

Rustic Men, Civilized Nation: Race, Culture, and Contention on the Eve of Cuban Independence

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The year 1898 marked a momentous transformation: the collapse of a four-hundred-year-old Spanish empire and the formal emergence of a new and significantly more powerful American one. Seen from the perspectives of the metropolises, this transformation takes on the look of inevitability—of the forward and inexorable march of time and history. The old empire, Spain, lost its last two possessions in the Americas long after the onset of its imperial decline and almost a century after the erosion of most of its empire in South and Central America. From the perspective of the new empire, the United States, the acquisition of Spanish territories in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam (as well as the annexation of Hawaii in the same year) represented America's historic and inevitable encounter with the world, when the United States deigned to share its political ideals with the rest of humanity or (depending on one's perspective) scrambled to acquire new markets for ever-expanding industries. But if in imperial eyes the transformations of 1898 seemed unsurprising—simply the manifestation of processes long in the making—from the perspective of individuals living these transformations in the colonies, the events of 1898 looked like something else entirely.

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Imagine the scene, for example, in Santiago de Cuba, the site of Spain's surrender, in July 1898. There, where society had been profoundly transformed by three decades of nationalist rebellion and conspiracy against colonial rule, Cuban soldiers saw the Spanish army surrender not to them, but to an American force that had arrived only weeks earlier. And though Cuban rebels saw their Spanish enemies defeated after 30 years of anticolonial mobilization, they were forbidden from entering cities and towns to celebrate their ostensible victory. American officers protected Spanish bureaucrats, guaranteeing them the authority and the peace to remain in positions of power. And though it was Spain who lost the war, it was Cuban soldiers who were forced to relinquish the weapons with which they had fought. None of these local events had the look of natural logic or historical inevitability, but rather only of inconsistency and disjuncture: the victors could not celebrate their victory, nor bear arms, nor exercise authority; the vanquished (for the moment) remained in positions of power. And the strange transition was supervised by a foreign government, newly arrived and unable to speak the language of either. Perplexed and despondent, Cuban soldiers could hardly think that this was the victory for which they had fought.¹

Yet despite all this, in 1898 a nationalist army, with roughly 40 thousand men and a 30-year history of anticolonial activity, essentially stepped aside and allowed, sometimes even welcomed, American military intervention. This fact alone requires a rethinking of explanations for the imperial transitions of 1898 that focus solely on American causes—the pressure to expand markets for American goods, the need to reunify the country in the wake of civil war and social unrest, the impact of a sensationalist press, and so on.² That a powerful nationalist army would tolerate American military intervention forces us to consider the ways in which conditions in Cuba, and the internal history of Cuba's long nineteenth-century revolution, made American occupation plausible and palatable in the first place. The proper study of the imperial transitions that occurred in 1898—and of the 113-day war that sealed Spain's defeat and

1. The best discussion of this unusual transition is Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba between Empires, 1878–1902* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), chaps. 10–13. On the 30-year history of anticolonial insurgency, see Ada Ferrer, *Ambivalent Revolution: Race, Nation, and Anticolonial Insurgency in Cuba, 1868–1898* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, forthcoming).

2. For a recent review of this literature, see Louis A. Pérez Jr., *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998); and Charles Bergquist, *Labor and the Course of American Democracy: US History in Latin American Perspective* (London: Verso, 1996), chap. 2.

heralded the beginning of what would later be called the American Century—thus requires that historians broaden their temporal and geographical focus. It compels historians to examine the complex history of the nationalist revolution that preceded American intervention.

When we do this, we find a revolution that in many ways challenged the principal ideological and political currents of its age. As Europe scrambled for colonies in Africa and Asia, the Cuban revolution attacked Europe's oldest colonial power. And as so-called scientists weighed skulls and as white American mobs lynched blacks, the revolution's leaders denied the very existence of races and armed black and white men together to form the world's first raceless nation.

But this unusual revolution was one defined more by conflict than consensus. It was a revolution that contained its own antithesis and in which nationalist goals were in uneasy coexistence with multiple alternatives, including annexation to the United States and home rule under Spain. Finally, it was a revolution consistently defined by the violent play of regional and class tensions and, especially, by long-standing and evolving conflicts over the limits of racial inclusion in the nationalist project. These internal tensions clearly shaped the course of the independence movement, but they also conditioned the very possibility of American intervention at a moment when a Cuban victory seemed more likely than ever before. And so it is only by exploring these contradictions and tensions, which for 30 years had developed and evolved at the heart of the revolution, that we can fully understand the complicated imperial transition of 1898.

At the outset of nationalist insurgency in 1868, no one could have predicted the extent and character of black and mulatto participation in the independence struggle or in the republic that early white leaders sought to create. During this initial period, it was not at all clear that these leaders viewed potential non-white recruits as either "compatriots" or "Cubans." Nor was it clear that black and mulatto participants saw and identified themselves that way. By the start of the final war in 1895, however, few rebel leaders could openly question the status of non-whites as Cuban; few would publicly challenge the idea that soldiers of color had played an important role in making the nation. Dominant nationalist discourse, in fact, celebrated and glorified their participation. Thus by 1898, with the notions of black participation in independence and of a multiracial Cuban nationality in many ways secure, the nature and terrain of the conflict over racial inclusion shifted. With the nation imagined to include people (men) of all colors (transformed into raceless Cubans), the major question was no longer who was Cuban, but what kind

of figure could successfully lead this new and heterogeneous republic, what kind of leader was suited to a multiracial society that was simultaneously freeing itself from the shackles of both slavery and colonialism.

At some point this question may have been an abstract philosophical one about the nature of political leadership. But as the end of war neared, it became a pressing and practical matter. It was as if with access to citizenship in the new nation relatively open, multiracial, and inclusive, the qualifications for political leadership had to be rethought. Clearly the boundaries of military leadership had to be made more impermeable than the boundaries of nationality; and the requisites for political power and leadership had to be stricter even than those for military power. And so as the end of the war neared, the question of controlling the transition from military to political power became critical. In an army and in a war that had eroded rigid social distinctions, the prospect of peace turned qualifications for rule and authority into questions of the utmost magnitude and urgency. By closely examining the controversy surrounding one particular leader on the eve of independence and occupation, this paper illuminates some of the complex anxieties and concerns present among Cuban nationalists— anxieties and concerns that helped shape a relatively quiescent response to American intervention.³

One Black Leader

In July 1898, when the Americans arrived and the Spanish surrendered in Santiago de Cuba, one witness to the strange turn of events was a Cuban rebel officer named Quintín Bandera. He was perhaps the most famous black rebel then living: he had participated in anti-Spanish conspiracies dating back to the 1850s, he had fought in three full-fledged anticolonial rebellions, and he had risen through the ranks to become a general in the Liberation Army. In 1895 he had accompanied the revolution's two most famous generals, Antonio Maceo and Máximo Gómez, during the daring insurgent invasion of the western half of the island. By 1898, with almost all the other famous non-white leaders having been killed over the course of the war, Bandera was among the last in a line of highly prominent black leaders who, having served the cause for 30 years, had developed national reputations and

3. A clear contrast here is the case of the Philippines, where nationalist forces in arms against Spanish colonial authority since 1896 rebelled against the United States occupation in February 1899. See especially Reynaldo Clemená Iletó, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1979).

followings.⁴ Yet despite his prominence, in July 1898 Bandera witnessed the end of the war from the sidelines. His position there, on the margins, is not altogether surprising; after all, American intervention sidelined most Cuban leaders from the negotiations and transitions of 1898. The fact that in this process American occupiers should also exclude a black officer—no matter how prominent—seems to warrant no further explanation.

Yet the basis for Bandera's exclusion stems less from American actions than from the highly problematic position he occupied even before their arrival. In 1897, about a year before the Americans declared war, Bandera's own army had court-martialed him, stripped him of his command and his men, and then sent him back east to Santiago de Cuba to await further orders. In June 1898, after American intervention and while still without a commission and without soldiers, he petitioned rebel authorities for permission to leave the island. But his request was quickly denied. Spain's surrender to American forces in July found him in that same uncertain position: alone, rejected, and overlooked at the moment of rebel (and United States) victory. A few months later he petitioned Cuban authorities again, this time simply for a formal letter of introduction to officers of the American occupation.⁵

To some extent the marginality imposed on Bandera prior to the arrival of American troops continued after their evacuation. Bandera did enjoy something of a political comeback after the end of the war, serving as president of a political party in Santiago and being feted in towns in the provinces of Havana and Santiago. Overall, however, his already precarious position worsened after the inauguration of the republic in 1902. He was denied full payment for his army service and routinely denied suitable employment. His livelihood was, in

4. When historians refer—as they often do—to the importance of black military leaders in Cuban independence, Bandera's name is always on the list of examples. See, for example, Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886–1912* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995), 33, 56; Pérez, *Cuba between Empires*, 106; Philip S. Foner, *Antonio Maceo: The "Bronze Titan" of Cuba's Struggle for Independence* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 259; and Rafael Fermoselle, *Política y color en Cuba: la guerrita de 1912* (Montevideo: Ediciones Géminis, 1974), 25–26.

5. For a transcript of the court-martial, see "Expediente formado para el esclarecimiento de hechos que se dicen cometidos por el brigadier Quintín Bandera, julio 1897," Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereafter ANC), Fondo Máximo Gómez (hereafter MG), leg. 16, exp. 2, 157. For the two requests, see Bandera to Consejo de Gobierno, 24 June 1898, ANC, Fondo Revolución de 1895 (hereafter R95), leg. 5, exp. 540; and Quintín Bandera to President of the Cuban Assembly, 28 Feb. 1899, ANC, R95, leg. 53, exp. 7, 426.

fact, so insecure that he was compelled to send out form letters soliciting assistance and to organize a fund-raiser for himself in Havana's majestic Payret theater. He was said to have held a job for a time as a garbage collector and, at one point, to have distributed soap samples to laundresses. The soap manufacturers even printed his picture on an ad, and under it the words "I am a son of the people."⁶ In 1906, in the midst of an armed rebellion against the first president of the republic, he was ambushed and killed by a white veteran of the Liberation Army of 1895. When a year later the secret police alleged to have uncovered a black conspiracy, the signal for the start of the projected uprising was to be the assassination of the man who had assassinated Bandera.⁷

Even after his death, Bandera remained at the center of controversy. After 1910, repeated efforts to construct a monument in his honor met with outright hostility; there was even resistance to the transfer of his remains to the national cemetery. In 1916, ten years after Bandera's death, the mayor of Havana, a white veteran of the independence effort, vehemently opposed any effort to honor the black veteran, insisting that he had done nothing for the revolutionary cause. A monument in Bandera's honor was not erected until 1948.⁸ Official ambivalence surrounding his place in public life was echoed more generally in popular memory. Thus Bandera boasts the dubious distinction of being perhaps the only independence hero who also serves as the target of racist humor—a patriot who was also a thief and a laggard, a lover with an insatiable sexual appetite, an uncultured man whose blackness rendered him incapable of making sounds basic to the Spanish language.⁹ At the very least, his was a career and a legacy unconventional by patriotic standards.

6. The description of the ad appears in Abelardo Padrón Valdés, *General de tres guerras* (Havana: Ed. Letras Cubanas, 1991), 7–8.

7. On Bandera's postwar economic and political life, see especially Padrón Valdés, *General de tres guerras*, chaps. 1, 10; and Alejandro de la Fuente, "With All and for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Cuba, 1900–1930" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1996), chap. 4. The form letter soliciting assistance may be found in Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Colección Manuscrita Abreu, no. 18. For details on his murder, see Manuel Cuellar Vizcaino, *12 muertas famosas* (n.p., n.d.), 30–53. On the alleged black conspiracy in 1907, see José Jerez Varona, Chief of Secret Police, to Major F. Foltz, 3 Aug. 1907, in United States National Archives, Record Group 350, entry 5, Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, General Classified Files, file 2499.

8. On the controversies surrounding his memorialization, see Tomás Savignón, *Quintín Banderas: el mambí sacrificado y escarnecido* (Havana: Impr. P. Fernández, 1948), 61–62; and the following articles in *Diario de la Marina* (Havana): "Por Quintín Bandera" (26 Apr. 1910, morning) and "Los restos de Quintín Banderas" (14 May 1912, morning).

9. Bandera's speech was repeatedly ridiculed and Africanized in the press. See, for example, the documents and anecdotes reproduced in Padrón Valdés, *General de tres*

By focusing on Bandera's 1897 court-martial—a moment of formal and dramatic exclusion from the inner circles of national leadership—we shed light not only on one man's career, but also on increasingly pressing struggles over the kinds of political leadership that would be exercised in the new republic. The court-martial, with its long, rich trail of charges and countercharges, reveals the shifting and always disputed boundaries of the patriotic community and allows us to explore important questions about the limits and possibilities of racial inclusion in late colonial and early republican Cuba. The case thus exposes some of the tensions of Cuban nationalism present before the arrival of American forces—tensions that helped make intervention seem conceivable and tolerable. Second, the discussions during the court-martial foreshadow some of the debates about leadership and self-rule that would dominate the period of American intervention that was about to commence. And finally, the case allows us to reflect on how Cuban nationalism, by treating race as something that had been superseded (something unnecessary and imprudent to talk about), made the concept of culture a central consideration in defining patriotic leadership—a conception of culture, it should immediately be added, that was always highly racialized and highly gendered.

The Events, Accusations, and Defense

In 1897 Quintín Bandera, commanding an almost all-black expeditionary force, crossed the Spanish army's fortified line dividing eastern and western Cuba for the second time since the beginning of the war. When Bandera arrived in the west in late March 1897, Máximo Gómez, the highest ranking officer of the Liberation Army, received him with "patriotic jubilation," believing that the arrival of Bandera's men, along with Bandera's name and reputation,

guerras, 8, 158–59, 356–59; and Cuellar Vizcaino, *12 muertes famosas*, 43. The way in which his speech was Africanized may be part of the reason for the confusion over his name.

Though his name is often spelled *Banderas*, the proper spelling, according to his most recent biographer, is *Bandera*, without an *s*. Since lower-class Cuban Spanish tends to drop final *s*'s, and since Bandera's speech was always represented as low and uncultured, it is very possible that though he said "Bandera" people assumed he really meant "Banderas." For a discussion of the confusion over his name, see Padrón Valdés, *General de tres guerras*, 14, 17.

I spoke with academics and nonacademics in both Cuba and the United States to get a sense of how he was remembered, talked about, and taught in elementary schools. Among the people interviewed were Herminio Fernández (Havana, June 1996), Adelaida Ferrer (Miami, Mar. 1996), Victor José Ramón Cordovez (Miami, Mar. 1996), José Abreu Cardet (Havana, May 1992), Fernando Martínez (Havana, June 1994), Alejandro de la Fuente (Seattle, Jan. 1998), and Blancamar León (Cienfuegos, Mar. 1998).

would impose a certain degree of respect and fear among Spanish troops.¹⁰ But the very reputation that was to cow Spanish soldiers soon became cause for disciplinary action and punishment. Four months after Bandera's triumphant march, the same general who had welcomed and commended him ordered his court-martial and approved the military tribunal's sentence that stripped Bandera of his command and sent him back east without his soldiers. What had happened in the intervening four months to so drastically alter Bandera's position within the nationalist leadership?

Bandera himself provided a simple answer to this question: it was the racism of local leaders in the central province of Las Villas that accounted for his troubles in 1897. As he explained to the Cuban general Calixto García after the court-martial, "I foresaw what would happen to me, for in Las Villas, the *jefes* [leaders], in their majority, did not want to be commanded by leaders of color." And on this basis he believed that "there could develop the greatest of intrigues in order to do me harm."¹¹ At first glance there appears to be some truth to Bandera's interpretation: most of his accusers in 1897 were white men and white men—some of them protagonists in the events of 1897—suspected of behavior similar to that of Bandera were never formally charged, never publicly humiliated, and never excluded from the center of rebel leadership. Though Bandera chose to explain his hardships by citing the racism of local officers, it quickly becomes apparent that the charge of racism cannot fully account for the complexity and power of the case against him. First, because many of the general accusations leveled against him in 1897 were also brought against him at other points in his career—not only by white *villareños*, but also by other leaders of color from his own eastern region, including officers such as Antonio Maceo, José Maceo, Guillermo Moncada, and Dimas Zamora.¹²

10. "Expediente formado para el esclarecimiento de hechos que se dicen cometidos por el brigadier Quintín Bandera, julio 1897," ANC, MG, leg. 16, exp. 2157, fols. 14,401–2; and Bernabé Boza, *Mi diario de la guerra desde Baire hasta la intervención americana*, 2 vols. (Havana: Librería Cervantes, 1924), 2:53.

11. From Quintín Bandera, "Narraciones de la Guerra del 1895 y notas biográficas del Gral. Quintín Banderas," in Padrón Valdés, *General de tres guerras*, 236.

12. For Antonio Maceo's accusation, see Maceo to Bandera, 16 Aug. 1896, in Bandera, "Narraciones," in Padrón Valdés, *General de tres guerras*, 211–12. For José Maceo, see "Relación de operaciones de José Maceo," in "Libro registro general de correspondencia del mayor general José Maceo del Ejército Libertador, 1a División, 1er Cuerpo (3 junio a 30 sept. 1895)," ANC, R95, leg. 19, exp. 2,970 (old number). For problems between Bandera, José Maceo, and Guillermo Moncada, see Padrón Valdés, *General de tres guerras*, chaps. 5 and 7. For accusations by Zamora, see the entries for 19 Sept., 21 Oct., and 23 Oct. 1897 in "Diario de campaña de Fernando Grave de Peralta," ANC, Fondo Donativos y Remisiones

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Moreover, as evidence was collected against Bandera, and sometimes even as a result of his own admission, it became clear that many of the charges leveled against him were accurate—at least in general terms. But despite prior offenses and prior accusations, it was only at this particular point in his career and only at this stage of the independence effort that the charges against him produced so dramatic a disempowerment.

At the court-martial Bandera faced four charges—charges that although vague left no doubt about their severity: “disobedience, insubordination, sedition, and immorality.”¹³ At the most basic level, his accusers charged him simply with being a bad soldier and officer. Rather than fighting and sacrificing selflessly for the nation, Bandera, they said, had interred himself and his men in the hills near Trinidad and there lived comfortably and peacefully, avoiding all military encounters with the enemy. Bandera’s critics identified two sources of his unwillingness to fight. One, they held, was Bandera’s sense of regionalism. His accusers claimed that Bandera repeatedly told his men that they had come to western Cuba for only three months, and that now that the three months had passed, they no longer had to fight and could return to Oriente at the first opportunity. With this accusation, Bandera’s detractors challenged his ability to imagine the nation, to see and feel beyond the local to something they identified as national. Bandera, they suggested, was too attached to the region of Oriente to stay willingly and enthusiastically in the west, even when the nation demanded it. Thus Bandera’s “regionalism” was constructed as grounds for the charge of insubordination.

The second (and in many ways more powerful) reason for his reluctance to fight was, his accusers believed, the fact that he was living happily and openly with his lover—usually referred to as a nameless “concubine” (*concupina*) or “mistress” (*querida*) during the court-martial. According to his accusers, this woman had kept Bandera from his duties as a soldier and officer. Because his attraction and devotion to the woman had rendered him inactive on the military front, he had failed to divert Spanish forces from attacking the troops of his superior, Máximo Gómez. Bandera had thus endangered the Cuban cause and Cuban honor by placing his lover over his patriotic obligations. He

(hereafter DR), leg. 359, exp. 7. Zamora, among the lesser-known black officers of the final war, had taken part in earlier insurrections. For his file as a political prisoner after the end of the Guerra Chiquita in 1879–80, see Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (hereafter AHN), Ultramar, leg. 4,804, pt. 1, exp. 382.

13. José Rogelio Castillo y Zúñiga, *Para la historia: autobiografía del general José Rogelio Castillo y Zúñiga* (Havana: Rambla y Bouza, 1910), 199–200. See also the official transcript from Bandera’s *consejo de guerra*, in ANC, MG, leg. 16, exp. 2, 157.

had even stolen for her: he knocked down a lieutenant in Gómez's guard (*escolta*) in order to take the horse for his concubine.¹⁴ And at one point, he had evicted a widow and rebel sympathizer from her home in order to install his mistress in comfortable surroundings. He was then said to have placed his able-bodied soldiers to watch over the house and its treasured occupant rather than fight actively against Spanish soldiers.¹⁵

With these charges, his accusers did several things. First, they publicly impugned the most important and renowned black officer then active in the revolution. By the time of the court-martial, Antonio Maceo was dead, as were the most famous non-white leaders active since 1868, when the Ten Years' War had begun, including José Maceo, Guillermo Moncada, and Flor Crombet. In a movement that prided itself on allowing for the ascent of black soldiers, white leaders assaulted the reputation and position of the most visible and popular black soldier then alive—the man who in popular songs and poems was acclaimed right alongside Antonio Maceo. But they did so in a way that focused not only on Bandera's military actions (or inaction), but also on his social behavior, cultural attainments, and political style. In developing and sustaining the charges of immorality and insubordination, his accusers questioned his standing not only as a military officer, but as a civilized or cultured (*culto*) patriot. By giving in to his sexual needs Bandera had rejected the norms of civilized manliness, which valued self-restraint and abnegation. His detractors cast him as an immoral, degenerate man who defiled the nation's purity. In their eyes, he was not the kind of man suited to lead soldiers, much less citizens. The incapacity imputed to Bandera might have been overlooked in earlier stages of the war, when the need to mobilize took precedence over other questions. But gradually, as leaders began to think about peace as well as war, the kinds of shortcomings they attributed to Bandera acquired meanings that were increasingly perilous.

Over the course of the court-martial, however, it became evident that Bandera did not necessarily accept the particular meanings his accusers assigned to his behavior. Thus his defense constituted a surprising blend of admission and denial, in which he disputed the details while accepting the broader outlines of his alleged behavior. He then explained this behavior in ways that suggest he did not share his accusers' definitions of leadership and manliness, or of the proper relationship between leaders and followers.

14. Brigadier Juan Masó Parra to Mayor Gral. José Mayía Rodríguez, 26 May 1897, ANC, R95, leg. 2, exp. 169 (provisional number).

15. Bravo to Gómez, 24 May 1897, in ANC, MG, leg. 11, exp. 1,628.

Testifying in his own defense, Bandera rejected many details of the accusations. He denied, for example, having stolen either the horse or the house for his lover. He denied, as well, having told his men that they had come to fight in western Cuba for only three months, and insisted that this pledge had first been made by his superior, Calixto García, when he had addressed Bandera's forces before they began their westward march. Bandera asserted, to the contrary, that he and his men were willing to march to the western tip of the island and to stay there until the end of the war, should the nation require them to do so. Despite Bandera's protestations, however, the testimony of most of his subaltern officers suggests that Bandera did, in fact, repeat the pledge that their force was supposed to head back east after three months.¹⁶

While Bandera denied some of the specifics of the accusations, he left many of the more general charges unchallenged. He admitted, for example, that he had not fought or marched as much as he could have. But he attributed his relative inactivity to the behavior of others: he had fought little, he argued, because he never received any orders to march or fight from the area's commanding officer, José Mayía Rodríguez. To some extent, Bandera's defense is borne out by the evidence, for, in fact, Rodríguez at one point explicitly ordered him to remain in the hills and avoid military combat. And Bandera does appear to have complained several times that Rodríguez kept leaving him without orders.¹⁷ Moreover, not only did local officers not order him to fight, they also seem to have placed obstacles in the way of his fighting by ignoring or denying his requests for resources with which to engage the enemy. Thus Bandera's appeals for ammunition apparently went unfulfilled. At one point he found himself complaining to Máximo Gómez that even simple requests for shoes for his soldiers were turned down by local insurgents, not because the shoes were unavailable, but because the insurgents insisted that such requests could be honored only if they came from local officers—a symptom, said Bandera, of the “discord” that existed between him and the area's leaders.¹⁸

In elaborating his own defense, then, Bandera seemed to turn the charges leveled against him back against his own accusers. Just as his detractors claimed that Bandera's provincial loyalties prevented him from acting for the national good, so did Bandera direct the same charge against them. Local lead-

16. See the testimony of Secundino Massabeau, José Portuondo, José Morales, Felipe Lins, Enrique Lins, Domingo Balón, and Pedro Estable, all in “Expediente . . . julio 1897,” ANC, MG, leg. 16, exp. 2,157, fols. 14,431–31v; 14,437; 14,439; 14,440v; 14,445v; 14,446v.

17. See Rodríguez to Bandera, 29 Apr. 1897, ANC, MG, leg. 14, exp. 2,015; and Bandera to Gómez, 16 Apr. 1897, ANC, MG, leg. 11, exp. 1,591.

18. Bandera to Gómez, 19 May 1897, ANC, MG, leg. 11, exp. 1,624.

ers in Santa Clara were, he implied, too rooted in their own area to accept a leader from outside their region.

For Bandera the problem was not only that he was an *oriental* (from the region of Oriente), but that he was a black *oriental*. Local leaders, he had told Calixto García, rejected him because he was black. This statement was at once about race and region: rejection could be explained only with double reference to the geographical origins of his adversaries and the color of his skin. With this observation, Bandera perfectly captured the interconnectedness of race and region. To speak of region was undoubtedly to speak about geography and territorial boundaries. But, as Michael Taussig has pointed out, “geography is also a map of social history.”¹⁹ Regions reflect more than natural, physical boundaries; they also reflect the uneven distribution of institutions and processes such as racial slavery and racial mixture. And here, in the back-and-forth between Bandera and his accusers, regionalism also revealed ideas about race, identity, culture, and behavior.

White leaders in Las Villas may have expressed hostility toward leaders from Oriente because they were not local. But at the same time, they were aware of certain features of local society in Oriente. In the late 1890s, Oriente was home to close to 30 percent of the island’s total population of color. Moreover, the subregion from which Bandera came (the southeastern coastal areas between Santiago and Guantánamo) had perhaps the smallest white population within Oriente. Here the population classified as “white” (either foreign or native born) accounted for only 37.7 percent of the subregion’s total population, compared to 68.7 percent in Las Villas.²⁰ For local white leaders in Las Villas, however, regional difference was more than a question of demographics. Not only did Oriente have a greater non-white population, it was also linked in both colonial and nationalist discourse to black rebellion. Thus in evaluating the rebellion that began and took root in Oriente in February 1895, even active, proindependence white Cubans could derisively say that the uprising was “of no importance, a black thing, over near Santiago de

19. Quoted in Peter Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993), 51–52.

20. U.S. War Department, *Report on the Census of Cuba, 1899* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 194–95, 198–99. I calculated the 37.7 percent figure by including only those 1899 districts that were part of the old *términos municipales* of Santiago and Guantánamo in the prewar period. These districts are Alto Songo, Caney, Cobre, Cristo, Guantánamo, Palma Soriano, Sagua de Tánamo, San Luis, and Santiago. See Pedro Imbernó, *Guía geográfica y administrativa de la isla de Cuba* (Havana: Establecimiento Tipográfico La Lucha, 1891).

Cuba.”²¹ Though here clearly overdrawn, this alleged link between black rebellion and the island’s eastern territories was not without some foundation. All three anticolonial rebellions began in Oriente. The region was, in fact, home to most of the rebel movement’s prominent non-white leaders: men like Bandera, the Maceo brothers, Flor and Emiliano Crombet, Guillermo Moncada, Jesús Rabí, Agustín Cebreco, and many others. Oriente was therefore associated with some measure of black political and military power; and more than any other region in the colony it had a powerful claim to multiracial forms of nationalist insurgency. Thus the apparent rejection of Bandera’s leadership in 1897 represented many complex and connected forms of discrimination: at once a rejection of his blackness and a repudiation of his nonlocal roots. At the same time this rejection could reflect a certain degree of trepidation toward a particular model of multiracial insurgency and of black leadership, both of which had their origins in, and were best represented by, Oriente.

This interpretation was in some ways suggested by Máximo Gómez’s secretary, Colonel Fermín Valdés Domínguez, who appeared to have been as perturbed by *villareño* responses to Bandera as he was by Bandera’s disobedience. Though horrified by Bandera’s behavior and by the presence of his lover in rebel camps, Valdés also condemned the way local white leaders dealt with Bandera’s infractions. José Mayía Rodríguez, the local leader under whom Bandera was placed, was known to have offended Bandera’s guard, openly calling them “blacks and bandits who look after black women.” Yet Valdés condemned Rodríguez less for his racist language and tone than for his failure to understand the multiracial and antiracist mission of the insurgency that came from the east. Thus Valdés censured Rodríguez for the way in which he addressed and offended “officers from Oriente who because of their valor and integrity had come to occupy a prominent place among us, because they were poor and humble, and *because they were black*.”²² The significance of black heroism derived precisely from the fact that this heroism came from men who were oppressed and then rose above that oppression to embrace and champion the nation. Valdés implied, then, that he and other white leaders from Oriente understood the achievements and the role of black soldiers and officers in the

21. Fermín Valdés Domínguez, *Diario de soldado*, 4 vols. (Havana: Univ. de la Habana, 1972–75), 1:90–91. See also Agustín Bravo to Antonio Maura, 8 June 1893, in Fundación Antonio Maura (Madrid), leg. 358a, carpeta 9; and “*La Discusión* en Oriente: del campo de operaciones,” in *La Discusión* (Havana), 21 Mar. 1895.

22. Valdés Domínguez, *Diario de soldado*, 4:46–47 (emphasis is mine). On the incident between Rodríguez and Bandera’s guard, see also Felipe Acea’s testimony in ANC, MG, leg. 20, exp. 2,772.

struggle for Cuban independence, while the western leaders did not. Therefore, when Valdés wrote in his war diary that he read of the misdeeds of Bandera and local white leaders with “shame” (*pena*), he was writing of a double shame — shame, on the one hand, that local white leaders seemed to reject the idea of a central role for black insurgents in the Cuban movement and, on the other, shame that this particular black leader seemed to be so lacking in the honor and discipline for which Valdés extolled black *oriental* leaders. In his vision, black insurgents were poor and humble, but dedicated and disciplined in their allegiance to Cuba, while white insurgents accepted and celebrated the patriotism and dedication of their black compatriots. In 1897, however, neither Bandera nor Rodríguez conformed to this vision.

Bandera failed to conform for several reasons. Broadly speaking, he did not resemble the portrait of black abnegation, discipline, and humility painted by Valdés Domínguez in 1897 or previously by the proindependence writers of the early 1890s.²³ Even before 1897, Bandera faced frequent accusations of indiscipline. His forces were said to be composed of either *plateados*, a local word for bandits, or *majases* (a local term for which the closest English equivalents are words like “dead-beats, skulkers, sneaks, stragglers, or coffee coolers,” U.S. Civil War slang for men who shirked their duties and avoided combat).²⁴ Such charges against Bandera and his men were leveled not by the Spanish but by Cuban insurgents such as José Maceo, Cosme de la Torriente, and others.²⁵

Here the contrast between Bandera and other important leaders of color proves revealing. Antonio Maceo was publicly portrayed as light-skinned and educated, articulate and dedicated, even amidst privately expressed concern about the extent of his political ambitions. Flor Crombet, a member of a slave- and land-owning family of mulatto refugees from Haiti, was praised by fellow insurgents for his elegance, his knowledge of French and English, and his familiarity with European history and politics.²⁶ Guillermo Moncada, a man of

23. On the image of the deferential and grateful black insurgent popularized in the prose of independence in the early 1890s, see Ferrer, *Ambivalent Revolution*, chap. 5.

24. James M. McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1994), 17.

25. For examples of such charges, see Cosme de la Torriente, “Memorias,” in Fernando Gómez, *La insurrección por dentro . . . con un prólogo escrito por el Excmo. Sr. teniente general D. Valeriano Wylér y Nicolau, marqués de Tenerife* (Havana: n.p., 1897), 131 and the citations in n. 12.

26. See Fermín Peraza Sarausa, *Diccionario biográfico cubano* (Havana: Ediciones Anuario Bibliográfico Cubano, 1951); and Eusebio Hernández to A. Maceo, Tegucigalpa, 3 Nov. 1882, in Antonio Maceo, *Papeles de Maceo* (Havana: Impr. El Siglo XX, 1948), 1:327.

little formal education, was generally described as very dark-skinned, and for a long time he was represented as brutal and racist by Spanish authorities and their Cuban allies. But by the late 1880s, he was being held up by the Cubans as “good and trustworthy” and as an example of what “strong allies” men of color could be “if nurtured from an early age.”²⁷ By contrast, Quintín Bandera, later described as “a man as black as coal,” was a man poor and unschooled, whom Spaniards and Cubans alike often represented as savage and foreign. His speech was ridiculed and “africanized” in the press. And as he made his way westward during the invasion of 1895–96, it was his troops (and not those of Maceo or Gómez) that were said to come with rings in their noses, and sometimes in loincloths and bare feet.²⁸ Culturally and socially, he was portrayed in a way that sharply contrasted with the portrait of a virtuous black insurgent that had been created by independence activists before the war. And Valdés, very much schooled in these writings, could not but have been aware of the contrast.²⁹ Black leaders were acceptable—indeed desirable—but they had to be black leaders of a particular kind. If race was no longer a rigid standard for inclusion—culture, performance, and civility now appeared to be quite critical.

Nowhere did Bandera more reveal to his superiors and his peers his incapacity for the kind of leadership they valued than in the way he chose not to fight—and here we get to the emotional crux of the accusations against him. For while his alleged military inactivity provoked the ire of his accusers, they seemed much more offended by the fact that while he was not fighting he was living with a woman and allowing his subordinate officers and soldiers to do the same. He had succumbed to his sexual desires and thus rejected the norms of civilization and manly honor.

Before, during, and after the court-martial, Bandera openly admitted to living with his lover in the hills near Trinidad. In the most striking defense of

27. *Album de El Criollo: semblanzas* (Havana: Establecimiento Tipográfico O'Reilly, 1888), 200–4. For a discussion of the racist representations of Moncada before the late 1880s, see Ada Ferrer, “Social Aspects of Cuban Nationalism: Race, Slavery, and the Guerra Chiquita, 1879–1880” *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos* 21 (1991).

28. Miguel Barnet, ed., *Biografía de un cimarrón* (Havana: Ed. de Ciencias Sociales, 1986), 170–71; José Isabel Herrera, *Impresiones de la Guerra de Independencia* (Havana: Ed. Nuevos Rumbos, 1948), 20; Padrón Valdés, *General de tres guerras*, 158–59, 336–39; Jean Baron Antomarchi, *Life with the Cubans* (New York: Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 1898), chap. 9; and Boza, *Mi diario*, 1:80.

29. Valdés Domínguez, *Diario de soldado*, 1:90–91. See also Ferrer, *Ambivalent Revolution*, chap. 5.

his behavior, he admitted it, in fact, unabashedly. He wrote to Máximo Gómez: “When this revolution began, my commanding officers brought their concubines along with their forces to the war—so much so, in fact, that during the western invasion even the assistants [the lowest position in the rebel army] brought their concubines with them. . . . All this is done publicly; one might even say that it is part of the habits and customs—of the way of being—of our army.”³⁰ Why, he concluded, should he be the only one punished for something that everyone did?³¹ Besides, Bandera suggested, his lover had in no way diminished his capacity to rout the enemy; in fact, she was even known to have taken up a machete to aid him in his battles against the Spanish.³²

On one level, at least, Bandera had a point. His lover was certainly not the only woman to find herself in the midst of a rebel camp. Gómez himself, as well as his secretary, Valdés Domínguez, frequently pointed out that others also kept lovers at or near their camps.³³ Like Bandera, certain white officers, such as Rodríguez, Francisco Carrillo, Juan Masó Parra, and Juan Bravo, were criticized for not fighting; and Máximo Gómez even claimed that Bandera, though *encuevado* (literally, “encaved”) with his concubine, was still in a better position than Rodríguez to do damage to the enemy. Several officers were also accused of shortcomings similar to those of Bandera. Carrillo, for example, was said to be “living happily in his hammock, surrounded by all the pleasures of life: good cigars, delicious and abundant food, and, not too far from his camp, two mistresses—one white and the other *mulatica*.”³⁴ In addition, many forces had camp followers, including women, children, the elderly, and

30. Bandera to Major General Gómez, n.d. (in response to Gómez’s letter of 8 June [1897]), ANC, DR, leg. 257, exp. 59. Bandera later claimed that he had signed this letter without having read it.

31. An analysis of other court-martials in the same period lends power to Bandera’s question. I found no case of an officer charged for living with a woman. In fact, cases involving women tended above all to be accusations against insurgent soldiers for rape, and I found no such case against anyone near Bandera in stature. Cases against military leaders of Bandera’s prominence and rank generally involved accusations of either negotiating with the enemy or engaging in illegal commerce. Collections of court-martial cases for this period can be found in ANC, R95, legs. 24, 25, and 42; and ANC, MG, leg. 16.

32. Bandera to Gómez, 28 May 1897, ANC, MG, leg. 11, exp. 1,633. For shocked reactions to his line of defense, see Valdés Domínguez, *Diario de soldado*, 4:128–29; and Padrón Valdés, *General de tres guerras*, 225–26.

33. See, for example, Valdés Domínguez, *Diario de soldado*, 4:87, 282–83, 314; and Máximo Gómez, *Diario de campaña, 1868–1899* (Havana: Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, 1986), 332.

34. Valdés Domínguez, *Diario de soldado*, 4:282.

the sick; and there is no reason to assume that the soldiers and the women necessarily kept their distance. There are even the occasional references to *mambisas*—women who fought with the men in battles against the Spanish.³⁵ Why then all the fuss about Bandera's unnamed mistress?

From the perspective of his accusers, Bandera's behavior was reprehensible for three reasons, all of which bear on debates—implicit and explicit—about the meanings of nation and manhood and the kind of leadership to be exercised in the new republic. First, Bandera's behavior defiled the moral and male purity of the rebel cause. For Máximo Gómez, who ordered the court-martial, Bandera's open sexual relationship in a rebel camp was a transgression of military honor. By keeping a concubine at his side while serving the nation and leading Cuban soldiers, Bandera "disregarded his sacred obligations." He demonstrated that he had not come to Occidente "inspired by patriotic ideas and aspirations of honor and glory."³⁶ And his "incorrect behavior as a military man" translated into "antipatriotic behavior as a Cuban."³⁷ Since the beginning of the independence effort in 1868, leaders had cast their struggle in masculine terms: they were taking to fields of battles with weapons in their hands to "reconquer [their] rights as men," Carlos Manuel de Céspedes had said upon declaring war on Spain.³⁸ The presence of women—as residents or workers in civilian prefectures, as nurses tending to sick soldiers, as supporters in cities and towns, occasionally as fighters and more regularly as lovers in rebel camps—had not changed the masculine discourse of insurgency and nationalism. But this masculinity was of a particular sort: not too aggressive or sexualized, but ascetic and austere—a self-sacrificing manhood that served as example to others. For instance, in the writings of patriot leader José Martí, as analyzed by literary critic Arcadio Díaz, the nationalist hero derived his political and spiritual authority by resisting the temptation of women, by renouncing temporal pleasure that might detract from his redemptive political mis-

35. Segundo Corvisón, *En la guerra y en la paz . . . por el teniente coronel Segundo Corvisón, ayudante del general en jefe del Ejército Libertador, mayor general Máximo Gómez* (Havana: Cultural, 1939), 41–42. See also K. Lynn Stoner, *From the House to the Streets: The Cuban Woman's Movement for Legal Reform, 1898–1940* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1991), chap. 1.

36. Gómez to Lieutenant Colonel Armando Sánchez, 8 July 1897, ANC, MG, leg. 16, exp. 2, 157.

37. Gómez to Bandera, 8 July [1897], ANC, DR, leg. 283, exp. 6.

38. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, "Manifiesto de la Junta Revolucionaria de la Isla de Cuba," 10 Oct. 1868, in *Documentos para la historia de Cuba*, 4th rev. ed., 4 vols., ed. Hortensia Pichardo (Havana: Ed. de Ciencias Sociales, 1977), 1:358–62.

sion.³⁹ Bandera, who publicly admitted to keeping his lover in his camp and who refused to concede that she detracted from the fulfillment of his patriotic duties, clearly failed to measure up to this abstract conception of the hero. For Gómez, more a soldier than Martí, Bandera's offenses struck at the heart of the rebel cause: the honor of the revolutionary army. For Gómez the central institution of this army was the military camp, which was for "all worthy men a temple."⁴⁰ The camp was a site for honorable and civilized men—for selfless men who exercised the moral restraint that qualified them to serve as role models and leaders. The presence of women—and particularly of a concubine and "dirty woman," in the words of Gómez's secretary—tarnished the manliness and sanctity of the place and the cause.⁴¹ The honor of the women, black like Bandera, was of little concern; it was the honor of the army that needed to be preserved and revered.

Second, though Bandera's accusers assumed the moral high ground in their dispute with the black general, it is also clear that in addition to their moral objections his accusers were equally upset by his effrontery. It wasn't only the fact that Bandera had a concubine, but the way he had a concubine that offended their sensibilities. The relationship was open; Bandera publicly admitted it to superiors and subalterns alike. In this way his behavior differed from that of José González, the black officer who was chosen to preside over Bandera's court-martial and who had recently begun living with a young woman of color. One observer noted that no one "knew whether González's marriage

39. Arcadio Díaz Quiñones, "Martí: las guerras del alma," *Apuntes postmodernos/ Postmodern notes* 5, no. 2 (1995). For a general discussion of the themes of masculinity and self-sacrifice in the discourse of insurgency, see John C. Chasteen, "Fighting Words: The Discourse of Insurgency in Latin American History," in *Latin American Research Review* 28, no. 3 (1993).

40. Gómez to Lieutenant Colonel José López, 8 June 1897, in Valdés Domínguez, *Diario de soldado*, 4:129–30. Gómez refers to the rebel camp as a temple in his campaign diary as well. See Gómez, *Diario*, 324.

41. The reference to Bandera's lover as a "dirty woman" appears in Valdés Domínguez, *Diario de soldado*, 4:128–29. For an interesting discussion of the links between the discourses of manliness and civilization in another context, see Gail L. Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995). According to Bederman, the cult of manly self-restraint developed among middle-class white men in the United States as a way of asserting their authority over women and non-white men (American and foreign alike). It is interesting to consider the possible rise of parallel discourses in colonial (or neocolonial) settings, where local leaders may have countered colonial discourses about uncivilized and unmanly colonized men by asserting their own manliness and civilization, in opposition to what they saw as the more primitive masculinity of local nonelite men.

was legal, but at least [the couple] kept up the appearance that it was, and this” the observer concluded, “was the most we can require of certain elements” of Cuban society.⁴² If Bandera had behaved as had González, everyone might have turned a blind eye to the offense. Instead, by admitting it openly, Bandera implicitly demanded that military and civilian leaders publicly condone his behavior and his model of leadership—something they were unwilling to do. Nevertheless, it might well have been precisely his open behavior and willingness to condone the same behavior among his subalterns that guaranteed Bandera the loyalty and respect of his troops.

The differences between the behavior of Bandera, the accused, and González, the handpicked black president of the court-martial, can be taken even further, for in other instances, under comparable circumstances, the men chose to act in ways that contrasted dramatically. At a party at a rebel camp in 1896, for example, Quintín Bandera asked a white woman to dance. When she politely declined, Bandera became perceptibly annoyed. He improvised a long speech on valor and patriotism and condemned the white woman’s refusal to dance with a black patriot as unpatriotic and anti-Cuban. For better or for worse, he drew attention to himself and the woman, to his desire and her refusal.⁴³ Years later and after the war, at another social gathering, a young white woman had a white male friend introduce her to the black officer and veteran José González. Through the former she sent word to González that she would be honored to have a dance with him. Politely, quietly, modestly, González—a man known to love to dance—demurred, saying that he was flattered but that he had never learned to dance.⁴⁴ Even when a white woman took the initiative, González refused to transgress social boundaries, refused to use the prestige he had acquired in war to remake or manipulate social distinctions. As with his mistress during the war, González acted quietly, inconspicuously. Bandera, meanwhile, drew all eyes to his purported transgression. And as with his own mistress during the war, he refused to keep up appearances, and then announced his refusal to his superiors.

Another reason Bandera’s behavior caused so severe a reaction in 1897 was that his superiors believed that it produced a deplorable example for the men under his command. In the eyes of his superiors, Bandera’s misconduct was

42. De la Torriente, “Memorias,” 20 Apr. 1896, in F. Gómez, *La insurrección*, 117–18.

43. Savignón, *Quintín Banderas*, 10–11.

44. Lino d’Ou y Ayllón, *Papeles del Teniente Coronel Lino d’Ou*, prologue by Nicolás Guillén (Havana: Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, 1977), 88–89. I am grateful to Rebecca Scott for calling my attention to this story.

even more reprehensible because of the character of his troops. Gómez wrote that because Bandera's subordinates were themselves "lacking in moral rectitude," his behavior had resulted in the total disarray of his division.⁴⁵ Here Gómez's accusation contrasts markedly with Bandera's defense. For whereas Bandera had attempted to justify his actions by pointing to the character—the "way of being"—of the rebel army, Gómez invoked this same character in demanding greater moral rectitude from the army's leaders.

This contrast is critical. Bandera, in his defense, stressed that he was a "rustic man," uneducated and incapable of artifice.⁴⁶ He was simply, as the laundry soap ad would later assert, "a son of the people." He drew little cultural distinction between himself and his soldiers, or between himself and the Cuban public. Gómez, on the other hand, implied that in a society "lacking in moral rectitude," strict and civilized leadership was indispensable. Discussing the poor moral examples set by different army officers, he predicted that "if those men who are called upon either by virtue of their rank in this improvised army or by virtue of their social background do not, with their example and their abnegation, support the labor of true redemption of this unfortunate society, then I see the foundations of this republic in serious trouble."⁴⁷ Given the character of Cuban society and of the rebel army's rank and file, Gómez insisted on a certain cultural, social, and political distance between leaders and soldiers. Leaders were to provide moral examples that would elevate the character of the soldiers and the army, which in turn would serve as a solid foundation for the new republic.

The problem, then, with Bandera's offenses was that they were eagerly interpreted as demonstrations of his incapacity for this kind of moral authority. Bandera's detractors questioned his standing as a patriot and rejected his claim to leadership because he allegedly failed to display the qualities of manly self-restraint and self-sacrifice. This was evident in the fact that he placed his desire to return to his home in Oriente above the needs of the army and, more generally, of the Cuban cause; in so doing, he was perceived as having encouraged disobedience among his men. His incapacity for leadership was further, and perhaps foremost, suggested by his apparent willingness to place his own sexual and personal desires above the army and the nation, in the process sullying the privileged and pure world of male insurgency. That Bandera chose to

45. Gómez to Armando Sánchez, 8 July 1897, ANC, MG, leg. 16, exp. 2, 157. See also Gómez, *Diario*, 332.

46. Bandera to Gómez, no date, ANC, DR, leg. 257, exp. 59.

47. Gómez, *Diario*, 332.

admit to many of the accusations, and that in so doing he emphasized his affinity with common soldiers and their weaknesses, further angered his accusers. For if independence was to succeed, its leaders had to quell, not reflect, the inclinations of poor and uneducated soldiers. Leaders had to have the social and cultural characteristics that Bandera boasted of not having.

Conclusion

The court-martial against Quintín Bandera, then, revealed important assumptions about leadership and its prerequisites. Nowhere, however, did the language with which Bandera's opponents expressed their concerns about these prerequisites ever suggest that racial identity could be considered an explicit criterion for leadership; and nowhere did the record name Bandera as a black man or black officer. But if qualifications for authority were not explicitly or primarily racial, neither were they exclusively military. For the language of the accusations, alongside a concern with Bandera's behavior as a soldier, displayed a marked preoccupation with his lack of sexual, social, and moral restraint as a man. At issue, then, were not only matters of military discipline, but also questions of decorum, civility, and refinement—qualities with clear racial, gender, and class content. Note, for example, the slippage between race and civilization in the exchange about Bandera that occurred in January 1898 between the rebel army's two highest ranking military men: Calixto García and Máximo Gómez. Wrote García:

Regarding your sensible observations about Quintín Bandera's contingent, and regarding, in general, the need to refrain from promoting so many rough and ignorant men, allow me to remind you that I was never a supporter of Bandera's contingent. . . . Bandera, Zamora [another non-white officer], etc. etc., are not my work, nor yours. I have always attempted to elevate only those men who are truly worthy, honorable, and civilized.⁴⁸

Clearly the qualifications for leadership far exceeded the realm of military skill and prowess; top-ranking officers such as Gómez and García saw worthiness, honor, and civilization as prerequisites for the exercise of leadership.

With independence at hand, however, their preferences were no longer an abstract proposition. The highest officers found themselves, in fact, at a complicated and difficult crossroads. For the duration of the war, and over the

48. García to Gómez, 14 Jan. 1898, ANC, MG, leg. 12, exp. 1,710; emphasis mine.

whole 30-year period of nationalist agitation, they had extolled a rebel army that eroded social distinctions and allowed for the ascent of “rustic men” such as Quintín Bandera. As independence approached, however, they became convinced of the need to mitigate the rebel army’s leveling effects, and to direct and supervise the transition from military to political power. An army of rustic men defending a just cause was one thing; quite another was the exercise of power, authority, and responsibility by these same men in times of peace.

And so as peace and victory began to seem attainable, perhaps even imminent, highly gendered and racialized concerns about the exercise of power by unqualified men translated into day-to-day anxiety over promotions and ranks within the rebel army. As 1898 unfolded, the leading figures of the rebel army and civilian government began to think about the end of war, and about which officers would finish the war in positions of power. Thus in February 1898 confidence in a Cuban victory led Gómez to write to commanding officers across the island asking for nominations for promotions to commissioned ranks. He asked the officers to make their choices “with special care and scrupulousness . . . so as not to find ourselves surrounded later by officers with whom we would have no idea what to do.”⁴⁹ Across the island, ranking officers made their recommendations. Pedro Betancourt, the highest ranking officer in Matanzas province, for example, responded by stripping Martín Duen of his command as leader of the Betances Regiment, a post he had held since the regiment had been formed. Betancourt replaced Duen, “a man as dark as ebony,” with Guillermo Schweyer, a white officer and a member of one of the region’s most prominent families. Duen, meanwhile, was transferred to another regiment, where he ended the war as one of only six commanders under a white colonel.⁵⁰ A local black soldier characterized this transfer of power as fairly typical of what was happening as peace approached and as more and more “sons of distinguished families” assumed positions of prominence and power.⁵¹ The same pattern repeated itself elsewhere on the island. In Cienfuegos, not too far from where Bandera ran into so much trouble in 1897, other prominent white citizens joined the rebel cause late, climbed rapidly through the ranks, and finished the war with authority over more experienced black officers and soldiers.⁵²

49. See, for example, Gómez to Pedro Betancourt, Feb. 1898, ANC, DR, leg. 250, exp. 50.

50. “Diario de operaciones del Capitán Martín Duen y Richard,” ANC, DR, leg. 278, exp. 1; and Ricardo Batrell Oviedo, *Para la historia: apuntes autobiográficos de la vida de Ricardo Batrell Oviedo* (Havana: Seoane y Alvarez, 1912), 170–71.

51. Batrell Oveido, *Para la historia*, 171.

52. See Orlando García Martínez, “La Brigada de Cienfuegos: un análisis social de su

These additional cases, in which the leadership of black men in Matanzas or Cienfuegos was frustrated, did not exactly parallel the case of Bandera, where a nationally prominent black figure was court-martialed, punished, and stripped of his forces. But the concerns expressed and revealed during the prosecution of Bandera—the preoccupation with civilization and manliness, with a leadership that would maintain strict political, social, and cultural distinctions between itself and the mass of people it commanded—foreshadowed emerging and urgent struggles over the meaning and boundaries of military and political power during the transition to peace. Conflicts over the leadership qualities of Bandera, or Duen, centered less on the military merits of individual leaders than on broader battles over contending models of republican leadership and over who would occupy the cultural and political center of the new polity.

How the civilian and military leadership of the Cuban movement—divided and fractured but conscious of the antiracist promise of their revolution—would have resolved the issue we cannot know; for over their own leadership would come that of a foreign government and army. With American officers and bureaucrats on the scene, the issue then changed: the question was no longer who among the Cuban insurgents and civilians was capable of leading an independent republic, but rather whether the Cuban people as a whole were prepared for independence at all. For the Americans, the answer to that question came easily, and it loudly echoed the allegations that Spain had made for most of the nineteenth century. The rebels, said one United States officer, were “a lot of degenerates . . . no more capable of self-government than the savages of Africa.” General William Shafter made the same point with a different, more explosive analogy: “Self-government! Why, these people are no more fit for self-government than gunpowder is for hell.”⁵³

And here emerges one of the central ironies of the story: that those same leaders who had so worried about the requisites for leadership—about cultural attainments, honor, worthiness, and civilization—would find themselves sud-

formación,” paper presented at the Taller de Historia, Archivo Provincial de Cienfuegos, Cuba, 4–6 Mar. 1998. On the postwar period in Cienfuegos, see also Michael Zeuske, “Movilización afrocubana y clientelas en un hinterland cubano: Cienfuegos entre colonia y república (1895–1912),” paper presented at the same conference; and Rebecca J. Scott, “Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Cuba: A View from the Sugar District of Cienfuegos, 1886–1909,” in this volume.

53. Both quoted in Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895–1902*, 2 vols. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972),

2:394–95.

denly subordinated to a government of occupation that declared them all generally incapable of leadership and self-rule. So in 1898, Quintín Bandera witnessed the end of the war in Santiago de Cuba from the margins, without authority, without soldiers, and without sanctioned political voice. This marginality, like that of most members of the nationalist army, was imposed by the exclusionary contempt of a foreign army recently arrived. But Bandera's ambiguous position at the margins was imposed, as well, from within, by military and civilian leaders who looked forward to peace with some measure of anxiety, who saw in the mass of rebel soldiers a potential "obstacle to peace and prosperity," and who defined leadership always as a refined check on the mass of "rustic men" with whom Bandera so clearly chose to identify.⁵⁴

54. The quote about the rebel army appears in Joaquín Llaverías y Martínez, ed., *Actas de las asambleas de representantes y del Consejo de Guerra durante la guerra de independencia*, vol. 5: 1898–1899 (Havana: Impr. "El Siglo XX," A. Muñiz y Hermanos, 1932), 27.