1

Minerva

A Magazine for Women (and Men) of Color

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Despite the rough treatment of yesterday and the stupid opinions of today unnerving our spirits, we prepare our defenses for the constant battle. We will do so until we are accepted for who we are and not because some pirate artist has agreed or decided that it meets his cowardly ends. You invite us to struggle? Well, we'll fight. . . . Let us reflect, then, without distinction as to race on the judgment that it has been women who have raised the majority of men and even some slovenly servants, as well as raising us women.
Africa Céspedes, 1889

Africa Céspedes was an irregular contributor to the early (1880s) editions of *Minerva: Revista Quincenal Dedicada a la Mujer de Color* (Minerva: The Biweekly Magazine for the Woman of Color), the first known magazine in Cuba dedicated to black women. While few of the articles to be discussed in this chapter were as powerful as Céspedes's irregular contributions, her opinions reflect a bold current among black Cuban women, many of whom had just attained freedom through the Spanish abolition proclamations of the 1880s. Women fought for formal education and against the formidable double barriers of sexism and racism. An early twentieth-century sociologist, Blanche Zacharie de Baralt, reflected the racial thinking common among elites in the Western world (e.g., the positivist biological "science" of the French racist Count Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau). Baralt described Cuba in a book, published in England in 1913, entitled *Sociología en impresiones de la República de Cuba en el siglo XX*. Exemplifying the prejudices of that time, she accused blacks of retarding the "social development" of Cuba. She wrote that, "race mixture darkened the white element, contaminating it and staining it with the stigma of inferiority. The curse of slavery weighing on the population con-

tributed to retarding its social evolution."[1] What she forgot to mention was that race mixture was largely the result of the desire for and power over black women's sexuality by male slave owners. The exoticization of black women then created terribly negative images that were used to devalue black "womanhood." A black woman was seen as a source of labor, an object of pleasure, or a commodity; she had little, if any, legal protection.

Newly freed black women in Cuba, then, struggled for respect for themselves and their race as a whole. *Minerva* magazine was created to advance such goals in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, during the twilight years of the Spanish colonial period in Cuba. Founded in 1888, it functioned not only as a voice of liberation for black women in Cuba but also as a pivotal vehicle through which Cuban women on the island could be linked to black Cuban women in the United States and in the Caribbean. Even though it only existed for a few years during its first run, it did reappear in the second decade of the twentieth century under the same name with the subtitle of "Illustrated Universal Magazine." Through their writings, black Cuban women called upon all of their sisters of color to cooperate in the effort "without fear of criticism and sarcasm from others."[2]

The Early Period

During the late nineteenth century, publications directed at women and at blacks already existed. In fact, there was a growth both in Afro-Cuban publications throughout the island and black women's writings in the United States. However, none focused specifically on black Cuban women. Under the editorship of Miguel Gualba, the first known edition of *Minerva* was published on October 15, 1888.[3] The guiding principle stated in the first issue was "that of offering a vehicle where our sisters who have studied literature can evolve a definite literary vocation [and] bring their efforts into the public eye and thus encourage our women to pursue further studies."[4] The fact that a man was the magazine's editor posed few problems at the time, given that such was expected. Literate Cuban women were, like their black North American sisters, "prepared to defend and celebrate black womanhood without disrupting the delicate balance of black male-female relations or challenging male authority."[5] They argued for the education of black women and for a defense of the virtue of black womanhood as important struggles for the race as whole, understanding quite clearly that "gender identity [in the Americas was] inextricably linked to and even determined by racial identity."[6] They therefore en-

gaged in a discourse about gender that used what Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has termed the "metalanguage of race."[7] In so doing, they "invited and received enthusiastic support of influential men"[8] and were able to reach a wider audience of both women and men. Indication of this is seen in the warm reception they received from the best-known black paper in Cuba at the time, *La Fraternidad,* whose editors welcomed the publication of *Minerva* on its first edition with the following comment:

> We have just received our first visit from *Minerva,* a biweekly magazine dated the fifteenth of this month and dedicated to women of color. The interesting magazine consists of eight pages, elegantly printed, with a cover in color in the form of a folder, where one finds the list of contributors who will enlighten the magazine with interesting literary, as well as musical pieces. Representative of the high quality contained in the magazine, there is a lovely composition from the inspired pen of señor Anselmo Font, entitled "Past and Present." To get a better idea of its contents, consider the following interesting table of contents: "Our Future"; "To the Press"; "Two Words," by Cecilia. Poetry Section: "Past and Present" by Anselmo Font; "Song" by Lucrecia González; "In a Fan" by Onatina; "*Minerva* Miscellaneous"; "Biweekly Notes" [by] E. T. Elvira.[9]

From the beginning *Minerva,* like many Cuban magazines of the time, saw itself as linking the island with Cubans living abroad. Many black women had fled the island as political exiles or economic or war refugees during the Ten Years War (1868–73). They settled in Tampa, New York, Key West, Jamaica, and other territories of the Americas. Most planned to return to Cuba after Spain had been defeated, and they maintained strong contacts with their homeland through the anticolonial struggle. When the independence did not come about in 1878, many stayed abroad but continued to work in revolutionary clubs that raised money and support for the final war of independence (1895–98). There was, in fact, an understood, actively articulated, and strongly nationalistic Cuban diaspora in the latter nineteenth century. Black Cuban women who lived in cities such as Tampa, Key West, New York, and New Orleans were part of that. *Minerva* magazine, then, also explicitly saw itself as linking black Cuban women on the island with those abroad and was circulated in many other areas. For example, the magazine in 1888 listed the persons who were acting as its

agents abroad. There was Joaquín Granados in Key West, Primitivo Plumas in Tampa, Juan Bonillas in New York, and Isolina Regino in Kingston.

It is evident that Cuban émigrés abroad were primary financial supporters of the magazine in the early period. Inside the front cover there was always a listing by place, name, and country of origin of those women who supported the magazine. Interestingly, though, the lists always included women with anglicized names who were said to be black North Americans. For instance, Liboria Urrutia and Jennie Walters were said to be some of the magazine's most enthusiastic supporters and promoters in Key West; they worked together to gain a readership for *Minerva* there. Black Cuban women living abroad obviously made contacts and developed friendships with their black sisters in cities where the magazine circulated. The magazine, then, served to promote a little-known relationship between black Cuban and North American women that transcended language, nationality, and culture. One wonders if the flurry of black women's publications in the United States at exactly the same time had any influence on *Minerva* or vice versa.[10] For *Minerva*'s editors seemed determined to echo all black women's concerns and to address women in general who identified with their struggles and who suffered similar kinds of affronts arising from the inferior status to which they were assigned. In addition, the magazine did provide a bridge between Cuban women on the island and some North American black women. Black women in various places supported the magazine not only by increasing its circulation but by sending it stories as well.

Originally, the editors had planned to illustrate the magazine's cover with portraits of the contributors, but due to financial difficulties only one known contributor, Ursula Coimbra de Valverde ("Cecilia"), ever appeared on a cover. The covers were painted gratis by a portrait artist named Torriente, who wanted, he explained, "to help the colored race." The editors also published the pen names of permanent contributors, which included Cecilia, Onatina, Lucrecia González, Cristina Ayala, América Font, Lino or Waal de Crees, Oscar de Ruzy, Natividad González, N. Lanita, and, as music editor, Raimundo Valenzuela. The publication was divided into several sections. In the first part appeared pieces submitted by contributors, female and male, from Cuba and elsewhere. The second section was devoted to poetry and the third to a biweekly news summary that focused primarily on events in Cuba and the United States. Some of the poems in the first editions were "Spring Morning" by Lucrecia González Consuegra, "Thought" by Cristina Ayala, "You and Me" by Rosa G. Nad, "To Onatina" by María Cleofa, and "To Cuba" by

América Céspedes. Some poems were sent from abroad, such as "The Ugly Woman,' written by a woman in New York, and "The Dance" by Rafael Serra, the famous Cuban journalist living in Kingston.[11] Another important piece was "Winter Afternoons" by Joaquín Granados. *Minerva* also reprinted lectures that were important to women, such as that given by Martín Morúa Delgado, Cuban nationalist and journalist, to El Progreso Society of Key West entitled "Women and Their Rights." In it Morúa Delgado exhorted women to struggle to occupy their rightful place in society as well as to cooperate with men in the achievement of that task.

The writers, whether in Cuba or living abroad, consistently tried to inculcate in their readers a desire for self-improvement, learning, and for serving the black community as models of "virtue and abnegation." In fact, virtue, freedom, and education were interrelated in most of the aspirations expressed by *Minerva*'s contributors. América Font wrote that

> one of the gifts that every woman should treasure is her virtue, but this may be to some extent a kind of weakness if virtue is not accompanied and protected by the gifts of intellectual abilities and refinement. . . . Virtue and training are the factors which will produce the sum total of goods for women and I think the one is deficient without the other. . . . Women should aspire . . . to leave behind the slavery of ignorance. To be free, according to this thinking, women should be educated, since where there is no enlightenment there is no freedom.[12]

In a poem entitled "Ignorance" another writer, Natividad González, indicates that to fight ignorance, "You need to search with energy and tenacity, the best way to change yourself, and casting your gaze to the past, try in the present to raise yourself up."[13] In a letter sent to *Minerva* by María Storini, the author points to the importance of giving women an education. Storini stated that although she was born a slave, she was lucky enough to have owners who resided in the major capitals of the Western world. Her experiences showed her how inadequate education for Cuban women, especially black Cuban women, really was. She wrote: "It is well known how neglected it is, if indeed the woman of our race has ever received the attention she deserves . . . for many people educating females is a question of ornamentation, and thus not entirely essential."[14] She asserted that such neglect did not occur in other countries, such as the United States, where much attention was paid to women's education. Although this was not altogether true for poor or black women, clearly

more women in the United States had access to education than was the case in Cuba. Storini asked as well that an association be founded for the instruction of black women in Cuba.[15]

Importantly, the magazine published articles on the significance of civil marriage. Like newly free black women throughout the Americas, many Cuban women understood that civil marriage was the only way to legalize common-law marriages. Even though some white feminists of the time opposed it, marriage had always been the primary way for women throughout the world to achieve a legally recognized adult status; for subordinated black slave women it was a natural first step toward achieving their humanity, which was gendered for all at the time. Storini, in her piece, emphasized this link between legal marriage, status, and humanity: "slavery has never produced wives but only concubines, and since bondage is over, degradation should end as well."[16] In an "open letter" addressed to Miss C. B., a woman identified simply as Amira warns women that "although one marries in the church today, Catholic marriages will not be valid without the civil procedure."[17] It was necessary that women be educated about marriage as free women and that they be aware that even if they got married in the church, in order to establish a family, the essential step was a civil marriage ceremony, since it entailed legal rights and some protections for women as well as for the children born to such unions.

Minerva advocated the glorification and preservation of the black family. An article published on December 30, 1888, under the title "Colored Race, Arise," encouraged the reader to consider that, "if the colored race wishes cordially to dignify itself and occupy its proper place in public functions, it should begin by establishing families according to the precepts dictated by morality and demanded by law. Keep in mind that without the family there is no possible psychological order [and] contemplate the fact that family is impossible to achieve without marriage."[18] The magazine also challenged all black men to seek wives among black women. "Honorable" women with the most education should be cherished and prized by black men; but no black Cuban woman, no matter how illiterate, should be rejected in favor a white woman; she too could be taught, and it was up to the man to work with black women to make sure that happened. The article went further to argue that the specific qualities of black women should be exalted, and elevation of the status of black women was all the more necessary given the extent of the degradation to which they and their sons, husbands, and fathers had been subjected for centuries. In a very sophisticated manner, black women appealed to race unity in

their challenge to black men to marry black women: Do not abandon them for white women, they argued, or further devalue them by having sex with them outside of marriage.

Yet education, virtue, marriage, and family were not all that the writers of *Minerva* stressed. They linked these concerns with the overall struggle for social, racial, and gender equality and clearly sought to educate as they polemicized. Laura Clarence was one such author. In a piece printed in late 1888, she referred to an article in a Havana magazine called *El Eco de Galicia* concerning Emilia Pardo Bazán, a Galician writer initially denied entrance into the Royal Spanish Academy of Letters because she was a woman. Clarence, in an elegant and original fashion, examined the historical legacy of discrimination in education for blacks and women. She presented the case of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, a premier abolitionist and novelist whose mid-nineteenth-century works had been banned in Cuba, although they were well known in Spain. Gómez de Avellaneda had suffered the same fate many years before. Clarence lamented how little times had changed in that respect. She also explained that the denial of education for blacks had led to a fear of reading and writing that some blacks still possessed. Fear initially had been instilled during the long era of the Blood Code,[19] in effect until 1878, which did not allow free blacks education beyond the primary level. If colonial officials discovered that you could write, they assumed that you had earned an education; and if it could be shown that you had gotten it in Cuba, you could be arrested. Because of the Blood Code, free blacks would have to travel to Europe for an education, a luxury that few could afford. Denial of education was all the more prevalent for black women, many of whom were the daughters of artisans or had themselves been slaves. Clarence ended her very extensive piece by encouraging those who might not know how to read and write not to be afraid; rather, they should seek avenues to educate themselves. She also encouraged women who hesitated to write for the magazine for fear of criticism and persecution to do so, for only through exercising their new rights could they hope to make of new law new realities.

The call went out often in *Minerva* for women to make their voices heard by submitting a contribution. One woman who responded was a worker by the name of Margarita Gutiérrez, who wrote that she had never written an essay before. Her article was titled "Woman: Defense of Her Rights and Enlightenment," and it appeared in the issue of December 15, 1888. According to the magazine's directors, *Minerva* was important for encouraging writers like Gutiérrez, who were the precursors of a new age for black people in Cuba.

Africa Céspedes was probably the most prolific writer to take a bold and confrontational style in calling for black women to struggle against sexism and racism by any means necessary. Although we know little about her, the paragraph that introduced this chapter was published in the February 28, 1889, edition of the magazine, which included her article "Reflections." In it she denounces the situation of black women, who, while no longer slaves, were still viewed as such by their former masters. She indicates that many women are ready to defend themselves until their worth is finally recognized. She skillfully challenges both sexism and racism by arguing that all women, and not just black women, play a crucial role in raising children and thus should be more highly recognized and valued by society in general; but black women, not white women or black men, are "considered the last layers according to [the] disgraceful judgment."[20] They occupied the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder of Cuban society and therefore were the least valued and respected. One wonders why there are not more published articles that took the bold tone found in Céspedes's pieces. Were there other women who took such a position but whose essays were not published, or did most women simply use a style that was less confrontational?

It is clear from the number of writers identified with initials, single-word names, and pseudonyms that there was great concern about sanctions, penalties, and even arrest among women who used journalism to challenge the status quo. In addition, given that many of *Minerva*'s contributors were nationalist revolutionaries on the island or political exiles active in revolutionary clubs abroad, it was important both for them and for the magazine that they remain anonymous at least in the public realm to which Spanish authorities had access. For instance, a regular section of biweekly news and notes was written by someone using the pseudonym of E. T. Elvira. "Elvira" never wanted to reveal her or his true identity, even though the news that he or she wrote about tended to be more social than political. It was largely devoted to reports of black and mulatto social groups in Cuba and abroad, and included weddings, births, deaths, and social events. Yet because even this section encouraged race solidarity and revealed the importance of Cubans abroad in supporting the nationalist struggle, it could easily have been viewed as political and problematic. Similarly, there was Emilio Plana, who while writing for *El Sport* magazine in Tampa was also a regular translator for *Minerva* magazine under the name of Jonatás.

Given the nationalist background of many of the supporters, it makes sense that many of the writers would attempt to write in a nonthreatening

tone. Some in fact went to painstaking effort to call for a reconciliation with whites, given that slavery had ended, as well as to challenge whites morally to rise above their own racism. For instance, an article by Natividad González emphasized the need to forgive those who had done so much harm to the poor and disinherited race. After all, blacks did not seek vengeance, according to González, but rather forgiveness as the way to attain unity and equality. Cristina Ayala in a piece entitled "I Agree" wrote that "a heart where noble aspirations reside cannot be deaf to the [black] voice[s] that [struggle for] the road to duty and virtue."[21]

On May 30, 1889, after nearly eight months of publication, *Minerva*'s administrator, Enrique Cos,[22] announced the magazine might have to be suspended for financial reasons. He also indicated that the publication had always existed in an hostile climate and that Spanish authorities during its entire tenure had tried to shut it down. They did in fact shut down *La Fraternidad* and put its founder, Juan Gualberto Gómez, in jail. The last issue of the early period of *Minerva* appeared on July 19, 1889.

Minerva in the Republic

Following the Cuban-Spanish-American War (1895–1900) and a decade of regrouping, the black community again began to feel the need to express itself through journalism. Even though a kind of pseudo-independence had come, imperialism and racism continued. For a decade, officials were unresponsive to black veterans, who had made up the bulk of the nationalist army but received few of the civil-service or public-sector jobs, and others who pressed for black rights. Government indifference to continued discrimination provoked revolts and other serious disturbances; these in turn led to brutal suppression of all blacks by the authorities.[23]

Minerva reappeared on September 15, 1910, but under a different name and with a broader mission. From that point it would be called the *Minerva Illustrated Universal Magazine: Sciences, Art, Literature and Sport: The Expression of the Colored Race.* The new magazine announced that although it would have a section called "Feminist Pages" (and in fact it continued to have more women writers than any other black magazine at the time), it would emphasize issues of importance to the black race as a whole. Its content would focus exclusively on social, literary, artistic, and scientific matters. Its purpose was to "inculcate a love of beauty, utility and truth" without neglecting the struggle for social equality. It was important, again, not to be seen as too political.

But it was hard not to be political. Black Cubans had fought for years for a unified Cuban nation and now found themselves, although in possession of greater legal and national rights, economically, socially, and culturally marginalized—this time by some of the same Cuban leaders with whom they had worked to achieve independence. Moreover, if they raised their voices about racism, they themselves were accused of being racists. Thus from the beginning, this *Minerva* had few illusions that a conciliatory tone was likely to achieve much. In fact, its editors were continually forced to defend *Minerva*'s right to exist. They were more open than they had been in the past about their determination to fight for social equality, and they expressed their outrage at the indignity of racism in forceful language. For example, in an strong editorial, the board of the magazine wrote:

> *Minerva*, the most authoritative expression of the colored race at this time, which accepts and seeks to bring black efforts to light by publishing [in the] literary, scientific, and social fields, finds itself incapable of stilling its indignation. Such rebellious indignation boils in the soul over the ominous act committed against the person of Julia Hernández Gutiérrez, who was rejected by the superintendency of the school of nursing at Reina Mercedes Hospital because she was black.

In another article entitled "Slanderous Accusations," the magazine refuted those in the press who published unfounded stories and offensive charges against members of the colored race who simply spoke out about the suffering of black people. The editors specifically defended Juan Gualberto Gómez, who had been under consistent attack in the press and in certain politicians' circles since 1902. Because he refused to accept second-class citizenship for blacks in the republic, just as he had declined to do during colonialism, he was accused of fomenting divisions between blacks and whites. According to *Minerva*, "to [attack Gómez] is to intentionally ignore the patriotic value of the prodigious body of work carried out by that incomparable man who dedicated the better part of his life to achieve the greatest fellowship between all the components of the Cuban population."[24]

The bolder approach of this *Minerva* is seen in its change of focus from education and racial uplift to promoting the contributions of blacks to human culture (so that "blacks are taken into account")[25] and instilling race pride in blacks themselves. For many writers, cases such as that of the nursing school applicant proved that even members of the race who had reached a high edu-

cational level were still forbidden from entering certain institutions. It was no longer "enough that a race, like an individual, [should] attain a great mental uplifting and [be] inclined toward mutual progress. Existing [black achievements in the social, economic, and cultural arenas] must be known about. . . . It is up to newspapers and magazines to assume such an obligation, in the context of a society only somewhat organized. *Minerva*, the exponent and voice for what culture means to us, has been carrying out precisely that mission."[26] Another issue explained that *Minerva* "features the history of our culture and its progress as well as providing a deft rhetorical device directed toward those who belittle our cultural beginnings."[27]

Toward this end the magazine had pieces on famous blacks in history, such as one on Alexander Pushkin, Russia's poet laureate, who was of African descent.[28] It also featured stories on black societies, black institutions, and successful individuals in contemporary Cuba whom blacks could be proud of. News such as the following appeared: "In Cienfuegos there has been much progress in a short time. We already have the following teachers [teaching in that region]: Eduviges Pérez de Rosa, Ursula Coimbra de Valverde, Dionisia de Wolf, Filomena Berravarza and others."[29] Another article mentioned the Society of Scientific and Literary Studies of Havana, which had among its members black writers, journalists, and teachers such as Regino Boti, José Manuel Pomeda, Rita Flores de Campo Marquetti, Inocencia Silveira, Graciela Serra, Cristina Ayala, and Digna de Lisle, and speakers and literary experts such as Camaño de Cárdenas. One writer followed up this story with a defense of *Minerva* by noting, "One could only characterize as highly laudable the initiative taken by the brilliant magazine from Havana, *Minerva*, which is dedicating special issues to the various societies of our ethnic ambiance."[30]

The magazine also expanded its call for support for black initiatives. Its editors made note of public establishments owned by black men, and exhorted the black community "to protect those places and show solidarity so their owners can get ahead." ("Protection" was a euphemism for financial support by community members.) The following announcement is a good example: "The telegraph [offices have] owners from our race. Your protection is requested for this establishment. The solidarity of mutual interests requires it."[31]

Interestingly, *Minerva* continued to serve as a link between Cubans on the island and Cubans resident in North America. The new discourse, however, employed a more sophisticated analysis, often of contrast and comparison, to highlight the specific ways that racism worked in both places. For instance,

the publication frequently explained that the discrimination experienced by U.S. blacks was not all that different from discrimination in Cuba during the same period. Yet while the United States expressed its racism in violent terms, Cuba's expression was sly and underhanded. In the United States, blacks were isolated, insulted, and lynched, while in Cuba blacks were shortchanged on their economic and social rights. Thus, negrophobia existed in both places.

Another important article was written by Laura Clarence. In it, to make her points, Clarence reprinted parts of an essay titled "The White Smile" by the famous author Emilia Pardo Bazán. Pardo Bazán was a subject of great interest due to her hotly debated application for membership in the Spanish Royal Academy of Letters, which historically had accepted few women. Although white, she was also known for taking stands against both racism and sexism. Clarence focused on a comment Pardo Bazán had made about Dick Saunders, a world boxing prizefighter; Saunders had publicly stated that he did not believe that a white fighter should accept a boxing challenge from a black athlete. After talking about the famous black American fighter Jack Johnson, who went on to beat Sanders in a match, Pardo Bazán, in tongue-in-cheek fashion, lambasted Saunders and U.S. racism. Clarence quotes her:

> It could not be tolerated in that free North American republic where blacks are and will always be regarded as an inferior race to whom no alternative can ever be conceded. Whatever the black does, if he obtains a doctorate, if he writes a book, if he makes a million dollars, if in concert he interprets Beethoven like Brindis de Salas[32]. . . contact with him will still be avoidable. A white person should get off the street car or get up from the table at the bar when a black fellow threatens proximity of the emanations of his skin which, as everyone [white] knows, looks like that of the cockroach.[33]

Because Johnson went on to beat Sanders, Clarence goes on to say that this time "the cockroach" had taught racists a much-needed lesson.

Minerva also featured less volatile items about blacks in the United States. A regular column called "Echoes from Tampa" often carried news of the black organization known as the Martí-Macec Union. It reported on the brave and "multiple efforts made by a class of people both noble and humble" to maintain a vibrant social and cultural scene.[34] There was also news on the sports page and in "Echoes From Tampa" about black sporting events in the United

States, especially in baseball and boxing. When black baseball teams would visit Cuba, the sports page would advertise their arrival. One headline proclaimed the arrival of "Visiting Teams, among them [New York's] Lincoln Giants." It added that the U.S. teams were "composed exclusively of black players." It was hoped that Cuba's black community would come out and support these all-black teams from the United States. The magazine also covered the activities of American blacks visiting the island. Those who were hosted by one of the island's own black societies would get the most press. One example was this item, which appeared in a September 1911 issue of *Minerva:* "The coachmen's center celebrated a soiree in honor of American tourists and prominent personalities of the colored race in the United States, Mr. John E. Ford, Dr. James E. Shepart, John Merrick, C. C. Spaulding and Acron M. Moore. The evening was a resounding success among leading members of Havana society."[35]

In 1912 the magazine again came to an end, after two years of publication. Although no official reason was given for the suspension, one can assume the primary reason was the black revolt that began in Oriente province in May of that year and spread throughout the island during the summer. There was a general crackdown on all blacks at that time in response to what became known as the "Race War." Black societies and organizations were especially vulnerable. New magazines, however, did resurface within the next few years.

Conclusion

Minerva magazine, during both its first and second periods, served to give voice to black Cuban women and the black community as a whole. Even though the magazine did not focus primarily on women during its second period, it continued to publish more women writers and featured more women's issues than any of the other black magazines of the time. Among the regular contributors in the second period were Laura Clarence, Cristina Ayala, Ursula Coimbra de Valverde, Gloria Alonso, Angelina Edreira, Ana María Marcos, Nieves Prieto, María J. Michelena, Dr. María Latapier, and Anabella and Vitalina Morúa Delgado. Interestingly, some of the women wrote during both periods. This illustrates, I think, that the changes in the magazine were not an expression of differing perspectives brought by different writers but of a changed consciousness on the part of black Cubans. The era of biological racism that had descended in much of

the West required all blacks to be more race conscious. Whether this was good for the struggle against sexism within the black community is yet another question. *Minerva* did in this second period serve as a bridge between those old nationalists and an emerging generation of intellectuals and activists. Juan Gualberto Gómez was the magazine's honorary director, and he, along with contemporaries such as General Campos Marquetti, continued to write for the magazine alongside unestablished new writers, such as Regino Boti and a very young Nicolás Guillén.

NOTES

Acknowledgment: This essay was translated by Francine Cronshaw.

1. Blanche Zacharie de Baralt, *Sociología en impresiones de la República de Cuba en el siglo XX* (England, 1913), 156–65.

2. "Prosigamos," *Minerva: Revista Quincenal Dedicada a la Mujer de Color* [Havana] 1, no. 6 (Dec. 15, 1888): 1 (hereafter *Minerva*).

3. Miguel Gualba was the director of *Minerva* magazine, manager of *La Fraternidad* newspaper, and secretary in its early period of the Directorio Central de las Sociedades de la Raza de Color. The central directorate was created in Cuba at the initiative of Juan Gualberto Gómez in 1887, to unite all the black and mulatto societies in Cuba in order to prepare them for the war that was quickly approaching. He maintained that the struggle was against Spain, not against whites.

4. *Minerva* 1, no. 1 (October 15, 1888): 5.

5. Joanne Braxton, introduction to Mrs. N. F. Mossell, *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, Schomburg Library of Nineteenth Century Black Women Writers Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), xxviii.

6. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," in "*We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible*": *A Reader in Black Women's History*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, 1995), 4.

7. Higginbotham explains the metalanguage of race: "we must expose the role of race as a metalanguage by calling attention to its powerful, all-encompassing effect on the construction and representation of other social and power relations, namely, gender, class, and sexuality, . . . [and] we must recognize race as providing sites of dialogic exchange and contestation, since race has constituted a discursive tool for both oppression and liberation" (ibid., 4).

8. Braxton, in Mossell, *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, xxxviii.

9. "Sumario," *Minerva* 1, no. 4 (Nov. 30, 1888): front cover.

10. Henry Louis Gates, who together with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture has spearheaded a project aimed at reprinting little-known texts by black women in the nineteenth century, has called the period between 1890 and 1910 "the Black

Woman's era" in the African-American literary tradition. See his foreword in Mossell, *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, xvi.

11. Rafael Serra was a Cuban journalist and patriot who collaborated with José Martí during the latter's years of exile. A significant poet, Serra served in the Chamber of Representatives during the "pseudo-republic" period. He died in 1909.

12. América Font, "Mis opiniones," *Minerva* 1, no. 4 (Nov. 30, 1888): 1.

13. "La ignorancia," *Minerva* 1, no. 5 (Dec. 15, 1888): 4.

14. María Storini, "Una carta," *Minerva* 1, no. 4 (Nov. 30, 1888): 3.

15. Storini, in her letter to the editor (ibid.), indicated that an association should be created for instructing women, in particular black women. It would be similar to the program established in Madrid in 1871–72, on the initiative of Fernando Castro, the rector of Madrid's Central University. The institution had as its goal the promotion of the education and instruction of women in all spheres of social life.

16. Ibid.

17. Amira, "Carta abierta a la srta. C. B.," *Minerva* 1, no. 4 (Nov. 30, 1888): 1.

18. "Raza negra, elevate," *Minerva* 1, no. 4 (Nov. 30, 1888): 2.

19. According to the Blood Code, in effect in Cuba during the colonial period and lasting until after the Ten Years' War, blacks were not allowed to pursue higher education, nor was anyone who could not prove that they were descended from Catholic Christians.

20. Africa Céspedes, "Reflexiones," 4.

21. Cristina Ayala, "Me adhiero," *Minerva* 2, no. 2 (Jan. 26, 1889): 2.

22. Enrique Cos, journalist and administrator of *Minerva* magazine, had been the first black student enrolled in Institute No. 1 of Havana. He collaborated with Juan Gualberto Gómez in his struggle for black emancipation and Cuban independence.

23. During the first decade of the "pseudo-republic," a group of persons belonging to the black race created a grouping called Independents of Color, which became a political party. It was initially recognized as such by the interventor government of the United States; blacks were otherwise marginalized at that time. Political struggle subsequently turned into armed struggle, and the movement of the Independents of Color was brutally repressed, and its leaders, independence army officer Pedro Ivonet and working class leader Evaristo Estenoz, were murdered.

24. "Imputaciones calumniosas," *Minerva* 4, no. 13 (July 1912): 7.

25. "Existe en Cuba la clasificación oficial de raza?" *Minerva* 1 (January 11, 1911): 16.

26. Ibid.

27. Alberto Castellano, "La labor de Minerva," *Minerva* 3, no. 7 (September 1911): 3.

28. Russia's leading poet, Alexander Pushkin, was born in Moscow on May 26, 1799. He carried African blood in his veins since his paternal grandfather was a black who had been brought to Russia as a child by Peter the Great. In his adopted country Pushkin's father established the Amiballoff family. Pushkin's mother belonged to one of the oldest and noblest families of the Russian empire and herself descended from Rottcha Caballero Alemán, who settled in Moscow in the thirteenth century.

29. E. T. Elvira, "Notas quincenales," *Minerva* 4, no. 12 (May 12, 1912): 16.

30. Alberto Castellano, "La labor de Minerva," 3.

31. Elvira, "Notas quincenales," 16.

32. Claudio Brindis de Salas was a prominent Cuban violinist, known as the "king of the octaves," and a member of the Legion of Honor.

33. Laura Clarence comments on Emilia Pardo Bazán, "La sonrisa blanca" [The white smile], *Minerva* 4, no. 10 (July 12 1912): 16.

34. "Ecos de Tampa," *Minerva* 4, no. 7 (April 7, 1912): 2.

35. *Minerva* 3, no. 7 (September 1911): 3.