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10-2016

### A Cuban Revolution

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#### Recommended Citation

Ortiz, Fernando, "A Cuban Revolution" (2016). *Lake Union Herald*. 36.

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## A Cuban Revolution

BY L. FERNANDO ORTIZ

**M**iguel is a Cuban veteran whose house was destroyed by Hurricane Sandy in 2012, forcing him to live under a small shelter with only one leg. Although he has to walk with a crutch, he came every night to the evangelistic meetings. When our Andrews University Master of Divinity students gave him a Bible, he came the next day with the Bible so underlined you would think he had had it for months. A veteran of his country, Miguel is now a soldier for Jesus.

Isaac, 17, a Pathfinder leader at his church in Cuba, gives Bible studies to 16 individuals every week. When Isaac arrives home from school every day, his priority is his Bible studies and, if there is time, he says, "I'll do my homework." He is an "A" student, but more than anything, he is an "A" soulwinner.

Liuska's mother, who, as a practicing *Santera*, had many idols in her home. When her daughter tried to give her Bible studies and warn her about her ways, she refused. But Seminary students visited her and befriended her. After a lot of prayer, she decided to give up her witchcraft. So she cleaned her house of all idols. Now she is no longer afraid of spirits but is studying the Bible and is in the process of learning how to trust the one true, living God.

These stories represent the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Cuba as students from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary engaged in hands-on, boots-on-the-ground personal and public evangelism work. Although students have the option to participate in domestic evangelism, the Cuba experience is meant to help students explore new ways of witnessing. This annual initiative, now in its fifth year, has changed the lives of more than 100 seminary students, hundreds of pastors and Bible workers in Cuba, and thousands who have heard the Good News that Jesus is their "true freedom."

By immersing themselves in the world of the local church, students are able to learn valuable lessons in evangelism as they rub shoulders with pastors, Bible workers and lay people, and see firsthand how they have been successful soulwinners despite the repressive Communist system. The whole experience is meant to equip students to obtain an evangelistic mindset and enlarge their worldview.

Students first take classes at Andrews on personal and public evangelism. Then, during their spring break, the Master of Divinity program organizes a study tour to Cuba to practice what they have learned and completely immerse the students in a new culture. They stay in local people's homes (not in hotels) and go door-to-door to either invite people to meetings or give Bible studies to those already prepared by the local Bible workers. In the mornings, they receive training from the local pastors before going to the field. This personal contact is what many of our students cherish and they report that this way of evangelizing has revolutionized their lives and ministry.

### A Revolution

The revolution starts when the team, along with the participating local churches, takes a city by storm. Five different key sites are chosen, each one holding their own



Seminary students took a summer study tour to Cuba to work alongside local Bible workers spreading the Word of God.

Ray Bibit

evangelistic meeting. During our last tour, which took place in Santiago de Cuba, the theme was “New Hope in Christ” because Cubans who have almost nothing receive an incredible amount of hope in listening to the gospel.

Dwight Nelson, lead pastor at Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University, preached at one site, and our seminary students led the meetings at the other four. This gives students a one-of-a-kind experience preaching to large audiences and often ignites their passion for ministry. Each site was packed to capacity every night. After each meeting, dozens came forward to altar calls, and many decided to accept Jesus as their personal Savior. As a result, 277 people were baptized. Over the last weekend, a local convention center was secured and all sites converged for a moving final celebration with about 2,000 in attendance, followed by a large-scale baptism.

## The Project Expands

But the project goes beyond a tour. It has developed into something deeper and wider than we ever expected or dreamed of. What started as a trip to equip Andrews’ students has transformed into a large-scale project to equip lay people and pastors in Cuba. Since most pastors and Bible workers in Cuba go from place to place on foot, sharing the gospel without basic materials like books or ministerial resources we consider standard here in the U.S., we have taken on the task of providing bicycles, computers, tablets, video projectors, horses, church buildings and other resources. This is empowering them to spread the gospel like never before.

So far, 300 pastors in Cuba have received much-needed resources.

News of this project in Cuba has spread far and wide, and we are hearing from many people who want to be part of the unique opportunity to make history in Cuba by donating toward a bike, a tablet or a computer for one of our workers so they can boldly proclaim the message to a people who have been in darkness for 50 years. For more information, visit: <http://www.careforcuba.org>.

In the meantime, Andrews will continue connecting students with the field, a field that will prepare them for greater and faithful service to their Master.

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L. Fernando Ortiz is director of the Master of Divinity program at Andrews University and Cuba study tour leader.



Ray Bibit

Miguel is a Cuban veteran with one leg amputated who came on crutches to the meetings every night and devoured the gospel message.