

The Sap of various colors

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Entering into a quarter in Cuba is as entering the third circle of Dante's hell. In the same brutally overcrowded room where several people live is a bedroom, kitchen, dining room and living room.

These quarters, fortresses or estates, known on the island, are always located in a pessimistic state of construction, with sanitary service, if even it can be called thus, are collective and disseminated by the zones most densely populated in the cities. In the municipality of Havana, exist close to a thousand of these individuals fortresses. During earlier times, when these places were considered to be normal living conditions, even Fidel Castro himself certified them as inferior.

In these places, as well as the so called unhealthy neighborhoods, the majority of inhabitants are black. Although this is so, the state does not publish statistics to this respect. However, it is a well known situation to all Cubans - the great majority of the many thousands of people that are in jail for common crimes are black.

Today the population of Cuba is constituted especially of blacks. The exact data is unknown since the government have not published the results of the census of population and dwelling carried out in September of the year 2002. Blacks and racially mixed, nevertheless are minorities inside the apparatus of the state, government or communist party (in power), that is to say; inside the organization that governs the destinies of the country.

Blacks are neither seen a lot as actors of movies, the theater nor television, are neither presenters nor stellar hosts of television programs. In the television or the movies presented on the Island, the roles that are performed by blacks are almost always those of slaves, delinquents or people of a less significant social scale.

The black person is certainly very present inside the world of sports, but this is fundamentally because of their natural characteristics of physical strength. Also, their participation is major in what is known as popular music and general folklore, but their presence is poor in that which is denominated, "The Cuban intellectuality".

Article 43 of the Cuban Constitution establishes that all citizens have access, according to merits and capacities, to all the charges and jobs of

the state, of the public administration and of the production and installment of services". But as the state in Cuba is unimodal, it is who decides when one has merits and capacities.

The constitution also specifies that the discrimination of any type, including that of a racial nature, is prescript and sanctioned by the law. Nevertheless, one can see the police detaining black people, above all, the black youth, on a daily basis asking them for identification and searching them, at times performing physical searches, in full public view, for the simple reason that they are carrying a package or walking by zones where there is wealth of tourists.

The last three people executed in Cuba, on April 10, 2003, were three black men of 22, 31 and 40 years of age, in a process that lasted only eight days from the moment of their detention until they were dead. The crime that they committed, which did not involve injury or the death of anyone, but was to seize a small ship of passengers with the purpose or aim of being brought to the United States of America.

The situation black surrounding black people in Cuba seems to be a permanent vicious cycle, though in theory we are all equal, and it is assumed that we all have equal opportunities; the black person continues to live, in many cases, in places that are equivalent to being killed daily, to being knocked down and trampled day to day by society, in which case it is logical to feel attacked and respond accordingly.

One cannot think about the none-existence of racism while the descendants of the last slaves continue living in places that, in some cases, have worse conditions of habitation than the "big huts" where their ancestors were kept by force.

In Cuba there is racism, although in theory the contrary is affirmed, it is a racism that the daily practice shows because many have developed the stereotype of viewing black people as synonymous with delinquency. The action of the policemen is an unequivocal example of such.

The solution has to start with the recognition of the problem, and with all stratum of society participating in its solution. The participation must involve black, racially mixed and white, which are the colors that form the wisdom of our population.