

Airing Cuba's Gay Gulag

In "The Easy Convenience of Cuban Homophobia" (*Native 74*), Lourdes Arguelles and Ruby Rich again link Cuban gays to the pre-revolutionary Mafia-run "casinos, prostitution, and bars of the tourist industry." This Goebbelian lie was first floated by the Cuban government in the early Seventies when American visitors started asking embarrassing questions about the repression of gay people in that country. It has since been repeated *ad nauseum*—in exactly the same terms and with the same vocabulary—in gay circles in this country as an excuse or, at least, as an attenuating circumstance for that repression.

Anyone who was raised as I was in Cuba in the Fifties knows this to be a ludicrous lie, strictly for external gay-left-liberal *American* consumption. I challenge Rich and Arguelles to mention what source—other than official Cuban propaganda—can they invoke to back up such an assertion. Have they done any sociological research on the Cuban gay community? Have they interviewed any of the thousands of mythical gay employees of George Raft? Have they scoured Miami's senior citizen homes in search of the imaginary and by now probably decrepit lesbian *croupiers*, drug pushers, and whores (heteros at work but homos at home, we must assume) of Havana's wicked waterfront bars?

Not content with repeating an old lie, Rich and Arguelles distill a new one: Cuban small-town "middle-class lesbians sometimes married men

moving to the capital, or became the mistresses of the city's ruling class," they assure us, wide-eyed. Come on, Lou and Ruby, is this a joke? Apparently Cuban gays and lesbians, like contemporary children of Bluebeard, managed to cover all the bases of vice and corruption. This hilarious *canard* will no doubt enjoy an even longer and prosperous career in the annals of the American left's justification of Cuba's policies than the one about the Mafia ties.

After attempting to discredit the victims, Arguelles and Rich warn that to denounce the Cuban regime's homophobia is to play "into a dirty political war" and that it amounts to "strengthening the right in this country." A classical Stalinist shut up advice: let's not wash our dirty Gulag clothes in public lest we confirm the enemy's worst suspicions.

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