed more access to DVDs and PCs. At the same time, media use is still regulated and there is a journalist currently on hunger strike for the right for the ordinary people of Cuba to have free reign over the use of the internet.

A source of tension between the U.S. and Cuba is the American base in Guantanamo Bay. The controversy surfaces around the ethics and the goings on of such a facility. Also, there is tension just for the fact that there is an American presence in Cuba through this base.

There is also tension between these two countries because of the refugee policy that America has toward the Cuban people. People who escape from Cuba to the U.S. are treated as refugees when they arrive only if they touch land by their own means.

<http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/havana/early.html>

http://www.state.gov/www/regions/wha/cuba/democ_act_1992.html

<http://www.hellocuba.ca/history.php>

Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations: Americas, 10 Ed., Vol. 3, 2001

Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations: Americas, 12 Ed., Vol. 3, 2007

For other news regarding current events in Cuba and concerning Cuba, follow these links:

http://us.oneworld.net/places/cuba#tabs-issue_tab-4

<http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y98/feb98/02e1.htm>

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/06/17/world/main4185799.shtml>

<http://uk.oneworld.net/guides/cuba/development#Health%20and%20HIV/AIDS>

Christian History

Christianity made its initial imprint on Cuba in the form of Catholicism when Diego de Vazquez conquered Cuba in 1510 even though it had already been proclaimed the property of Spain in 1492.

Later, the first Diocese, or organization of the church, was set by Leo X in 1518. He left a physical marker, in this case a papal seal, at Baracoa in Santiago de Cuba. However, this seal was later moved by Adrian VI in 1522, and thus symbolically and physically moved the center of the Catholic church of Cuba in the city of Santiago, where it still remains.

Catholicism brought with it Dominican, Franciscan, and Augustine convents and monasteries as well as universities to the island. This allowed for the further training of priests and monks as well as scholars. Due to the absence of gold and the lowering of the population due to disease, the Catholic Church activities were sluggish.

Near the beginning of the 19th century, the Spanish government applied laws to Cuba more liberally than previously done. By the mid-19th century the people of Cuba, though more economically stable due to these laws, began to resent the Spanish presence. Support for the Catholic Church fell in these years because the people associated the Church with the hierarchal Spanish government that they wanted to free themselves from. This opened the door to Protestantism in Cuba.

Jose Marti, the Father of the Cuban Revolution, went so far as to try to find a replacement for Catholicism. He wanted a new form of religion that society could be based on after the War of Independence. During his exile to the United States, he thoroughly studied the protestant churches from the mid-to-late 1800s.

Marti, however, did not return to Cuba with the intention to promote the Protestant church because he did not want the new government to resemble Capitalism. At the same time, he did realize what implications Protestantism might bring should missionaries make their way to Cuba, especially with sentiments against the Catholic Church being so strong as to push the people towards atheism.

Much of the Protestant history known today can be seen as a direct result of the Revered Edward Kenney who started his work in 1871. His primary intent was to evangelize and be a chaplain to sea captains who spoke English and people who chose to reside in Cuba from other foreign countries.

Seeing the plight of the sick in Havana, however, Kenney chose to help serve the ill and dying that suffered from sicknesses such as yellow fever. By doing so, he earned the respect of a people and drew them to question where his spiritual strength emanated from and was able to show them another form of Christianity through Protestantism.

In spite of the progress that Kenney made, the Anglican and Catholic Church pressured him to return to the United States in 1880. Those nine years of service in Cuba would lay the foundations for future outreach, relative to Protestantism, and would later resurface as Cuba continued fighting for its independence.

The furthering of the Protestant church continued after Kenney's departure due to the laboring of Someillian and Silvera and their working with the Methodist church. These two people traveled to and from Key West. Their primary mission was to evangelize to the poor of the country of Cuba. This mission work was successful until the first installment of the Cuban war for Independence.

After that, Someillian and Silvera shifted their focus to the more social elite of the city of Havana. Due to the fact that this represented a minority of Cuba, the congregation that they established did not grow as expected and they returned to Key West to concentrate their efforts there.

Although Kenney and Someillian made their mark as the “fathers of Protestantism” in Cuba, it was the Cuban people, after these men left, who continued the work that was left behind. Two main groups were formed in Havana and Matanzas. The strongest was the one in Matanzas who called themselves the *Fieles de Jesus*.

Through many persecutions, both political and social, these people formed a community that would bring forth some of Cuba’s most patriotic leaders in the Revolution. One leader was Pedro Duarte.

It was Pedro Duarte who pleaded on behalf of Cuba gaining religious tolerance from Queen Maria Cristina. These two congregations in Havana and Matanzas were later recognized by Bishop Young of the Anglican Church in 1884. He helped Pedro Duarte receive a theological education in the United States so that the work of the Church could further progress.

Thanks to the labors of a Cuban exile in 1883, the Baptist Convention of Cuba was able to start in the south and west within the island. Another man that helped this movement was W.F. Wood, who helped to install the first Protestant day school and the first Cuban-American College. Though Wood was to preach on this island for a good while, this movement was somewhat stifled until a later date when religious freedoms would be instilled.

The Presbyterian Church in Cuba was founded by Evaristo Collazo when Duarte left to be educated by Young. Collazo became the leader of the Fieles de Jesus. He had encountered the Presbyterian Church when he was escaping from possible arrest from the government and became familiar with it.

When Duarte returned he started two churches in Havana and Santa Clara. He applied for and was granted the recognition and aid from the Presbyterian Church which later sent a minister to teach and ordain Collazo.

Relations between the United States Presbyterian Church and the Cuban Presbyterian Church were strained after the United States Presbyterian Church continued to send missionaries to check up on Collazo and even sent two missionaries to remain permanently.

These check ups were ended in 1895 when the government of Cuba, tired of the meddling of the United States in their affairs, sent the U.S. missionaries home during the last phase of the War of Independence. After the War of Independence was over, Protestantism nearly collapsed with the exception of a few congregations that haphazardly continued to function.

Another war, the Spanish-American War, soon followed and the United States was then able to control Cuba and its government for a time. They granted the island should have religious freedom and all restrictions on Protestant missionaries were lifted at that time.

With the help of the North American Mission Board, the Presbyterians were able to start the first Sunday school which later started the formation of another congregation in Cuba.

The Spanish-American War, however, did not make it easier for those in the Anglican Church to provide missionaries to minister to those in the region. This was mostly because of the church’s ties to the Catholic Church. The political atmosphere did not allow for one church to encroach upon the territory, affairs, or missionary works of another church in the same region.

Through investigation of the Catholic Churches in Cuba, grounds were found on which the Anglican Church was allowed to step in and send missionaries to Cuba in 1898. However, missionaries were not sent until 1904 because of other political entanglements.

In 1898, the Southern Baptist Convention was given free access in four provinces in Cuba: Havana, Pinar del Rio, Matanzas, and Las Villas. In 1901 the first Baptist missionary, C.D. Daniel, arrived and began his work. At this time, the Southern Baptist Convention was known for its stubborn attitude towards the laws of the land which hindered this convention for quite some time afterward.

Other protestant denominations such as the Quakers, Congregationalists, and the Disciples were also able to start missions after the stringent laws were lifted. However, these attempts were not successful and did not remain a fixture of Protestantism in Cuba.

During the Spanish-American War, the help of those in the American military who were Protestant became indispensable to the North American Mission Board. Through military personnel, the board was able to assess the needs of the island of Cuba.

On the other hand, there was well founded speculation that the purpose of evangelizing the island was for a future purpose: the annexation of Cuba. The thought was that Cuba would someday become a U.S. protectorate and possibly another state.

In 1902, Cuba gained their independence from Spain and the right to religion was given to all persons on the island. At this time, Cuba was both economically and politically reliant on the United States. At first, this provided an economic boom due to World War I. Later relations cooled as Cuba neared the 1940s after a succession of Cuban dictatorships.

Between 1902 and the early 1940s, the island was basically divided up between the established churches in Cuba. For example, while the Methodist church had a congregation in almost every province, the Baptist church stayed around the provinces of Havana, Las Villas, and Cardenas. This time period was also characterized by the establishment of protestant schools and colleges in the area.

The structure and placement of more churches in Cuba basically remained the same until 1920 when some of the denominations had splits and the new denominations placed churches in the same areas. One such development was the joining of a Baptist congregation with a Presbyterian to form one church called Presbiterio Central. After this time period of church growth, Cuba underwent drastic social and political changes that made its mark on church history.

The anti-Catholicism sentiment that had once fostered the growth of the church became a hindrance due to the amount of focus on the subject. With political changes in resistance to the United States policy towards Cuba, some began to distance themselves from Protestantism by association.

The religious holidays in Cuba such as Christmas, Easter Week and Epiphany were no longer allowed to be celebrated after a ruling from the government in the 1960's. The people, however, chose to celebrate the holidays quietly in their homes. Changes came to this system when in 1998 the Pope made a visit to Cuba and Castro decided to re-instate the celebration of religious holidays.

During the 1960s, religious persecution and discrimination was common no matter the religion or denomination of that religion. There were even "reeducation camps" set up for some ministers so that the society of the Revolution could flourish.

This continued through the 1970s which saw the First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party support the movement of systematically removing religious beliefs through propaganda. Those churches who remained in Cuba decided to take a non-political approach in order to continue to do ministry. So although churches were disbanded and schools were closed, the church's legacy continued.

In the 1980s the churches and the government started on a new road towards a more settled relationship. An example of this is when Castro allowed the church service attended by Rev. Jesse Jackson to be nationally televised in 1984. Another is found when the Pope was allowed to visit in 1998.

Other olive branches included the allowing of U.S. Catholic bishops to visit their brethren in Cuba and allowing the Cuban bishops to visit those in the U.S. The most broadcasted change happened in 1985 when Castro agreed to sit down in a series of interviews where Frei Betto (a Brazilian priest) asked Castro questions about himself and his thoughts on religion.

On top of this the most important change occurred when Cuba's Fourth Communist Party Congress removed a barrier that involved Christians not being able to obtain party membership in 1991. This was furthered by declaring Cuba a secularist state instead of an atheist state.

Currently, there are over 60,000 evangelicals in Cuba. Although the laws of the land have relaxed a bit in relation to the Church, there are still many restrictions that limit mission opportunities and activities of the churches. So while the government allows the churches to exist and they are tolerant of religion, the government by no means supports them.

Due to the nature of the government in Cuba, information on history referring to any one specific denomination in Cuba since the new regime took power is somewhat limited. Nevertheless, the Christian churches continue to grow despite hardship.

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04558c.htm>

http://www.christiancuba.org/anonymous/christiancuba.org/root/cuban_council/Church_in_Cuba_BriefReport.PDF
World Christian Encyclopedia: Cuba

http://books.google.com/books?id=HEBeNigNwKkC&pg=PA229&lpg=PA229&dq=Protestant+beginnings+Cuba&source=web&ots=zdJ8NPhpri&sig=vYq_WV_Q39yJfxBrHvK1kvg-0j0&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPA233,M1

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CE5DD173AF93AA15752C0A96E958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>

Religion

The following section is about the religions of the country of Cuba. This will include overall information about the religion and possible history of the religions presence in Cuba. However, because of the limited information available, the number of adherents or number of congregations may or may not be included in this section. For information about the beliefs of these religions, links are provided for further studies.

Non Christian

Judaism

Judaism was introduced to Cuba in 1898 when some of the Jewish-American soldiers in the Spanish-American War brought their beliefs with them from the U.S. and established the first congregation. In addition to this, many Jewish people from other European countries stopped over in Cuba on the way to America, and remained in Cuba.

After Castro came to power, about 94% of the Jewish community left the island. They didn't agree with the new revolution and did not put their faith in Castro to do as he had promised. The 6% that did stay did so because of their belief in a revolutionary Cuba. This followed a period of nearly forty years of isolation of their communities.

In the last 10 years, Jewish communities and Judaism have come back to the surface as a thriving part of Cuban society. As of right now there are at least 12 Jewish congregations in Cuba. Though the Jews of Cuba make up less than 1% of the population, theirs is still a society of hope in the future as they continue to grow.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php>

<http://www.religionfacts.com/judaism>

<http://www.jewishcuba.org/>

Islam

Much like the history of Judaism, Islam was introduced to Cuba between 1860 and 1930. Islam was brought to Cuba by immigrants who were on their way to America during a time of war and famine and were looking for better opportunities elsewhere. Most of these people came from Lebanon, Syria and Palestine.

The Muslim community thrived and then diminished during the time of the revolution from a population of over 30,000 to currently 550. Although there were Muslim communities, the associations that they formed were based on the ethnicity of the group as opposed to their religion. The biggest change happened in 1979 when these different groups came to form the Arab Union of Cuba.

Though this religion has survived and continues to function in Cuban society, Muslim leaders are struggling with government regulations and restrictions. One such struggle includes the petition for a mosque to be built so that Muslims can perform their daily prayers which is presently performed in their homes.

<http://www.islamawareness.net/LatinAmerica/cuba.html>

<http://www.cubasolidarity.com/aboutcuba/topics/race/0311cubanarabs.htm>

<http://www.einnews.com/cuba/newsfeed-cuba-muslims>

<http://www.religionfacts.com/islam>

Hinduism

Hinduism was introduced to the Cuban culture along with the influx of people from other nations from the 1830s until well into the 1910s. Some of the Indian people were brought to the Caribbean as another source of slave labor or as indentured servants. Others sought to make new fortunes in Cuba.

As of now the population of those who are considered Hindi and practicing is 34,000 people which is still well below 1% of Cuba's total population. No associations have yet gone through the Ministry of Religion in order to receive legal recognition.

http://www.guyanajournal.com/hinduism_caribbean.html

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=104026&rog3=CU>

Buddhism

There are few that adhere to Buddhism in Cuba and the history of this religion in Cuba is sparse. In January 2007, a Buddhist religious group was recognized by the government which included over 200 participants in the Havana area.

Known as the Soka Gakkai International organization, the Buddhists focus on cultural diversity, educational assistance, and humanitarian aid. The leader was invited to Cuba by the Minister of Culture in 1996 and through interaction with the government, recognition was achieved. Through recognition they are now allowed to participate openly in society and culture along with having a regular meeting place.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90249.htm>
<http://www.sgi.org/buddhism/recent-event/2007/events070106b.html>
<http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/index.htm>

Baha'i

The Baha'i community was founded at the end of 1939 with one center in Havana and has expanded to five local centers. There is also a Baha'i community in Camaguey. These communities have their own school systems and cultural centers and have been a fixture in Cuban society since the 1940s. They are legally recognized by the current governmental system.

<http://www.northhill.demon.co.uk/bahai/intro8.htm>
<http://cu.bahai.org/en>
<http://www.religionfacts.com/bahai/beliefs.htm>
http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/summary_0199-4905069_ITM

Jehovah's Witness

This religion was introduced to the island in 1938. The number of adherents grew steadily from 100 members to 4,000 between 1938 and 1947. The largest amount of growth occurred from 1947 to 1965 when the membership grew to 20,000 members. Persecution from the government was still occurring during this time and afterward. A major milestone was made when the government chose to acknowledge the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses in regards to serving militarily.

Officially recognized by the Cuban government, this sect currently boasts over 86,000 members and is allowed to meet publicly (though restrictively). Alongside this, the Cuban Watch Tower is allowed to be printed and distributed among those in this sect.

<http://www.udel.edu/DRC/Aguirre/publications/ag10.pdf>
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51634.htm>
http://www.religionfacts.com/jehovahs_witnesses/index.htm

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)

The population of those that practice at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is a very small congregation of 30. Although they are recognized by the government of Cuba, they are restricted in their actions toward evangelism because they haven't associated themselves with a larger association of Christian Churches that the government has been willing to meet with.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90249.htm>
<http://www.geocities.com/dyancey3/ldscuba.htm>
<http://www.religionfacts.com/mormonism/index.htm>

Santeria

Santeria is a mixing of African cultural religions with that of the Catholic Church. This syncretic religion began when the Catholic Church started their mission work on the island with African slaves from the 16th to 19th century. Santeria is a highly spiritualistic religion.

It has been estimated that about 70 percent of the island of Cuba performs some religious acts in regard to Santeria whether or not they attend another church. This religion is still a major part of society and churches have been established in the countryside. Most of the practices are done in meeting houses, instead of the churches, due to the secret nature of the rituals involved in Santeria.

The government of Cuba recently gave full recognition to Santeria groups in 2007. The most important fact about this recognition is that the regime has given those practicing Santeria preference in regards to legislation because they consider Santeria to be a part of their culture and history. Thus, those that practice Santeria at this point are not restricted as to what they are allowed to do as long as they abide by the few rules that the government has put in place.

<http://www.church-of-the-lukumi.org/contsanteria.htm>
http://cuban-exile.com/doc_326-350/doc0337.html

Non-religious

Because of the strong associations made with government and religion in the beginning of and well into the history of this country, there are those that choose to be non-religious. What is interesting is that though they consider themselves to be nonreligious, some still choose to pay homage to the Virgin of Charity, which is Cuba's patron saint.

At the moment figures for the percentage of those that consider themselves nonreligious range from 55-65%. This may be confusing because, as said previously, there are those that consider themselves nonreligious though they may participate in any other religion at any one time, though not on a regular basis.

http://www.adherents.com/adhloc/Wh_82.html
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/religions.php?ror3=7>
<http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Bu-Dr/Cuban-Americans.html>
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/27/AR2006072700781.html>

Catholic/Orthodox

Catholicism was brought to the island of Cuba in the late 1400s and has made its mark on the country of Cuba since. The Catholic Church suffered persecutions due to associations with political struggles with Spain in various wars.

Today the percentage of people that associate themselves with Catholicism is anywhere from 45%-70%, or around 5,300,000 people, because there are those that choose to follow two or more religions. So while a person may attend a Catholic Church, they may also participate in Santeria, or go to the church so rarely that they may consider themselves nonreligious though the church counts them as Catholic.

<http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/catholicism.htm>

Christian/Evangelical

Methodists

After the start of the Methodist church in Cuba (La Iglesia Metodista en Cuba), the movement once again began to pick up pace in the 1980s.

Currently there are 30,000 persons who affiliate themselves with the Methodist church. About 70% of that number is under the age of 30 and there are over 230 Methodist ministers in Cuba at the moment. Bishop Pereira is the leader of the laity.

This church is also part of the Cuban Council of Churches which allows them the opportunity to give their voice in an association which the government is willing to communicate with.

<http://www.worldmethodist.org/cubastory.htm>

<http://www.oikoumene.org/de/mitgliedskirchen/regions/caribbean/cuba/methodist-church-in-cuba.html>

Baptists

In 1905, the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba was formed, as was the Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba, which was followed by the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba in 1989. The Baptist Convention of Western Cuba makes up one of the largest non-Catholic denominations on the island.

By gaining recognition from the government, and as a member of the Cuban Council of Churches, the Baptist churches are allowed to hold meetings as a group in a church building. However, they are not allowed to meet on public land. As of the year 2000, there were over 38,000 adherents to Baptist beliefs and the number has continued to grow.

<http://home.pacific.net.au/~dparker/Forum46.htm#cuba>

http://www.masterliness.com/a/Baptist_Convention_of_Western_Cuba.htm

<http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/baptists.htm>

Presbyterianism

The Presbyterian movement in Cuba started in 1890 with a small congregation who asked the Presbyterian Church in the United States to send them a missionary so that they could be officially recognized as the First Presbyterian Church of Cuba. With the start of the Cuban War on Independence in 1895, however, the church soon broke apart and the people refocused their efforts on the war.

In 1900, when the United States intervened on behalf of Cuba, the Presbyterian Church once again sent missionaries to re-establish the work previously started. This was followed by some 59 years of growth and evangelism in which the Presbyterians were able to establish the schools for which they were well known.

In 1959, with the change in governmental powers and with the political movement against the United States' involvement, new restrictions were placed on the church. All their schools were lost and the church lost most of its membership. In 1990, the government loosened some of these restrictions which allowed the Presbyterian Church to become a part of the Cuban Council of Churches.

Over half of the current membership of the Presbyterian Church in Cuba has joined within the last ten years. Currently having a body of 15,000 persons, there are three presbyteries, one synod and 53 congregations in Cuba.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/caribbean/cuba/presbyterian-reformed-church-in-cuba.html>
<http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/presbyterianism.htm>
<http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/cuba/international.htm>

Church of Christ

The Church of Christ began its history in Cuba in 1899 when Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Menges were sent as missionaries to Havana and began a house church in rented quarters. A Sunday School was established to teach English to those that wanted to learn and the work went well. In 1902 the Menges moved to Matanzas to start a second work, where they mentored Julio Fuentes and Jacobo Gonzalez so that the work would carry on after the Menges' return to the United States.

By 1959, the church numbered almost 5,000 members and 161 congregations all over the island. After the regime change, house meetings were no longer allowed and some church buildings were destroyed. Churches and memberships declined.

The Church of Christ was not officially recognized by the government of Cuba until the 1990s and since that time the church has grown to over 105 congregations. Over 3,500 members are active in this denomination and The Church of Christ is a member of the Cuban Council of Churches. History was made by this church when a meeting/conference was allowed to take place in the Cuban national capital building in March of 2001.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/caribbean/cuba/cic.html>
<http://www.worldconvention.org/country.php?c=CU>

Pentecostals

Pentecostalism made its debut in Cuba in 1920 when a couple of missionaries from Puerto Rico came to visit the island. One of these, Mary Kelty, returned to Cuba after the visitation to work with Esther and Francisco Rodriguez. In concert with the Assemblies of God Church in the United States the denomination was established in Cuba.

The Pentecostal denomination is made up of many churches whose names range from "Assemblies of God" to "Disciples of Christ." However, the "Assemblies of God" is the major church group in which more than 15,000 individuals participate.

Currently, it is estimated that about half of the non-Catholic Christians are Pentecostal and thus make up the second largest protestant denomination in Cuba which is still healthily growing in number. These were officially recognized by the government as full members of the Cuban Council of Churches in mid 2008.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/caribbean/cuba.html>
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108521.htm>
<http://www.globalministries.org/lac/projects/christian-pentecostal-church-of.html>
http://books.google.com/books?id=N9TLGG8-HtAC&pg=PA80&lpg=PA80&dq=Pentecostal+Cuba&source=web&ots=KySx2i33_7&sig=UpMrEi0zh7a3F-mT_xDTIwCBYO4&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=7&ct=result

People Groups

110448

American (7,200)

English is the primary language spoken among the Americans living in Cuba. They are a North American people of the Anglo American people cluster. It is not known how many are evangelical but estimates predict at least 10%. This people group has the Jesus film and the Bible available in their language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=110448&rog3=CU>

101106

Basque (600)

Basque, a dialect of Spanish, is the primary language spoken among the Basque living in Cuba. They are a Eurasian people of the Basque people cluster. Alternate names for the Basque are Eskuakunak and Euzkadi. It is not known how many of the Basque people are evangelical. Few Basques in Cuba are Christian.

The Basque people do not have a country which is specifically theirs, but are a part of Spanish states around the world. The Basque have relocated because of either political or economical reasons but are still very much a part of their own culture though some have assimilated to the Cuban culture.

The Basque people do have the Bible translated in their language along with the Jesus film, but there has not been any church planting among this people group in the past two years.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=101106&rog3=CU>

102927

British (200)

Of the British people living in Cuba it is not known how many are evangelical. Their primary language is English and the Bible and the Jesus film are available to them. They are a Eurasian people of Anglo-Celt people cluster. Alternate names for the British people are Anglo-Pakistani, Anglophones, Euroesian, Scot, Scottish, and White.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=102927&rog3=CU>

102324

Cuban (11,095,000)

Among the Cubans living in Cuba an estimated 4- 5.29 % are of the evangelical presence. The predominant religion is Catholicism although other beliefs like Santeria are practiced as well.

Their primary language is Spanish and the Bible has been translated in this language as well as the Jesus film. They are Latin-Caribbean Americans of the Hispanic people cluster and an alternate name for the Cuban is Cuban White.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=102324&rog3=CU>

114916

Deaf (Population Unknown)

The Deaf of Cuba use the Cuba Sign Language to communicate with one another. Among this people group less than 5% are evangelical Christians. This people group is a part of the Deaf people cluster which are scattered throughout the country. There are no reported ministry tools available for this people group.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=114916&rog3=CU>

103059
French (5,800)

Among the French people living in Cuba it is unknown how many are evangelical. The primary language among this people group is French and the Jesus film and a translation of the Bible is available to them. Other names for this people group are Franco-Mauritian Mulatto and Metropolitan. They are a Eurasian people from the French people cluster.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103059&rog3=CU>

103480
Greek (2,400)

Among the Greek people living in Cuba 5% of this population are evangelical Christians. There has been a recent increase in activity in terms of church planting for this people group. The primary language among this people is Greek although others do speak Spanish. The Bible and the Jesus film can be presented in Greek. Other names for this people group are Dimotiki, Greek Cypriot, Hellenic, Romei, Romeos, and Urum. They are a Eurasian people from the Greek people cluster.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103059&rog3=CU>

103642
Haitian (40,000)

Among the Haitian people living in Cuba it is unknown how many are evangelical though the primary religion is mostly Roman Catholic. Their primary language is Haitian Creole French and the Jesus film and the Bible are available in this language. Alternate names for this people group are Haitian Black or Haitian Mulatto. They are Latin-Caribbean Americans from the Afro-Caribbean, Fancophone people cluster.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103642&rog3=CU>

103686
Han Chinese (40,000)

Among the Han Chinese living in Cuba it is not known how many of the Christian Chinese in Cuba are evangelical and there have been slim to no attempts made for church planting with this people group in mind. This people group is primarily non-religious but they do believe in spirits and ghosts and also in Good Fortune and horoscopes.

The primary language is Mandarin though Spanish is another language they may speak. The Bible and the Jesus film are both available in Mandarin for use in Cuba. Alternate names for this people group are Beijinghua, Cantonese, Chinese, Mandarin, Guanhua, Guoyu, Hakka, Han Chinese, Mandrin; Han

Chinese, Sino-Mauritian; Hoton, Huizui, Kreol, Northern Chinese, or Pei. They are East Asian people from the Chinese people cluster.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103686&rog3=CU>

104026

Indo-Pakistani (34,000)

Among the Indo-Pakistani living in Cuba it is not known how many of the people are evangelical and only 3% of this population is known Christians. The primary language is Hindi and their primary religion is Hinduism. The Hindi Bible and the translation of the Jesus film are both available for use in Cuba. Alternate names for this people group are East Indian; Indo-Pakistani; Hindi and North Indian. They are South Asian peoples from the Hindi people cluster.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=104026&rog3=CU>

104168

Jamaican (5,000)

Among the Jamaican living in Cuba it is unknown how many are evangelicals. The primary religion is Roman Catholicism. The language they speak is Jamaican Creole English. Although the Jesus film is available for use in this language, a translation of the Bible is yet to be completed. An alternate name for this people group is Panamanian Black. They are North American peoples from the Afro-American, Northern people cluster.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=104168&rog3=CU>

109538

Jews (500)

Among the Jews in Cuba less than 2% are evangelical. Their primary language is Spanish although they also use Hebrew for their religious prayer language. Another language that is used is called Ladino for the use of both Hebrew and Spanish elements. The Jesus film and the translation of the Bible in Spanish are available to those in Cuba. Alternate names for this people group are Hakitia, Ladino, and Spanish Jew. They are Jews from the Jewish people cluster and their primary religion is Judaism.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=109538&rog3=CU>

108452

Russian (22,000)

Among the Russians living in Cuba it is not known how many of them are evangelical. Their primary language is Russian and they are not known to be a religious people. The Jesus film and the Russian translation of the Bible are available for use, but this people group is among one of the most unreached in Cuba. Alternate names for this people group are Eluosi; Olossu; or Russ. They are a Eurasian peoples from the Slav, Eastern people cluster.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=108452&rog3=CU>

109534

Spaniard (3,500)

Among the Spaniards living in Cuba it is unknown how many of them are evangelicals, but estimates will sometimes go above 5%. Of the Spaniards living in Cuba, 90% are associated with the Roman Catholic Church. Their primary language is Spanish and the Jesus film and the Bible are both available in this language.

Alternate names for this people group are Argentinian White; Camba; Chilean; Colombian; Cuban; Dominican; Dominican Mulatto; Hispanics; Latin American; Latin American White; Latinos; Mestizo; Mestizo; Mexican; Peruvian; or Puerto Rican White. They are a Eurasian people from the Spanish people cluster.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=109534&rog3=CU>

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical churches and Christians should find ways to emphasize the spiritual nature of true Christianity. Persons familiar with the situation in Cuba indicate that three main spiritual needs dominate the peoples of Cuba. The first of which is Christ. As one source put it, "They teach us at school that there is no God, but they don't teach us how to live without Him." The spiritual vacuum that every person has without Christ applies to those in Cuba and they need Him every bit as much as we do. Evangelicals need to fill this need.

We can do our part by going on missions to Cuba and supporting those who do through financial means and prayer support. This does not mean evangelism is done just like every other country because of some of the legal restrictions. People must be won to Christ through relationships not rallies. We can also help by setting up ministries for those youth who are already involved in a church so that they can grow in their relationship with Christ and then tell others about who He is through the way he lives his life.

2. Evangelical churches and Christians should seek ways to fill the need for moral life among the Cuban people. This need is especially intense in relation to the families in Cuba which is under duress due to the high divorce rate. This situation leads to some dysfunctional families which continue to co-inhabit a home even after a divorce has taken place! Also, many families that struggle to meet the needs of everyday life find it difficult to abide by the laws of the land.

This need can be met by setting up Bible studies in homes so that those in need of guidance can find it. In addition, Christian influence will allow for a community of accountability so that once they know what God requires of them, they can fulfill it within their context as a member of the body of Christ.

3. Evangelical churches and Christians can seek to overcome some of the economic and national problems confronting Cuba. Cubans need hope and assurance of the future. The economic problems often lead to drug use among the youth and further stress the family as they seek to live out daily life.

One way that we can help is to set up chemical dependence ministries inside the churches. Christ welcomes all people including those that have dependence issues so this would help them not only get over their dependence but help them to depend on God for support.

4. Evangelical churches and Christians can help the Cubans implement the methods of house churches. House churches are the most prevalent and effective expression of Christianity in Cuba. House churches have some government protection.

The house churches allow for a deeper sense of community and is allows for a family centered society to bond in a spiritually uplifting way. This approach allows for the opportunity to reach entire families which thereby helps meet family needs in the community. In addition this also helps strengthen the family by having them teach each other, learn from each other, and grow with each other. It is also convenient because one does not need to find transportation to get to a church building.

5. Evangelical churches and Christians must employ indigenous methods and avoid the temptation to infuse financial means and foreign elements into the churches. Every method must emphasize encouraging Cubans to work in their own ways rather than pushing outside strategies or influence on their work. Workers in Cuba are not there to push their own agenda, but to help fellow Cuban laborers and friends in their ministries of glorifying God and winning others to Christ.

Workers from outside Cuba must not encourage pastors to build a church building or to set up rallies for evangelistic purposes. Why? Because the resources are not available and it is ILLEGAL to do so without governmental permission before you enter the country. Missionaries to this country need to do what they tell the government they are going to do and no more. Workers should remain within the confines of their visas.

Also, if a mission groups says they are bringing 100 books, do not try to bring 1,000. Such illegal action creates tension between the church and the government and will be a hindrance to the ministry with the people of Cuba. The country of Cuba is ranked 24th in the world for their persecution to the Christian people who reside in the country but this is mainly due to their not abiding by the laws.

6. Evangelical churches and Christians should develop a method for sharing the Good News with followers of Santeria and Roman Catholicism. Most of the Cuban people are involved in some aspect of Santeria. Most of the religions in Cuba have an aspect of Santeria to them. Every worker who desires to serve in Cuba should have training in an understanding of Santeria and ways to share the gospel with its followers.
7. Evangelical churches and Christians should realize that they cannot use public means of communication. This means, for example, that you cannot use the radio station to publicize a meeting in a house church. In addition to this, do not expect to be allowed to schedule public rallies or meet in public places. This is illegal if you do not have the governments consent.
8. Evangelical churches and Christians should seek some means to evangelize among the 40,000 Han Chinese in Cuba. Church planting among this groups could eventuate in hundreds of new believers. The same type of effort should be directed toward the Hatian people in Cuba (40,000) and the Indo-Pakistani group (34,000)
9. Evangelical churches and Christians should seek to aid Cuban churches through various means of leadership training. This training should be especially directed toward helping leaders of house churches. Trainers must use reasonable care in providing this training.

Pictures

<http://www.flickr.com/search/?q=Cuba&l=commderiv&ct=0>

http://images.google.com/images?as_q=Cuba+people&gbv=2&hl=en&btnG=Google+Search&as_epq=&as_oq=&as_eq=&imgtype=face&imgsz=&as_filetype=&imgc=&as_sitesearch=&safe=active&as_st=y
http://images.google.com/images?imgtype=photo&as_st=y&gbv=2&hl=en&safe=active&q=Cuba

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http://images.google.com/images?as_q=Cuban+leaders&gbv=2&hl=en&btnG=Google+Search&as_epq=&as_oq=&as_eq=&imgtype=face&imgsz=&as_filetype=&imgc=&as_sitesearch=&safe=active&as_st=y

Links

<http://www.joshuaproject.net>

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