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BEHIND OPEN DOORS - DAVID CREEDON

Between traditional society and modernity, Cuba is a country with a rich and complex history in its own history. The common clichés of 1950 automobiles and Art Deco architecture have all reinforced a stereotype of Cuba as a tropical island of the cold war, a place where ghosts of the past still haunt the present. A lack of knowledge and understanding of the country's historical context has only served to have added to an unbalanced view of Cuba as a tormented island. This perspective ignores the legacies of colonial empire and authoritarian governance whose influence still pertain today.

The struggle for Cuban national identity is a complex and prolonged one, dating back to the 1492 when Cuba became under direct control of Spain. The country's strategic position in the Caribbean made it an ideal starting off point in the transportation of wealth from the new world to Europe. Until the mid 20th century, the country at various times had been under the control of Spanish and British Empires as well as the United States.

The country's history has resulted in the former slave colony becoming a multi-ethnic nation. Because of the diversity of those who came to the island, the different ethnic backgrounds have provided the country with a rich cultural influence of European, American and African traditions. Cuba's national identity is a hybrid of all these influences and provided its people with its own sense of belonging.

The portraits from this series document people of Cuba in their home environment and capture scenes that are reflective of their character not normally seen. One becomes aware that these people still retain family values and a richness of life that would appear to be disappearing in the more affluent western societies. Families are tight knit groups as they share rooms or houses in close proximity. Rooms can be quite small and are in contrast on some occasions to the relatively more grandiose old colonial structures. Family units often consist of grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, teens and children. They support each other in such a way as to create a culture of emotional trust and security. This mutual cooperation and care became evident as they invited me into their homes and displayed a patience and ease as I went about my work. Despite the external condition of some of the buildings, on the whole interiors are very well kept and spotlessly clean. Visiting various homes throughout the country you find that Cubans are very welcoming and you will be treated more like a long lost relative than a complete stranger. The generosity of the people is quite evident and they are willing to share what little they have with you with offers of coffee or something to eat. The strength of any country is in its people and despite over fifty years of sanctions as well as the hardships experienced during the Special Period the Cuban people are resilient as well as having dignity and spirit.

The Cuban people are very proud and take great pride in their independence.

A young lawyer when asked the question that everyone asks in the west, "what will happen when Fidel Castro dies"? Her reply was; "I hope we don't turn into another Puerto Rico."

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