

Liberation or Domination:

American Intervention and the Occupation of Cuba, 1898-1902

Michael Pollock

Michael Pollock is a graduate student in history at Eastern Illinois University. A recent inductee into the Epsilon Mu chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, and the 2003 Distinguished Graduate Student in History, Mr. Pollock wrote this article for Dr. Roger Beck's Imperialism class in the fall of 2002.

To change masters is not to be free. – Jose Marti, 1895.

In 1895 the third major Cuban insurrection in thirty years erupted against the Spanish. In 1898, as the Cubans were preparing a final assault on Spanish urban strongholds, the United States declared war on Spain, invaded Cuba, and began a military occupation that remained until 1902. Early U.S. histories of the intervention and occupation portrayed the Americans as altruistic, magnanimous, and brave. The same narratives viewed the Cubans as unsophisticated, uneducated, and incapable of either successful military action or self-governance. These American views of both Cuban and American motivations were simplistic and marked by an absence of Cuban perspectives. The period in which these events occurred was significant. This era marked the height of new imperialism elsewhere around the globe. The Europeans were busy neatly sub-dividing Africa during these years, and as Spain labored to cling to her few remaining colonies, the United States was looking beyond her continental borders to continue the expansionism that had marked the republic since its founding.

Later writers, particularly Hispanic historians, described the American intervention more accurately as neo-colonialism, a new and more subtle but equally devastating form of imperialism in which an imperial power exerted indirect control through political, economic and cultural influence. Americans ironically justified their intervention as anti-colonial in nature, claiming they were going to save the Cubans from the Spanish and give them a better life.

The United States had already established a significant economic and cultural presence in Cuba by 1898, and the insurrection threatened that investment. The American intervention and occupation succeeded in not only interrupting and altering the Cuban independence movement, but utilized military force, economic coercion, and paternalistic attitudes to substitute American for Spanish hegemony in Cuba. In so doing, the United States preserved not only its economic investment, but also the underlying social order of Spanish colonialism. The United States invested significant manpower and money to rebuild a devastated Cuba, and expected gratitude and security in return. They exerted the force necessary to achieve those goals, while preserving traditional colonial inequities and reaping

huge financial rewards. The roots of American involvement on Cuban soil began many decades before the military actions of 1898, and had a profound influence on Cuban society that has lasted to this day. Whether or not the American dominance is viewed as beneficial to the Cuban people the Cubans were not given a choice. Paternalism and self-interest played a much larger role in American policy than humanitarianism.

The United States had had designs on the Caribbean and on Cuba in particular from the earliest days of the American republic. The primary concern was that Cuba might pass into the possession of another, more threatening, colonial power such as England. The Monroe Doctrine (1823) enunciated these concerns. Europeans were warned not to interfere with American interests in the region. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams wrote to the Spanish minister that year:

These islands [Cuba and Puerto Rico] from their local position are natural appendages to the North American continent, and one of them, Cuba, almost in sight of our shores, from a multitude of considerations, has become an object of transcendent importance to the commercial and political interests of our Union.^[1]

Annexation was a common political theme from the earliest days, as noted by Thomas Jefferson, also in 1823: “I have ever looked on Cuba as the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of states.”^[2] In these early days, however, Spain rebuked the United States’ repeated attempts to purchase the island and America balked at taking it by force. A Congressional bill in 1859 made the acquisition of Cuba a priority. “The ultimate acquisition of Cuba may be considered a fixed purpose of the United States--a purpose resulting from political and geographical necessities.”^[3] The presence of Spain in the Caribbean was tolerated because it was seen as non-threatening to the United States. A declining colonial power, Spain had already lost the bulk of her empire by the mid-nineteenth century. With America’s increased trade and investments in Cuba, the status quo was acceptable. The United States by this time had become Cuba’s number one trading partner.

The increased American presence in Cuba during the mid-1800s can be traced directly sugar production. The industrialization of this key industry deepened the bonds between the states and the island. As in so many other colonial settings, the export value of a particular agricultural commodity led to specialization. Sugar became the cash crop of Cuba, and resulted in a consolidation of plantations, more acreage devoted to sugar, and a decline in small farming operations and the planting of basic food crops.^[4] The need for labor also increased, resulting in a further proliferation of slavery and the slave trade. The Americans brought technological advances in sugar production that resulted in a wave of immigration and investment. Railroads, steam power, and the telegraph all contributed to the

booming sugar industry. American workers came to Cuba to design, build, and operate the sugar mills. American companies, supported by Creole (native white Cubans) landowners and American financiers and professionals, developed the Sugar Trust. Corporate mill towns controlled local politics through bribes, graft, and employment guarantees.^[6] North American capital and culture expanded into other areas as well. The Creole ruling class sent their children to America for education, and as the 1868 insurrection deepened, many Creoles emigrated to the states.

In 1868, the first of three uprisings against the Spanish caused a serious threat to the status quo. The Ten Years War raged across Cuba from 1868 until 1878, and decimated the country. In 1878 the insurrection faltered. The Spanish, financially overextended and lacking support at home, agreed to reforms in the Treaty of Zanjón.^[7] Following the treaty, American capital rebuilt much of the country and solidified American cultural and financial influence. The war had ruined the Cuban economy, and, despite American investment, the Spanish demands for taxes to pay for the war and continued military activities drove thousands of peasants and small farmers into intractable debt. The separatists who participated in the uprising found their land confiscated, resulting in their mass emigration to the United States. José Martí, a rebel leader, was exiled and spent the next seventeen years in Europe and the United States building the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC). A second war of independence in 1879 was short lived and again unsuccessful. By the mid-1880's, the separatist movement expanded to include many Creole landowners. The Cuban elite was struggling under Spanish rule and resented its failure to institute reforms, which included the promise of political participation.

Funded by exiled Cuban communities in the United States, and despite differences in motivation, the separatist movements united in the desire to rid the island once and for all of the Spanish. The Creole elite, having enjoyed the fruits of the colonial system, favored annexation to the United States. They desired to maintain the social and economic systems that had been so profitable, and questioned the ability of the Cuban people to effectively govern themselves.^[8] A second group of the separatists clung to the idea of eventual independence, but believed that a short American protectorate would be necessary to prepare the Cubans for self-government.^[9] A third group, the *independistas*, had been at the heart of the insurrectionist movement and believed that complete independence from both Spain and the United States was required. Led by Martí, the new vision of “Cuba Libre” encompassed not just shedding the Spanish yoke, but replacing the colonial social and economic structure. Martí wrote in 1892: “Through the gates we exiles open will enter Cubans with a radical soul of the new country. Our goal is not so much a mere political change as a good, sound, and just and equitable system.”^[10] Historian Louis Pérez wrote in *Cuba Between Empires*:

Marti was not merely attempting to overthrow Spanish rule; he aspired to nothing less than a fundamental change in Cuban politics by creating new ways of mobilizing and sharing power. Independence was to produce the republic and the republic stood for political democracy, social justice, and economic freedom. Marti transformed a rebellion into a revolution.^[11]

In 1895, Marti and Generals Gomez, Garcia, and Maceo, having built a military force under the direction of the PRC, invaded Cuba. The rebel armies gained control of the countryside, elected a civil government, and began to force the Spanish army to withdraw to a few urban enclaves. The unity Marti had woven between the disparate threads of Cuban separatists began to slowly unravel with his death in battle late in 1895, as American politicians began to debate the “Cuban problem.”

The insurrection of 1895 was more organized and enjoyed wider Cuban support than earlier rebellions. The rebels’ strategy was to destroy the sugar industry, remove the Spanish access to revenue, and force their return to Spain. Horatio Rubens, PRC minister in Washington, D.C., wrote in 1898:

The guerilla warfare peculiarly adapted to the physical conditions of the island, the gradual decimating of Spain’s forces, and the cutting off of all sources of her revenue from Cuba, has been the means on which Cubans have relied in their confident anticipation of ultimate triumph.^[12]

Spain’s response arrived in the form of General Valeriano Weyler. He took over command of the Spanish forces in December of 1895 and immediately “adopted the infamous system of reconcentration which, under his supervision, became a process of direct starvation of the Island people.”^[13] The policy ordered all rural workers into camps near or in Spanish urban fortresses. His ruthless campaign resulted in social and financial upheaval, and proved to be the final straw for even Spain’s most loyal planters. Without workers to harvest and process the sugar crop, and no protection for their embattled plantations, even the elite Creoles joined the separatists in the hope that United States’ annexation would save their privileged status and whatever assets remained.

Throughout the thirty years of civil strife the United States refused to recognize the independence movement, and had covertly and steadily supported the Spanish as they struggled to retain their hold on Cuba. American policy, which claimed neutrality, was actually designed to encourage Spanish reforms within the colonial structure. In December, 1897, President William McKinley, fearing the impact of an independent Cuba on American investments and security, urged that “Spain be left free to conduct military operations and grant political reforms, while the United States for its part shall enforce its neutral obligations and cut off the assistance the insurgents receive from this

country.”^[14] Since Spain had outlawed all Cuban ownership of firearms, and since the guns and money to operate the insurgency came from Cuban exiles in the United States, McKinley’s policy was tantamount to a declaration of war on the insurrectionists.

The U.S. government position, however, did not reflect the public distaste for Weyler’s campaign of attrition. On one hand, the American people were clamoring for American intervention on behalf of the Cuban people, while the American government was struggling to maintain the status quo of a rapidly disintegrating colonial state. “Both Grover Cleveland and William McKinley plotted a Cuban policy around efforts to extract from Madrid reforms designed simultaneously to placate partisan leaders and guarantee Spanish sovereignty over the island.”^[15] Following the Ten Years War that ended in 1878, the Spanish did institute one reform with the abolition of slavery, but the promised political reforms negotiated by the United States did not materialize. The United States attempted to negotiate a similar settlement in 1897. The Spanish agreed, but the PRC, the Cuban military, and the provisional government, filled with the vision of Cuba Libre, refused. In April 1898 Maximo Gomez, a liberation army general, adamantly demanded the eviction of the Spanish.

A year ago we received a proposal to agree to an armistice. We refused then and we must refuse now. . . . I am anxious that hostilities should cease, but it must be for all time. If Spain agrees to evacuate Cuba, taking her flag with her, I am willing to agree to an armistice.^[16]

Throughout 1897 and into 1898, the United States government debated American intervention in Cuba. As the impending defeat of the Spanish forces became evident, U.S. business interests with Cuban investments and the Cuban elite both asked the United States to intervene and oversee the transition from Spanish colony to American protectorate. Both of these groups saw annexation as the ultimate protection. Over one hundred planters and industrialists petitioned President Cleveland for assistance as early as June, 1896, claiming that Spain had defaulted on virtually all promises of reform. The petitioners were equally concerned that the independence movement would prove a larger threat to their investments than the Spanish.^[17] Secretary of State John Olney was concerned about the sugar industry. He wrote the Spanish foreign minister, “The wholesale destruction of property on the Island is utterly destroying American investments that should be of immense value.”^[18] As the American public urged humanitarian intervention, openly opposed annexation, and supported Cuban independence, their government expressed serious doubts about whether the Cubans could either win the war or effectively govern themselves. A paternalistic view of the Cuban people drove the intervention engine and barely masked the economic self-interest of American officials

and business.

J.C. Breckinridge, U.S. Undersecretary of State, expressed his concerns about the Cuban people in a memorandum to the Commander of the U.S. Army in December, 1897:

The inhabitants are generally indolent and apathetic. As for their learning they range from the most refined to the most vulgar and abject. Its people are indifferent to religion, and the majority are therefore immoral and simultaneously they have strong passions and are very sensual. Since they only possess a vague notion of what is right and wrong, the people tend to seek pleasure not through work, but through violence . . . we must clean up this country, even if this means using the methods Divine Providence used on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.^[19]

The Cuban military, poised for a final victory after thirty years of conflict, warned the United States that intervention was neither necessary or desired. Marti had sounded the alarm in 1895 over replacing Spanish with American hegemony. “Once the United States is in Cuba, who will get it out?”^[20] General Antonio Maceo insisted the Cuban military did not need American help. “We shall not ask for interference by the United States, we don’t need that. We can end this war ourselves before the year is out.”^[21] The Cuban legal counsel in Washington, D.C., Horatio S. Rubens, told the White House directly, “We will oppose any intervention which does not have for its expressed and declared object the independence of Cuba.”^[22] Rubens was particularly concerned that the United States had continued to withhold recognition of the independence movement and he warned McKinley:

We must and will regard such intervention as nothing less than a declaration of war by the United States against the Cuban revolutionists. If intervention shall take place on that basis, and the United States shall land an armed force on Cuban soil, we shall treat that force as an enemy to be opposed, and, if possible, expelled.^[23]

On April 9, 1898, President McKinley asked for congressional permission to pacify the island of Cuba, and made no mention of independence or the recognition of belligerents. He called for a neutral intervention to stop the fighting and establish a stable government. The Joint Resolution of April 20 authorized military force, but in response to Ruben’s concerns, included the Teller Amendment, disclaiming any American intention to exercise sovereignty over the island beyond pacification.

Tomas Estrada Palma had replaced Jose Marti as leader of Cuba’s provisional government. He was a naturalized American citizen, educated in the United States, and contrary to the military leaderships’ independence

stance, had moved the PRC toward an annexationist position. During the conflict, he resided in Washington D.C. He accepted the premise of the Teller Amendment and, without the official backing of the Cuban Army or the PRC representatives in Cuba, placed the Cuban army under the authority of the invading United States Army.^[24] The Cuban provisional government reluctantly accepted Palma's decision and prepared to coordinate with the American forces.

On April 21, 1898, the United States declared war on Spain and invaded Cuba with no clearly stated purpose beyond ending the hostilities. In 1898, when Senator George Hoar exhorted the U.S. Congress to support American intervention in the bloody conflict that had been raging for three long years between Cuba and Spain, he summarized the national purpose felt by many Americans:

It will lead to the most honorable single war in history. . . . It is a war in which there does not enter the slightest thought or desire of foreign conquest, or of national gain, or advantage. . . . It is entered into for the single purpose that three or four hundred thousand human beings within ninety miles of our shores have been subjected to the policy intended to starve them to death.^[25]

Humanitarianism was but one small explanation for the intervention. Senator Thurston of Nebraska saw the war as good for business. "War with Spain would increase the business and the earnings of every American railroad, increase the output of every American factory, stimulate every branch of industry and domestic commerce."^[26] Senator Money of Mississippi thought war was good for the soul. "War brings out all the best traits of character...devotion, self-abnegation, courage."^[27] Many American politicians wanted revenge for the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine in February of 1898. National stature and an aggressive foreign policy were the concerns of Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt when he wrote, "I should myself like to shape our foreign policy with a purpose ultimately of driving off this continent every European power."^[28] The yellow journalism of American newspapers stoked the fires of the national movement to avenge the Spanish atrocities against the Cubans and expel the bloodthirsty and vicious Spanish from the island. William Randolph Hearst bragged that he had spent a million dollars to bring about war.^[29] President Grover Cleveland had made the case in 1896 that the key issue was to keep Cuba out of the hands of any other power. Others were moved by the quest for new markets, a wish to protect American investments, or the desire to secure the shipping lanes in the Caribbean and provide naval bases to protect the future canal across Panama.

The Americans had not arrived as allies of the Cubans or as agents of Cuban independence. North American commanders moved quickly to exclude the Cuban military from the front lines, subdued the weakened Spanish forces, and instituted a military protectorate, giving virtually no recognition to the Cuban army or the provisional government.

“Cuban commanders were ignored. Negotiations for the surrender of Santiago de Cuba^[30] were conducted without Cuban participation, and by the terms of the surrender Cubans were barred from entering the city.”^[31] The scene was repeated across the island as American troops relegated the Cubans to the rear lines, robbing them of the victory and closure for which they had struggled for more than thirty years.

American paternalism toward the Cuban people showed in the descriptions of their military. The conflict itself, ignoring the three Cuban insurrections over thirty bloody years, was dubbed the Spanish-American War, as if the Cubans had not participated in the outcome. Although the Cubans were generally excluded from battle, United States’ reports bristled with tales of Cuban cowardice and inefficiency. General H.S. Lawton proclaimed that “The Cuban soldier is a myth.”^[32] Another American officer said, “The rebels were a lot of degenerates, absolutely devoid of honor or gratitude, no more capable of self-government than the savages of Africa.”^[33] *The New York Times* reported on July 29, “The Cubans who have made a pretense at fighting with us have proved worthless in the field . . . it would be a tragedy, a crime to deliver the island into their hands.”^[34] A correspondent for the *New York Times* insisted “There is no Cuba. There is no Cuban people; no Cuban aspiration; no Cuban sentiment. I ask where is the Cuban nation?”^[35] Such demeaning attitudes led American officials to the obvious conclusion: the imposition of a government by the Americans was the only way to save the future independence of the Cubans. Major George Barber, an American official in the newly conquered city of Santiago de Cuba, insisted that “The Cubans are utterly irresponsible and have no idea what good government is. Under our supervision and with firm and honest care for the future, the people of Cuba may become a useful ace.”^[36] Governor-General John R. Brooke agreed: “These people cannot now or in the immediate future be entrusted with their own government.”^[37]

Both American officials and the American public viewed their military’s efforts as courageous, generous, and worthy of the subservient gratitude of the Cubans. They were distressed at the response they received from the Cuban military and the provisional government, each of whom realized their opportunity for a free and independent Cuba was evaporating. An editorial in the *Washington Post* in early 1900 concluded,

After our country, out of pure sympathy, has spent millions upon millions and sacrificed many of her noble sons upon the altar of humanity to rescue the Gem of the Antilles from Spanish greed and oppression, we are now called upon to give up all and retire from the field of action . . . the amazing impudence to demand immediate independence is unparalleled in history. We are dealing with base men, devoid of magnanimity.^[38]

The Americans conducted peace negotiations and concluded the Treaty of Paris with the Spanish in August of 1898. No Cuban participation was permitted. General Maximo Gomez expressed the disappointment of the Cuban

patriots. “None of us thought that the American intervention would be followed by a military occupation of our country by our allies, who treat us as a people incapable of acting for ourselves. . . . This cannot be our ultimate fate after years of struggle.”^[39]

By assuming the credit for ousting the Spanish and securing the peace, the United States appropriated the right to supervise the Cuban government. They were distrustful of the *independistas*, the ignorant masses and ungrateful rabble, whom they viewed as too stupid to realize they were not ready to govern themselves. “The Cuban desire for independence was motivated by a wish to plunder and exact revenge. If we are to save Cuba we must hold it. If we leave it to the Cubans we give it over to a reign of terror.”^[40] Thus the war of liberation became a war of conquest, and the Teller Amendment an empty promise.

The United States occupation of Cuba from 1898 until 1902 secured the island as a neo-colonial possession through political coercion, cultural domination, and financial investment. Jose Marti’s vision of a new, democratic, diverse and egalitarian republic fell victim to the protectorate. The Americans viewed Marti’s goals as far more threatening to U.S. economic and strategic interests than Spanish sovereignty. In order to secure control of the country, the occupation forces needed to oversee the disbanding of the Cuban army and arrange for a Cuban congress friendly to American aims.

When the army, filled with the most radical *independistas*, began to understand that the Teller Amendment would not be honored, they considered declaring war on the United States, but General Gomez realized that this was impossible as his army was starving, homeless and decimated from years of war. Without the approval of the provisional government, he accepted three million dollars to pay off his soldiers in exchange for an American guarantee to honor its commitment. In doing so, Gomez put the independence of Cuba in the hands of the Americans. As the army disbanded, the PRC and the National Assembly, the last bastions of the independence movement, disintegrated.^[41] The American military government proceeded to reshape the Cuban colony with little resistance.

The first order of business for the Americans was to secure the political structure of the protectorate, and thereby ensure that the proper Cubans were in place to create a constitution, and later a republic, which reflected American interests. The Americans established close relationships with Tomas Estrada Palma and other pro-annexation Cubans, primarily white, propertied, educated, and returned exiles. These members of the elite were dedicated, as were the Americans, to preventing the social and economic reshaping of Cuba as proposed by Marti and the *independistas*. They were appointed to key positions as municipal and civic officers. To ensure that the electorate reflected the “better classes” and were denied the considerable power of *independista* sentiment, Secretary of War

Elihu Root “proposed limited suffrage, one that would exclude the mass of ignorant and incompetent” voters. All voters were required to be adult males in possession of real property, possess an ability to read and write, or be a veteran of military service.

The 1900 municipal elections demonstrated the lack of public support for the occupation. Each of the American backed candidates was defeated, despite the voting restrictions. The newly elected *independistas* immediately stepped up demands that the United States evacuate the island. During the next crucial round of elections to select a constituent assembly, U.S. Military Governor General Leonard Wood hand picked the conservative candidates, campaigned for them, and reminded the Cuban public that “no constitution which does not provide for a stable government will be accepted by the United States.”^[43] Again, the American backed conservatives were trounced. Wood reported to Senator Orville Platt that “the men whom I had hoped to see take leadership have been forced into the background by the absolutely irresponsible and unreliable element.”^[44] The Constitutional Convention convened in July 1900. The outspoken support for independence demonstrated to American officials the Cuban’s incapacity for self-government. In March 1901 the United States Congress solved their dilemma by passing the Platt Amendment, a series of rules limiting future Cuban rights and expanding American powers over the Cuban government. The Congress demanded that the amendment be written into the Cuban Constitution, without which action the military occupation would not end. The Platt Amendment limited Cuba’s right to negotiate treaties, extended the right of intervention to the United States at its discretion, legalized all acts taken under the American occupation, removed the Isle of Pines from Cuban jurisdiction, and required the provision of land for American naval bases and fueling stations. Despite widespread protests, the message to the convention was clear. Accept limited sovereignty or no sovereignty. The Constitution, including the Platt Amendment, passed sixteen to eleven.^[45] The dream of a truly independent Cuba was gone.

The cultural and economic domination of the American occupation was less direct than the Platt Amendment, but no less devastating to the majority of the Cuban people. Under American supervision, Cuba lost the opportunity to rebuild a diverse economy or an egalitarian society. The American intervention had stopped the revolution short of its goals of agrarian reform, anti-imperialism, racial equality, and social justice, and solidified a colonial hierarchy under American influence. Thirty years of warfare left the island destroyed, and the intervention assured that the reconstruction of the Cuban economy would be based on the cash cropping of sugar rather than a more diverse and self-sufficient system. “Americans recognized that hegemonial relations with Cuba depended upon reconstructing the sugar system. The restoration of sugar production promised to restore the propertied classes to positions of privilege—the very elites from which Americans were seeking to recruit allies”^[46] The occupation government utilized its

considerable financial leverage to facilitate the investment of American capital and the consolidation of the sugar industry. General Leonard Wood advised President McKinley that after having successfully blocked Cuban independence, the remaining chore was to solidify economic ties. “There is, of course, no independence left in Cuba after the Platt Amendment. . . . With the control we now have over Cuba, combined with the other sugar producing lands we now own, we shall soon practically control the sugar trade of the world,”^[47]

The neo-colonial system established during the occupation encouraged investment. American corporations and land speculators purchased thousands of acres of land from indebted Cuban farmers. Within a few years of the intervention, American capital had gained control of the sugar, mining, real estate, construction, utilities and tobacco industries. Changes in the land title system initiated by the occupation forces displaced many Cuban families unable to prove ownership. These lands were auctioned at very low prices to the American land investors and corporations.^[48] As noted in the *Louisiana Planter* in 1903, “Little by little the whole island is passing into the hands of American citizens.”^[49] For the Cuban working class the transition from colony meant destitution. Displaced from vanishing agrarian jobs and pressured by massive post-war immigration,^[50] thousands fell into poverty.

Just two years later, as American troops invaded Cuba, the issue of race also confronted the occupation government. The racial equality that proved so elusive in North America,^[51] had been a principle tenet of “Cuba Libre” and a reality in the Cuban armed forces. American officers were shocked to not only find blacks in positions of power, but also accepted as an integral part of the Cuban military. The occupation forces were not inclined to allow such “an experiment in interracial democracy” to continue. Order was far more important than inclusiveness to the Americans, and depended on promoting the “right people” to local positions.^[52]

The occupation forces reversed the broad vision of Cuban citizenship. The reorganization of the Cuban Army systematically denied commissions to Afro-Cubans. Quentin Bandera was a black Cuban who had been fighting the Spanish since 1850. He rose in the Cuban military to the rank of general and had a sterling national reputation. In 1898, after sitting out the final battles with the rest of the Cuban forces, he was denied full payment for his military service and refused a commission in the reconstituted Cuban Army. He was rumored to have held a job in Havana as a garbage collector until he was murdered in 1906. For the Afro-Cubans, the intervention and occupation ended their hopeful dream of equal opportunity in a new inclusive Cuba, and a return, if not to slavery, to a subservient role based on North American racial values.

The occupation did result in American investments that provided great economic advances for a decimated Cuba. General Wood oversaw the repair and construction of infrastructure such as sanitation systems, roads and

bridges, hospitals, harbors, and communication systems. Although some construction was designed to promote American investment, many of the public works projects benefiting the destitute Cuban people could not have occurred without serious financial aid from abroad. General Wood oversaw the National Library project as well as the medical research that identified the vector of yellow fever. The appalling condition of the nation's prisons and mental hospitals was also addressed. The justice system was revamped, habeas corpus introduced, and the corrupt judicial system rebuilt.^[53] None of these actions however included the participation of Cuban leaders.

Nowhere did the Americans attempt to have a greater impact on Cuban life than in the area of education. As in other colonial efforts, the Cubans were not consulted. General Wood "sought no less than a cultural revolution, a total reconstruction of society, with education as the main tool. . . . Once educated, they would recognize the superiority of American over Spanish values and patterns of behavior, and would perform as sober and responsible people."^[54] The most important facet of the program involved the building of schools. Although the Spanish colonial government had a strong secondary and university program, primary schooling was abysmal, a clear reflection of a class society.

Wood's plan was based on the Ohio school system and included instruction in English, subject matter translated from American textbooks, and teachers imported from the states or trained there. He experienced impressive initial successes. Enrollments jumped five times in the first year, and literacy rose from 41 to 57 percent.^[55] The success did not last. American unwillingness to consider cultural differences presented several long-term problems. Teacher selection followed the same path as political appointments. A patronage system resulted in widespread corruption and nepotism on local boards. The American emphasis on industrial and competitive methods reinforced the aristocratic social system. Hastily conceived certification plans led to a lack of professionalism. The military authorities gave control of the schools to local boards, but did not provide for local community control of the boards. The teacher corps did not reflect the diversity of the country. Lincoln De Zayas, a secretary of public instruction years after the occupation, offered that Cuba was simply not ready for an American system.^[56] In later years the early successes could not be sustained. Enrollments fell, students in lower grades did not advance, and the widening gap in wealth on the island was reflected in the 85 percent of wealthy Cubans who sent their children to private schools.^[57] Efforts to democratize the Cuban schools through an American system failed. In 1902, 45 percent of Cuban children were enrolled in primary school. By 1955 that figure had risen to just 55 percent.^[58] In each instance, the American attempt to control or reshape Cuban culture did not succeed. Military force subdued the independence movement but could not kill it.

The American military occupation of Cuba ended on May 20, 1902. The dichotomy between true independence

and the provisions of the Platt Amendment, the growing economic domination of the United States, and an artificially constructed political hierarchy all failed to disguise the neo-colonial reality which would become twentieth century Cuba. Another intervention and another occupation would take place just three years after American forces left Cuba. “Cuba Libre” was both subdued and kept alive by the Platt Amendment. Enrique Collazo insisted that the defeat of Spain had been a Cuban victory, stolen by the United States for the sole purpose of depriving the island of its sovereignty.^[59] General Gomez added, “There is so much natural anger and grief throughout the island that the people haven’t really been able to celebrate the triumph.”^[60] The American subjugation of Cuban independence and the trail of broken promises acted much like a grain of sand in an oyster. The unfinished revolution of 1895 – 1898 shaped the republic and Cuban politics for the next sixty years.

^[11] Albert G. Robinson, *Cuba and the Intervention* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1905), 55 (no note provided of original citation).

^[2] Ibid., 56 (no note provided of original citation).

^[3] Ibid., 61 (no note provided of original source).

^[4] Louis A. Perez, *On Becoming Cuban* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 17.

^[5] Ibid., 19.

^[6] Ibid., 237.

^[7] Louis A. Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1878-1902* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), 6.

^[8] Louis A. Perez, “Cuba Between Empires, 1898-1899,” *Pacific Historical Review* 48 (1979): 474.

^[9] Ibid.

^[10] Jose Marti, “Nuestras Ideas,” Mar. 14, 1892 in Marti, *Obros Completas, I*, p.2. 503, quoted in Perez, *Cuba Between Empires*, 107.

^[11] Ibid., 108.

^[12] Horatio S. Rubens, “The Insurgent Government in Cuba,” *North American Review* 166 (Jan.-June 1898): 566.

^[13] Robinson, 44.

^[14] William McKinley, “First Annual Message, Dec. 6, 1897”, in *A compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902*, X: 32, 37-8, quoted in “Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1898-1902*, 147.

^[15] Perez, “Cuba Between Empires 1898-1988,” 477.

^[16] Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1878-1902*, 165 (no note provided of original citation).

^[17] Ibid., 157.

^[18] *Foreign Relations*, 1897, 543, quoted in Leland Hamilton Jenks, *Our Cuban Colony* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1970), 43.

^[19] J.A. Sierra, *The Beckinridge Memorandum*, <<http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/scaw2.htm>>.

^[20] Jaime Suchlicki, *Cuba: From Columbus to Castro* 2nd rev. ed. (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1986), 84 (no note provided of original source).

^[21] *New York Journal* 8 March 1897, quoted in Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1898-1902*, 113.

^[22] *The State*, 7 April 1898, quoted in Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1898-1902*, 185.

^[23] *The State*, 7 April 1898, quoted in Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1898-1902*, 189.

^[24] Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1878-1902*, 189.

^[25] *Congressional Record*, 55th Cong., 2d sess., 1898, 3, quoted in Louis A. Perez, “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude,” *American Historical Review* 104 (April 1999): 358.

^[26] *Congressional Record*, XXXI, 3165, March 25, 1898, quoted in Jenks, 54.

^[27]

Ibid., 3165, March 28, 1898, quoted in Jenks, 54.

[28] J.B. Bishop, *Theodore Roosevelt and his Time*, Vol. 1 (New York: 1920), quoted in Jenks, 52.

[29] Ibid., 51.

[30] The battle of Santiago de Cuba was the first major battle for the Americans. Bad weather and disease hindered them, and a long siege ensued. The Americans claimed the city as U.S. territory, bringing relations between the armies to a crisis.

[31] Louis A. Perez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 97.

[32] *New York Times*, 24 July 1898, quoted in Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1898-1902*, 204.

[33] Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895-1902*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 2:394-5, quoted in Ada Ferrer, "Rustic Men, Civilized Nation," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 78 (November 1998): 685.

[34] Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1898-1902*, 195 (no note provided of original citation).

[35] *New York Times*, August 7, 1898, 2, cited in Perez, *Cuba Between Empires*, 1983 1898-1902, 204.

[36] Louis A. Perez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 180. (no note provide of original citation).

[37] Ibid., (no note provided of original citation).

[38] *Washington Post*, 27 August 1900, quoted in Perez, *Incurring a Debt of Gratitude*, 367.

[39] Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1898-1902*, 211 (no note provided of original citation).

[40] *New York Times*, 29 July 1898, quoted in Perez, *Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 99.

[41] Perez, "Cuba Between Empires, 1898-1988," 499.

[42] Perez, *Between Reform and Revolution*, 182. (no note provided of original citation)

[43] Perez, *Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 103.

[44] Leonard Wood to Orville H. Platt, December 6, 1900, Wood Papers, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C., quoted in Perez, *Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 103.

[45] Perez, *Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 112.

[46] Leonard Wood to William McKinley, October 29, 1901, Wood Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., quoted in Perez, *Cuba Between Empires 1898-1902*, 349.

[47] Ibid., 349.

[48] Perez, *Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 123.

[49] Perez, *Cuba and the United States*, 95, quoted in Carmen Diana Deere, "Here Come the Yankees! The Rise and Decline of the United States Colonies in Cuba, 1898-1930," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 78 (November 1998): 773.

[50] Perez, *Between Reform and Revolution*, 201. Between 1898 and 1901 70,000 immigrants entered Cuba. 55,000 of those were Spaniards returning from the peninsula.

[51] The United States Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 that racial segregation was legal

[52] Rebecca J. Scott, "Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Cuba," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 78 (November, 1998): 717.

[53] Russell H. Fitzgibbon, *Cuba and the United States, 1900-1935* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), 34-45.

[54] Erwin H. Epstein, "The Peril of Paternalism: The Imposition of Education on Cuba by the United States," *American Journal of Education* 96 (November 1987): 3.

[55] Ibid., 4.

[56] Ibid., 19.

[57] Ibid., 18.

[58] Ibid., 1.

[59] Enrique Collazo, *Los Americanos en Cuba*, Havana, 1906, quoted in Perez, *Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 146.

[60] Sierra, 1.