

# Liberty and Democracy: Crossed and Intertwined Paths

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## Abstract

This article seeks to analyze freedom in the capitalist and in the socialist systems in view of the role of the State, politics, and education as instruments for the construction of a democracy. In this sense, two countries are considered: Brazil and Cuba. These are Latin America countries that are peripheral, have similarities in their history, and have different economic systems. The critical analysis is mainly based on the work *Psychopolitics - Neoliberalism and the new techniques of power* by South Korean author Byung-Chul Han, and in the work *Cuba in the 21st century: Dilemmas of the revolution*, which is the result of a research carried out by professors and students at the Federal University of São Paulo. Thus, it is noted that democracy in Brazil has great challenges to solidify itself, as it is based on the logic of individual freedom, whereas Cuba, due to the principles established by the Revolution, manages to promote freedom under a collective perspective.

**Keywords:** capitalism; democracy; liberty; political education; socialism.

## 1. Introduction

The etymology of the word “liberty” goes back to Latin “liber”, which shares the same origin as the Greek “eleútheros”, both meaning “free”. According to Ferreira (2005), the root of the word, at times in history, meant “nation, people”, and “member of a non-enslaved people” for those who were not considered slaves. In this order, the word “liberats” appeared to refer to what is free, resulting in the current etymology “liberty”.

According to Han (2020, p. 11) the words "Freedom (Freiheit) and friend (Freund) have the same Indo-European root", where "being free originally means being in friends", which, in turn, demonstrates that “freedom is a relational word”.

In this sense, being free is being in community, establishing a successful relationship with the others, as Marx (1998, p. 92) also defended: “It is only in the community (Gemeinschaft) [with the others that each] individual has the means of developing their faculties in every way; it is only in the community that personal freedom is possible.”

In this way, is it possible to say that individual freedom exists? For Marx (2011, p. 524), individual freedom is sustained insofar as “the relationship of capital with itself as other capital” is built, that is, individual freedom was created so that individuals could

compete freely between themselves and thus multiply, through human voluntary servitude, capital.

In other words, in capitalist societies, where neoliberal reason has effectively and intelligently established itself, financial capital has already reached the collective unconscious, transforming the subjectivation of the individual: people sustain individual freedom in an entrepreneurial format, where the subject (worker) exploits itself to meet the needs of capital, which it believes to be its own, and still under the influence of optimism (Han, 2020).

Therefore, to defend the existence of individual freedom is to be subjugated to the fantasy of the dictatorship of capital, that is, subject to self-exploitation in a "voluntary" manner with such force that "Whoever fails in the neoliberal performance society, instead of questioning society or the system considers itself responsible and is ashamed for it" (Han, 2020, p. 16).

In this logic, the citizen becomes a consumer: people who consume life without being aware of the consequences, of the responsibilities that they should acquire. This aspect reflects on political performance insofar as the citizen, in the figure of voter, "only reacts passively to politics, criticizing, complaining, exactly as the consumer does when face with a product or service he does not like" (Han, 2020, p. 21).

Likewise, politicians and parties act as providers: they satisfy voters who are in the role of passive bystanders rather than engaged citizens; what Han (2020, p. 22) calls "spectator democracy", where political participation occurs through grievance and grievance.

The state of complaints and grievances by citizens prevents political participation from being built, insofar as it impedes legitimate forms of government, as for democracy to be consolidated it is necessary for people to develop informational self-determination, an interest in transparency, insurgency against forms of exploitation, above all being aware of the real meaning of freedom.

The defense of individual freedom, under the aspect of the dictatorship of capital, puts the construction of democracy in tension, in which, for a democracy to be sustained, it is necessary that there is freedom and education so that the individual is able to establish his construction being-individual- citizen.

Thus, this article aims to analyze democracy in Brazil dialectically with freedom and citizenship, considering that it is a capitalist and underdeveloped country, which has high levels of illiteracy and poverty, and low political participation of the people.

On the other hand, it analyzes the social rights claimed by the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and so defended by its population, even during the so-called "special period", giving importance to the fact that it is a socialist country with the highest literacy rates and encouragement of culture as well as a democratic structure.

Thus, it reflects the crisscross relationship between the capitalist system and the promotion and guarantee of the exercise of active citizenship under the idea of individual and market freedom, and the crisscross relationship in the solidification of social rights, including the active political participation of the Cuban people, even if for the rest of the nations, Cuban socialism is a dictatorship.

## 2. Cross-relation: Robinsons' Brazil

We Brazilians are like Robinsons: we are always waiting for a ship to pick us up from the island where a shipwreck has thrown us

Lima Barreto, "Transatlantism", Careta

Brazil, the country with the largest territorial extension in Latin America, has an origin marked by indigenous and African exploitation by the Portuguese. It was once a monarchy, colony and republic, known by other countries as the country of carnival and warm people, but it is characterized by patrimonialism, the various forms of violence, intolerance and social inequality, bossiness, religious fundamentalism, which are often denied and softened by the Brazilian people themselves, whether due to lack of education or the denial of history.

According to historian Lilia Schwarcz (2019, p. 20-21) the historical narrative is not always necessarily based on facts, as there are interests in manipulating it in view of the conquest of the monopoly of truth, which, in turn, opens up space for the construction of myths that common sense absorbs in such a way that the critical capacity to contest or reflect on the history of a country with a "glorious past" and a "unique history", in this case, Brazil, is lost.

In this sense, Schwarcz (2019) states that the construction of official history has a strategic role in public policies of the State, in which certain events are exalted and problems are smoothed with the intention of forgetting them, but which reverberate in the present time.

Brazil's mythical past, created and supported by "common sense theories", is based on four fallacious assumptions: it is a harmonious and conflict-free country; Brazilians are averse to any form of hierarchy, always reacting to adversities with great informality and equality; we are a full democracy, where there is no racial, religious or gender hatred and; finally, "God is Brazilian", as it is believed that because "our nature is so special, that it would ensure that we live in paradise." (Schwarcz, 2019, p. 22).

However, this narrative is ambiguous, as Brazil was responsible for more than three hundred years of slavery, that is, it sustained a sociability of possession and ownership of one person by another based on the most varied and cruel forms of violence, being the last country of America to abolish slavery, after the United States, Puerto Rico and Cuba (Schwarcz, 2019).

The slave system, theoretically abolished more than 130 years ago, continues to be rooted in Brazilian society, as a kind of custom, in which, as Lima Barreto stated at the beginning of the 20th century: "The mental capacity of blacks is discussed a priori and that of the whites, a posteriori". From this social configuration, blacks were excluded from the main Brazilian institutions, from access to fundamental rights, condemned to prisons and asylums, the fight against racism and the promotion of racial equality suffers constant resistance to this day<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In Brazil: "Currently, with 55% of its population made up of mixed race and black people, Brazil can be considered the second largest country with a population originating in Africa, only losing the podium to Nigeria. And, if on the one hand this mixture generated a society defined by rhythms, arts, aromas, cuisines, mixed sports, on the other it produced a nation that naturalizes social inequality, in the figure of maids, manual labor, the absence of blacks in the corporate and business environments, in theaters, concert halls,

In addition, the country has an HDI of 0.765 (84th place in the world ranking)<sup>2</sup>, that is, it has a high level of social inequality in contrast to a Gross Domestic Product of R\$ 2,143.4 billion reais (2nd quarter of 2021)<sup>3</sup>; it is the country that murders most homosexuals and transsexuals in the world<sup>4</sup>; it is the 5th most violent country in the world for women to live in<sup>5</sup>; faced a civil-military dictatorship for 21 years, which, in moments of political crisis, a significant part of the population defends that period as enchanted and as a way of solving current problems.

The beginning of the country's history was marked by the colony of exploration and by the monoculture properties, which developed through relations of serfdom, where the landlord had the power of command, of violence, economic and political. In this logic, in the First Republic, there were colonels, who were the great landowners, and those who determined the country's political and electoral issues. Thus, with the patrimonialist practice supported by personalized and localized powers, the idea was created that the State would have the function of resolving private issues (Schwarcz, 2019).

Not enough, the country's corruption has solidified in such a way throughout history, that corruption scandals involving politicians have become common and routine: "the capture of the State for private interests and the consequent practice of corruption that is established with a view to its own conservation this type of scheme is one of the main factors that explain the crisis we are currently experiencing." (Schwarcz, 2019, p. 122).

Furthermore, article 5, item VI, of the Federal Constitution of Brazil, provides that "the freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable, the free exercise of religious cults being ensured and guaranteed, in accordance with the law, the protection of places of worship and their liturgies". This, given the secular nature of the Brazilian State.

However, the Brazilian National Congress has an "evangelical bench", which is composed of deputies and senators who call themselves evangelicals and who have agendas defended by some religious leaders. In many cases, they propose policies that go against the rights of women, children, LGBTQIA+. In addition, current President Jair Bolsonaro has a religious speech – "Brazil above everything. God above everyone" - to legitimize hate speeches and revenge, such as the encouragement of the military regime, the denial of science and the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to these issues, it is necessary to reflect on the economic transformations that Brazil has undergone, including throughout the 20th century, from an agrarian-slave economy to an industrial economy, which, on the one hand, caused high economic growth and, on the other hand subsidized a deep inequality, as there was not an equitable social distribution.

Brazil, in the face of world capitalist development, finds itself in a peripheral position, where the State, directly and indirectly, constituted itself based on capitalism,

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clubs and social areas. The country also practices another form of daily social exclusion, delegating to the police the role of performing discrimination, in the famous "acts of intimidation": the police raids that always choose more blacks than whites and humiliate them through public presentation of power and hierarchy." (Schwarcz, 2019, p. 35).

<sup>2</sup> PNUD faz lançamento nacional do Relatório de Desenvolvimento Humano 2020 | As Nações Unidas no Brasil

<sup>3</sup> Produto Interno Bruto - PIB | IBGE

<sup>4</sup> Pelo 12º ano consecutivo, Brasil é país que mais mata transexuais no mundo | Exame

<sup>5</sup> Brasil é o 5º país que mais mata mulheres (unifesp.br)

especially regarding the "nature of social formations set in the authoritarian tradition and late transition" (Pochmann, 2017, p. 311).

It was at the end of the 19th century, given the transition of the agrarian-slave society, that the material bases of the capitalist State in Brazil were introduced, and after the events of the 1930s, the constitution of the capitalist State in the country gained a modern apparatus, as it followed the traditional liberal path, with the centralization of the functions of justice, tax collection and territorial defense (Pochmann, 2017).

It is noteworthy that between the 1930s and 1980s the Brazilian State was led by a strong presence of the military regime, which, in turn, favored the middle and upper classes through social monopolies, in which the State allowed the expansion of privileges in segments and sectors within the Brazilian economy and society (Pochmann, 2017).

After 1930, on the one hand, the constitution of the Brazilian State was "fundamental for the consolidation of the new dynamics of accumulation with industrialization", but on the other hand, it provoked the capitalist advance in a savage way, that is, "capitalist modernization became conservative, as it was responsible for widespread exclusion within society." (Pochmann, 2017, p. 317).

Still, it is observed that the Constitution of 1988 is a historical-political landmark for the creation of social rights in the country, being considered a "citizen constitution". However, given the current political, social and economic scenarios, it was not able to sustain the democratic regime, facing the traditional social formation with conservative and authoritarian structures.

It is worth mentioning that the country's conservative structures are based on Christian doctrine, which preaches Western morality, that is, the creation of polarizations and dichotomies of holiness (right) and sinful (wrong):

This belief in binary codes could divide the world from litanies that only work at the expense of the continuous exercise of equally binary narratives: honest or corrupt, good versus evil, family groups opposed to degenerate individuals, those who they identify with religion against the agnostics and the unbelieving, the new that contradicts the old. The functioning of these polarities, in turn, produces a logic of hatred and affection that contaminates not only the understanding and evaluation of public institutions, but also the daily life of personal relationships (Schwarcz, 2019, p. 212).

Still, this reason provokes a belligerent feeling of those who do not follow it, causing a distrust of what is not part of the moral community itself, such as, for example, "the press, intellectuals, the university, science, non-governmental organizations, minorities and new political agents". In this case, belonging to the moral community would be "the simplicity of the common man, the one who cooks barbecues, attends church on Sundays, knows the barber by name, is close to his family, which is more like a united clan, and has a daily life similar to that of their voters"; as was widely used in the 2018 election campaign, the refrain: "It's people like us" (Schwarcz, 2019, p. 212).

The use of virtual space, where there is a kind of free-for-all, "there is no time for confirmation of facts, documents and sources, nor for intellectual authorship, or for less passionate analysis than that made in the "heat of the hour." (Schwarcz, 2019, p. 213).

This is how polarizations are solidified in contemporary times: a space for political narratives is created where the enemy is established, they disseminate information, as a kind of conspiracy theories, to provoke emotions of hatred, resentment, insecurity in the

population and so, selecting an enemy to disallow his speech to legitimize his own (Schwarcz, 2019, p. 213).

According to Han (2020, p. 81), this logic arises from dataism: a very efficient form of control of digital optics, that is, "it is the pure time of knowledge driven by data". Han (2020) states that dataism appears as a second Enlightenment, since in the first one, it was argued that current knowledge would be released through statistics, a moment when, according to Voltaire, statistics represented clarification.

In this sense, for the second Enlightenment everything must become data and information, as a kind of totalitarianism or fetishism, in which all sense nexus is renounced, which, therefore, is reflected in a complete emptying of language. From this perspective, dataism would be nihilism, since it totally renounces meaning, there is no construction of a narration, as data fills the space of meaning (Han, 2020).

Given this, it is possible to create an allegation, an alleged reality based on what is believed, where it is possible to explore the prejudice arising from Western Christian morality and make it confuse reality with truth.

No wonder that Brazil finds itself in a *bolsonarist* scenario considering that the Brazilian people in general choose to be Robinsons: they deny reality to support their fantasies, they defend individual freedom, but they want dictatorships, they hope for a democratic Brazil, but they support the conservative, violent and traditional structures.

### 3. Cross-relationship: Cuba and the choice to be free

To be good is the only way to be happy.

Being cultured is the only way to be free;

But in the commonality of human nature, one needs to be prosperous to be good.

José Martí, 1884.

Cuba, the largest of the Caribbean islands, was inhabited by indigenous peoples from 8000 BC until the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America in 1492. Its history is also characterized by colonization, in this case, by the Spanish, for approximately 400 years, which used African slave labor to cultivate tobacco, coffee and sugar cane through plantations.

The nineteenth century was marked by the great tension caused by the conflict between Spain and the United States in the face of the dispute over territory, which, in turn, provoked the Spanish-American War, in 1898, which the United States won. As a result, the Treaty of Paris was signed, which established the cession of Cuba to the United States. In the same year, an American military government was installed on the island (Marasciulo, 2020).

In 1902, Cuba became an independent republic. However, the United States continued to exert great political and economic influence on the island (Marasciulo, 2020).

As a result, the years after the decree of independence suffered from corruption and succession of military leaders, most of them in line with American policy.

One of the figures representing oppression and corruption in the country during the years before the Revolution was General Fulgêncio Batista, whose main opponent was Fidel Castro. As a result, in 1959, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, through the nationalist

revolution, organized since 1953, managed to overthrow the general and enter Havana (Marasciulo, 2020).

Thus, in 1961, the island broke its diplomatic ties with the United States and signed a pact with the Soviet Union, signing an agreement to sell sugar and import oil. In the same year, the United States provoked an attempted invasion, causing the death of 176 people, but without success. In the same year, Fidel admits that it is a socialist revolution (Marasciulo, 2020).

In 1976, Fidel left his post as prime minister to become president of Cuba, after drafting the country's Constitution, which was approved by means of a national referendum on February 15 of the same year (Marasciulo, 2020).

The 20th century was characterized by the historic landmark of the emergence of the Soviet Union, in which the island strongly established its import and export trade relations and which, due to the fall of the USSR, suffered the greatest economic contraction (35%), the so-called “special period” (Iramina, 2017).

In the “special period, mainly between 1993 and 1995, Cuba had a shortage of several products, such as gasoline and energy, which, in turn, caused blackouts of 18 hours a day and food rationing, such as it also led Cubans to immigrate to the United States (Iramina, 2017).

However, despite this chaotic scenario, Cuba maintained its decision to remain a socialist country, honoring the social achievements of the revolution, especially the extensive public education and health system (Iramina, 2017).

Considering this, the island sought to take measures to recover from the crisis, including reorienting the Cuban economy towards tourism, implementing emergency measures, such as the introduction of the double currency, and regularizing and encouraging private businesses, which in practice, entailed effects and challenges (Iramina, 2017).

Currently, the island has challenges with the expansion of entrepreneurship, through the so-called *cuentapropismo* and private works, as they reproduce the dynamics of neoliberalism, and which are at odds with the revolutionary principles of equality and solidarity (Iramina, 2017)

It is worth mentioning that this brief historical trajectory carried out aims to demonstrate the pre-Cuban revolution period, that is, a past linked to colonization, slavery, and corruption. From this, we seek to analyze the socialist system of Cuba in the 19th century in view of its resistance and maintenance until today, as well as the difficulties faced by a peripheral country and the pressures suffered by capitalist nations.

For this, research carried out by a group of thirty-three young Brazilian students, professors and researchers from the Federal University of São Paulo who traveled to Cuba for almost two weeks in 2016 will be used, which originated the work *Cuba in the 21st century: dilemmas of the Revolution* (2017).

Frei Betto (2017, p. 59), in the preface of the work, pointed out the seriousness of the research, stating that it is a “mandatory reading for those who, in the face of Cuba, react with balance, without the anti-communist reactionarism of those who venerate capitalism nor the childish and dogmatic leftism of those who consider the Cuban Revolution to be paradise on Earth.”

Thus, the first point to be discussed is about the democratic character of Cuba, since there are great divergences between the positions of the right and the left, and even the progressive fronts, on this point:

If our yardstick for measuring the government of Cuba is that old and worn-out liberal democracy of the West – like the systems of the United States, Italy and Brazil – then Cuba is definitely not a democracy. On the other hand, if to consider a democratic we count the real representativeness, the legitimacy of the government system among the population and the representativeness of the political structure, Cuba is perhaps the most democratic country in Latin America (Moreira; Lima, 2017, p. 455).

The Cuban country has a solid link between decision-making and popular will, where popular support mechanisms have been established, such as the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) and the Popular Councils. It is no coincidence that, even though voting is optional, the average turnout in elections is over 90%<sup>6</sup>, as pointed out by law professor Júlio Fernández Estrada of the University of Havana (Moreira; Lima, 2017, p. 464).

Thus, two important points were verified: the success of the construction of the national spirit and the maintenance of acquired social rights are untouchable. According to Moreira and Lima (2017, p. 464), in the formal and informal conversations held with the inhabitants, there was no inhabitant who considered “exchanging social rights for more economic opening or greater access to goods”.

In addition, Cuba was the first country in Latin America to eradicate illiteracy, which demonstrates that the Cuban political system is politicized, autonomous and has a high involvement of the population in social agendas (Moreira; Lima, 2017, p. 481).

As for the Cuban electoral system, it is worth pointing out that there is no private campaign financing, digital marketing, political project proposal for candidates, as electoral dissemination takes place through the presentation of a small biographical file of all candidates (Moreira; Lima, 2017, p. 489).

There are two types of elections in Cuba: general elections and partial elections. In the first, the positions of deputies in the National Assembly and other national bodies are put to vote, including the Council of State, delegates to Provincial and Municipal Assemblies and their respective presidents and vice-presidents, all with a five-year term. In the second, there is the election of positions for delegates to Municipal Assemblies and their respective presidents and vice presidents, for a two-year term (Moreira; Lima, 2017, p. 498-506).

It is worth noting that deputies and delegates are directly elected by the population. Furthermore, the law provides for the revocation of the mandate of the deputy elected by most of the people, in cases where the commitments assumed are not being fulfilled by the actions taken (Moreira; Lima, 2017, 506).

In addition, to become a deputy of the National Assembly, the pre-candidate goes through the scrutiny of the National Candidacy Commission by one of the mass organizations in the country, and, from that, the commission transfers him to the Assembly of Popular Power of the respective municipality. Thus, it is in the Municipal

<sup>6</sup> In the case of Brazil, where voting is mandatory, in the last election of 2018, at the federal and state levels, the level of abstention was 20.3%. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/politica/eleicoes/2018/eleicao-em-numeros/noticia/2018/10/08/abstencao-atinge-203-maior-percentual-desde-1998.ghtml>. Accessed on: 30 sep. 2021.

Assembly, with the vote of more than half of the delegates, that the pre-candidate has his candidacy approved (Moreira; Lima, 2017, p. 506).

Using the example of Fidel Castro's candidacy, who was for 32 years president of Cuba, and which is constantly criticized by the Western media that accuses the regime of being a dictatorship, it is important to emphasize that for the presidential election, Fidel only remained in office because he respected the country's laws, namely: "the candidate must be a deputy; that is, he must have been elected by direct and secret vote of the population, in the same way as all 609 deputies of the National Assembly." (Moreira; Lima, 2017, p. 506-514).

Thus, it is noted that the accusations coming from the capitalist nations ignore the originality and dynamism of Cuban politics to support its western liberal democracy as a kind of religion.

In Cuba there is no separation of the three powers (Executive, Legislative and Judiciary) as there is in Brazil, but there is only one power, the Popular Power, made up of three Assemblies (National, Provincial and Municipal), Popular Council and the Electoral Circumscription, in which there is no subordination between them, but all the people can exercise government in a practical and effective way. Thus, it is Cuban voters who present and choose candidates for delegates in the Municipal Assemblies of Popular Power, as electoral constituencies are self-organized (Moreira; Lima, 2017, p. 498).

However, as much as Cuba has a permanent and dynamic political structure, it is not possible to say that its democracy is impeccable, since there are issues that end up limiting its political renewal, such as resistance to maintaining and defending its independence.

Finally, despite the challenges to be faced about promoting democracy, it cannot be denied that the Cuban State has a greater popular support than neighboring countries and other countries in the world, since the State and the population they support in equal measure the universal social rights and sovereignty won by the Revolution.

The second point to be discussed is about education in the country, considering the quality of its education system: "In the period between 2000 and 2015, Cuba was the only Latin American country to fully comply with the goals set by Unesco within the scope of "Education for all" program." (Mechi, 2017, p. 1737).

Fidel Castro placed as one of the goals for the revolution the eradication of illiteracy, and between 1959 and 1960, carried out a large literacy campaign, thus resulting in the literacy of 100,000 people (Mechi, 2017).

From this, educational practices were not based only on reading and writing instruments, but, above all, it was about "reading and writing the world", that is, promoting the understanding of the reality in which they were inserted; one way found to apply this education was the use of speeches by the revolution's leaders, such as Fidel Castro, who was based on leaders such as José Martí, Che Guevara and other Cuban revolutionaries (Mechi, 2017, p. 1761-1769).

The use of political discourses as a pedagogical instrument aims to provoke in the new generations a permanent sense of ownership regarding the importance of popular reflection on the paths of progress, without excluding the new demands of youth (Mechi, 2017).

However, it is important to point out that this pedagogical instrument is not free from imperfections, since the current debate on education in Cuba points to an "uncritical,

mechanical education, whose principles and methods contribute to a stalemate of critical thinking and to the difficulty in criticizing the current paths of revolution, in which the speeches of the Sierra Maestra revolutionaries crystallize as absolute truths” (Mechi, 2017, p. 1777).

With regard to the immobilization of critical thinking, it is not about difficulties faced in questioning censorship or persecution, but the way in which this methodology is developed, that is, centered on the reproduction and memorization of content, which, in turn, hinders the development of reflection and criticism (Mechi, 2017, p. 1777).

In 2016, a group of Brazilian researchers carried out a social project in Cuba, with children who had family problems involving alcoholism and domestic violence, so that they could write short texts to talk about their rights. Therefore, they noticed that the children had a mechanical reading, where there was a lot of repetition and little reflection, something that is present in the reality of Brazilian schools as well. However, they observed that the children showed solidarity and tranquility, without fear of making mistakes and the punishment they might suffer from their peers and educators, on the contrary, they made mistakes, started again, laughed at their own mistakes, collaborated with each other without any judgment (Mechi, 2017, p.1793).

It is worth mentioning that the Cuban people face, with some difficulty, issues related to sexism, homophobia, and racism. Regarding gender equality in Cuba, according to the Global Gender Inequality Index<sup>7</sup>, released by the World Economic Forum, in 2015, Cuba occupies 29th place in the ranking of 142 countries, while Brazil is in 85th place in the same ranking. However, Cuba faces a deficit in the transparency of statistical data on violence against women, revealing an important aspect, that gender violence is not a central issue of public safety (Barreto; Moreira; Andrade, 2017).

On the other hand, when the country adopted assertive policies, implementing measures that allowed women to leave home, such as, for example, the creation of day care centers and access to basic, technical and higher education, as well as measures that relieved women of their role maternity, offering free contraceptive methods and the legalization of abortion, women gained more autonomy and financial and intellectual independence (Barreto; Moreira; Andrade, 2017).

The island faces issues related to machismo, where feminism is important for the creation of a people more committed to equality and social well-being for all.

As for sexuality, Cuba is a homophobic country, where homosexuality is still a taboo. The places frequented by LGBTQI+s are stigmatized, and public displays of affection are not accepted, even though the law preaches free love. However, it does not present serious levels of violence compared to Brazil (Barreto; Moreira; Andrade, 2017).

The racial issue is a legacy of more than three centuries of slavery on the island, even though slavery was abolished by law. In 2014, Raúl Castro said that Cuba's position on the racial issue is shameful and insufficient, mainly because it has already spent more than fifty years of revolution. According to Barreto, Moreira and Andrade (2017, p.707-713):

The persistence of inequality is expressed on the island in poorer neighborhoods, mainly inhabited by black people; on public transport, crowded mainly with black people;

<sup>7</sup> RANKING of the Global Gender Inequality Index. Available at: < <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/rankings/> > Accessed on: 01 Dec. 2021.

in the lower salaries of black people, due to low qualifications; in the mentality of some (few) white Cubans who still refuse to relate or have their relatives affectively relate to black men and women; in the popular rumor that black people don't have good manners in cities; in the greater sexualization of black women, which is reflected in prostitution; the low presence in history teaching of black personalities who contributed to Cuban society; the low representation in the media; and the small presence of black intellectuals in high positions of power, mainly within the Cuban Communist Party.

In general, Cuba does not have a violent and degenerate society, since the revolution was able to guarantee a minimum of human dignity for all citizens with universal access to social services, such as health, quality education, security, housing, among others, but it still presents social issues that have not been overcome, such as “substantive equality” (Barreto; Moreira; Andrade, 2017, 739).

Currently, it is noted that the revolution remains active, with the maintenance of a more democratic, self-aware, and cultured society than any other country in Latin America, above all a more humane one<sup>8</sup>. But this does not mean that the country does not face difficulties like other peripheral and underdeveloped countries, such as, for example, the scarcity of resources and a precarious structure; there are also difficulties in establishing the substantial equalities for a colonizing and enslaving past.

In addition, there is concern about the direction the revolution may take in view of the development of contemporary capitalism rooted in neighboring countries, and the private dynamics that are developing on the island. However, the centralizing question defended by society, in general, is not to go against the revolution, but in what way and in what ways will it be possible and effective to maintain socialism on the island, thinking about the common well-being of the Cuban people.

Thus, it is noted that Cuba is concerned with supporting the development of the individual under the aspect of social well-being, that is, providing and guaranteeing social rights so that Cuban society can educate itself, understand the concept of freedom, and thus sustain a prosperous and human future, even if it is a country that faces issues and mistakes to be overcome.

#### 4. Conclusion

Modernity and contemporaneity are characterized by the defense of how things should be, and not necessarily reflect on how things are, as stated by the philosopher Mauro Cardoso Simões (2021).

Given this, it is possible to understand how political polarizations are tensioned and are unable to advance in terms of solving the problems that the world still faces, since

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<sup>8</sup> "Cubans have little experience of police violence, organized crime, massacre, overcrowded prisons, lowering the legal age of majority, private security, a closed condominium, turnstiles and revolving doors, entrance exams, fast food, eviction, working children, children out of school, day care centers with no vacancies, telemarketing, advertising in the streets, on television, in newspapers, magazines and cinemas, electoral marketing, parliament as a business counter, the notary office, the education, health and retirement treated as business, cinema, expensive concerts and dance performances, expensive books, expensive public transport, expensive medicine, illiteracy, Big Brother, traffic, shopping mall, hunger, unemployment, childhood abandonment, abandonment in the old age. In short, the Cuban has little familiarity with the experience of helplessness." (Santos; Vasconcelos, 2017, p. 237-246).

we are stuck in the defense of ideological ideals that do not dialogue with each other (and, often, ignore reality), they only fight for the monopoly places of truth and power.

In addition, there is the factor of the expansion of the internet and its mechanisms for manipulating the masses, which are maintained by the logic of consumption and injections of high doses of information, as the individual thus places himself in a situation of extreme competition (without time and condition to reflect), making self-exploration (unconscious) self-empowerment (conscious).

Brazil and Cuba have similar pasts, peripheral economies, but with different economic systems. The proposal to carry out a reflective and critical analysis of capitalism and socialism, considering the reality of these countries, consists in pointing out how much the denial of history and the opening to empirical study, together with the maintenance of ideological fantasies, prevent the construction of democracies based on freedom.

There is no way to sustain a democracy without principles and social policies aimed at social rights, as Cuba, in general, has managed to do until today, as well as there is no category of citizen without the educational formation of a being.

The starting point for the formation of democracy is the people, but the people appropriated of their history, with self-reflective capacity, and who become citizens (and consumers). From there, it becomes more viable to understand the roots that structure the current problems, as well as to promote an awareness of the collective for substantive equality (and not for an individual freedom).

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