

The Independent Party of Color

El Partido Independiente de Color

In the aftermath of independence, Afro- and Euro-Cubans made clear their very different interpretations of Martí's antiracism and association of Cuban nationalism with an end to racial discrimination. Euro-Cuban elites consolidated their hold on political and economic power, using the language of equality to cover up the continuity of inequality. Education and property qualifications for jobs and public office limited opportunities for Afro-Cubans, and Euro-Cuban and Afro-Cuban elites condemned any attempt at race-based organizing as a threat to national unity, especially after the second U.S. occupation began in 1906.

The Partido Independiente de Color (PIC), founded in 1908, clearly called upon the language of Cuban independence to promote its program. "We continue to love and adore the goddess of slavery with the tunic of the Republic," the party's founder, Evaristo Estenoz (d. 1912), explained bitterly, associating racism with colonialism and insisting on the association of independence with racial equality!

Political Program of the Independent Party of Color

The "Independent Association of Color" hereby constitutes itself as a national organization in the entire territory of the Republic. We seek to maintain a balance among all Cuban interests, spread love for the Fatherland, develop cordial relations, and interest everybody in the conservation of Cuban nationality, allowing everybody born in this land to participate equally in public administration.

Our motto is an egalitarian, sovereign, and independent republic, without racial divisions or social antagonisms. All Cubans who are worthy should be able to be named to the diplomatic corps, and, as a matter of important and urgent necessity, citizens of the race of color should be named, so that the republic can be represented in all of its hues.

We believe that all court trials that take place in the Republic should be trials by jury, and that the duty of serving on the jury should be mandatory and free.

We call for

- The abolition of the death penalty, and for the creation of penitentiaries that fulfill the needs of modern civilization.
- The creation of correctional School-ships [*Barcos-escuelas*] for youthful offenders who, according to the law, cannot suffer greater penalties.
- Free and compulsory education for children from ages six to fourteen.
- The creation of polytechnic [vocational] schools in each of the six provinces, free and compulsory for adults, to be considered as the second stage of compulsory education, and consisting of Arts and Trades.
- Official, national, and free university education available to all.
- The regulation of private and official education, under the auspices of the state, so that the education of all Cubans will be uniform.
- The creation of a Naval and Military Academy.
- Free and faithful [leal] admission into military, administrative, government, and judicial services of citizens of color, so that all of the races can be represented in the service of the state.
- Immigration should be free for all races, without giving preference to any. The free entrance of all individuals who, within sanitary prescriptions, come in good faith to contribute to the development of the public good.
- The repatriation, at public expense, of all Cubans from foreign shores who want to return to their native land but lack the necessary resources.
- The creation of a Law to guarantee that in employment in all public enterprises, in Cuba and abroad, Cubans will be given preference to foreigners, until the latter are naturalized, and preventing new enterprises from being established in other countries.
- We will work to make the eight-hour day the norm in all of the territory of the republic.
- The creation of a Labor Tribunal to regulate any differences that arise between capital and labor.
- The promulgation of a law prohibiting the immigration of minors, and of women, except when they are accompanied by their families.
- The distribution of plots of land from State reserves, or from lands acquired by the state for this purpose, among veterans of the War of Independence who lack resources and who wish to devote themselves to agriculture, giving preference to those who are not suited for public office.

Constitutional Act of the Agrupación Independiente de Color

In the city of Havana, in the residence of General Evaristo Estenoz, 63 Amargura Street, on the night of 7 August 1908, after a long and well-thought-out

discussion, those who have signed below unanimously approved the following: That in light of the results of the elections of 1 August throughout the Republic to fill the positions of provincial governors, provincial councilors, municipal mayors, and municipal councilors, in which the candidates of color were excluded, with preconceived intent, from the candidate lists of the different political parties that participated in the election;

This being a self-evident demonstration that the black race cannot rely on the political parties for the betterment which it deserves for the services that it has lent and continues to lend to the national interest;

We solemnly agree, with our sights set on universal cordiality, on love for the progress of humanity, on the collective good of all of the inhabitants who make up the territory of the homeland, and above all, on the mutual respect and consideration that in accordance with human law, and with political and civil law should exist so that all who enjoy the light of the sun in this land can love each other and understand each other, and;

Collecting the general sentiment of all of the elements of the race of color in the whole island, who have consulted us daily, showing their dissatisfaction with the current state of things;

We believe that in order to bring about an era of moral peace for all Cubans;

We resolve to present a candidate list made up of men of color, covering all of the elective positions.

This proposal is not based on hatred, nor animosity toward anybody, for all Cubans have the right to support us or to combat us. We simply say that we, inspired by a high and generous goal, have the duty to maintain the balance among all Cuban interests, and that the black race has the right to participate in the government of its country not with the objective of governing anybody, but rather with the aim that we should be well governed.

President Evaristo Estenoz
Secretary Gregorio Surín

Translated by Aviva Chomsky

Note

1. Tomás Fernández Robaina, *El negro en Cuba, 1902-1958: Apuntes para la historia de la lucha contra la discriminación en la neocolonia* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1990), 61.

A Survivor

Isidoro Santos Carrera

In 1913 the PIC was crushed by armed attack by government troops and white militiamen, and thousands of Afro-Cubans massacred, including the party leadership. Eight years later, former PIC leader Isidoro Santos Carrera recalled the massacre and protested against the black organizations that showed support for President José Miguel Gómez and José de Jesús Monteagudo, who had led the government forces that carried out the massacre.

The Voice of a Survivor

We cried out, when the Independents of Color were imprisoned, after it became easy to capture or kill every Cuban with dark skin who happened to be out in the countryside or even in the cities and towns. We cried out when the society "Luz de Oriente," a society of blacks, who were persecuted, jailed, humiliated, and assassinated, sponsored a dance for that barbarous pack of wolves that is the perverse and heartless officers, made up of jackals and led by that vulture Monteagudo who, obeying the orders of José Miguel [Gómez], called the whites to arms to attack and defend themselves from the blacks. We cried out, I repeat, against the way that society celebrated that act, putting the waists of the unfortunate women, who had not yet finished mourning their earlier crimes and when we were still deprived of freedom, into the hands of the tormenters of hundreds of their sons, abandoned, without knowing what could have happened to them, and not a few of them heading toward exile, as the only means of escaping that conspiracy, of which José Miguel and his supporters were commander in chief.

The society Luz de Oriente presented Monteagudo with a sword, it sponsored a dance for his officialdom and it took a place at his banquet, it offered a toast thus, to the blood spilled and to the prisoners, since those blacks of the Luz were not tied by any family relationship then, and much less now, to those men who were assassinated and deprived of their freedom; nor did they form part of those families who were humiliated and persecuted, simply for being black families, at the time of that sadly recalled government of barbarous events. . . . The world should know that we blacks who were—and