

The Ladies in White: Beyond Skin Color

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Berta Soler being harassed

Many countries are asking 'Who are the Ladies in White?' The immediate answer they receive is: "They are the wives, sisters, and family members of the 75 prisoners from Cuba's Primavera Negra.

Yes. The answer is such; it is cold. If we look at it with human warmth, with that sensitivity that characterizes us as rational human beings, we would have more to say. We are not simply those women: we are a group

spawned by the horror and injustice of a dictatorship, united by courage of love.

That suffering, caused by the pain we have felt due to our involuntary separation from our loved ones, united us despite our ideological or religious preferences, much less our skin color. We are daughters of the same two parents: dictatorship and love; that is why we are sisters, because our feelings bind us.

It is normal to see Laura, a white blonde with green eyes, embracing Berta, a shiny, ebony-like black woman. One can even find them sharing the same bed, when they have nighttime activities, so Berta doesn't have the problem of having to go home to the distant Alamar neighborhood, in East Havana, where she lives.

It is not only Berta; there are Melba, Lidia, Asunción, Noelia, Clara Lourdes and many more. Being white, mulatto, or black is not important among us; what is essential is to be prepared to fight for the release of political prisoners.

I remember how in various "acts of repudiation," government-ordered female



paramilitary personnel dressed as "common folk" insulted us; but occasions like this are where they reveal a racism they cannot suppress. When they see our women united and strong, they don't miss a chance to say to the blacks and *mulatas* among us things like: "Hey, black woman! What are you doing here? Are you going to go to the United States and clean floors?" One can also hear: "Hey, you! The Revolution has made humans of you people, and this is how you pay it back?" and many other similar things over these long, past, six years.

I would think about all this and believe that despite the fact our walks are executed in silence, it would be worth it to force myself to smile and retort: "*They are getting ready to become presidents*" whenever one of these petulant Communists disrespectfully and verbally assaults someone like Berta or some other Lady in White.

Those people are not capable of seeing the importance of being a woman with dignity and principles, of being prepared to confront any and all obstacles to bring home our loved ones, who never should have had to leave.

What possible importance can skin or eye color have? What is truly valuable is the size of one's heart, so that it can be filled with good feelings, particularly love.

