

## Introduction

I am submitting this grant proposal with the hopes of receiving the necessary financial support to make possible a trip to Cuba with the intention of researching selected works of Afro-Cuban authors. I am particularly interested in the work of Marta Rojas, an author and journalist whose literary output has often touched on the theme of national identity, frequently focusing on the process of its creation through an Afro-Cuban point of view. From the perspective gained through my investigative work in Cuba, I hope to acquire invaluable insights that will allow me to build upon my current doctoral research in the field of Afro-Cuban cultural identity and its formation. In regards to my research, my objectives are the following:

A) To study various aspects of Afro-Cuban culture, including its impact on Cuban culture and how its identity is defined. I am also very interested in studying more about the impact that the Cuban Revolution has had on Afro-Cubans and its different organizations. I would also like to explore different aspects of Cuban politics and their cultural impact.

B) In regards to my doctoral dissertation, I am very interested in conducting further research on the racial issues treated in the works of Marta Rojas; since this aspect of her literary production will be the central focus of my dissertation.

While in Cuba I would like to collect data from different journals and newspapers (*Letras cubanas, Revolución y cultura, El caimán barbudo, Granma*) from the major libraries in Havana, such as the José Martí National Library, the Elvira Carpe Library and several independent libraries with whom I have been able to establish contact through electronic mail and they have been helpful by advising me as to the best locations for my particular research needs. I have made contact directly with Marta Rojas via electronic mail, and she has provided me with the necessary information as how to contact her for an interview while in Cuba. An extensive

interview with the author would be an invaluable resource for my doctoral dissertation.

Through my major professor, Dr. Gómez-Martínez, I have been able to make contact with the Cuban philosopher Pedro Guadarrama and the anthropologist Jesús Guanche who works at the Fernando Ortíz foundation with Miguel Barnet, a Cuban author that presents themes in his work that are essential for my investigation. By conducting personal interviews with these individuals, I will be able to obtain relevant information and the insight that would otherwise be unavailable to me.

### **Research Plan**

During my years as a graduate student I have been studying the themes of Afro-Caribbean literature through different classes and seminars. Currently I am taking a class on Cuban history and a class on Afro-Caribbean women writers. Last semester I had an independent study class with Dr. Lesley Feracho in which I was able to concentrate only in Afro-Cuban literature and identity. The theme of Afro-Cuban identity and its impact, internationally as well as in Cuba, is of great interest and crucial for my doctoral investigation. It was in this course with Dr. Feracho that I was introduced to Marta Rojas' work. Her historical novels and journalistic articles and books deal with and reflect upon the issues and conflicts of blacks in the Cuban society, from the time of its formation as a colony and to its current impact. Through her historical novels, Marta Rojas re-writes history with Afro-Cubans as the protagonists, dealing with their particular problems in society. Marta Rojas has already agreed on talking to me in an interview. She has provided me with different methods of contacting her while in the island, such as her e-mail and telephone numbers. This interview, the opportunity of sharing ideas with her, and the different investigative work in the local libraries will be very beneficial and crucial to my current doctoral investigative work.

Most of the sources that I plan to consult during my visit are not available in the United States. The work of Marta Rojas is very hard to find in libraries across the nation and her last novel, *El harén de Oviedo*, which was just published last year, is not available at all in the United States. I believe that the information collected will be very helpful for anyone interested in Afro-Cuban literature and identity.

**Estimated Budget** – For travel to Cuba and transportation within Cuba during the two weeks stay.

Travel:

Flight: \$1,200

Transportation: \$ 300

Total:

I would like to thank the Center for providing students who are interested in the research related in the disciplines related to Latin American countries. Thank you for considering my proposal.