

**Author's Reply:** I salute Richard Peña for a display of moderation usually lacking in matters Cuban. To Debra Evenson, I give thanks for that rarest of commodities in these matters: the facts. The change in legislation regarding homosexual teachers in Cuban schools is major and symbolic—and better than Mayor Ed Koch could accomplish recently in New York, where his attempt at gay-protection legislation was ruled unconstitutional.

Geoff Puterbaugh brings up the bitter book by reformed sinner Allen Young (a Venceremos veteran turned Cuba hater), which I know only too well: Landing in the same time warp as the filmmakers, Puterbaugh brings up the 1971 declarations—as damnable and dated an act as was

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the election of Richard Nixon in this country the next year. But I find most disturbing his goad to me to name names. As any gay person would know, that is a tactic historically used *against* homosexuals, not *for* them. It was favored by the U.S. police as a follow-up to bar raids in the fifties and by one Cuban émigré in 1978 in exactly the manner Puterbaugh urges. No thanks.

The Ana María Simo letter seems to come with the territory. Most recently, she was in print attacking that infamous Commie lover, theater impresario Joseph Papp, who had misbehaved by including a Cuban musical group in the Public Theatre's extensive Latin-American Theatre Festival—called "very leftist" by Simo and company.

As for Nestor Almendros and Orlando Jiménez-Leal, well, their article ["Point of View: Improper Conduct," September] is almost the least of it. A campaign of intimidation unprecedented in cultural circles has accompanied the release of this film. Any critic who has dared to voice any criticism has found retaliation immediate. Within days of the publication of my article, their distributor threatened *American Film* with a libel suit; a national press release was issued denouncing my article to newspaper and magazine editors; and for the first time in its history, this magazine gave a filmmaker equal space to rebut a critic. (I hope future independent filmmakers are given the same privilege!) In order to procure a screening of the film for Cuban director Tomas Gutiérrez Alea, critic Richard Goldstein had to guarantee Almendros space in the *Village Voice* to attack the article. When the reviewer for a gay paper, the *New York Native*, penned a negative review, his editors compensated the filmmakers by running a laudatory interview in which the preceding review was repeatedly excoriated. It is noteworthy that no independent filmmaker in the United States has ever received such treatment—nor employed the tactics necessary to win it.

As for the filmmakers' claim in their article that the film comes from "left field," anyone who watched their appearance on William Buckley's "Firing Line" this summer knows otherwise. As for their concern for gay Cubans, well, the television show was instructive there, too. It took twenty-five minutes for Buckley to say the word "homosexual," and when he did, Jiménez-Leal immediately countered to say their film was "not about homosexuality" but about "human rights."

The charges and personal attacks in the filmmakers' reply to my original film review are as misrepresentative and ill founded as those in their film, but space here prohibits any point-for-point. The larger issue, however, should not be missed. Almendros and Jiménez-Leal suffer from an advanced form of arrogance. They believe that anyone who dislikes their film is a Communist, and that anyone who disagrees with them must be on Castro's payroll. Slurs and libel are their tools. For Ana María Simo, not hating Cuba is tantamount to being a card-carrying leftist. Wake up, guys, it's not the fifties any more. Or is it?