

I learned many things while in Cuba, from topics that spanned culture, politics, and society. However, the two topics that interested me the most had to be the daily lives of the Cuban people and my personal development.

Looking back I can definitely say that if there was any topic that I learned the most about while abroad I would have to say that topic would have to be myself. I always felt as though I had a desire to want to engage myself with people but I did not notice the degree of this desire until I went to Cuba. Being immersed in a culture where I could barely scratch the surface in many ways, as a result of my own inadequacies, yet still immersing myself in it to the best of my abilities, I surprised myself. I learned that I can fit in and adapt in a foreign environment, or at least in a Cuban environment.

Being back in America and surrounded by English speakers as well as Spanish speakers, I realized that full language immersion was the key to improving one's language acquisition exponentially. Being back in a land where English is everywhere I am able to give English objects a Spanish name and my ear was able to read a native Spanish tongue much faster than before my departure for Cuba. I experienced first-hand the difficulties and differences that native Spanish speakers have in communicating with one another. I had trouble communicating with Cubans because of words and phrases I would use from Dominican Spanish as well as because of my lack of knowledge in regards to Cuban terminologies.

In terms of general politics between the U.S. and Cuba I learned that one must not always believe one side of the story. The saying every story has two sides is definitely applicable in terms of politics. On one hand the proponents of socialism will say that Cuba is a place where everyone is equal but someone who does some research will find that the majority is equally

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poor. There are good things about Cuba and its system but there are also bad things and with all things good in life blemishes do exist. Generally speaking there are three things that are outstanding about Cuba; the healthcare system, the free education system, and the fact that everyone owns their home.

The embargo between the United States and Cuba is still very obscure in terms of the U.S. justification for the embargo and Cuba's reaction to it. Cuban's feel as though the United States wants to colonize them as they did to Puerto Rico so they believe that the embargo is there to bring Cuba down from the inside. The U.S. claims to have the embargo in place because they want to change Cuba's human rights practices for the better but they are forcing the Cuban government to deprive its people even more because the U.S. is stifling Cuba's access to resources. In my opinion I believe that Cuba should be left alone to resolve its own problems. The embargo has been in place for over half a century and still no good change has come about as a result.

Cuba was a great learning experience, not only for someone looking to increase their faculties in Spanish but also as a humbling experience. The people of Cuba live a humbling life and their life can really make you appreciate your own. Learning about other cultures from their own perspective can also be an eye opening experience and it will show you that there is always a story that is untold.