

Cuban Quick Fact Sheet

- *Background*
 - Colonized by Spanish, remained colony until 1895.
 - US highly involved in politics until 1959 Revolution, Fidel came to power and government became communist.
 - Castro based socialist reforms off model of Soviet Union, a major trading and political partner.
 - Revolutionary government originally held popular support, but antagonized much of upper and middle classes.
 - Castro's authoritarian attitudes cause criticism of his style and lessening of popular support, many of his economic reforms unsuccessful.
 - Economy struggled since dissolution of Soviet Union in 1990. Though trading internationally, struggles to have hard currency to pay for imports.
 - Responses to this challenge sparked new wave of immigration to US, especially Florida, 90 miles north.
 - Agreement between US and Cuba in September, 1994, expands # of legal immigrants to 20,000/year.
- *Language, Religion, Culture, and Traditional Practices*
 - Population a mixture of descendants of original settlers from Spain, black descendants of slave population, and Chinese descendants of immigrant workers.
 - Historically struggled w/ racial issues, slave population until later 19th century.
 - After independence, the various governments neglected the poor, many whom were black. Castro Regime made efforts to remedy this.
 - Have a strong sense of "Cubanidad," or cultural identity.
 - Equality of sexes official socialist ideal, though sexism still prevalent and women do most domestic work. Publicly, a man is considered head of household though in home, the woman usually has control.
 - Difficult to practice religion openly and be successful in society.
 - Music a combination of Spanish and African elements: rumba, guaracha, bolero, conga, and cha-cha are a few examples.
- *Adjusting to America*
 - Cuban-American community very good at taking care of its own.
 - Often little motivation to learn English and move to areas with better jobs; refugees fit well in Spanish-speaking, Cuban-American society.
 - Revolution declared a socialist, nationalistic, anti-American society. Many revolutionary values are "mirror image" of our values. Middle-aged entering US have spent most of their lives in this society.
 - Because society is communist, many refugees see social benefits (healthcare, a job, housing, and higher education) as basic rights.

- Values stress collective wealth and collective political awareness. Those who've lived in system may be struck negatively by materialism, winner-take-all capitalism, individualism, competition, crime, racism of US.
- Many refugees have family in Cuba who opposed their immigration, process can sever cherished family relationships.