

**“Desde Cuba with Yoani Sánchez:  
From Verbal Violence to Citizen Cyber-Journalism”**

**Interview of Yoani Sánchez by Ted Henken  
Havana, July 28 & November 6, 2008**



On a recent trip to Havana in July 2008, I had the good fortune of tracking down and interviewing the fearless and indefatigable Cuban blogger, Yoani Sánchez. When I called her home to arrange the meeting and interview, her intrepid husband, the journalist and fellow blogger Reinaldo Escobar answered the phone and invited me to meet them over lunch later that day. My visit soon took on a typically surreal Cuban socialist quality, however, when Escobar explained that while they lived on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor, the building's elevator only reached the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, from where I would have to proceed by foot. In fact, when I arrived the elevator was not working at all, forcing me to ascend all 14 floors on foot, arriving drenched in sweat and out of breath.

Upon seeing my state of exhaustion, Escobar commented ironically, "They must've told you the elevator was broken... And you must've believed them!" Laughing, he quickly handed me an ice-cold blackmarket *Bucanero* beer and explained that he, in fact, was the building's elevator repair man. "Twenty years ago when they expelled me from the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde*, I decided to study

engineering. In today's Cuba there is just as much need for a good repair man as there is for a good journalist. Except that the first profession requires no ideological training. Really, I should thank them for granting me my freedom."

Yoani Sánchez, who soon joined our conversation, began studying Latin American Literature at the University of Havana in 1995 from where she graduated five years later after defending an incendiary senior thesis entitled, "Words Under Pressure: A Study of the Literature of Dictatorship in Latin America." However, as she recounts in her now famous blog, *Generación Y* ([www.desdecuba.com/generaciony](http://www.desdecuba.com/generaciony)), upon beginning to work for a publisher of children's literature, Editorial Gente Nueva, she soon arrived at the conviction—shared by the majority of Cubans—that she was unable to support her family on the salary she earned legally.

As a result, without finishing her social service obligation, she quit her job and began to dedicate herself to the better paid profession of freelance Spanish professor for the occasional German tourist visiting Havana. This was a period (prolonged until today) when engineers prefer to drive cabs, teachers do everything possible to work in hotels, and neurosurgeons fight for jobs as check out clerks in dollar stores. In 2002, disillusionment and economic asfixiation forced her to emigrate to Switzerland, from where she returned—for family reasons and against the advice of her friends and acquaintances—in the summer of 2004. Instead of starting a new life in exile, Sánchez says that she discovered that "life is not to be found in another country, but instead in another Cuba."

Upon her return, she turned to the profession that accompanies her until today: information technology. In that same year, she founded, together with Escobar, and a group of other Cubans—all residing on the island—the digital magazine of reflection and debate, *Consenso*. Four years later, she continues working as webmaster, contributor, and editor of the magazine (now called *Contodos*) and its on-line portal, "DesdeCuba.com." Almost two years ago in April 2007, Sánchez launched her own blog, which she has christened "*Generación Y*," reflecting its satirical, openly partial, and generational content.

"*Generación Y* is a blog inspired by people like me," she explains, "with names that begin with or contain the letter 'Y.' Born in the Cuba of the 1970s and 80s, marked by the experience of rural boarding schools, Russian cartoons, illegal departures, and frustration. So, I especially invite Yanisledi, Yoandri, Yusimi, Yuniesky, and others who must drag around their own 'Ys' to read what I write and write me back."

After her uniquely incisive writing style and endlessly creative strategies for getting on-line in a country where less than 2 percent of the population (200,000 Cubans) have access to the World Wide Web, were discovered by a handful of intrepid reporters from *Reuters*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *El País*, her audience (more outside Cuba than inside) and international renown began to grow. In April 2008, Sánchez won the Ortega y Gasset prize for Digital Journalism, awarded by the Spanish group *Prisa*, one of the most prestigious distinctions in the Spanish-speaking world. Then in May, she was included in *Time* magazine's annual list of the "100 Most Influential People in the World." Lauded by *Time* as a "hero and pioneer," Sánchez insists on a more simple title: citizen.

In November 2008, *Generación Y* won renewed recognition from the Spanish language site *bitacoras.com* and the award for best blog of 2008 from "The Bobs" (the *Deutsche Welle* International Weblog Awards). Sánchez was also named among the 100 most notable Spanish Americans of the year by the weekly magazine of the Spanish newspaper *El País*. The Spanish version of *Foreign Policy* magazine included her in its list of the year's 10 most important intellectuals, as did the leading Mexican magazine *Gato Pardo*. Sánchez is the only individual included on all of these lists.

Not to be outdone, the Castro family also sought to single out the blogger on two different occasions during 2008. First, in June ex-president Fidel Castro alluded to her in

the preface to a book about Bolivia, calling her a stooge of imperialism for accepting the Ortega y Gasset prize. Then in December, Mariela Castro, director of Cuba's National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX) and the daughter of Cuba's current president, Raúl Castro, attempted to disqualify Sánchez after she publicly asked her the impertinent question whether her fight for tolerance of sexual preferences might lead to a greater tolerance of political and ideological preferences. "Will we be able to come out of those closets too?" Sánchez wanted to know.

While Mariela Castro claimed at the time that such questions were "beyond my area of responsibility," she later used CENESEX's own blog to attack Sánchez, using language laced with sexism. "She has an Overlord at home who responds for her," Mariela wrote, referring to Sánchez's husband Reinaldo, "especially when attacked by another man," presumably referring to her uncle Fidel. "But she also has another, more powerful one who purchases her intellectual honesty... This little girl is playing the role of a 'cocky hen' with her little lies under the protection of her owners... It seems as if our dissidents have run out of intellectual resources when they have to turn to someone so insignificant."

For her part, Sánchez responded to the sexologist in a blog post entitled, "Cocky Hen," asking, "Does she believe that I do the work of a man because I demand rights and claim respect for political preferences? I have no feathers on my tail, but if being a delicate hen means that I must accept that a group of septugenarians –all men– decide every aspect of my life, then I prefer being a transvestite and will sound my cock-a-doodle-do like the cock with the most hormones in the barnyard [...] I agree with the prestigious specialist that I am 'insignificant,' an anonymous hen who, with her cheep cheep, has managed to inconvenience the fine fighting cocks."

Repeatedly denied permission to travel abroad, Sánchez and her husband Escobar have more recently begun to organize itinerant blogger workshops across the island in order to share their knowledge and promote independent blogs in Cuba. Further provoking the ire of Cuban state security, in December 2008 the couple was among a group of bloggers who kicked off their own independent Cuban blogger competition, "Una Isla Virtual."

Because the portal DesdeCuba.com is effectively blocked in Cuba by the government, most Cubans can only access *Generación Y* through the use of minidisks and flash drives passed from hand to hand. Still, the number of hits received has expanded exponentially during 2008, growing from one million in January to almost 15 million in December. Moreover, reflecting her success at turning her blog into a virtual public plaza of dialogue and debate, Sánchez's posts during the past two years have generated over 300,000 comments, with each post typically generating between 3,000 and 7,000 responses from her readers.

Also during 2008, a virtual parade of volunteers from around the world have begun to collaborate with *Generación Y*, translating Sánchez's posts into as many as 15 other languages. As a result, there are versions of the blog now accessible in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Polish, Finish, Lithuanian, Czech, Bulgarian, and Hungarian. As Sánchez explains, "Nothing becomes so attractive as what has been prohibited."

Openly skeptical, Sánchez rejects cynicism, personal attacks, and the disqualification of those who think differently –all unfortunate characteristics with deep roots in Cuban political culture and commonplace on both sides of the Straits of Florida. Her goal is to avoid the common use of "verbal violence," creating instead a pluralistic, respectful, and serious civil dialogue in her beloved *patria*. She intends to accomplish this goal through the transparent exercise of her particular brand of citizen cyber-journalism.

**Ted Henken:** *What path led you to combine your literary education with your current passion for blogging?*

**Yoani Sánchez:** For a few months now, there has been a growing interest from all across the world in finding out what is happening with the web in Cuba, especially with what I like to call the Cuban “blogosphere.” I am part of this incipient generation of bloggers who are chronicling their lives each day from Cuba. In fact, I have my own blog, called *Generación Y*, where I write brief sketches of my daily reality.

Cuba’s independent blogosphere is very small and most bloggers use pseudonyms. I am one of the few who write openly signing my name to each of my posts. Of course, this approach has generated for *Generación Y* an outpouring of both sympathy and hatred. I began with a process of interior saturation, of accumulated experiences that all began to explode out of me last year. I think of myself as a cross between a linguist and a hacker, which may sound strange, but that is how I would define myself professionally.

I began writing in April of 2007 and would characterize my blog as a kind of personal exorcism where I am able to vent all the demons that I have accumulated over time: the demons of inaction, apathy, dissatisfaction, frustration, and, above all, of questioning. Fundamentally, I question why the reality we live with in today’s Cuba, is nothing like what we were promised when we were children; why this social project that my and my parents’ generations dreamed of was never realized.

**TH:** *What projects were you were involved in prior to the blog, especially as related to the on-line magazines and websites DesdeCuba, Consenso, and Contodos.*

**YS:** In December 2004, my husband Reinaldo Escobar and I, together with a group of colleagues, founded a beautiful project called *Consenso*. It was a digital magazine since we were unable to print and distribute it in hard copy. This experience quickly became my graduation as a webmaster and web designer. Until that moment I had not had the tremendous responsibility of actually designing a website. This allowed me to become the administrator of the *Consenso* website, all culminating in February of 2007 in our web portal *DesdeCuba*.

*DesdeCuba* hopes to provide a home on the web for a variety of diverse content. On one side, we have our new magazine rechristened “*Contodos*,” since we have come to the realization that the idea of *Consenso* [consensus] was not exactly what we were looking for. Instead, the name “*Contodos*” [with all] better captures our search for diversity and pluralism. *Contodos* is a magazine of analysis with op-ed articles and debates. Our fundamental premise is the rejection of verbal violence. We aim to back up our opinions with arguments, not with insults, defamations, or incendiary language.

**TH:** *How do Cubans access the internet and for what purposes do they typically use it?*

**YS:** Outside of Cuba, there are many clichés about Cuban reality. When I began blogging, some people said, "That's impossible because in Cuba no one can connect to the internet." That's not real. Here in Cuba, we Cubans have developed many tricks. We are very creative in finding "holes in the wall." And, of course, we apply this talent to the challenge of getting online too.

I have coined the term that we Cubans are "undocumented" on the web. What I mean is that the way we get online always involves some degree of illegality. Not only those who buy a password on the black market and log on at night from home, but also those who use the internet access at their jobs for personal ends whenever the boss turns his head. There are also those who visit foreign embassies to access the internet, or, as in my case, people who dedicate part of their limited family budget to pay for an hour online in a public internet café. Of course, depending on the place, this will cost between \$5 and \$12. Someone who pays this kind of money for internet access is clearly not using their state salary, indicating the illicit origin of the money. Therefore, there is always a degree of illegality that marks our entry into the web in Cuba.

What does this lead to? The majority of Cubans who use the internet in Cuba today do so in a very pragmatic manner: to apply for a job, to contact a relative in Miami, to send an e-mail to a loved one traveling outside the country, or to obtain a visa. These Cubans are largely computer illiterates. However, voicing one's opinions online is still something that very few Cubans do. Perhaps this is out of fear, indifference, or apathy, or because they don't see it as an effective means of making one's voice heard. This tells us that the Cuban blogosphere is still practically in diapers. What we are trying to develop, however, are individuals who are both computer literate and have the desire to express their opinions. It is in that conjunction where the true blogger potential of this island lies.

**TH:** *In your blog and in the portal Desde Cuba, you call for "a pluralistic, respectful, and serious tone," you criticize Cuba's political culture of "verbal violence," and you speak of "citizen journalism." Explain the meaning of these terms and the reason you use them?*

**YS:** "Citizen journalism" is causing quite a fervor across the world, really shaking the foundations of traditional journalism. Citizen journalists are individuals, without any particular professional training, who live in the epicenter of events. One fine day, they decide to recount how they live and to film, record, and photograph the reality that surrounds them, converting themselves into transmitters of information. In the Cuban case, citizen journalism is especially important given the fact that the government exercises an information monopoly. Here, a citizen journalist is a person who writes about everything that the official press refuses to mention.

In the case of "verbal violence," this is one of our fundamental premises in the work we do at *DesdeCuba*. We refuse to use incendiary language, defamation, or harangues, because that only exacerbates the cycle of intolerance that is an obstacle to reasoned debate. Cuba is a very diverse country. You walk out into the street and you not only find a diversity of races but also of opinions. The official press spends all its time trying to make us believe that this is a very monolithic country, that we all think the same, and it does so with a dose of revolutionary violence and ideological aggressiveness

that is paralyzing. We have to find a way to put a stop to this never-ending cycle, to this spiral of aggression that is very characteristic of Cuban journalism.

For example, one of our policies is in how we address Cuban political figures. We have never printed a phrase like "the bloody tyrant Fidel Castro," but neither have we written "our dear Commander in Chief." These are the two extremes we want to avoid. He is Mr. Fidel Castro and the way to counter what he thinks, his theory and hypothesis of reality, is with arguments. Therefore, we say "no" to verbal violence and we say "yes" to a more humane journalism; a journalism based more on each person's lived experiences and daily reality, and above all on mutual respect. Because even to those with whom we disagree, we show respect and honor their right to have differing opinions.

**TH:** *What have been the most important lessons learned since you began your blog?*

**YS:** One of the greatest lessons I have learned is the need that we Cubans have for this kind of public forum where we can freely exchange our views. I have been the victim of many attacks. I have lived this in my own flesh and blood, in my own kilobytes. I have lived it on the web and it has been a magnificent experience. To see the level of verbal aggression, insult, and lack of argument in which people can engage, to be systematically insulted, has all been a magnificent exercise. It is an exercise of humility. That is how I have taken it, like the cybernetic cross that I have to bear.

I believe that whoever promotes diversity has to accept the diversity of opinions that people may have about them. I accept that. It seems very well to me that everyone is free to think what they want about me. I applaud them and invite them to post their opinions on my blog. That is what I want to communicate: A blog is a magnificent exercise in tolerance. Would that each of our politicians had a blog so that they could receive insults, complaints, and applause.

I also think that this past year has confirmed for me the need we have to begin to destroy those myths and push against the walls. I don't believe that the solutions to Cuba's problems will come from the heroic acts of the few, but from the constant activities of the many. And you could say that my blog is my little push against the wall.

**TH:** *What obstacles exist for Cubans to access your blog and how have you overcome them?*

**YS:** Starting the last week of March 2008 the Cuban government has "filtered" the entire *DesdeCuba.com* website from all public internet sites and hotels in order to prevent us from updating our site. Of course, many other websites are totally blocked at a national level to prevent Cubans from accessing sites the government considers objectionable, such as *Cubaencuentro.com*, *Cubanet.org*, *Reporters Without Borders*, and *Amnesty International*.

This has obliged us to develop what I like to call a “citizen network,” outside Cuba, of people who help us post our texts. I have not even been able to see my own blog since the last week of March. I am a “blind blogger,” you might say. Of course, that sounds quite strange, but that's Cuba. In Cuba reality is often a lot like science fiction. I send my texts by e-mail. Cubans who live on the outside post them. And in return they send me the readers' comments.

Whenever people ask me, “Why do you write a blog if Cuba's connectivity is so low?” I tell them, “In Cuba, the internet works differently.” How does it work? Well, in a much more rudimentary but very effective way. We can't easily measure the amount of people who know what's going on in the internet by the number who are able to connect. Someone who logs on and downloads a page, a site, some software, or a video normally shares that file with 20, 30, or even a hundred other people. Therefore, it is not so important the number of people who can connect but how many are actually able to read what is written there.

Inspired by this philosophy, I got the idea of creating a minidisk. This is a copy of my blog as it appears on the web without the option of posting comments. This is one way that I have been able to say, “It doesn't matter if they prevent me from accessing my blog, I will find a way to make my posts available to my fellow Cubans. It doesn't matter if one fine day they decide to ban me from the hotels, I will dictate my posts by phone to my collaborators abroad. It doesn't matter if they confiscate my phone, I will write my posts by hand and send them...”

What I am trying to say is that the internet has a way of slipping through the fingers of the Cuban censors. There isn't a simple way they can stop us from posting a text on the web. This is as new a phenomenon for them as it is for us and fortunately for us technology evolves faster than censorship. This is how both *Generación Y* and *DesdeCuba* survive: through the solidarity of people who we don't even know but who have decided to support our endeavor.

**TH:** *How do you finance your blog?*

**YS:** That's a very good question because it is a question we want to respond to with the utmost transparency. One of our policies is to accept financing neither from governments, nor from political parties, nor from foreign political groups. This does not mean that we do not accept help. Friends and supporters come to Cuba and give us a memory flash or other supplies. They buy us an internet card or make a donation to our cause. But that's another kind of thing, something at a personal, citizen level. But we don't want anything, first, that links us to any foreign government, and above all that would influence our editorial line. We don't want our editorial line to be dictated by others based on who finances the magazine. We reject that.

In the particular case of Reinaldo and I, we have our parallel profession that is at the same time an underground profession. We have survived now for more than 12 years by giving Spanish classes to tourists and showing them Havana. That's a very unstable profession, but it affords us economic autonomy – and economic autonomy is connected to political and ideological autonomy. Now that my blog has become fairly

well-known, I have begun to collaborate with a number of foreign magazines who pay me. That has also allowed me to purchase more hours of internet time. So, our autonomy is at all levels. It is autonomy from the Cuban government and from any foreign institution. And that gives us great tranquility and freedom when it's time to write.

**TH:** *What is your reaction to the most recent speeches of Raúl Castro and what is your evaluation of the pace of economic reforms that have taken place since he became Cuba's president in February 2008?*

**YS:** I think that in general there is a common sentiment that we Cubans share and it is frustration. There were a group of optimists who expected that in his most recent speech on July 26, Raúl would enact a series of reforms that have great popular demand: the right to open small private enterprises, to enter and leave the country at will, to buy and sell cars and homes. Nevertheless, his most recent speech had a very pessimistic, retrograde tone, like the old formula of Cuban political speeches.

Personally, I count myself among the skeptics. I never allowed myself many illusions and I said so in my blog. However, I was still somewhat surprised by this new counter-reform rhetoric. The speech Raúl gave a year ago on July 26, 2007, seemed more reformist. It gave the impression that we should expect a series of changes to Cuba's economic and social structure. However, what he said last Saturday was like a bucket of cold water over our projections. It was a confirmation that from within the center of power, they are unable to enact reforms. They are trapped in a dilemma: they have to make changes because the social pressure is high, but they can't change too much because if they do the wave of changes will engulf them.

**TH:** *My final question has to do with the relationship between Cuba and the United States, and especially with the upcoming presidential election. What is your evaluation of the United States' Cuba policy, and your reading of the upcoming election between Obama and McCain.*

**YS:** I believe that this conflict between the governments of Cuba and the United States is stuck on automatic pilot. No one wants to sit down and dialogue. That leaves us trapped in the middle, the Cubans on one side and the North Americans on the other. Also, the Cuban-Americans have had their right to travel to Cuba severely limited. It seems that no one wants to hear what the Cuban people really think about the need to put an end to this almost century-long standoff.

Personally, I have a lot of hope that the North American political discourse can change, thereby causing the Cuban discourse to change also. The U.S. election this November has generated more expectation in Cuba than our own elections did last February. From a generational perspective, I am happy to share with Obama the word "change." Also, the fact that he is someone who is only 40-something years old is a signal for Cuban youth. That is to say, "Look, in the United States it is possible that a man

from your generation could come to power, something that could never happen in Cuba under the current government.”

I think that Obama is a man who enjoys a lot of sympathy in Cuba among intellectuals, the Afro-Cuban community, and the youth. He does not fit in the traditional role of the “enemy.” That is important because in Cuba the political discourse is sustained by the supposed existence of a “wolf,” that wolf with sharpened teeth who will come eat us all one day. And if one fine day, the wolf is no longer so aggressive and no longer plays the role of the enemy, I think that Little Red Riding Hood won’t be so convincing. You understand?

The thing is that no one is going to have as much influence on the changes in Cuba as we Cubans ourselves. What happens in the United States could help us or hurt us, but we Cubans are the ones who must decide for how much longer are we going to allow a group of people to govern us who don’t represent us.

**Note:** *Given Sánchez's comments about the Democratic candidate Barack Obama, I contacted her again by phone on Thursday, November 6, 2008, in order to get her reaction to Obama's victory.*

**TH:** *What was the reaction in Cuba, both among the people and from the government, to Obama's victory on November 4?*

**YS:** What is really very interesting is the great difference between the popular reaction and expectations – that is, the manner in which the Cuban population reacted to and in a sense anxiously awaited the election results in the U.S., and, on the other hand, the way the news was covered by the official Cuban media.

Among Cubans, there was great anticipation, great excitement, a lot of popular movement and questions about who would be elected the next president of the United States. Ironically, there was perhaps more anticipation and excitement than there was surrounding our own election of a new president of Cuba on February 24, 2008. Why is that? Well, because in the U.S. election the element of surprise was in the air until the final moment. In Cuba's presidential election, however, everyone knew who would be elected.

The Cuban government tried to place the results of the U.S. elections in among the other headlines and news of the day. Nevertheless, people on the street couldn't talk about anything else but that. There was a kind of Obama-mania running across the entire island during the final weeks leading up to the election. In the street, people asked each other about it and were even making plans for the coming Obama era.

Now, I believe that such anticipation and excitement is very important given the fact that the pace of reforms in Cuba has slowed definitively, or at least it seems to have halted for now. As a result, many Cubans have the hope that Barack Obama can be the external push so that we can build momentum for reform once again. People are left waiting for something to change outside the island because they feel that nothing will change from within.

On the part of the official media, the day of the election coverage on the national news of what was happening in the U.S. only appeared in the fourth part of the international news. The following day, when it was clear that Obama had won, *Granma*

gave the news only minimal coverage in a small section at the bottom of the front page. Essentially, they wanted to deemphasize the importance of his victory.

Nevertheless, among the population the news was of maximum importance. Everyone was searching for any scrap of information they could find. On Tuesday, that is, from late Tuesday night through the early morning hours on Wednesday, people were already getting the news through friends abroad or from those who had clandestine satellite access that Obama would be the new president. Thus, though the official media downplayed its importance, the news of Obama's victory was both hoped for and sought after among the people.

**TH:** *In revolutionary Cuba much has been said about the United States being a racist country. How does the election of an African-American alter this perception?*

**YS:** I think that the arrival of Obama to power is an especially strong signal for the Afro-Cuban community. For many years, we have heard that racism is very strong in the United States. And suddenly we are faced with this new reality that negates or at least alters the perception that we had. I think that it is another one of those blows to the idea of "the enemy," to the idea of the big bad wolf who symbolizes everything evil: imperialism, racism, a place where the poor are nobodies... And I think it is another blow to the argument that Cuba's official propaganda has always tried to sell us, that up there in the north are concentrated all the worst vices and evils.

**TH:** *Before the election, did Cubans really believe that Obama could win?*

**YS:** I think that the majority of the population did in fact believe that Obama would be the next president of the United States. However, I do think that this was largely a case of wishful thinking. It's funny, people here saw it as a given that their dreams and illusions for the future would come true through ballot boxes in the territory of our "enemy."

**TH:** *How has the Cuban government reacted so far to the election of someone so different from Bush to the presidency of the United States?*

**YS:** The government has wasted no time in beginning to construct the first arguments against Obama. They have begun to say, for example, that the same evil imperialist system remains in place and that Obama's election was due less to his own talents and capacities and more to a vote of punishment against Bush and the Republican party.

**TH:** *Does Obama's victory give Cubans hope that U.S. policy toward Cuba will change?*

**YS:** Obama's victory changes the formula that has existed up to now. The formula that the North American government and the Cuban government have always used has been one of confrontation. Obama's victory opens up the possibility that perhaps we can detain this confrontation and begin to dialogue and exchange ideas.

That being said, I think that Cubans tend to overestimate the importance of Cuba in Obama's agenda. People in Cuba seem to think that on his first day in office, Obama will declare a new policy toward Cuba. The problem is that Obama has many other important crises and priorities that will take up his time taking precedence over the Cuba issue.

**TH:** *Given that so many Cubans reside in Florida, what do you make of the fact that Obama won the state, won the majority of the state's Hispanic electorate (57% to 42%), and did so without taking a hardline against Cuba? Also, though he lost the Cuban vote*

*in Florida, what do you make of the fact that he managed to double Kerry's 17% in 2004 to 35% this year?*

**YS:** I see this as clear evidence that the political environment has changed. New generations are bringing a new agenda to the table. This agenda is no longer a belligerent one, nor is it one of aggressive international projection of American power. Instead, there is a newfound focus on domestic issues and a concomitant conciliatory attitude with other countries in the region.

In the Cuban case, the generations with the most extreme and rancorous positions are getting old and the younger generations feel that they should vote for a president, not solely based on his or her position toward Cuba, but instead based on how that president will resolve the U.S.'s many domestic crises. This has clearly been an element in this election. People have not only voted against the Bush administration but also in hope of change. Not just change in the U.S. either, but hope for changes all across the planet.