

EDITOR'S NOTE

Mariel@40: An Introduction

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The Mariel Boatlift of 1980 has not wanted for scholarly, journalistic, and artistic attention over the years. Yet, forty years later, there is much about this traumatic episode in Cuban, Cuban American, Caribbean, U.S. immigration, and South Florida history that remains underexplored or simply unsaid. In this introduction, issue co-editors Michael J. Bustamante and Lillian Manzor describe the aims and contents of this special issue, as well as its origins in the 2020 virtual program *El Efecto Mariel: Before, During, and After*, at the University of Miami's Cuban Heritage Collection. They also contextualize its contributions considering previous scholarship. For U.S. immigration policy, race/ethnic relations in South Florida, and Cuban American politics, the multiple, intersecting legacies of Mariel remain highly germane for understanding various aspects of the present. And in Cuba, too, the legacy of Mariel remains painfully alive, as practices of political exclusion associated with 1980—e.g. the “act of repudiation”—have been revived as a prominent feature of Cuban political conflict since 2020.

Keywords: Mariel Boatlift; Cuba; Exile; Miami; Caribbean; Migration; U.S. Immigration Policy; Race

Between late-April and October 1980—though principally in the months of May and June—over 120,000 Cubans made their way to the United States via the improvised flotilla known thereafter as the Mariel Boatlift, named after the Cuban harbor and adjacent port town some thirty miles west of Havana from which it departed. The exodus was the direct consequence of the shocking occupation of the Peruvian embassy in Havana by some 10,000 Cubans beginning on April 1. To this day, “el Mariel,” as it is metonymically known, constitutes the largest, most concentrated episode of out-migration in Cuba's history. And in the particularly fraught history of migration from Cuba since 1959, it stands out as a moment of singular contradiction, trauma, and conflict. As Cubans made known their intention to leave, “acts of repudiation”—aggressive acts of real and symbolic violence, including the chanting of insults, beatings, damaging of personal property, and throwing of eggs—pitted loyal “revolutionaries” against working-class, multiracial so-called “*escoria*” (“scum”) who were allegedly ungrateful for the Cuban Revolution's achievements in their name.¹ Simultaneously, as the Carter administration experienced a major crisis in an era of rising anti-immigrant sentiment, Mariel sent a new generation of anti-communist Cubans into a more unwelcoming, precarious exile in the United States than what their predecessors had experienced in the two previous decades.

Given the significance of these events, Mariel has not wanted for scholarly, journalistic, and artistic attention over the years. The unfolding of the crisis received extensive—if often sensational or outright prejudiced—coverage in U.S. commercial and Cuban state-run media. So, too, did international reporters stay on the case in the months and years that followed as significant numbers of Mariel migrants—particularly those without family already in the United States or suspected of having criminal records in Cuba—lingered in resettlement camps or longer-term forms of detention/incarceration awaiting sponsorship or deportation. Over the next decade, scholars—chiefly in the United States—were already publishing influential studies on the response of the U.S. government to the crisis; the impact of Mariel migrants on the South Florida labor market; and the struggles of Mariel migrants to adapt to new lives as compared to prior Cuban refugees

¹ See Bourdieu and Passeron.

amid their discursive construction as racial, ethnic, criminal, mentally-ill, and/or sexual “others”—a process that drew on stereotypes first placed on the would-be migrants in Cuba.² Since then, Mariel has been the subject of books, dozens of academic articles, as well as memoirs, oral histories, and films.³ Standout scholarly subfields in what we might call “Mariel studies” include investigations of the so-called Mariel “stigma” and its long-term effects on the migrants’ upward mobility; race and the racialization of Mariel migrants; the impact of the boatlift on U.S. immigration policy; gender, sexuality, and the experiences of LGBT Mariel migrants; the boatlift as an episode in U.S.-Cuban relations; and the cultural production of the so-called “Mariel generation” of Cuban writers and artists (e.g. Reinaldo Arenas) who took part in the exodus.⁴

Yet, paradoxically, there is much about Mariel that remains underexplored or simply unsaid forty years later. For starters, the antecedents, causes, and unfolding of the crisis in Cuba continue to be deeply under-historicized, save for a few exceptions.⁵ Given the partial taboo around the subject in Cuba to this day, scholarly or journalistic treatments from island-based voices tend to elide the trauma migrants experienced or be limited to Mariel’s place in the annals of the U.S.-Cuban bilateral conflict.⁶ Commemorative discourses around the boatlift in South Florida and Cuban America, meanwhile, continue to fold the episode into a metanarrative of shared anti-communist suffering, exodus, and uplift, often downplaying the singularity of the Mariel experience, including suspicious treatment toward so-called “marielitos” (a condescending term in its origins) among some prior Cuban exiles.⁷ And while more studies of the “Mariel generation” are certainly welcome, less has been written about how the shadow, or scar, of Mariel eventually filtered its way into Cuban cultural production on and off the island among writers and artists who lived through the events as children or did not experience them directly.

For these reasons, as critic Iván de la Nuez first wrote more than twenty years ago and restated in 2020, Mariel remains “an unclassifiable shore of Cuban culture [and history] that still needs to be deciphered in many respects” (“Extremo Mariel”; “Mariel en el extremo”). We would add that Mariel occupies an uneasy place in the Cuban historical and cultural imagination because, as one of us wrote recently, it “proved to be an event that both the Cuban state and many prior Cuban exiles in Miami tried their hardest to forget” (Bustamante 222). After a decade of Soviet-backed economic stability, ideological orthodoxy, and socialist

² For the U.S. government’s crisis response see Copeland, “The Cuban Boatlift of 1980: Strategies in Federal Crisis Management.” For Mariel migrants and the South Florida labor market see Card, “The Impact of the Mariel Boatlift on the Miami Labor Market” and Portes and Stepick, “Unwelcome Immigrants: The Labor Market Experiences of 1980 (Mariel) Cuban and Haitian Refugees in South Florida.” For the struggles of Mariel migrants see Szapocznik et. al., *Coping with Adolescent Refugees: the Mariel Boatlift*; Hufker and Cavender, “From Freedom Flotilla to America’s Burden: The Social Construction of the Mariel Immigrants”; and Silver et al., “The Cuban Immigration of 1980: A Special Mental Health Challenge.”

³ For monographs regarding Mariel see Engstrom, *Presidential Decision Making Adrift: The Carter Administration and the Mariel Boatlift* and Triay, *The Mariel Boatlift: A Cuban American Journey*. For memoirs see Arenas, *Antes que anochezca*; Ojito, *Finding Mañana: a Memoir of a Cuban Exodus*; Hawk et. al. *Florida and the Mariel Boatlift of 1980: the First Twenty Days*; and Doss, *Let the Bastards Go: From Cuba to Freedom on God’s Mercy*. For oral histories see García, *Voices from Mariel: Oral Histories of the 1980 Cuban Boatlift*. For films and documentaries see Villaverde, *Tent City*; Burroughs, *Against Wind and Tide: A Cuban Odyssey*; Bravo, *Los Marielitos*; Schnabel, *Before Night Falls*; Pérez-Rey, *Beyond the Sea/ Más allá del mar*; García, *Voices from Mariel: Los Marielitos Then and Now*; and Aparicio and Fraguera, *Sueños al paio*.

⁴ For discussions of Mariel stigma and migrant upward mobility see: Fernández, “Race, Gender, and Class in the Persistence of the Mariel Stigma Twenty Years after the Exodus from Cuba” and Portes and Puhmann, “A Bifurcated Enclave: The Economic Evolution of the Cuban and Cuban American Population of Metropolitan Miami.” For racialization of the Mariel cohort: Skop, “Race and Place in the Adaptation of Mariel Exiles”; Gosin, *The Politics of Racial Exclusion: Interethnic Struggles for Legitimacy in Multicultural Miami*. For the impact of the boatlift on U.S. immigration policy: Hamm, *The Abandoned Ones: The Imprisonment and Uprising of the Mariel Boat People*; Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: the United States and Refugees During the Cold War*, pp. 179–84; Capó, “Queering Mariel: Mediating Cold War Foreign Policy and U.S. Citizenship among Cuba’s Homosexual Exile Community, 1978–1994”; Lipman, “‘The Fish Trusts the Water, and It Is in the Water That It Is Cooked’: the Caribbean Origins of the Krome Detention Center” and “A Refugee Camp in America: Fort Chaffee and Vietnamese and Cuban Refugees, 1975–1982”; Shull, “‘Nobody Wants These People’: Reagan’s Immigration Crisis and the Containment of Foreign Bodies”; Stephens, “‘I Hope They Don’t Come to the Plains’: Race and the Detention of Mariel Cubans, 1980–1981”; and Young, *Forever Prisoners: How the United States Made the World’s Largest Immigrant Detention System*. For gender, sexuality, and the experiences of LGBT Mariel migrants: Capó and Peña, *¡Oye Loca!: From the Mariel Boatlift to Gay Cuban Miami*. For U.S.-Cuban relations: Leogrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana*, pp. 214–223 and Kami, *Diplomacy Meets Migration: US Relations with Cuba During the Cold War*, pp. 145–184. For Cultural Production of the ‘Mariel Generation’: Bertot, *The Literary Imagination of the Mariel Generation*; Barquet, “La Generación del Mariel”; and Simal, “Narrar a Mariel: Espacialización y heterotopías del exilio cubano en la novela *Boarding Home* (1987) de Guillermo Rosales (1946–1993).” Citations included here (as in previous footnotes) are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive of all previous published works in the fields, subfields, and/or periods described.

⁵ See Sierra Madero; Bustamante, pp. 179–214.

⁶ See Ramírez Cañedo.

⁷ See Yanez.

“institutionalization” in the 1970s, “Mariel represented—still represents—an inconvenient memory [for partisans of the Cuban Revolution] because it exposed a significant underbelly of dissatisfaction in Cuban socialist society,” especially among urban, working-class communities of color who, in theory, were some of the Revolution’s greatest beneficiaries (Bustamante 222). For the pre-existing Cuban exile community, on the other hand, “the welcome extended to the new arrivals in many cases proved conditional against the backdrop of a city in the midst of an economic crisis” and allegations that the Cuban government had deliberately infiltrated the migration with criminals, psychiatric patients, and racial others that threatened to damage their hard-won image as a (mostly white) “model minority” (Bustamante 223). De la Nuez puts it best: “Stuck between a communist government that kicked them out of the country because they did not fit in with their utopia of a perfect future and a conservative exile community that could never completely assimilate them because they did not fit in their fantasy of a perfect past,” many Mariel migrants struggled to find their place (“Extremo Mariel”).

But if Mariel is a Cuban story deserving better study on those terms, its implications also clearly exceed a national frame. Hence the importance of locating Mariel within a comparative history of Caribbean migration to the United States, as well as exploring its significance for U.S. immigration/refugee policy. Mariel came shortly after the passage of the 1980 Refugee Act, a law that was meant to bring U.S. refugee policy more in line with international, rather than Cold-War-inspired definitions and practices. But Mariel quickly illuminated the inadequacy of the law for dealing with unexpected migrant and refugee flows. Thus, Mariel migrants were not admitted into the United States under the Refugee Act’s purview, but were instead labeled as “entrants (status pending)” under the Attorney General’s parole authority. Moreover, roughly half were detained on U.S. military bases across the country, a practice the U.S. government first assayed at a similar scale with Vietnamese refugees following the fall of Saigon five years before. Notwithstanding the recent work of Jana Lipman, Alexander Stephens, and others on this subject, there is much more to be said about the legacies of Mariel as a crucial turning point in the reconfiguration of U.S. immigrant detention practices.

Immigration politics and policies, of course, also deeply informed Mariel’s lasting impact on ethnic/race relations within and beyond South Florida.⁸ The juxtaposition of the boatlift with not only a parallel Haitian refugee crisis unfolding in 1980 (and the disparate treatment those migrants continued to receive, even as they, too, were labeled “entrants”), but also the McDuffie or Liberty City uprising, which erupted as the boatlift was unfolding, calls for a careful analysis of relational dynamics and realities between often sharply divided communities. Doing so allows us to explore both the missed opportunities for more enduring alliances—particularly given the presence of significant numbers of Black Cubans among Mariel migrants—as well as the persistence of old fault lines. Indeed, for all the stigma, status indeterminacy, and new vulnerabilities Mariel migrants (especially queer migrants, migrants of color, and the detained more broadly) faced upon arrival in the United States, Mariel also saw the privileged, Cold-War-motivated treatment of Cuban migrants in the U.S. immigration system dating to the 1960s continue in some ways. This perpetuated patterns and allegations of ethnic/racial competition, favoritism, and rivalry in greater Miami.

Motivated by these concerns and enduring gaps in knowledge, in 2020 the University of Miami’s Cuban Heritage Collection, together with the Cuban Studies Program at Harvard University, convened *El Efecto Mariel: Before, During, and After*, a series of six webinars to overlap with the Mariel Boatlift’s fortieth anniversary.⁹ Covid-19 forced online what was originally conceived as a series of in-person conversations with complimentary exhibitions. But if there was a silver lining to our pandemic existence, it was that remote conference technology allowed participants and audience members to join from across the United States and the globe. Over the course of a year, over twenty scholars, eyewitnesses, and protagonists of the boatlift participated in conversations with each other and several hundred attendees about Mariel’s antecedents in Cuba and the United States, its unfolding on both sides of the Florida Straits, the expressions of solidarity and stigmatization it generated within the existing Cuban exile community, and the broader social, political, and racial tensions in and beyond South Florida that followed in its wake. What such conversations made clear was that Mariel serves as a powerful prism through which to explore several intersecting fields of inquiry.

This special issue of *Anthurium* represents a continuation of those dialogues. It features some voices from the webinars the Cuban Heritage Collection hosted, as well as submissions received and accepted in response to an open call for papers issued in late 2020. We cannot think of a venue better than *Anthurium*

⁸ See Antonio López, pp. 154–184.

⁹ Recordings are available at www.library.miami.edu/chc/efecto-mariel.html.

to showcase this work, as the journal's interdisciplinary focus has invited us and our contributors to account even more intentionally for Mariel's relevance not only for Cuba and Cubans, but also for U.S.-Caribbean, Miami, and South Florida migration politics, policy, and culture. *Anthurium* has also allowed us to publish this issue in a bilingual format, with some pieces in Spanish. It is our hope this issue helps to further demystify Mariel, make it more decipherable to specialists and students, and illuminate its intersecting importance for the concerns of Cuban studies, U.S. immigration history, Caribbean studies, and American studies. Moreover, we would note that several pieces included here focused on racial politics in South Florida and the experiences of Mariel migrants of color serve as fitting complements to the contents of Volume 16, Issue 1 of *Anthurium* from 2020, "Looking for Black Miami." Likewise, contributions that address gender and sexuality echo and build upon the contents of Volume 17, Issue 1 from 2021, "The Queer Caribbean," which highlights recent work in Caribbean queer studies.

The special issue opens with a set of research articles under the heading "Race, Immigration, Gender, and the Politics of Exclusion." These articles add new perspectives on the legal, political, and other impediments to resettlement, integration, and advancement that Mariel migrants faced in the United States, particularly the roughly half who did not have family awaiting them. More specifically, they invite us to consider the consequences of the immigrant detention many Mariel migrants endured, and the contours of racial and other forms of marginalization that shaped and were shaped by those experiences.

Omar Granados begins the section with a powerful examination of Mariel migrants of color in Wisconsin who first spent time in detention at Fort McCoy. Drawing on his oral history and public humanities work with this community, he offers a detailed, eminently human portrait of camp life for migrants of color as well as their subsequent struggles to integrate into towns like Madison and La Crosse, the latter where Granados (himself Cuban) now teaches. The article thus provides a necessary corrective to other narratives that, intentionally or unintentionally, end up seeking to combat the stigmatization of Mariel migrants by focusing on redeeming the "moral, intellectual, and economic worth of white Mariel refugees."

Melissa Hampton follows with a novel examination of detention facilities across the United States as sites of perceived "gender disorder," animating stereotypes about and exclusionary practices toward Mariel migrants overall. Importantly, her work focuses not on the, by this point, fairly well-known travails of gay Mariel migrants (thanks to the work of Julio Capó Jr. and Susana Peña), but rather journalists' and policymakers' fixations on sex workers and unwed mothers in the improvised detention facilities on U.S. military bases. As she convincingly shows, consistent with broader shifts in early Reagan-era America, Mariel migrants in detention became not only racial or ethnic others to be feared, but also maligned future "welfare queens" bound to become dependent on "big government."

Alexander Stephens shifts our attention both to the local level in Miami and to national debates about U.S. immigration policy circa 1980. As resettlement efforts for Mariel refugees sputtered or sponsorships broke down, Miami became the destination for houseless or otherwise wayward Mariel migrants with nowhere else to turn. Once there, however, journalists and city officials alike quickly (if speciously) labeled them the sole cause of a localized wave of crime. Drawing out the history of local officials' and, importantly, Cuban American leaders' lobbying efforts with Congress and the U.S. federal government to do something about the problem, Stephens identifies Miami's response to the boatlift as a crucial node in the development of the "criminal alien" as a legal/discursive construct and the consequent rise of what other scholars have called a "cimmigration" system in the United States.¹⁰ From a more national perspective, Kristina Shull tells a parallel story, bringing new sources to bear in recounting the long-term detention of Mariel migrants suspected of crimes in Cuba or convicted of crimes after being admitted to the United States. Notwithstanding an eventual Supreme Court decision that should disallow indefinite detention of any migrant pending deportation, in some cases Mariel migrants remain detained past the completion of their sentences to this day.

Finally, the section ends with two articles that return us to the central problem of race. For all that the Mariel literature has frequently mentioned race as among the reasons Mariel migrants were stigmatized as compared to their earlier Cuban exile peers, Devyn Spence Benson and Danielle Cleland remind us that too few scholars have foregrounded, let alone actually told, the stories of Black Cuban migrants themselves.

¹⁰ See, for example, Juliet Stumpf, "The Cimmigration Crisis: Immigrants, Crime, and Sovereign Power" and César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández, "Creating Cimmigration."

Omar Granados would agree with this point, as his piece features the voices of Black Cubans in Wisconsin. Spence Benson and Cleland focus on Miami, drawing on an impressive collection of oral testimonies they have gathered from Black Cuban migrants in South Florida across multiple generations and cohorts. Crucially, they describe Black Mariel migrants' experiences with racism from white Cubans and exclusion from white Cuban neighborhoods in irrefutable detail, and they show these indignities continued trends dating to the 1960s. Monika Gosin, in turn, takes a more comparative, or intersectional, approach to Mariel's implications for racial politics in Miami. Through a critical reading of the (non-Cuban) Black Miami press in 1980, she shows that Black Miamians both criticized ongoing forms of favoritism for Cubans (especially as compared to Haitian refugees) *and* identified Black Mariel migrants as possible allies in a broader critique of the racist contours of U.S. immigration policy.

One would think the strength of this work on Mariel migrants' experiences in the United States, and the boatlift's impact on South Florida and U.S. national policy and politics, would be matched by an equally compelling group of research articles on Cubans' experiences leading up to and during the unfolding of the Mariel crisis on the island. So, too, did we hope to receive new historical work on the boatlift's lasting impact on Cuban society during and beyond the 1980s. In truth, our CFP generated few proposals in these veins. This outcome not only reflects ongoing lacunae in the Mariel scholarship, as noted above; it is the product of archival access difficulties in Cuba and the taboo on the island, still, around writing more honest histories of these traumatic events.

That being said, in the realm of cultural production, Cubans on and off the island have in recent years forged a space to work more intently through the buried legacies of the events leading to the boatlift in 1980 and their relevance for the present and the future. Thus, in a second section titled "Mariel and the Politics of Memory," we feature two scholarly articles, an interview, and an essay by a filmmaker regarding his documentary in-progress, each of which critically tackle Mariel's afterlives in genres like literature, theater, and film. These four pieces show how contemporary writers, playwrights, and filmmakers return to Mariel to keep its history alive for, and among, Cubans and Cuban Americans who have either repressed their memories of the boatlift or did not experience it directly. Most importantly, they demonstrate the capacity of cultural production to present a non-Manichean understanding of traumatic histories and, therefore, to help envision different, reconciliatory futures.

Mariel Martínez Álvarez begins this section with an insightful reading of two plays from Cuba—Carlos Celdrán's *Diez Millones* and El Ciervo Encantado's *Departures*—which generate an imaginary and an archive around the events of 1980. Both plays deploy various poetic and theatrical languages to structure the audiences' engagement with the history of the "acts of repudiation" and the ensuing trauma for both the subjects and objects of these acts. Using the category of "strategic vulnerability," Martínez Álvarez argues that the centrality of children's experiences to both plays allows for a restaging of the "acts of repudiation" in which the focus shifts from the responsibility of adults to such acts' incomprehensibility among the innocent and the ensuing pain they left on all. After all, children compelled or pressured to participate in violent acts can hardly be held responsible for those actions in the same way as their elders. Both plays thus reach beyond the categories of victimizer and victimized, and they foreground the personal, collective, and historical losses the "acts of repudiation" entailed. That these plays were presented not only in Havana, but also in Miami and New York—the two sites of the Cuban diaspora in the United States that by now have the largest presence of both "Marielitos" and "egg throwers" who once defamed them—helped make them powerful vehicles for reconciliation and new imaginaries of coexistence.

Raúl Rosales Herrera's essay takes us to the legacy of Mariel in contemporary U.S. Cuban, and especially second-generation Cuban American, literary production. Engaging the concept of "postmemory," the essay briefly surveys the Mariel generation of writers from the boatlift before analyzing the role of Mariel in the work of more recent, and again, largely U.S.-born authors who did not experience Mariel directly. While writers from the Mariel generation, like Reinaldo Arenas, Guillermo Rosales, and Carlos Victoria, struggled to find a space in Cuban, Cuban American, U.S., and Latin American literatures and literary criticism, contemporary Cuban American writers are now revisiting inherited family myths surrounding Mariel to try to fill in gaps, silences, and omissions in the telling of this crucial moment in Cuban diaspora history. Because contemporary writers like Cecilia Rodríguez Milanés, Chantel Acevedo, Derek Palacios, and Vanessa Garcia did not live through Mariel, they resort to "imaginative investment, projection, and creation" to de-essentialize the Mariel metanarrative, give voice to Mariel migrants, and debunk many of the stereotypes about them.

Grounded as diasporic subjects, these writers revisit Mariel's past to make sense of their present and, most importantly, to envision a more inclusive, critically minded Cuban diaspora future. Their characters often return to Cuba and/or move between Cuba and the United States, underscoring more transnational and hybrid identifications.

Returning to theater, Maité Hernández-Lorenzo interviews Matanzas-based playwright Ulises Rodríguez Febles and Miami-based director Alberto Sarraín about the 2013 Miami production of Rodríguez Febles' 2005 play *Huevos* (*Eggs*). Weaving her personal memories of Mariel together with snippets of conversation with both, Hernández Lorenzo explores how the audience of the play in Miami, like its original audience in Cuba, shared two fundamental elements: pain and guilt. Together, Hernández-Lorenzo, Rodríguez Febles, and Sarraín reflect on the complex memory scars left by Mariel all these years later, and the way the play *Huevos* prompted audiences to resurface and work through these memories. The interview thus demonstrates how *Huevos*, too, like the works Martínez Álvarez explored, served as a space for and of reconciliation.

Lázaro Lázaro González documentary-in-progress and accompanying artistic statement address the need to archive and revisit a different set of not just Mariel memories, but feelings: those of "Cuban sexiles," or gender nonconforming subjects that were part of the boatlift and marginalized on both shores because of their sexualities. Acknowledging the importance of and inherent paradoxes in trying to create a repository of both documents and sentiments, Lázaro González draws on archival studies to frame his approach to the task. His film *Sexilio*, in turn, utilizes interviews, photographs, personal mementos, and legal records—sources not unlike those used in many of the essays included in the "Politics of Exclusion" section described above. Lázaro González also draws on media coverage, newspapers, and other ephemera from Cuba and the United States. Yet rather than passively deploy this archive to tell his story, he uses it to prompt memories and emotions among interview subjects by having them interact with ephemera that either they have selected or that he has provided. *Sexilio* is one part of Lázaro González attempt to create an archive of Cuban sexiles, which also includes a project to create an archive of the Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción (UMAP)—the forced labor camps to which homosexuals were sent between 1965 and 1968. Indeed, his commentary on the need to explore how detention facilities for Mariel migrants waiting to leave the island (e.g. the infamous "Mosquito" camp) and then again upon arrival in the United States might have "triggered memories of the UMAP for those who suffered it" suggests an important area for future research.

The third section of this issue features original creative work and personal essays that further explore the fraught legacies of Mariel from a variety of insular and diasporic viewpoints. It begins with a play by Susannah Rodríguez Drissi, *Houses without Walls*, whose 2018 Los Angeles premier garnered several important awards. The play poetically, viscerally, and at times humorously performs the loss endured by mothers who stayed behind in Cuba and their daughters who left via Mariel. Although it is inspired by events experienced by the playwright, a Mariel migrant herself, the play tackles the traumas, guilts, and losses experienced by all women who face or are impacted by migration. The play's title and ending invite the audience to imagine an allegorical house without walls built through rapprochement and not resentment.

As an aside, it is worth noting that the significant attention to theater in both the second and this third section of this issue is not gratuitous. Theater's function from time immemorial is to make us not forget. As one of us has argued elsewhere, theater fosters temporary communities of shared experience, a conviviality through which we can revisit the past and, in so doing, move forward.¹¹ This is the essence of the theater; we enter a space with strangers and agree to be together, live, face-to-face with the actors. The drama on stage allows us to identify or disidentify with the other. Theater thus offers the possibility of accepting or learning from experiences and narratives that are alien to us. Herein lies its power. The audience forms an ephemeral community for a few hours in which we recognize that we are participating in a created story and, as such, it can be altered. Thus, by its very nature, theater not only allows the audience to imagine different endings, different futures; it also can be a powerful catalyst for change.

Returning to the contents of the third section, Dashed Hernández Guirado's illustrated short story "Barquito (*Tradescantia pallida*)" follows the play by Rodríguez Drissi. Using, again, the "strategic vulnerability" of children to explore forced participation in the violent "acts of repudiation" suffered by a neighbor (and the efforts of some families, on the other hand, to shield their children from involvement), this piece addresses

¹¹ See Manzor, "Theater and Reconciliation: The Power of the Digital Diaspora."

with brutal lyricism children's inability to comprehend events over which they have no control. The short story's last words in parentheses, "Turn up the radio, mom, you can still hear the screams here," powerfully underscore the traumatic legacy of Mariel that, indeed, can still be "heard" and felt, as all the pieces in this section demonstrate. Those words could also refer to the unfortunate persistence of "acts of repudiation" in Cuba today, a subject to which we return below.

Next, Jeannine Diego's first-person narration uses the trope of garments to approach the ways in which Cuban Americans in Miami responded to the Mariel exodus and created "the Marielito" as a specter and stereotype. Except for in the work of María Antonia Cabrera Arús, clothing and fashion are seldomly used as categories of analysis in Cuban studies.¹² Using the metaphors of stitching and pricking, Diego presents, first, Cuba's rejection of Mariel migrants and then the exile community's rejection, to suggest how both are "stitched" to the portrayal/creation of the "Marielito" as undesirable. The essay also addresses Mariel migrants' own future rejection of Haitian refugees, and Americans' rejection of other immigrants, a poetic complement to some of the essays in the first section. This personal essay ends with a beautiful image of the clothes that were given to the Mariel migrant eventually being discarded. The clothing that the immigrants never asked for stand for the unasked and unwanted designations that immigrants, in this case "Marielitos," receive.

Karina Cespedes ends the section with a personal essay on the stigmatizing results of "the Mariel effect," both on Mariel migrants themselves and on subsequent Cuban immigrants to the United States in the 1980s. Based on personal experiences and her academic work, Cespedes delves into the ways Cuban and Cuban exile communities turned against their "others" in 1980 by scapegoating those who were politically, racially, and economically different from the way each community imagined itself. Whether one was a Mariel migrant or not, Cubans who arrived in the United States during the 1980s suffered from the consequences of labels such as "deviant" and "criminal" ascribed to "Marielitos" overall. Most importantly, Cespedes suggests that the ensuing racialization of all 1980s Cuban immigrants revealed the "precariousness of Cuban whiteness within the U.S."

Finally, this special issue ends with two short sections composed of student research and reviews. As part of the *El Efecto Mariel* program at the University of Miami, in 2020 the authors cotaught a course between Florida International University (where Bustamante taught at the time) and the University of Miami. Our syllabus for "The Mariel Boatlift of 1980: Antecedents, Causes, Effects" was developed in collaboration with Nicholas Sheets (University of Miami) and was inspired by an idea from Mirta Ojito. In addition to examining primary documents, historical studies, fiction, and film, students had the opportunity to hear the personal accounts of faculty, staff, artists, and community members who witnessed Mariel's dramatic and traumatic episodes. Likewise, faculty from across the United States also joined the class remotely on occasion to discuss their Mariel scholarship. After the semester was complete, one student from each university was invited to submit a revised version of their final research paper for this issue. Both essays address areas that have been under-addressed in Mariel scholarship.

Kasey S. Crider's essay focuses on the adaptation outcomes of unaccompanied refugee minors from the Mariel Boatlift. The paper draws on the existing literature on unaccompanied minors and on the adaptation of Mariel migrants, materials from the Carter Library and other relevant archives, as well as oral history interviews he conducted with three subjects who had first-hand experience as staff members of the Cuban Adolescent Management Program (CAMP) at both Fort Chaffee and Fort Indiantown Gap: Dr. José Szapocznik, the director of CAMP; Dr. Raúl Hernández, a Mariel migrant himself who was a physician; and Alberto Sarraín, a psychologist. All three worked at Fort Indiantown Gap, along with Dr. Carmen Díaz, a Mariel migrant who was a clinical psychologist there. Despite the lack of quantitative data documenting the unaccompanied minors of Mariel and the difficulty of conducting oral histories with them, his essay brings their experiences to the fore and begins filling an important gap in Mariel scholarship.

Dani Gutierrez's essay focuses on the experience of lesbians who took part in the Mariel Boatlift. Although Cuban male homosexuals have been studied in Cuban history and have been the focus of several studies on Mariel as we mentioned earlier, there is no thorough analysis of the lesbians who came through

¹² See "The Material Promise of Socialist Modernity: Fashion and Domestic Space in the 1970s" and "Thinking Politics and Fashion in 1960s Cuba: How Not to Judge a Book by its Cover."

Mariel. Gutierrez thus set out to find if Cuban Mariel lesbian stories were featured in U.S. lesbian newspapers from the 1980s and found significant, if uneven, coverage. Acknowledging the limitations of these sources, Gutierrez sheds light on Cuban lesbians' experiences of persecution and marginalization in Cuba, the challenges they faced once in the United States (whether in the resettlement camps, with sponsorships, or with family, for the few who had family to take them in), and the networks of solidarity from which they benefited, especially those fostered by lesbian community organizations across the United States.

Last but not least, Julio Capó, Jr. reviews journalist Nicholas Griffin's recent book on Miami in 1980—the “year of dangerous days,” per his title, while Jorge Luis Lanza Caride reviews the 2020 independent Cuban documentary “*Sueños al paio*.” The latter garnered attention, among other reasons, because its critical treatment of Mariel led to its censorship.

As much as the publication of this special issue fills us with gratitude, we are also sobered, and saddened, by just how germane the legacies of Mariel remain. From the vantage point of 2020–2021, it appears we Americans and Cubans have simply not learned the lessons we should have in 1980. Needless to say, the practice of detaining asylum applicants and others seeking refuge in the United States is alive and well. Immigrant detention facilities have grown far beyond the scale of what anyone could have imagined in 1980, and now they are often in the hands of private contractors rather than the U.S. government or the U.S. military. (Interestingly, though probably temporarily, the recent refugee evacuation from Afghanistan has revived the U.S. military's role.) Ethnic and racial fault lines—in terms of political power, residential segregation, and immigration status—are an ever-present part of Miami's social reality, even as the exceptional treatment of Cuban migrants under U.S. law has mostly disappeared since the elimination of the so-called “Wet-Foot-Dry-Foot” policy (dating to 1995) in 2017. The end of that policy also means all Cuban asylum seekers are now subject to possible detention and deportation, much like in 1980.

Cuba, meanwhile, has not produced another mass-migration event directed at the United States since 1994. Yet, the negotiation of more regular migration channels to the United States after the so-called *balsero* crisis helped produce the largest sustained exodus of Cubans north to date: nearly 650,000 through the end of “Wet-Foot-Dry-Foot” in 2017.¹³ That is more than five Mariel boatlifts of families separated, disaffected young people, and brain drain. Admittedly, much of this migration occurred in circumstances that were more orderly and certainly more favorable than forty years ago for maintaining transnational links. Still, significant, if less visible, irregular migration flows—chiefly via Latin America and the U.S.-Mexico border—have also left legacies of trauma, especially over the past decade.¹⁴

Most worrisome to us, however, is that the contours of political conflict between Cubans today seem to have hardly changed. “Acts of repudiation” never went away from the Cuban political landscape after 1980—targeting government dissenters accused of being on the U.S. payroll, for example. But in the past year, amid Cuba's worst economic crisis in thirty years, and in the wake of an unprecedented sit-in of artists in front of Cuba's Ministry of Culture on November 27, 2020 (27N) and mass-protests across the country on July 11, 2021 (11J), we have been alarmed to see the practice revived more intensely in response to peaceful demands for plural national dialogue and/or political change.¹⁵ Against this backdrop, and bolstered by the polarization of the U.S. domestic political climate, the culture of exclusion has reared its head more strongly in the diaspora too, with a handful of incidents in which individuals in Miami accused of being Cuban government sympathizers were targets of near “acts of repudiation” in reverse—though we hasten to note the important difference that these incidents did not carry the imprimatur of the state.¹⁶ And of course, one can find virtual “acts of repudiation” among Cubans of all stripes on Twitter and other social media sites every day.

Is there an end to this cycle? We certainly do not have the answer. But we do know the past continually repeating itself is not a good thing. Like the memory of so many other events over the past sixty-plus years, Mariel's memory must ultimately inspire Cubans to forge new paths toward national dialogue, democratization, social justice, and healing.

¹³ See Duany.

¹⁴ See Poole.

¹⁵ See Redacción OnCuba; Vicent.

¹⁶ See Amador; González.

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