

Editors' Note

Welcome to the 25th issue of the Publication of the Afro/Latin American Review Association. The works that populate this issue center on literary critiques of Cuba of the past and the present and bring to us creative writing from the small, but mighty nation of Panama.

Damaris Puñales-Alpizar's "Socialismo mulato: Soviet Fascination with Race in Cuba" argues that in "the Soviet imaginary, the Cuban mulato represented not only an exotic other but also the realization of another kind of socialism, possible in other conditions and at other coordinates, (almost) far from Soviet reach."

Amy King's, "Opposing Worldviews: A New Perspective on Ernesto 'Che' Guevara's Failure in the Congo," revisits Che Guevara and provides a new reading of the figure by "reexam[ining] Western portrayals of African and Hispanic history and depict[ing] Che Guevara's failure in the Congo through a more inclusive scope of cultural misunderstanding" by revisiting Che's "revolution to liberate the oppressed Congolese from imperialist intervention." Thus, her work reinserts Africa and the African experience into the decades-long discussion on Che Guevara.

Dawn F. Stinchcomb's review of George Palacios' *Manuel Zapata Olivella (1920-2004) Pensador político, radical y hereje de a diáspora Africana en las Américas* (Editorial Pontificia Bolivariana, 2020) illustrates that the author's reading of the well-studied and celebrated literary giant Manuel Zapata Olivella "makes a deep dive into all of the Zapata Olivella's best works and the criticism about them to bring to the fore his own "cartography"—borrowing from the author himself—of the development of Afro Colombian and Afro Latin American literature. Palacios' investigation is well-researched and clearly shows the process of "racialization," or "darkening," of Colombian letters that decidedly goes beyond the national rhetoric of Latin American mestizaje and settles comfortably among the literature of the African Diaspora with all of its textures and complexities."

In this volume of the journal, we include the creative works by Afro-Panamanian writers Melanie Taylor Herrera and Carlos Wynter Melo. The writings of Melanie Taylor Herrera (1972) reflect that she is an urban writer as she noted in a 2013 interview with PALARA co-editor Sonja S. Watson, "Soy una mujer urbana, hija de los logros del feminismo del siglo XX, afro y consciente de serlo, pero no circunscribo mi escritura a temas afros ni a temas de denuncia social ni siquiera a temas exclusivamente panameños" (Watson, "Entrevista a Melanie" 2013). Much like her literary contemporary Carlos Oriel Wynter Melo (1971), Taylor represents

a new generation of black writers in Panama: race is omnipresent and a part of their identity but does not restrict or limit the topics that they choose to engage in their literary works. Both have distinguished themselves initially as short story writers in Panama and Latin America. Taylor Herrera won the Rafaela Contreras short story prize in 2009, awarded by the Nicaraguan Association of Writers as well as the Sixth Continent International Short Story Award, (2011). In 2014, she won the Metro culture micro-story contest conducted by Radio Panama. She has been invited to literary events such as Centroamérica Cuenta (2014) and the International Congress of the Spanish Language (2016). In 2020, her short story collection *Los Cuarentinos* was included in an anthology by the University of Guadalajara, Mexico. Her most recent work is *Mujerona* (2021) (Zeta Centuria Editores), a book of poetry that relates feminine sexuality, poking around the senses through language.

Wynter Melo has also distinguished himself as a novelist. In 2017, his novel *Las impuras* (The Impure) was a finalist for the Association of Caribbean Writers Prize. His work has previously been recognized at the Guadalajara Book Fair, the Hay Festival, the Bogotá Cultural Secretary, the National Cultural Institute of Panama, UNESCO, and other organizations. His books include the works of fiction *Ojos para ver una invasión* (Piedra Santa 2015), *Mujeres que desaparecen* (URUK editores 2016), and *El escapista y otras reparaciones* (Panamericana 2007), and an essay collection entitled *Panamá. El dique, el agua y los papeles*. In the year 2021, the Latino Book Review magazine includes him among the six Panamanian and contemporary writers that must be read. Contemporary issues of the human experience in the current age unite Taylor's and Wynter Melo's narratives. The unnamed central protagonists that populate many of their narratives convey that they represent other figures that experience the same issues in a complex modern society.

We welcome your original essays for inclusion in PALARA 26 (2022), "Afro-Diasporic Protest: Black Women's Resistance in Cali and in the Black Pacific," which will be curated by guest co-editors Sarah Soanirina Ohmer (Lehman College), Aurora Vergara Figueroa (Universidad Icesi), and Melissa Gómez Hernández (Universidad Icesi). The co-editors encourage submissions on queer of color and/or Afro-Indigenous activists, critical scholars, and artists, and Black women or Black LGBTQ+ writers.

The Editors

Sonja S. Watson, Dean, AddRan College of Liberal Arts,
Professor of Spanish, Texas Christian University,

Dorothy E. Mosby, Interim Dean of Faculty and Vice President
for Academic Affairs; Mary E. Woolley, Professor of Spanish, Mount
Holyoke College