# Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 2

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00:00:14 Speaker 1

2nd Thank you Tim.

00:00:21 Speaker 1

Thank you and.

00:00:24 Speaker 3

I promise everybody that I would be on time so.

00:00:28 Speaker 4

All right, 30 minutes, but don't hold me to it because when I start talking about journalism in Cuba.

00:00:36 Speaker 3

Either one of those is enough.

00:00:38 Speaker 4

To get me going but.

00:00:38 Speaker 3

Put them two together and you're in trouble, but look on a cold day like this.

00:00:45 Speaker 3

What could be better than to talk about Cuba?

00:00:49 Speaker 1

Right?

00:00:52 Speaker 3

Cuba, Cuba.

00:00:54 Speaker 3

Most days I can tell you from experience.

00:00:58 Speaker 3

There's a shimmering sunlight that washes over Cuba.

00:01:02 Speaker 3

It's a light so exquisite that artists have told me that there's nothing like it in the whole world.

00:01:09 Speaker 3

Despite the brilliance of that light, however.

00:01:14 Speaker 3

Mystery clings to Cuba.

00:01:20 Speaker 3

That legendary place that can be.

00:01:23 Speaker 3

So hard to get.

00:01:24 Speaker 3

To and we as Americans know that, and even harder to understand.

00:01:31 Speaker 3

After nearly 1/2 a century.

00:01:34 Speaker 3

Good God of reporting on events there and living as part of the extended Cuban.

00:01:40 Speaker 3

Family, as Tim mentioned, my wife Miriam was sent out at the dawn of the.

00:01:46 Speaker 3

Revolution when she.

00:01:47 Speaker 3

Was just a child, came to the United States.

00:01:50 Speaker 4

I'm still trying to.

00:01:51 Speaker 3

Unravel some of that.

00:01:52 Speaker 3

Enduring mystery about Cuba, and for me it's best expressed by a Cuban conundrum that.

00:02:00 Speaker 3

It goes something like this.

00:02:03

OK.

00:02:05 Speaker 3

If things are as good as they say.

00:02:08 Speaker 3

As they're often portrayed down in Cuba with let's see, we could all do it.

00:02:13 Speaker 3

Free education, free, universal medical care.

00:02:19 Speaker 3

Low rent, subsidized food and all the promises of socialist equality.

00:02:25 Speaker 3

A society where everyone is equal as well as shelter from the furys of capital.

00:02:33 Speaker 3

Why, if that's the case, why have so many Cubans risked everything to flee, throwing themselves into the shark infested straits of Florida in rickety rafts, or, more recently, just this year, especially making the treasure treacherous journey through Central America.

00:02:52 Speaker 3

To the southern border of the United States.

00:02:55 Speaker 3

To live in of all places the imperialist empire demonized by the Cuban regime.

00:03:03 Speaker 3

Every day for the last 60 plus years.

00:03:09 Speaker 3

But then the other half of the conundrum asks a question.

00:03:13 Speaker 3

That's similarly puzzling, so.

00:03:17 Speaker 3

Why if things are as bad as they are often portrayed, what with shortages of everything from milk?

00:03:24 Speaker 3

And meat to cigarettes.

00:03:25 Speaker 3

And even sugar in Cuba.

00:03:29 Speaker 3

With blackouts lasting a half a day.

00:03:32 Speaker 3

Day or longer hospitals lacking basic medicines. Classrooms without trained teachers with repression, censorship, coercion and intimidation by the state. Shadowing every Cuban everyday. Why in heaven's name haven't the Cuban Cuban people tossed out their oppressors?

00:03:52 Speaker 3

Has happened in so many other Communist regimes.

00:03:57 Speaker 1

2nd that this rule has persisted.

00:04:02 Speaker 3

In for so long I would say is due in large measure to the way the Castro regime.

00:04:08 Speaker 3

Fidel, his brother and all the rest of them, had brilliantly played its propaganda hand over the decades, soliciting global sympathy as the victim of imperial brutality.

00:04:23 Speaker 3

They have convinced millions outside Cuba all around the world, that life there would indeed be ideal.

00:04:30 Speaker 3

If not for the Yankee embargo.

00:04:34 Speaker 3

Contributing to this persistent misunderstanding about Cuba is the lack of sale and unbiased reporting.

00:04:41

Out there.

00:04:43 Speaker 3

The regime tightly controls for his coverage.

00:04:46 Speaker 3

In fact, as.

00:04:47 Speaker 3

The Knight Center for.

00:04:48 Speaker 3

Journalism says here in this report and you could go to the Committee for the Protection of Journalists and many others.

00:04:54 Speaker 3

It is one of the most repressive and most censored states in the world.

00:05:01 Speaker 3

The the the regime.

00:05:03 Speaker 3

Tightly controls press coverage harass independent journalists have been brave enough to start using the Internet over the last few years to get some reporting done and limits access to foreign correspondent.

00:05:16 Speaker 3

I felt their rage.

00:05:18 Speaker 3

This summer, when for the first time.

00:05:21 Speaker 3

Since publishing the Cubans.

00:05:24 Speaker 3

I tried to go back.

00:05:26 Speaker 3

To see the people who are written about who I wrote about in the book.

00:05:30 Speaker 3

I was detained at the airport in Havana, refused.

00:05:33 Speaker 3

Entry into the country.

00:05:35 Speaker 3

And summarily escorted by uniformed officials back onto the next jet to the United States unable to deliver.

00:05:43 Speaker 3

The medicine.

00:05:44 Speaker 3

And food that I had brought with.

00:05:47 Speaker 3

Me what it says.

00:05:48 Speaker 3

If you don't read Spanish is order then names ready to basically your exit paper get out and don't come back.

00:05:58 Speaker 3

Persona non grata, no explanation, and I've tried to.

00:06:02 Speaker 4

Get an explanation from the embassy.

00:06:04 Speaker 3

There is none, but there probably needs not.

00:06:07 Speaker 3

B1 it's obvious what happened.

00:06:11 Speaker 3

The blue conditions that I reported on in the Cubans made.

00:06:15 Speaker 3

Clear that the reason so many Cubans have.

00:06:17 Speaker 3

Opted to escape.

00:06:19 Speaker 3

And this year alone, more than 150,000 have crossed EU.

00:06:24 Speaker 3

S Southern border this.

00:06:25 Speaker 3

Year more than Marielle and you remember that from 1981?

00:06:32 Speaker 3

1980

00:06:34 Speaker 3

The reason is that no amount of propaganda, no no amount of censorship, can hide the fact that things going back to the conundrum haven't been good there for a very long time.

00:06:49 Speaker 3

One of the most common misperceptions I encounter is that the revolution of.

00:06:53 Speaker 3

1969

00:06:54 Speaker 3

Pulled Cuba out of poverty and misery even as a smaller country as Cuba is at that time had about 6 million people in the 1950s. It is a diverse and complicated place. Was there poverty, especially in rural Cuba.

00:07:08 Speaker 3

Before Castro, the answer unquestionably is yes.

00:07:12 Speaker 3

And this photo.

00:07:14 Speaker 4

And don't attack me.

00:07:15 Speaker 4

But this photo.

00:07:16 Speaker 3

Is used by Cuba's foreign Ministry to make that point. This is from the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Cuba. Their website saying look at what existed there, but the truth, as always, is much more complicated.

00:07:34 Speaker 3

Than that, in many ways, Cuba, at least in its cities in the 1950s, was an advanced economically developed country with a high standard of living. I always encourage people at talks like this.

00:07:48 Speaker 3

But they should consider the 1950 that the 1950s were very different here in the United.

00:07:54 Speaker 3

States as well as they were in Cuba.

00:07:57 Speaker 3

And that the best way to consider things is not.

00:07:59 Speaker 3

To compare today to where Cuba was.

00:08:02 Speaker 4

In 1959

00:08:03 Speaker 4

Of course, there's been some advancement.

00:08:07 Speaker 3

But to consider.

00:08:08 Speaker 3

What Cuba might be today had the revolution not occurred, or at least not taken the direction it took.

00:08:17 Speaker 3

So I ask you to consider this.

00:08:59 Speaker 5

She's pleasant.

00:09:01 Speaker 5

One second.

00:09:05 Speaker 5

They must see it.

00:11:08 Speaker 1

2nd and it goes on and on.

00:11:19 Speaker 3

Of course there's selected scenes.

00:11:22 Speaker 3

But I think the idea that.

00:11:25 Speaker 3

That Cuba was a poor, undeveloped country before is just not a sustainable truth.

00:11:33 Speaker 3

The fact that there was poverty.

00:11:34 Speaker 3

In the countryside, yes, but I can.

00:11:37 Speaker 3

Tell you without.

00:11:38 Speaker 3

Any hesitation I've been there myself and I've seen it and it still exists, just as there's still poverty in the countryside here.

00:11:47 Speaker 4

And in the city so.

00:11:50 Speaker 3

Let's let's just uhm.

00:11:52 Speaker 3

Move ahead and and say I don't know how.

00:11:55 Speaker 3

Many have been to Cuba or Havana, right undoubtedly.

00:11:59 Speaker 3

In in your.

00:12:00 Speaker 3

Trips they took it to Havana Vieja, right?

00:12:02 Speaker 3

And Havana Vieja is like beautiful, but once you go outside of the Havana of tourist.

00:12:09 Speaker 3

The capital of all Cubans, which.

00:12:12 Speaker 3

Is what they call Havana.

00:12:13 Speaker 3

Nearly resembles what you just saw.

00:12:16 Speaker 3

This is more like what you would see once you go two blocks over from the main streets and conditions there and across the island are as bad or worse than they have ever been.

00:12:31 Speaker 3

Cuba is reeling from the pandemic shutdown, which dried up the tourism on which it has become increasingly dependent.

00:12:39 Speaker 3

There is a lack of petroleum to keep the generating stations open or to refine the gasoline and diesel fuel that they need to keep the buses and trucks rolling so people can get to work even.

00:12:50 Speaker 3

Some of these notorious cameos that they had during the special period in the 1990s when I imagined the temperature in Cuba even today, is probably 86 or 88.

00:13:03 Speaker 3

Degrees, those things are packed with people and there's no air conditioning and the windows hardly open and you're stuck in there and you.

00:13:09 Speaker 4

Can't get out.

00:13:11 Speaker 3

Second, the shortages of food and medicine and the long blackouts the general dismay over the future reminds many Cubans who lived through it of the special period that followed.

00:13:24 Speaker 3

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of the billions of dollars in subsidies from the Soviet Union.

00:13:31 Speaker 3

On which the revolution.

00:13:33 Speaker 3

Had been nursed the desperation of the Cuban people. Then in 1994 spilled over with public demonstrations the first public demonstrations against Castro and his government. The protest on the seawall, the Malecon in Havana, now called the Malecon also was.

00:13:53 Speaker 3

Quickly put down, it lasted a few hours.

00:13:56 Speaker 3

One afternoon scenes like this appeared on CNN.

00:14:00 Speaker 3

But not in Cuba within hours.

00:14:04 Speaker 3

The street was quiet.

00:14:06 Speaker 3

Fast forward to last July July 2021 when demonstrations broke.

00:14:11 Speaker 3

Out in Havana.

00:14:12 Speaker 3

And in dozens of cities across Cuba, people set up with the shortages.

00:14:17 Speaker 3

With the repression marched in the streets in all of those cities shouting Libertad and ominously.

00:14:26 Speaker 3

For the regime shouting, we are not afraid.

00:14:32 Speaker 3

The government responded brutally hauling.

00:14:36 Speaker 3

Away protesters, eventually hundreds were convicted of public disorder, some convicted of assault and even sedition, and sentenced to long prison terms, including juveniles.

00:14:48 Speaker 3

16 year old kids, but.

00:14:51 Speaker 3

That hasn't stopped.

00:14:52 Speaker 3

The people not completely last month after hurricane even knocked out power for days in the western portion of the country, people are massed in the streets again.

00:15:05 Speaker 3

Power was out for three days and when it came back it was still out for most of the day.

00:15:10 Speaker 3

Although they had some.

00:15:10 Speaker 3

Electricity each time the Cubans go out in the street they become bolder.

00:15:15 Speaker 3

They become rowdier.

00:15:16 Speaker 3

They become less afraid.

00:15:19 Speaker 3

They tell me we've got nothing else to lose.

00:15:22 Speaker 3

There's nothing more that they can take away from us.

00:15:24 Speaker 3

It's common now to see them hurling stones and bottles at police cars.

00:15:31 Speaker 3

Some of the bottles filled with excrement putting up barricades in the street and being out in the street, and all hours of the day or night, banging pots and shouting their demands without elections or without elections or the right to protest.

00:15:46 Speaker 3

Legally, Cubans have been left with few options other than.

00:15:50 Speaker 3

Civil disobedience.

00:15:53 Speaker 3

The government is intent on preventing the demonstrations from gaining momentum, like those in Iran, like the protesters in Iran are doing now.

00:16:01 Speaker 3

In many ways they act as if they're frightened.

00:16:04 Speaker 3

The government today is run nominally by a 60 something year old guy in the white way over a party hack.

00:16:12 Speaker 3

Named Miguel Diaz.

00:16:13 Speaker 3

Pannill handpicked to succeed Raul Castro.

00:16:17 Speaker 3

The the older guy with the glasses sunglasses as both president and head of the very powerful all powerful Communist Party Raul.

00:16:27 Speaker 6

Is 91.

00:16:29 Speaker 3

Still wearing his uniform other old men around him.

00:16:33 Speaker 3

Ramiro Valdes and Machado Jose Machado Ventura are in their 90s and they.

00:16:39 Speaker 3

Continue to have a say in.

00:16:41 Speaker 3

The way Cuba is run.

00:16:44 Speaker 3

And by all accounts, Cuba is run badly even shidel.

00:16:49 Speaker 3

Before he died said the system was not working.

00:16:55 Speaker 3

Just something as basic basic as currency.

00:16:59 Speaker 3

At that time there were two different.

00:17:01 Speaker 3

Kinds of currencies.

00:17:02 Speaker 3

Until this year, when it were they were unified under the Cuban peso, which started out at the beginning of the year within a social exchange rate of 24 pesos to.

00:17:14 Speaker 3

The dollar.

00:17:20 Speaker 3

It's worth about 200 pesos to the dollar, meaning half a penny.

00:17:28 Speaker 3

With inflation, raging salaries simply cannot keep up.

00:17:33 Speaker 3

Cuba maintains a system of food rationing, limiting the amount of food each family can purchase at heavily subsidized rates in the global meta, but the allotment each family gets each month through the Liberator last.

00:17:46 Speaker 3

For a few days.

00:17:48 Speaker 3

For the rest of.

00:17:48 Speaker 3

The month the food has to be.

00:17:50 Speaker 3

Purchased outside at market prices, placing a.

00:17:53 Speaker 3

Lot of it out of reach.

00:17:55 Speaker 3

And the truth is, no matter how much.

00:17:57 Speaker 3

You have.

00:17:58 Speaker 3

Some things are simply not.

00:17:59 Speaker 3

Available this is common sight shelves are just.

00:18:03 Speaker 3

Empty pharmacies unstocked.

00:18:07 Speaker 3

Urban agriculture has collapsed, basically.

00:18:10 Speaker 3

Before 1959.

00:18:13 Speaker 3

Before 1959, Cuba produced 80% of.

00:18:16 Speaker 3

The food it consumed.

00:18:18 Speaker 3

Today it has to import at least 80%.

00:18:22 Speaker 3

Of the fruit of what it needs.

00:18:23 Speaker 3

To fill it, feed.

00:18:25 Speaker 3

Its 11 million residents, even rice and sugar.

00:18:30 Speaker 3

Two Cuban staples that once were so plentiful on the island now are imported.

00:18:36 Speaker 3

I can imagine what Cubans think when they see.

00:18:38 Speaker 3

A bag of rice A.

00:18:40 Speaker 3

Bag of rice from Vietnam.

00:18:42 Speaker 3

That's been a while.

00:18:43 Speaker 3

But a bag of sugar from France in Cuba.

00:18:50 Speaker 4

My God.

00:18:51 Speaker 1

Second, the health.

00:18:54 Speaker 3

System that you undoubtedly have heard so much about is struggling.

00:18:58 Speaker 3

It's now common for Cubans to have to bring pillows and.

00:19:01 Speaker 3

Sheets with them.

00:19:02 Speaker 3

If they have to spend time in the hospital.

00:19:05 Speaker 3

Along with food, medicine is in short.

00:19:07 Speaker 3

Supply and essential.

00:19:09 Speaker 3

Medical equipment, even something as simple.

00:19:11 Speaker 3

As X-rays and pacemakers simply are not available.

00:19:14 Speaker 3

This is a prescription receipt that I I found down there and what it says down here on the bottom.

00:19:23 Speaker 3

Is health services.

00:19:24 Speaker 3

In Cuba are free.

00:19:26 Speaker 3

But they cost.

00:19:34 Speaker 6

Because there's nothing.

00:19:35 Speaker 3

That's really free, right the?

00:19:37 Speaker 3

Cuban peso now so.

00:19:38 Speaker 3

Undervalued Cubans are all chasing after dollars, but without American tourists, the primary source of dollars is remittances from family.

00:19:47 Speaker 3

And family and friends.

00:19:49 Speaker 3

In the US and Spain and other countries.

00:19:51 Speaker 3

But here's the rub.

00:19:52 Speaker 3

Many of those who fled Cuba.

00:19:54 Speaker 3

Since 1959 have been white result.

00:19:57 Speaker 3

Again, right families who are there receiving more likely to receive money 2 1/2 times more likely to receive money than black families because they simply don't have anyone in the other countries who's capable of sending it back. There aren't that many.

00:20:13 Speaker 3

So how do I get all this information into a book?

00:20:16 Speaker 3

For Americans?

00:20:18 Speaker 3

Many who have grown.

00:20:19 Speaker 3

Up with a completely different view.

00:20:22 Speaker 3

Generally a sympathetic view of the Cuban Revolution.

00:20:26 Speaker 4

I decided to do.

00:20:26 Speaker 3

It from the point of view of ordinary people in an ordinary town, we can spend the whole day talking about what ordinary means and.

00:20:35 Speaker 3

How you do that but.

00:20:38 Speaker 3

Work with me on.

00:20:39 Speaker 3

This I vowed.

00:20:40 Speaker 3

Not to focus the important things I vowed not to focus on should.

00:20:44 Speaker 3

L or J even though Che is not Cuban, he's associated with Cuba.

00:20:50 Speaker 3

But in fact, on the kind of people who have never been heard from here and whose voices have been silenced there in Cuba.

00:20:59 Speaker 3

To make the book readable, I chose to locate it in a single town.

00:21:06 Speaker 3

A single town and the town I chose was near Havana.

00:21:10 Speaker 3

That's so well known, but across the harbor from Havana in a place called one abacoa, where tourists almost never stray, never right.

00:21:21 Speaker 3

In three years I never ran into another American while.

00:21:23 Speaker 3

I was there.

00:21:25 Speaker 3

To get there from Havana and only places where you probably were, it only takes about 6 minutes on this little Sherry called Beeline Cheetah.

00:21:33 Speaker 3

It costs pennies, but in that time.

00:21:37 Speaker 3

You move from one world to another.

00:21:41 Speaker 3

The launch into in 1994 was hijacked so often by Cubans attempting to flee to Florida that for decades until I just until I began working on the book in 2017, the government limited.

00:21:57 Speaker 3

The amount of.

00:21:57 Speaker 3

Fuel that could be pumped into the ranchita.

00:22:01 Speaker 3

To just a few liters, meaning it only had enough to get back and forth, and then had a refill and you could prevent it from ever anybody ever attempting to try to take it to.

00:22:14 Speaker 4

One of them actually made it.

00:22:16 Speaker 3

And in one case, one guy who was on it was intercepted by the.

00:22:21 Speaker 3

Coast Guard U.

00:22:21 Speaker 3

S Coast Guard.

00:22:22 Speaker 3

The Coast Guard asked.

00:22:23 Speaker 3

Anybody who wanted to go to the United States to come on board his mother was ill, so he stayed on board.

00:22:29 Speaker 3

Went back to.

00:22:30 Speaker 3

Cuba the next day it was hijacked again.

00:22:34 Speaker 3

And he ended up being on the if you read the book, he was on the the tugboat when it sank, but because he knew how to swim, he survived.

00:22:45 Speaker 3

Let's see and one of our color.

00:22:47 Speaker 3

I found a working class community that, like many others in Cuba, had seen better days.

00:22:53 Speaker 3

If it's known for anything, it's it's mix of religions from the the white clad Santa DA woman she's she's training to be a St and the.

00:23:05 Speaker 3

The large and now rapidly deteriorating Catholic churches Guanaba Cola is also home to Abakua.

00:23:14 Speaker 3

Palo Monte and other cults that blend Catholic imagery with traditions brought from Africa by enslaved people centuries ago.

00:23:23 Speaker 3

The nearby refineries, once owned by Exxon and Shell and confiscated by the Cuban government in 1960, resulting in the embargo that's still in place today.

00:23:33 Speaker 3

At times, casts a dark and choking cloud over the city city of about 100,000 inhabitants.

00:23:40 Speaker 3

There's still some farm.

00:23:41 Speaker 3

Land on the outskirts and it's not unusual to see a donkey or a horse and cart in the streets, but the colonial heart of the city is a traditional mix of Spanish and Caribbean styles.

00:23:57 Speaker 4

As is interesting in.

00:23:58 Speaker 3

The years since Raul Castro took over and opened up the state controlled economy.

00:24:02 Speaker 3

I mean, he timidly allowed Cubans to open some.

00:24:06 Speaker 3

Businesses, right?

00:24:07 Speaker 3

They had to be businesses.

00:24:08 Speaker 3

That were on this list that they put out what abacoa.

00:24:12 Speaker 3

Was an entrepreneurial hotbed.

00:24:14 Speaker 3

Kind of like Brooklyn, right?

00:24:15 Speaker 3

A factory with where things could get going, but it also showed the limitations of the.

00:24:22 Speaker 3

Experiment Cubans could buy a license to become self-employed entrepreneur.

00:24:28 Speaker 3

It's a big change from the.

00:24:30 Speaker 3

Purely communist system ahead.

00:24:32 Speaker 3

But lacking skills and business or any kind of.

00:24:35 Speaker 3

Basic business training.

00:24:36 Speaker 3

Many opted to become just St vendors.

00:24:39 Speaker 3

Where the only requirements were.

00:24:42 Speaker 3

A cart you needed to have a.

00:24:43 Speaker 3

Cart, but even that.

00:24:45 Speaker 3

Loom large in the country without a wholesale market.

00:24:48 Speaker 3

There's no Home Depot.

00:24:48 Speaker 3

In Cuba, to go to to buy a set of wheels for your cart so enterprising Cubans steal the wheels from.

00:24:56 Speaker 3

The garbage carts.

00:24:59 Speaker 3

And you can see they these things were were almost new in one of our cola.

00:25:04 Speaker 3

I saw them come in because people were complaining about the garbage.

00:25:08 Speaker 3

They brought them in, showed them up.

00:25:11 Speaker 3

One morning I came by and all the wheels were gone.

00:25:15 Speaker 3

In another week the bins were gone too.

00:25:18 Speaker 3

They take them and they chopped them up and they grind them down the plastic and they use it to make shoes and toys.

00:25:28 Speaker 3

The people I met in one of Alcoa and he was really the heart of my story.

00:25:33 Speaker 3

And who are featured in the book may be leading ordinary lives, but they are all in one way or another.

00:25:43 Speaker 3

Possessed of extraordinary stories so.

00:25:46

Let me introduce.

00:25:47 Speaker 3

You to Maria del Carmen, a widow who lives in the same house in one of our core. Purchased by her great grandmother who came from Spain and purchased a house after the 1898 Spanish American Cuban War. She.

00:26:03 Speaker 3

But either Carmen never embraced the communist system that expected her to denounce her Catholic religion.

00:26:10 Speaker 3

She suffered discrimination because of her faith.

00:26:15 Speaker 3

It affected her for.

00:26:16 Speaker 3

Her whole working life.

00:26:18 Speaker 3

But she's managed.

00:26:19 Speaker 3

To balance and.

00:26:20 Speaker 4

This is one of the things I was looking for.

00:26:21 Speaker 3

How do you live in this system that you don't?

00:26:25 Speaker 3

Support she did it, balancing her unhappiness with Dennis.

00:26:30 Speaker 3

Bounding devotion two of all things classical Spanish dance which.

00:26:36

She teaches.

00:26:37 Speaker 3

To younger Cuban girls.

00:26:39 Speaker 3

So I was there for their end of the season performance.

00:26:44 Speaker 3

Two blocks from Maria la Carmen.

00:26:46 Speaker 3

On the other side of less esculapius church I encountered Arturo Montoto, a renowned Cuban painter who started in Pinata, Rio, the area.

00:26:57 Speaker 3

That was just devastated by.

00:26:58 Speaker 3

The hurricane, with nothing from a poor family on a farm.

00:27:03 Speaker 3

And with the help.

00:27:04 Speaker 3

Of the regime was.

00:27:05 Speaker 3

Trained in Moscow.

00:27:07 Speaker 3

At the Superior Institute of Art and has now.

00:27:10 Speaker 3

Uh, built an art studio of all things in one abacoa it was he who told me that he struggled to paint when he was not beneath the Cuban Sun.

00:27:22 Speaker 3

And yet all is not right for Mondo to who hides his resentment against the regime inside.

00:27:30 Speaker 3

His paintings and sculptures.

00:27:34 Speaker 3

While I was there, he opened an exhibit in Havana that he called dark.

00:27:39 Speaker 3

I don't know if you can appreciate how dark that painting is.

00:27:44 Speaker 3

And one of.

00:27:45 Speaker 3

The sculptures that he did was this.

00:27:50 Speaker 3

Three feet across gigantic black egg.

00:27:53 Speaker 3

Which has a special meaning.

00:27:57 Speaker 3

In a country where eggs are always.

00:28:01 Speaker 3

Rationed, imagine a 3 foot.

00:28:05 Speaker 3

Egg when you can only buy three or five per per week, not.

00:28:12 Speaker 3

Far from window to studio.

00:28:14 Speaker 3

I met Lily Hernandez, who has never known any government other than the current one.

00:28:21 Speaker 3

She is a member of the Communist Party. She is president of the local committee for the Defense of the Revolution, which is basically the regime's eyes and ears on every street in every neighborhood.

00:28:37 Speaker 3

And she cried when Shadell died.

00:28:41 Speaker 3

She's a proud communist, she told me.

00:28:44 Speaker 3

But one day she'd like to.

00:28:45 Speaker 3

Go to the.

00:28:46 Speaker 3

US just to see what it is.

00:28:49 Speaker 3

That draws into so many Cubans, her son, Jose Ito.

00:28:55 Speaker 3

Now about 40, took out a license.

00:28:57 Speaker 3

One of those lessons I mentioned as a furniture repair.

00:29:00 Speaker 3

Repairer and he gets some of his raw material by slicing up used truck tires that he scavenges from the highways unlike him.

00:29:09 Speaker 3

Father Jose there is.

00:29:11 Speaker 3

Fed up with the revolution for him, its failures far outweigh its achievements and his fondest.

00:29:19 Speaker 3

Dream he told me.

00:29:20 Speaker 3

Is that his two young daughters lived anywhere?

00:29:24 Speaker 3

But Cuba.

00:29:27 Speaker 3

At the Methodist Church in central.

00:29:29 Speaker 3

America, I met Jorge Garcia.

00:29:30 Speaker 3

Corrido and talked to him.

00:29:32 Speaker 3

About what it's like to.

00:29:33 Speaker 3

Be young in Cuba.

00:29:34 Speaker 3

While he was thoroughly invested in his church, he harbored dreams.

00:29:39 Speaker 3

He told me of saving enough money to leave Cuba someday, as did his father and grandfather.

00:29:45 Speaker 3

The elder Garcia, also named Jorge left, Wanna Barcola in 1999 after a horrific incident that I relate in the book in which 14 members of his family, including another son and grandson, drowned when they attempted to reach Florida.

00:30:06 Speaker 3

In that government tugboat that I mentioned before that was rammed and sunk by Cuban officials Garcia.

00:30:15 Speaker 3

Lives in Miami now.

00:30:16 Speaker 3

And continues to fight.

00:30:18 Speaker 3

Every day to bring justice to his family.

00:30:22 Speaker 3

He never received a death certificate for his son or any of the others.

00:30:28 Speaker 3

The Cuban officials simply say they disappeared.

00:30:33 Speaker 3

And they've never acknowledged what they did.

00:30:35 Speaker 3

Finally, around the corner from Lily Hernandez not far from Montalto or Maria del Carmen.

00:30:41 Speaker 3

Met God and Jesus for real, otherwise known as people. The most extraordinary people leading these ordinary lives. Gotti life traces the arc of the revolution itself. She was born in 1956 December 1956, three weeks after Fidel.

00:31:01 Speaker 3

Landed in the South eastern coast and on an old fishing boat called Grandma.

00:31:07 Speaker 3

And began his.

00:31:09 Speaker 3

Insurrection as a black Cuban woman.

00:31:12 Speaker 3

She benefited from the early achievements of the revolution.

00:31:16 Speaker 3

She was sent along with thousands of other Cuban students to university in the Soviet bloc to study in.

00:31:23 Speaker 3

Kiev in Ukraine she

00:31:25 Speaker 3

Met and married people.

00:31:27 Speaker 3

And also got her advanced degree in ECON.

00:31:31 Speaker 3

Comics they returned to Cuba. They both joined the Communist Party. She rose to become Vice Minister of Light Industry for the entire country and was a high-ranking member of the National Party.

00:31:43 Speaker 3

But eventually she saw through the promises of the revolution, realizing that the equality she had hoped for, that she believed him when she got.

00:31:50 Speaker 3

On that ship.

00:31:52 Speaker 3

Had not been delivered and she gave up everything.

00:31:55 Speaker 3

Her state car, her phone, her computer and all the privileges that went with it.

00:32:01 Speaker 3

She left government.

00:32:02 Speaker 3

She'd left a party and became.

00:32:05 Speaker 3

A self-employed entrepreneur. She told me she now runs this seamstress shop in central Havana, employing several other women.

00:32:16 Speaker 3

She told me one afternoon after I'd known her for several years and she was confident that I would protect her story.

00:32:24 Speaker 3

Protected by putting it out there, they all knew that I was.

00:32:28 Speaker 3

Writing the book.

00:32:29 Speaker 3

And I was going to use their real names and they said yes.

00:32:32 Speaker 3

Do it tell the story.

00:32:34 Speaker 3

She told me that for her the revolution that she once believed in so hardly is lost.

00:32:41 Speaker 3

But her love for Cuba is undiminished.

00:32:44 Speaker 3

She doesn't know what's going to happen next.

00:32:47 Speaker 3

Nobody does, but many are not waiting to find out.

00:32:53 Speaker 3

Her only son Oscar.

00:32:54 Speaker 3

Encouraged by the Obama opening with Cuba in 2015, started his own design business filled with optimism that Cuba was opening and leaving space for young people to dream about the future.

00:33:07 Speaker 3

I watched him hustle to find wholesale supplies and build up business contacts in Wakulla and in Havana, but by 2018 it was so difficult for him to work.

00:33:19 Speaker 3

That he decided.

00:33:20 Speaker 3

To leave Cuba.

00:33:21 Speaker 3

And here he is at the airport, saying goodbye to his mother.

00:33:24 Speaker 3

The last time he was in.

00:33:25 Speaker 3

Cuba he's now living in Florida.

00:33:28 Speaker 3

Where with other young.

00:33:29 Speaker 3

Cubans in just a short time.

00:33:31 Speaker 3

He's over his own graphics business.

00:33:35 Speaker 3

And he has no intention of returning to Cuba.

00:33:40 Speaker 3

My wife Miriam returned from Cuba last Tuesday, just last week completing the mission.

00:33:47 Speaker 3

I had started last summer before I was detained at the airport and expelled.

00:33:54 Speaker 3

She delivered that suitcase of medicine that I tried to bring.

00:33:59 Speaker 3

She visited.

00:33:59 Speaker 3

With gaudy people muddy the Carl and Lily, Montalto, and all the others.

00:34:04 Speaker 3

Each one of them told her that conditions there are as bad or worse than they'd ever seen.

00:34:10 Speaker 3

So what happens now?

00:34:11 Speaker 3

Next, the breach between the people and the government clearly is widening.

00:34:16 Speaker 3

Will things change once once Raul Castro is no longer on the scene.

00:34:22 Speaker 3

Will the army, which now runs most of the Cuban economy, demand changes to open up in order to protect their own incomes?

00:34:31 Speaker 3

Forget about socialism, they're worried about their own hides.

00:34:36 Speaker 3

More important will the dissatisfied Cubans out on the street ever be able to gain momentum?

00:34:42 Speaker 3

Creating a volatile movement that will force the government to.

00:34:45 Speaker 3

Change or leave.

00:34:48 Speaker 3

I don't know.

00:34:49 Speaker 3

Anybody who tells you they know it is like this.

00:34:52 Speaker 3

They don't know what we do know is that the inventiveness and adaptability that the Cuban people have shown so vividly over the last half century, and so vividly in Miami, where they've remade the city, will continue to guide them.

00:35:08 Speaker 3

This is a photograph I love.

00:35:12 Speaker 3

Because it really captures that spirit of adaptability and striving on repurposing the plastic soda bottle as the gas tank.

00:35:22 Speaker 3

On this Frankenstein of a motorcycle.

00:35:30 Speaker 3

Actually, I like this one too because it proves that no matter how severe the shortages, even when there's no gasoline for cars or no cars at all, and.

00:35:42 Speaker 3

No boxes for.

00:35:43 Speaker 3

Cake and no gift cards in the stores and no stores that sell gift cards.

00:35:48 Speaker 3

There's still a way.

00:35:50 Speaker 3

To celebrate a birthday and to hope that at.

00:35:53 Speaker 3

Some point in the future.

00:35:56 Speaker 1

Things might get better.

00:36:00 Speaker 3

And it's part of the spirit.

00:36:02 Speaker 3

Not just of.

00:36:03 Speaker 3

Cuban people, I think all people have that spirit, but when you're under a system like that for so long it the only way to survive is to have that so.

00:36:14 Speaker 3

Let's let's open it up.

00:36:17 Speaker 3

I'd like to finish.

00:36:17 Speaker 3

It's there and hopefully we have plenty of time or not so much time.

00:36:22 Speaker 3

Depends how long you want to stay to go ahead.

00:36:24 Speaker 7

Thank you very much for that.

00:36:26 Speaker 7

That was that was a fascinating tour through our current state of Cuba.

00:36:30 Speaker 7

I wanted to ask you about the embargo.

00:36:33 Speaker 7

It's been going on through 60 years.

00:36:35 Speaker 7

What is the best move here?

00:36:36 Speaker 7

Is it to ease restrictions as Obama had started to do during his time?

00:36:42 Speaker 7

You know, then, Trump reversed.

00:36:44 Speaker 7

That I don't think we really know for sure.

00:36:47 Speaker 7

You know what course Biden is going to follow?

00:36:49 Speaker 7

He seems to be inclined to reverse.

00:36:51 Speaker 7

To ease it up a.

00:36:52 Speaker 7

Little bit and has given some money for hurricane in relief.

00:36:57 Speaker 7

What's the best move here, both for us and for?

00:37:00 Speaker 7

The Cuban people, yeah.

00:37:02 Speaker 3

A good question and embargo is always.

00:37:04 Speaker 4

At the heart of things.

00:37:05 Speaker 3

And really, the United States involvement with Cuba is over a century right since 1898, and depending on which book you read, it goes way back even to Benjamin Franklin right then.

00:37:19 Speaker 3

But you have to understand.

00:37:20 Speaker 3

That the embargo is now law.

00:37:23 Speaker 3

It's not a presidential.

00:37:25 Speaker 3

Initiative it's not.

00:37:27 Speaker 3

Something that Obama or Biden or anybody else can simply wave away.

00:37:33 Speaker 3

What they can?

00:37:34 Speaker 3

Do is sort of poke holes in it, which.

00:37:36 Speaker 3

Is what Obama did during during his administration.

00:37:39 Speaker 3

Actually, George Bush poked huge holes through it in 2004 when he allowed the sale of food and medicine to Cuba under one condition that the sales had to be in cash.

00:37:53 Speaker 3

Because Cuba is a.

00:37:54 Speaker 3

Debtor nation that they owe everybody money.

00:37:59 Speaker 3

Including the Russians, including the Chinese, including the Paris club, including the London Club of London, and they owe money to everybody.

00:38:09 Speaker 3

So what?

00:38:11 Speaker 3

The chances of.

00:38:12 Speaker 3

Changing it so this is during the the Clinton.

00:38:15 Speaker 3

Administration 1990

00:38:16 Speaker 3

6 Helms, Burton law.

00:38:17 Speaker 3

It's now law, the law of the land.

00:38:20 Speaker 3

You have to get.

00:38:20 Speaker 3

Congress to change it to lift the.

00:38:22 Speaker 3

Embargo that.

00:38:23 Speaker 7

Changed what would would there be?

00:38:25 Speaker 3

Any benefit to?

00:38:27 Speaker 2

Me turning it.

00:38:28 Speaker 7

Or, you know.

00:38:28 Speaker 3

To change the laws so it's been in for 60 years.

00:38:31 Speaker 3

It hasn't achieved its purpose because Castro is still there.

00:38:34 Speaker 3

But what it has done?

00:38:37 Speaker 3

Is it's given those guys?

00:38:39 Speaker 3

Who I showed you in the regime.

00:38:41 Speaker 5

An excuse.

00:38:43 Speaker 3

To say to the Cuban.

00:38:45 Speaker 3

People and to everybody else in the world.

00:38:47 Speaker 3

We like this because of them.

00:38:51 Speaker 3

And so the argument goes and.

00:38:53 Speaker 3

I think it's a legitimate 1.

00:38:54 Speaker 3

The best thing to do to get rid.

00:38:57 Speaker 3

Of this regime is not.

00:38:58 Speaker 3

To keep the embargo, but to lift it.

00:39:01 Speaker 3

But there are political reasons you know that.

00:39:03 Speaker 3

Doesn't go down well in Florida, South Florida where?

00:39:06 Speaker 3

There are conservative Cubans who see.

00:39:08 Speaker 3

Any attempt to work at all?

00:39:11 Speaker 3

Or anything that might.

00:39:12 Speaker 3

Benefit the regime.

00:39:13 Speaker 3

As being.

00:39:16 Speaker 3

Simply unacceptable. I was curious.

00:39:18 Speaker 7

About the collapse of agriculture and the.

00:39:21 Speaker 7

Fact that where they used to.

00:39:22 Speaker 7

Produce 80% of their food. They now have to import 80%. Why? Why did that happen? That didn't even happen in Russia. They still managed to have collective farms.

00:39:35 Speaker 7

Uhm, is part of it because they were no longer sending people for training to the Soviet Union and then later to other eastern countries.

00:39:44 Speaker 3

No, no, it's the answer is.

00:39:47 Speaker 3

Every question.

00:39:48 Speaker 3

Anybody may?

00:39:49 Speaker 3

Ask the answer is always it's.

00:39:50 Speaker 3

Complicated I guess. Thank God.

00:39:52 Speaker 3

In this case.

00:39:54 Speaker 3

You had a system that that removed all incentives to produce, right?

00:39:59 Speaker 3

So the farmers were.

00:40:01 Speaker 3

Given an allotment.

00:40:02 Speaker 3

They raised that a lot in the food and nothing more because they weren't able to sell it, they weren't able to use it in any way, so they they did that.

00:40:12 Speaker 3

Land went fallow.

00:40:15 Speaker 3

There's an invasive species of weed called model.

00:40:18 Speaker 3

That has sort of tickets.

00:40:20 Speaker 3

Eating the island.

00:40:21 Speaker 3

That's every every field that, when shallow is now.

00:40:24 Speaker 4

Filled with this stuff.

00:40:25 Speaker 3

It's very hard to do.

00:40:26 Speaker 3

It out, the only thing it's good for is they are now exporting chuckle.

00:40:31 Speaker 3

They burn it and they they sell it as charcoal.

00:40:34 Speaker 3

Uh Cuban charcoal?

00:40:36 Speaker 3

You can't find it in too many places, and you certainly won't find it.

00:40:39 Speaker 3

In Florida, but they they do that.

00:40:40 Speaker 3

But basically it's.

00:40:43 Speaker 3

The land has gone fallow.

00:40:44 Speaker 3

Because it hasn't been used.

00:40:46 Speaker 3

They don't have the money because the.

00:40:48 Speaker 3

Way they're managing.

00:40:49 Speaker 3

The economy to buy tractors and to buy fuel so they basically return to.

00:40:54 Speaker 3

Sort of organic.

00:40:55 Speaker 3

Farming done on a very basic level with oxen and plows and and hand to.

00:41:01 Speaker 3

Rules, so there's no way to produce.

00:41:04 Speaker 7

Subsistence farming, right? That's not.

00:41:06 Speaker 3

Well then.

00:41:07 Speaker 3

They they yes when you import 80% of your food, right?

00:41:11 Speaker 3

You're not producing enough.

00:41:12 Speaker 3

The population has also grown.

00:41:13 Speaker 3

It was 6 million.

00:41:14 Speaker 3

Then it's now 11 million, so they would need to do more.

00:41:17 Speaker 3

But they live in a country that is fabulously fertile, has tremendous.

00:41:22 Speaker 3

Rather, they could easily like in Mexico, have to harvest a year or more.

00:41:27 Speaker 3

And they don't a big part of the problem is the the economy is simply mismanaged.

00:41:32 Speaker 3

When you have generals running hotels and agriculture and other things, they may know how to give a command, but they don't know anything about providing incentives.

00:41:43 Speaker 1

How much?

00:41:43 Speaker 7

Crime on the island.

00:41:45 Speaker 3

Second, crime, like you might find here, I've never experienced it in in 50 years.

00:41:53 Speaker 3

I've never had any kind of thing like that, but.

00:41:57 Speaker 3

The the situation down there has disarmed the morality of Cubans, so stealing in the term that you and I are using goes on every day.

00:42:10 Speaker 3

It's part of of surviving.

00:42:13 Speaker 3

If you work in the paint factory, you.

00:42:14 Speaker 3

Steal a gallon of paint and you use that.

00:42:17 Speaker 3

To bribe the dentist or the doctor so that you can get your kid with an ear infection.

00:42:22 Speaker 3

In to see.

00:42:23 Speaker 3

Him before everybody else.

00:42:25 Speaker 3

If you work in the hospital and you're given a bucket of water and a gown.

00:42:31 Speaker 3

Kind of bleach.

00:42:32 Speaker 3

The first thing you do is empty half of a gallon of bleach into another container that you then sell to somebody else, and you pour the bleach into your half of the bleach into the water.

00:42:42 Speaker 3

When you finish using it, you put some of it back in, then it goes on all the time.

00:42:46 Speaker 3

It's not stealing in the mind of the people who have to do this.

00:42:51 Speaker 3

Everybody is dancing, adapting and surviving the sirviendo cancel the term they use.

00:42:58 Speaker 7

Catch yourself a little bit on the protest movement, but the idea that we heard about last year, not so much this year is it still is it still going?

00:43:11 Speaker 3

You know it it was.

00:43:14 Speaker 3

I think it was given a little bit more credence than it really deserved because it was easy to understand.

00:43:20 Speaker 3

You know there were young people.

00:43:21 Speaker 3

They had a song.

00:43:22 Speaker 3

It was a real great video.

00:43:23 Speaker 3

I think we won a Grammy.

00:43:25 Speaker 3

But the truth of the matter is it.

00:43:29 Speaker 3

The significance of it is that.

00:43:30 Speaker 3

They were young, black and mulatto.

00:43:34 Speaker 3

And kids who were protesting and these are the people who ideally.

00:43:40 Speaker 3

And in the propaganda were the.

00:43:41 Speaker 3

Ones who were supposed to most.

00:43:43 Speaker 3

Benefit from the revolution.

00:43:45 Speaker 3

Like how did that?

00:43:46 Speaker 3

So the fact that they are out there protesting in the same way is is such an assault on the whole idea of the revolution that they they really had to come down hard.

00:43:57 Speaker 3

I think you know the guys in.

00:43:59 Speaker 4

It have had.

00:43:59 Speaker 3

Trouble, the artists are still out there, but I don't look.

00:44:04 Speaker 3

I don't look to them.

00:44:05 Speaker 3

As the ones who are going to really bring change is going to come from the people in the street, it's gonna come from the people who had just set up and really had it because.

00:44:14 Speaker 3

Those young people.

00:44:16 Speaker 3

Although they might be protesting now, you know what their dream is from the time that they.

00:44:20 Speaker 3

You're old enough to dream.

00:44:23 Speaker 3

Is to get.

00:44:23 Speaker 3

Out, that's it.

00:44:25 Speaker 3

There's there's no, there's nobody younger than 30 or less.

00:44:32 Speaker 3

Limited authority.

00:44:33 Speaker 3

OK who?

00:44:35 Speaker 3

Has any intention?

00:44:36 Speaker 3

Of staying at the just utheemu save you.

00:44:42 Speaker 3

To get out in whichever way you can.

00:44:44 Speaker 7

Do they have access to social media you mentioned before that this woman wondered what it?

00:44:50 Speaker 7

Was like in the United.

00:44:52 Speaker 7

States and what the appeal was.

00:44:54 Speaker 7

What is their level of access to outside information?

00:44:58 Speaker 3

You know the the regimes run.

00:44:59 Speaker 3

By their men.

00:45:00 Speaker 3

I don't think they really.

00:45:01 Speaker 3

Understand what the.

00:45:04 Speaker 3

Internet is or can.

00:45:05 Speaker 3

Do and you know people are like always asking for it and during the Obama opening Google.

00:45:11 Speaker 3

Went down there and.

00:45:12 Speaker 3

You know they started providing more stuff so generally young.

00:45:16 Speaker 3

People all have.

00:45:18 Speaker 3

Probably 3G, maybe, maybe 4G. Some places they have Wi-Fi hotspots that you can go. The Internet is censored down there, but it's.

00:45:30 Speaker 1

You can't censor.

00:45:31 Speaker 3

The Internet, the way you can censor a newspaper, right so uh, people bring in that they they would bring in.

00:45:39 Speaker 3

Like, uh, with a A?

00:45:40 Speaker 3

Thumb drive sealed with stuff from.

00:45:43 Speaker 3

Miami and then.

00:45:44 Speaker 3

Reproduce it, they call it alpha ketay.

00:45:47 Speaker 3

If you have money, you can buy a phone.

00:45:50 Speaker 3

They the Cuban, some Cubans have visa so.

00:45:53 Speaker 3

That you don't have to have the right letter anymore to.

00:45:55 Speaker 3

Get out of the country.

00:45:57 Speaker 3

You can go to Panama if you intend to come back and some people come back not because they love the country, but because they can make money.

00:46:04 Speaker 3

They come back with phones that they pay $200 for in Panama and they sell them for $500.

00:46:11 Speaker 3

There are some.

00:46:12 Speaker 1

So the the.

00:46:14 Speaker 3

Internet access is not complete, most people.

00:46:16 Speaker 3

Don't have it at home you have.

00:46:17 Speaker 3

To go through a Wi-Fi hotspot outside.

00:46:19 Speaker 3

If you have 4G, maybe you.

00:46:20 Speaker 3

Can get on.

00:46:21 Speaker 3

But it is.

00:46:21 Speaker 3

Really a.

00:46:22 Speaker 3

Significant aspect of where things are today.

00:46:25 Speaker 3

Because that July 11th it.

00:46:27

Could not have happened.

00:46:28 Speaker 3

Without people getting that those scenes on the Internet.

00:46:33 Speaker 3

So that people in other cities.

00:46:34 Speaker 3

Could see that it's not me.

00:46:36 Speaker 3

The real seer for all people is not that they're afraid to.

00:46:39 Speaker 3

Go out and say.

00:46:40 Speaker 3

Leave our thought.

00:46:42 Speaker 3

Is that they're afraid to be.

00:46:43 Speaker 3

Out there and then look behind them and find that there's nobody there.