

It's Just Simply...a Coincidence

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Militarism grew in power in Cuba after February 24, 2008. Castro's uniformed men took totalitarian power by assault. Yet, another phenomenon also became evident. There are no dark skinned people in the power elite that is relieving Dr. Fidel Castro.

According to 2004 statistics, only 12 of 57 members of the College of Generals, which is subordinate to the Ministerio de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (MINFAR) [Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces] are black, despite the high number of dark skinned officers in this armed force. It is a MINFAR unwritten tradition that blacks be given a rank no higher than that of Lieutenant Colonel.

Outwardly, it seems to everyone that graduation ceremonies for MINFAR Brigade Colonels or Generals are off limits to Cuba's African descendants, and it is virtually impossible even to consider the possibility of a black man aspiring to the rank of Division General, or even less so to that of Army Corps General.

The most illustrative case is that of retired Brigadier General Rafael Limonta Moracén, who began fighting as a youth in the Sierra Maestra and carried out missions in Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Congo, Ethiopia and Angola. His health really required him to spend more time at home, at headquarters, but instead he was sent to carry out minor tasks in civilian life without being given much of an explanation.

Let us recall Castro's first foreign military excursions, during the last century, in the 1960s. They all took place in the Middle East and Africa, which is why so many of those who were sent had dark pigmentation—their number was notoriously high.

Discrimination against Cuban blacks in those spheres that are under Castro's influence becomes even more evident if one examines the Ministerio del Interior (MININT) [Ministry of the Interior],

the organization whose function par excellence is to carry out the State's repressive measures. Only four of this unit's eighteen general's olive-branched epaulettes are in contrast with their dark skin.

Division General Humberto Francis was a rare exception among those four high-ranking blacks at MININT. He had unlimited power when he commanded the Dirección de Seguridad Personal [the Personal Security Division]. Fidel is currently very ill, for which reason he goes absolutely nowhere. This General is now a Vice-Minister yet, paradoxically, he wields less power than before.

If one takes the time to take a good look at Cuba's principal military leaders what one finds is that there is a glaring absence of blacks. Yet, the political system says there is no racism. According to the rhetoric, the lack of Afro-Cubans at the armed forces's highest levels is just an unpremeditated, contextual and circumstantial coincidence.

Racism is a taboo subject in Cuban society. High-level politicians prohibit conversation on this topic; they too don't publicly talk about it. Those blacks or mestizos who are affected by these discriminatory attitudes, as is the case with most dark Cubans, are afraid of suffering repression at the hands of the nation's powerful white crusaders.

Those few high-level, dark-skinned Castroite leaders also dare not lead a discussion about this difficult subject. They know their superiors, who are mostly white, could demote them. Like all Cubans, they are painfully aware of racism but they prefer to remain silent about it.

Many Marxist-Leninist treatises assure that coincidence is also a philosophical category. Government social and political researchers—who—by the way—are white—assure us in their academic theses that: “[the] oft repeated notion that blacks don't ever get to wear general's epaulettes is just simply...a coincidence.”