

especially effective when each simultaneously "catches the other offguard" (e.g., turning around after passing), and exchanges a knowing smile.

If the time is opportune (both partners are searching, the situation does not compromise other commitments, and so forth), cruising can lead promptly to **impersonal sex**. If not, skilled searchers will find a means, even without alerting others present, to exchange information for future contact. Cruising is most often a brief search for a one-time, unpaid sex partner (**trick**), but it may also be a lengthy search for a candidate long-term lover.

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## CUBA

The largest island of the Antilles chain, home to ten million Spanish-speaking people, Cuba separates the Gulf of Mexico from the Caribbean Sea. At its closest point, it is 90 miles south of Florida.

*The Colonial Period.* Cuba was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and colonized by Spain beginning in 1511. Overwork and disease brought from the Old World caused the death of most of the native Caribs, who were replaced by Africans imported as slaves beginning in 1518. The Spanish *peninsulares* normally intended to return to Europe and rarely brought women with them.

During the seventeenth century **pirates** and privateers roamed boldly throughout the Caribbean. The British, French, and Dutch seized islands from the Spanish or colonized vacant ones as naval bases or sugar plantations; like the pirates they seldom brought women along. All three European powers were involved in the notorious triangular trade, shipping

molasses or rum to Europe, guns and trinkets from there to Africa, and slaves back to the West Indies. Many maintain that the common economies and social systems thus evolved rendered Caribbean islands and indeed parts of the adjoining mainland, including New Orleans, Vera Cruz, and Caracas, and their hinterlands more alike than different. **Slavery** and exploitation promoted a low regard for life and labor and set up situations for institutional and situational homosexuality, with males outnumbering females by a great margin. The varieties of language, politics, topography, size, and history, however, created differences, some islands having received great numbers of East Indian (Trinidad, for example) or Chinese immigrants (Cuba).

Cuba began to excel in sugar production after 1762. Havana became a glittering metropolis, rivaling New York and Rio de Janeiro, by 1800. The slave population, including huge numbers of males imported for work in the cane fields or molasses manufacturing, grew from fewer than 40,000 in 1770 to over 430,000 seventy years later. The census of 1841 reported that more than half the population was non-white (black and mixed blood) and that 43 percent were slaves. Males outnumbered females by 2 to 1 in the center and west and were just equal in the east. Other islands in the Caribbean had even greater sexual imbalances. Documentation for the homosexuality that must have abounded is scarce but the earlier prevalence can be assumed from attitudes and customs that still survive.

When most of Spain's colonies in the Americas gained independence in the early nineteenth century, Cuba remained Spanish. By the 1840s, however, the slave trade became more difficult as the British energetically pursued smugglers and after 1850 the Spanish authorities cooperated more earnestly. With Spain's adoption of the Napoleonic Code in 1889, homosexuality was decriminalized three years after the abolition of slavery.

*Independence.* Cuba gained its independence from Spain in 1898 as a consequence of the Spanish-American War, but became a virtual American protectorate until the Platt Amendment (1902) was repealed in 1934, by which time Americans had come to own over one third of the sugar mills, producing over half of Cuba's sugar.

During World War I, Europe was closed to North Americans and Cuba, especially Havana, became a resort for the more adventurous. Prosperity increased with a rise in commodity prices. Also, Prohibition in the United States after 1920 left Cuba as an oasis where liquor still flowed freely. Casino gambling and prostitution were also legal. A favorite port of call of cruise ships, Havana flourished as a mecca for pleasure-seekers.

Havana was also a center for Spanish-speaking culture, as Federico García Lorca discovered to his delight when he visited the city in 1930. In the late 1930s, José Lezama Lima, who was to become one of Latin America's greatest novelists, began his literary career there.

The postwar collapse of commodity prices was to some extent offset by tourism. Everything was for sale in Havana under the dictator Fulgencio Batista, whose 1952 coup ousted an outwardly democratic but venal and nepotistic predecessor.

Old Havana had gay bars. Moral laxity, characteristic of the slave-rooted Caribbean economy, the Napoleonic Code, and the weakness of the Catholic Church (which was mainly Spanish, urban and upper class) produced an environment where gays were only mildly persecuted and could buy protection from corrupt officials. Drugs, especially marijuana, which flourished throughout the Caribbean, were available in Cuba long before they won popularity in the United States.

*The Castro Regime.* Exploiting popular revulsion against continuing political corruption as well as resentment of the diminishing but still important Ameri-

can domination, Fidel Castro led an ill-assorted group of liberals, patriots, and Marxists, including some gays, to victory over Batista in 1959. Only after he came to power did the United States realize that Castro was an avowed Communist. The American Central Intelligence Agency then tried and failed to assassinate him. Hatred of the Colossus of the North and of the upper classes, some of whom had by corruption shared the spoils of foreign exploitation, as well as implacable American opposition to his regime, drove Castro to ally with the Soviet Union. His triumph was sealed by the missile crisis of 1962 when Khrushchev agreed to withdraw the missiles in return for Kennedy's promise never to try to invade Cuba. Since then the situation has been a stalemate.

Castro closed all gambling casinos, houses of prostitution, and gay bars. Not only are all the male brothels and bars where boys could be bought gone, but so also are all other gay establishments. Two million people have fled, including almost all of Havana's 15,000 Jews.

Soviet hostility toward homosexuality since 1934, when Stalin restored the penal laws against male homosexuals, combined with traditional Latin American machismo and Catholic homophobia, to make the existence of Cuban homosexuals wretched and oppressive. To prevent their "contamination" of youth, thousands of gays in the 1960s were placed in work camps known as Military Units to Increase Production (UMAP). Although the camps were abolished by the end of the decade, other forms of discrimination continued. Article 359 of the Cuban penal code prohibits public homosexuality. Violations are punished with a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 20 years. Parents must discourage their children from homosexuality or report their failure to officials as Articles 355-58 mandate. Articles 76-94 punish with 4 years imprisonment sexual deviation regarded by the government as contrary to the spirit of Socialism. Cuban gays are left undisturbed

only if they abstain from practicing, but even then they are not permitted to hold jobs which involve contact with foreigners or to attend university.

The gifted playwright and fiction writer Virgilio Piñera (1912-1967) returned from Argentina in 1957 and after Castro's triumph worked for several of the newspapers of the regime. On October 11, 1961, he was arrested and jailed for homosexuality. Che Guevara personally denounced him. The novelist Reinaldo Arenas, an authentic son of the proletariat, was subjected to constant restriction by the Castro government. An early exile, the gay satirical writer Severo Sarduy has chosen to live and work in Europe.

Between 10,000 and 20,000 gay men and lesbians were among the 125,000, which included an indeterminate number of criminals and insane people, who chose to leave (or were forced to leave) in the boatlift from Mariel in 1980. Among the refugees was Reinaldo Arenas, who resumed a productive career in New York City.

Cuba is the only country that imposes AIDS tests on all its people, and the only one that confines for life anyone carrying the HIV virus. In a 1989 report, the independent human rights group Americas Watch described Cuba as a tightly

controlled society in which people are restrained from speaking freely and holding meetings and most are forbidden to leave the country. According to the report, the regime has perfected a system of monitoring "almost every aspect" of private life, beginning with neighborhood committees that collect information, opinions, and gossip and determine who is admitted to day-care centers and universities, who may purchase consumer goods, and whether a job change is appropriate. People's lives "are shaped by judgments about how their conduct and their views conform to officially prescribed doctrines." The report concluded that "Cuba's practices on human rights are sharply at odds with international standards." Despite intensive persecution, closeted gays still serve in political and cultural institutions.

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## CULT PROSTITUTION

See *Kādēsh*.

## CUNNILINGUS

See *Oral Sex*.