

THE MOSQUITO NET – a play in one act
By Kimberly del Busto Ramírez

Dramatis Personae

FULANA: A flamboyant, talkative, transsexual receptionist and founder of "Cambio, Inc.," a Cuban-American anti-revolutionary division of the non-profit organization "Tshirts for a Cause."

EL COMANDANTE: Commanding and intolerant. Wears an olive green uniform and is faceless but for a mosquito-style mask with a threatening proboscis and bulging, compound eyes.

LA BLOGUERA (Yoani): Based on Cuban dissident blogger Yoani Sánchez and content from her *Generación Y* blog. Passionate, intelligent, articulate.

EL CONGUERO: A sometimes expressionless, sometimes menacing, sometimes sympathetic, sometimes mischievous percussion-playing shapeshifter.

GUARDS (non-speaking): Members of the stage crew costumed in olive green uniforms.

SCENE: A bare stage with a human-sized cage-like enclosure and a blank projection surface.

AT RISE: Projection: Images of los Damas de Blanco. EL COMANDANTE enters, "inspects" the women-in-white with his giant eyeballs, and alerts a member of the running crew:

COMANDANTE

"¡La gusanera está revuelta!"

CONGUERO (*sings*)

Lines of white cotton and linen
Piously patron la Iglesia Santa Rita
Then inch like the worms they are
Slow and silent down la quinta avenida

A frail stalk of pale gladiolus
Is no match for a club or a fist
How would you like it, comrade,
To be provoked by women like this?

Projection: Las Damas de Blanco dragged, shoved, crushed, and beaten. Drums (CONGUERO) convey the sounds of bludgeoning and beating. GUARDS force FULANA onto the stage. Physically and psychically, FULANA sustains the abuse dealt to las Damas. Drumming stops as FULANA unrolls a length of white bandage to wrap her arm as she addresses the audience:

FULANA

A woman always looks radiant in white. Delicate, floral, silent, saintly, virginal—a virgin bride. Even the ugliest white bridal gown glides down the aisle to eclipse a dark-tuxedoed groom.

COMANDANTE (*lighting a cigar*)

In white, a woman always appears striking. Whenever a woman rises up in white—

FULANA

She washes away any dirty-clothed man, gleaming and glowing with purity!

COMANDANTE

Because she is lazy. Same as a man in white. Men, women, I see no difference.

FULANA

Now you are talking my language, honey.

COMANDANTE

Take a look at the logo of the Cuban Federation of Women.

(*Projection: the CFW logo.*)

FULANA

Ohhh, interesting!

COMANDANTE

You see, now *that* woman is working hard.

FULANA

Well, for a little cartoon drawing, I'd say so.

COMANDANTE

And does she wear white?

FULANA

Her baby does.

YOANI

So that is still your idea of revolutionary equality? The maternal soldier? Will we ever be able to have skirts *and* ideas?

The CONGUERO taps a woodblock with mallets ("keyboard strokes") to underscore her speech.

COMANDANTE

Tan flojas, las que visten de blanco y desfilan por las calles... ¡en vez de trabajar en el campo...!

FULANA

Bueno, I guess you could wear white to work hard in the field all day, pero it would get dirty.

COMANDANTE

Exactly, so please, comrade, how could you think that—

YOANI

If it's men shouting the orders...and men who are screaming and suffering for their lives in jail—why are we fastening our gaze almost exclusively upon these silent damas?

Projection: "BBC News: Cuban opposition activists arrested in Havana;" "Fox News: Police Bar Cuba's Ladies in White;" New Jersey Herald: 'Ladies' Powerful in their Silence."

CONGUERO (*sings, to "Lady of Spain"*)

Lady in white, I adore you
Marching on the five o'clock news
With your pink lipstick and hairdo
How far to the right do you lean (to?)

FULANA

(*Batting eyelashes, feigning modesty*) Ohhhh, *stop*. Nooo, *go on*. You handsome devil! With your gnarly beard and sweat-soaked fatigues. (*Unraveling her bandages*) My bruises feel better already! (*Projection: footage of Barbara Walters' 1977 Jeep ride around Havana with Fidel Castro.*) Mmmmm, maybe Barbara Walters nailed it out there in TV-land when she salivated through that one-on-one with—well, let's just say is it really true that she did more than just *interview* Fidel? ... Anyway, aquí en Nueva York, facial hair is *very* in. Downtown all the hipsters try to look like Ché. If they can't sprout enough facial hair, or they're afraid people aren't getting it, they just buy a t-shirt with his image clearly screenprinted—*pa!*—smack in the middle. You know, *American* apparel. Y conoces los beanie caps, tú sabes, "el Ché beret?" Also for sale. Stroll down St. Marks Place and you can purchase the whole revolutionary aesthetic for less than 40 bucks. For 200 more you can get his guapo guerilla face inked permanently onto your arm at a place called *Cappuccino & Tattoo* between 1st & A. Who doesn't want café con Chévolution? (*Flourish of beats from the CONGUERO*) So what if we pay with big fat George Washington dollars instead of little tiny Ernesto Guevara pesos? (*Flourish*) So what if Cubans are deprived of the cash, power, and rights to buy or sell custom styles because the laid-back cool-looking Argentinian dude in the photo nationalized everyone's money and rationed things? (*Flourish*) In *this* wealthy, capitalist country, it is our God-given right to spend a *lot* of money to look distressed—and we're proud of that, dammit. (*Flourish*) Entonces, I like your uniform. Very Urban Outfitters, ¿verdad? (*Irresistibly drawn to him*) Can I touch your gun? (*Giggles, sits in his lap.*)

CONGUERO (*sings to "Lady of Spain"*)

Lady in white, I am squealing
All that *Granma* is concealing
Hear what my drums are revealing?
Dama de Blanco, I love you

The CONGUERO and FULANA lean in slowly to kiss each other. EL COMANDANTE points his gun at FULANA, causing her to snap out of her trance.

COMANDANTE

Ché was right. We should round up all of you maricones and—

FULANA

Oh. My God. Oh. Come on. Wake up, Fulana! Wake up, U.S.A!

CONGUERO

¡Deeeeeeespierta América! Por favor, no toque el remoto. Porque—en siguiente—un homenaje muy conmovedor a las Damas de Blanco!

Projection: A flash of footage from Univisión's Despierta America: "Ladies in White leader Laura Pollán rushed to the hospital." The CONGUERO beats out an EKG rhythm.

YOANI

Dozens of text messages transmit medical updates about the leader of the Ladies in White. Peaceful activism floats through cyberspace...

FULANA

(reading from her phone) Another peaceful demonstration, another repudiation rally. Leader Laura Pollán is hospitalized. #damasdelblanco

YOANI

...silencing the spiral of ideological propaganda from the "official newspaper."

FULANA

I'm finally going to do something about the civil inequities in Cuba! Instead of just pouting, politely answering the phone, and passively processing orders for un porquito non-profit organization: "Tshirts for a Cause." Porque seeing these Cuban women-in-white being bullied and beat up on the news—for doing nothing but silently marching with flowers—Fulana is having a little flashback to my childhood, plus una epifanía: I'm only lucky enough to be me and to live with freedom in Nueva York because I had the random good fortune to fly away from Fidel as a young kid. As a boy. That's right, I was once a little boy!

YOANI

Even if he had not been sent as a boy, he would have left as a man. We have failed to create a country where our children want to stay. Every Cuban household has an empty little chair.

FULANA

My name was Fulano. And as Fulano I clutched a little Spiderman maleta and said "Adios al malecón y la Bahía de la Habana"—and "Hello, East River and FDR Drive!" I said goodbye to Fulanito as well; I wasn't going to miss being him one bit. You see, Fulano was only six, and in Cuba he would get beat up every day in the schoolyard. Teased for seeming too much like a girl.

COMANDANTE

Oye, Fulanito! ¿Por qué tienes pestañas tan largas, y mejillas rosadas...usando maquillaje?

FULANA

Hell, yes, I wear makeup! (*A desk with makeup and a telephone rolls in. The phone rings.*) Buenas tardes, Cambio Incorporated! Are you still waiting to hear about change on the island? Human rights cost money, honey, and your generous financial contribution is tax deductible.

CONGUERO: a flourish of beats.

YOANI

The blogosphere is expanding! This net, this internet, ensnares mosquitos who can't prevent digital words from getting out! A neighbor reports "Yesterday they called us to insult the ladies in white, but today, strict orders not to assault these women with gladioli in their hands....we're not allowed to touch a hair on their heads." Now—suddenly—anything can happen...

An EKG rhythm from the CONGUERO. EL COMANDANTE appears wearing a stethoscope and bloody laboratory coat over his fatigues. The CONGUERO starts and sustains a long drumroll:

CONGUERO (*sings, to "Howdy Doody"*)

It's diagnosis time,
It's diagnosis time!
El Jefe y Raúl
Are diagnosing you!
Dissidents disappear,
The foreign press is here.
It's time to start the show,
Comrades, let's go!

COMANDANTE

Acute respiratory distress syndrome is characterized by the development of sudden breathlessness within hours of an inciting event. Examples of inciting events include trauma, drug overdose, pancreatitis—or, in this case, a mosquito bite. (*Projection: diagram of the human respiratory system*) The timing is only a coincidence. Though the patient's lung collapsed during the repudiation rally it was less likely due to her having been crushed against a building by a faithful and law-abiding comrade than it was from a single three or four day old bite from the yellow fever mosquito—genus *Aedes*, species *aegypti*. In the febrile stage, the skin becomes flushed and muscle and joint pain intensifies. Later, the patient becomes red with broken capillaries, bleeding sporadically from the nose and mouth. Notice the pattern of blood rising under her skin, collecting around her gums, dripping from the nose. Classic symptoms of—

COMANDANTE

Dengue!

YOANI

Brutality!

COMANDANTE

Dengue hemorrhagic fever. Caused by what at first seems to be only a harmless mosquito bite...but quickly intensifies into complete respiratory arrest.

YOANI

You crushed her lungs!

COMANDANTE

Because mosquitos, teeny tiny mosquitos, are very insidious.

YOANI

They are ubiquitous. It is an infestation. There are mosquitoes are on every street corner. In multitudes, in droves, in masses, in committees.

COMANDANTE

Because Señora Pollán was out marching silently for hours, holding flowers, she naturally attracted mosquitoes.

YOANI

The mosquitoes got her.

COMANDANTE

She was covered in bites.

YOANI

Her skin was unblemished.

COMANDANTE

Well it really only takes one bite.

YOANI

She complained of none that day. She never swatted a single insect from her face.

COMANDANTE

Maybe she should have. Now she would not be fighting for every breath.

YOANI

A mosquito crushed her lungs.

COMANDANTE

Yes, they are very sneaky insects. Injecting the skin with analgesic before siphoning out blood.

YOANI

Oh great, they have anesthesia? Those bugs are better equipped than a Cuban hospital.

CONGUERO (*sings*)

Welcome to Hospital Calixto García
I hope you brought the doctor a gift
Porque we're all out of medicina...
From start to end of every shift!

COMANDANTE/DR.

Because of the acute cardiorespiratory distress, of course she has a little difficulty—breathing,

YOANI

They are the virus in her lungs!

COMANDANTE

...severe abdominal pain,

YOANI

Her arm had already been broken.

COMANDANTE

...and persistent vomiting. Sometimes even with blood.

YOANI

She survived the last episode. Marched with her broken arm flexed into the L for Libertad.

COMANDANTE

Her vision is dwindling from the pain behind the eyes.

YOANI

This time they may have snapped her for good.

PROJECTION: Handheld camera footage of the emergency room in Calixto Garcia Hospital.

YOANI

Crowds are gathering outside Calixto Garcia Hospital, where Pollán is rumored to be. Where there is a million dollar machine for cosmetic and reconstructive surgery—but not a single bottle of aspirin. A typical Cuban infirmary.

COMANDANTE / DOCTOR

Where a Cuban surgeon's salary equals 30 convertible pesos a month.

CONGUERO

That's the equivalent of 33 McDonald's dollar menu items to you, you stinking U.S. capitalists!

YOANI

Medicine—like the rest of our reality—exists in two very different dimensions. One: patients with no resources to offer gifts or payment to doctors. Two: those who can pay cash on the spot.

CONGUERO (*smoking a cigar*)

Actually there is a third, privileged, dimension. For party officials. And Michael Moore.

YOANI

Compassion and hypocrisy collide. (*Projection: May 2007 New York Times article “‘Sicko,’ Castro and the ‘120 Years Club.’”*)

CONGUERO (*sings*)

Dijo Ché: “Vale mas la vida
de un ser humano
que todo el oro del hombre
mas rico del mundo.”

YOANI

Pero también dijo Ché: “A revolutionary must become a cold killing machine motivated by pure hate.”

COMANDANTE / DOCTOR

Oye comrade—“ser humano”—you need antibiotics. I can’t write you a prescription for antibiotics, because there are none. Pero for 30 measly chavitos a month...why should I care about your bronchitis?

YOANI

This is “free” medical “care.”

CONGUERO (*smiling wickedly at audience*)

Bueno, aqui vamos con Obamacare. Dios mio, por que la gente creen a los charlatanes.

YOANI (*to audience*)

Do any of you ever get sick? Feel a lump, twist an ankle, break a finger? Then take notes. Here is a checklist of items for you to bring to the hospital (*drumroll from the CONGUERO*) A gift for the doctor (*A flourish “checks off” the item*), a gift for the lab assistant (*flourish*), a gift for the security guard (*flourish*), clean sheets and a pillow (*flourish*), disinfectant, yellow gloves, (*flourish*), a cup and bucket to bathe patient because faucets are broken-*(flourish)*, a fan (*flourish*), a package of food and puree for the patient (*flourish*), medicines (*flourish*), and— from the black market— (*with special emphasis*): Bug spray (*flourish*), needles for the IV (*flourish*), gauze and cotton (*flourish*), disposable syringes (*flourish*), and suture threads. Finally, money for a taxi to take the patient home after her operation because no ambulances are available. So. Listen up, estadounidenses. Cada joe. Every fulana...

FULANA

¿Qué?

YOANI

...Our “free health care” that you hear about? It is very expensive.

Sound: Computer notification beeps, critical alert warnings. Projection: A pop-up text notice with a digital stop sign and translated text next to the flags of six different countries.

CONGUERO

This website is currently not available. Please try again later. Thank you.

COMANDANTE

You are under arrest...gusanera.

YOANI

On what grounds...comrade?

COMANDANTE

Violation 963-N, as in Neptune: hoarding.

YOANI

Hoarding? Absurd! Everything I “own” slides into a pillowcase.

COMANDANTE

Your pocket is full of black market purchases. Hoarding is not tolerated.

YOANI

My pocket is empty. And it’s a wonder I can “purchase” anything on six pesos a month.

COMANDANTE

Circumventing government rations to purchase luxury items—

YOANI

You are telling me that medical gauze and thread for sutures are considered luxury items?

COMANDANTE

Consult your libreta. Oh, perhaps you don’t carry it with you? It probably doesn’t fit in your pocket with all of your contraband, capitalista.

YOANI

How else are citizens supposed to obtain gauze and thread?

COMANDANTE

Come on, gusanera. You know better. It is not how much *you* have, but how much *we* have. Can all of your comrades have gauze and thread? Is there gauze and thread for everyone? No? Then you are hoarding.

YOANI

Try *coping!* Resolviendo!

COMANDANTE

Be CAREFUL. (*Pointing off*) They are already waiting for you to report now for advisement!

YOANI

You mean intimidation.

COMANDANTE

Worm! Hoarder!

YOANI

I'm arrested because of *your* general negligence of all citizens—?!

COMANDANTE

(*interrupting*) See, you are misinformed again, gusana. It is not me; it is the blockade. In the US they have gauze and thread coming out of their assholes.

YOANI

So what do *you* do if, say, your child needs stitches? Do *you* wait for a rationing of thread? Do you just sit and stare into your little one's gaping skin?

COMANDANTE

Sidestepping the system to hoard scarce commodities from profiteers is a serious offense. So is revolting against the revolution.

YOANI

To you mosquitoes everything I do is a serious offense.

COMANDANTE

Empty your other pocket, you mini-capitalist. What else did you get on the black market?

YOANI reaches into her pocket, draws the bug spray, depresses the nozzle on COMANDANTE.

COMANDANTE

(*Shielding his eyes. To the GUARDS*) Get her!!

GUARDS capture and discipline YOANI. Lights up on Fulana at her desk ordering lunch online.

COMANDANTE

Oye, Fulanito! Es la hora del almuerzo. Estás listo para comer el suelo?

FULANA

¡Déjame!

COMANDANTE

(*Mocking him*) “¡Déjame!”

FULANA

¡No hago nada!

COMANDANTE

Exactamente: no hagas nada. Entonces, ven conmigo.

FULANA

Sólo estoy leyendo, y preparando para comer—

COMANDANTE

Vas a comer donde, cuando, y lo que *yo* digo. Y para patos como tú, la cafetería es el baño de las chicas. Prepárate. En el menú de hoy: papel higiénico.

FULANA

Nooo!!

A GUARD hands el COMANDANTE a roll of toilet paper. COMANDANTE stuffs a wad into FULANA's mouth and encloses her in the cage-like space. Projection: Cuban political prisoner Orlando Zapata Tamayo. COMANDANTE drizzles a handful of seeds into the cage.

COMANDANTE

¡Come! Why aren't you eating? That is almost perfectly good food, what you have been given. You are lucky to have a government who feeds even swine like you. (*Lights a cigarette, antagonizingly*) Are you waiting for the salvation that will come from the prayers of the women in white? Go ahead and try praying to your God for food and see what happens. Will rice fall from heaven? Ask the revolution for food and you shall receive it. Go on, ask. We will teach you yet: el Comandante is your God. (*Re-pocketing the food and exhaling smoke into the cage*) Why would you do this to yourself? Your ribs are exploding through your sides. You climb all over the bars like a wild tarantula. Your muscles will atrophy if you don't nourish them—aren't you afraid that would mean the end of your ability to cause commotion?

CONGUERO (*sings*)

You're languishing, hoping for Mamá
To nourish your limbs as they rot
Thirsty fool, learn that this revolution
Is the only real teta you've got!

COMANDANTE

Your skin is cracked. I can see the color of your bones. Your testicles have shrunken down to the size of olives. You are depleting your manhood. You can't fight back because you are fatigued. Don't you want to fight me? You smell rancid. You no longer eliminate any waste. You stink, because you are rotting your own flesh... yellowing eyes, widening pupils, decaying already. It's killing me, smelling you in here. I'm going back into the air conditioning. (*Strides forward, goes off after throwing the butt of his cigarette into the cell.*)

CONGUERO

(to the prisoner) Okay, what will it take? A radio? A television set? If you eat, I will reward you. ¿Entiendes? Because if you eat, they will reward me.

Projection: la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre and Reina Luisa Tamayo, a dama de Blanco, with her son Orlando Zapata Tamayo's image emblazoned on a t-shirt.

CONGUERO (sings)

Cry out for your women with flowers
Now that they've schemed, prayed, and marched
"Ayúdame...estoy reseco..."
"Help me, mami...I am...parched..."

The prison gate swings open to release FULANA. Projections: Amnesty International designates Orlando Zapata Tamayo a prisoner of conscience; signed petitions for his freedom; his body in his coffin, dressed in white; "BBC News: Cuban prison hunger striker Orlando Zapata Tamayo dies;" "New York Times: Dissident's Death Ignites Protest Actions in Cuba." FULANA copies the images onto t-shirt templates. Telephone rings.

FULANA

Buenas tardes, Cambio Incorporated! Are you still waiting to hear about change on the island? Human rights cost money, honey, and your generous financial— (A beat.) Oh, girl. You really should have stopped me at "buenas," chica—do you want my schpiel to get stale? ...Nah, just got here; I haven't even logged on or plopped on my wig yet... You know it, baby, my routine always goes cafecito, computadora, cosmetica—cafecito siempre a la primera—I got to wake up before I make up, tú sabes? And the webcam shows a more authentic me than a mirror; I never understand how people can trust to put their faces on backwards...?! Anyway, I'll facebook you in ten minutes, but I'm not turning on the videochat until my lipstick's done. (Hangs up.)

Projection: El Nuevo Herald newspaper masthead.

COMANDANTE

It's almost time for my afternoon shit. Let me amuse myself with today's toilet paper before I wad it up to wipe my ass. (He unfolds a copy of el Nuevo Herald and tries to focus. Projection: the pages of the Herald from the point of view of mosquito-masked eyes—a scattering of letters appearing between the circular lenses of compound eyes.) Fucking Herald. (to the audience) My eyesight may be failing but I still have a very sharp sense of humor, comrades.

YOANI

(To the CONGUERO) Psssstt!

CONGUERO

Pssstt what? Me?

YOANI

Yes, you. ¿Puedes ayudarme?

CONGUERO

What do you need?

YOANI

Sneak me into your workplace so I could connect to the Internet?

CONGUERO

Okay. But I don't know how much good it will do you. Nearly every site is prohibited by Cuban authorities. MSN has been blocked for months. You can only use local email and chat. And don't even think about going to *El Nuevo Herald*.

COMANDANTE (*reading the Herald*)

"Reina Luisa Tamayo was repeatedly hit on the head, thrown to the ground and gagged with a smelly rag that left her breathless. One Cuban state security agent heard screaming 'Shut up, you lousy black.'" (*Crumples the newspaper, throws it into the audience, runs into a GUARD who hands him a tablet displaying a digital copy of the Herald. He angrily presses buttons, trying to control the device.*) Worse. Than. Before. (*Clutches the machine over his head and addresses the audience.*) Which one of you has been leaking all this bullshit to the foreign press?! (*Pointing at audience members*) Decrease the bandwidth—Increase monitoring on the proxy server—Prohibit public internet access—make any circumvention impossible—silence these ungrateful enemy "bloggers," these *gallitas*, these so-called journalists! (*Projection: Las Damas de Blanco*) And all of you—crack down on those subversive, silent women!

El COMANDANTE exits into the audience. Projection: Yoani Sánchez's Twitter feed. She types:

YOANI

How do you shout on Twitter? / Brief texts go to this blue bird that makes them fly through cyberspace. / We broadcast blindly, reporting on the Island in 140-character fragments. / Technology has turned every citizen into his or her own mass media.

CONGUERO (*sings*)

Los blogueros dicen

Pio, pio, pio

Cuando tienen hambre

Teclando con brio! (*rapid acceleration of strikes, "typing," on the woodblock*)

Sound: the "tweeting" of a trogon, the Cuban national bird. The COMANDANTE strides through the audience swinging a cage containing a small red, white, and blue bird.

COMANDANTE

I have caged a native tocororo. (*Drizzling seeds into the cage*) Listen how happy our national bird is to be fed and protected. See how its feathers are the colors of the flag: blue back, white breast, and red wings. Consider yourselves lucky to bear witness to my catching this beauty!

YOANI

Indeed. Every Cuban knows about the tocororo, but most Cubans have never caught a glimpse of their own national bird.

COMANDANTE

Pues, I am lucky, too! Because the last one I captured is almost dead in its cage.

Projection: Las Damas de Blanco fades into artist Pablo Cano's Las Damas "cake box" series.

FULANA

Attention all lovebirds. I need a date. For a gallery opening tonight. Fifty white paper damas enclosed in white cake boxes exhibited on a white wall in a white room—it's a white tie event with a white bar for a white crowd. Alongside las damas the artist also unveils a brand new portrait of Lady Gaga. Wanna come? Check your book and bring your checkbook, pleeeeeease.

Projection: images of eBay listings for Pablo Cano cakebox Damas de Blanco at \$499.00 each.

YOANI (to audience)

Bluetooth technology is the nightmare of the censors. The intangible is making its way, in a place where printing and distributing a publication can lead to prison.... Digital culture is leaving out in the cold those who think revolutions are made of weapons and speeches.

FULANA

No, please, no food at all—white bar only vodka, water, and club soda. Madre de dios, I have to watch my figure. Besides, in sympathy, I'm fasting, haven't you heard...on the island there is another prisoner starving himself. Uh huh, yes, I know we have our starving own here in New York... uh huh...no chica, I actually witnessed one—last week I saw a fashion week model drop right down and faint on the runway inside that big giant white Bryant Park tent. Sí, ¡Qué horror!

Projection: An underground video exposé on Cuban prison conditions. COMANDANTE approaches to cast a huge shadow obscuring the projection.

COMANDANTE

Turn this OFF! (to the GUARD, indicating the projectionist in the booth) Get him. (to a member of the audience) Comrade, take this down and hear me well. (*Projection: Granma newspaper masthead.*) Cuba will not accept pressure or blackmail, important Western media groups are again calling attention to a prefabricated lie. It is not medicine that should resolve a problem caused by the patient himself...by unpatriotic people, foreign diplomats and the media that manipulates them. The consequences will be their responsibility, and theirs alone.

YOANI

This "official discourse," persuades desperate Cubans released prisoners deserved to be prey. So Party militants and members of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution are mobilized—pressured—to participate in so-called "repudiation rallies" where they spit on, insult, and knock about the Ladies in White.

Drums (CONGUERO): sounds of bludgeoning and beating. Projection: Laura Pollán shoved against a wall by a CDR supervisory officer during a march of Las Damas de Blanco.

COMANDANTE

Oye, Fulanito! ¿Qué estás haciendo allá con ellas? ¿Jugando con muñequitas?

FULANA

¡No! Estamos escogiendo gladiolos.

COMANDANTE

“¡Escogiendo Gladiolos!” ¡Mira, todos: Fulano está escogiendo flores con las niñas! No puedes hacer eso, Fulano, si quiere ser un hombre. ¿Cómo vas a coger la pelota con manos llenas de gladiolos? Deje caer las flores, Fulano. OYEME. ¿Eres un hombre o una niña? ¿Tiene huevos, Fulanito? Vamos a ver: si no puede atrapar la pelota, no tiene huevitos, si puede cogerlo, si tiene huevitos.

A ball is hurled at FULANA and hits her in the groin. A blow from the CONGUERO.

FULANA

For Fulano, the torment was demoralizing, dangerous. So after he left, before my first day of school in the U.S., I did a little experiment. I snuck into my mother’s bathroom and painted a fingernail. Ay qué linda; it looked so pretty I painted the other nine. My parents were so preoccupied with visas, moving, new jobs, and finding furniture that they didn’t notice. Nor had anyone bothered to give me a haircut in weeks. My locks grew into a cute little bob—very Dorothy Hamill. I hid my Spiderman bag and carried my books in my arms like the girls do. Y así, I entered my first United States classroom at P.S. Cualquiera, with my naturally long eyelashes, rosy cheeks, and inadequate athleticism. And it worked.

YOANI

Hello, little girl. Do you speak English? Pues... ¿cuál es su nombre, niña?

FULANA

(smiles) Fulana.

YOANI

Tome un asiento, Fulana. Welcome to our class!

FULANA

Just like that, instead of taking a stand, I took a seat. Because it was more comfortable that way. I felt reborn. Fulano may have been born in Havana, honey, but Fulana is a native New Yorker! Finally I could have girl friends, flowers, dolls, and—more importantly—*boyfriends*, and no one teased Fulana. I mean, those dumb kids never suspected anything! I continued to sit pretty as Fulana for 30 years. Now that I have facial hair, it is *adults* who bully me...but only sometimes, because, let’s face it, I am not the biggest freak on the sidewalk over here in NYC, verdad?

FULANA sits in front of her computer screen. Projection: Yoani’s Generación Y blog.

FULANA

If I had stayed...I would have been a part of Generación Y. It is so important what Cuban bloggers are doing. I read Yoani's blog every day. I download some entries into my offline archive. If it's really good I click share to post it onto my facebook wall. My friends—people I know and sorta know and don't really know—like it. That's the response I initiate: "Likes." A little cartoon thumbs up. By that I make other people aware, the way she makes me aware. And..? I don't know. It's visibility. It scares them, the censors. They know we are watching. They get concerned. They will back off. If we click enough. If we raise enough hits. What's a hit? To hit. Golpear. Golpes: Blows against a dama.

Projection: Attacks on las Damas de Blanco alternate with tourist shots of a scenic Havana.

CONGUERO (*sings*)

A tourist snaps breathtaking photos
Drives around in a streetcar
Kicks back, has a drink, checks his email,
And posts pix at Hotel Miramar!

YOANI

Hotels demand proof that you live outside Cuba before letting you connect to the internet. I flash my blue residence card to the desk clerks, who are just as native as I am.

COMANDANTE (*as desk clerk*)

Nope, that will not permit you to dive into the vast World Wide Web. Sorry, it's a decision that comes from *above*.

FULANA

What are you going to do?

YOANI

Change myself into a foreigner overnight. Go back disguised as a tourist. I'll have to learn a language as complicated as Hungarian to fool the access-card sellers.

Sound: Telephone rings. FULANA and COMANDANTE answer simultaneously:

COMANDANTE (*as DESK CLERK*)
Hotel Miramar!

FULANA
Cambio Incorporated!

FULANA

(Into the telephone) Two tickets, two limos, and two bidder's paddles for the Tropical Night auction and gala at Jungle Island's Tree Top hotel? *(Projection: Advertisement for "Noche Tropical.")* The item of highest value is a diamond choker; the lowest is a seashell from Varadero. All proceeds benefit prisoners of conscience and the ladies in white....Activists...I'm not sure how the money is actually distributed; the foundation handles that....Yes, of course it will be televised. On Telemundo, mi amor. *(Hangs up. The phone rings.)* Buenas, Cambio Incorporated! Yup, signing up for Tuesday's march comes with a signature shirt and silicone wrist band; pay in

advance and you'll receive it at the rally. (*Projection: t-shirts and wrist bands product ads*) ...Well, Style 1 is a One-size-fits-all solid white crewneck with a Helvetica "CAMBIO" in all caps across the chest. Style 2, also solid white, says "Dama de Blanco" but that one only comes in a babydoll women's fit sizes S, M, L, XL. It's cuter but the XL is really cut like an S so if real women have curves I recommend going with the one-size-fits-all... Yup...The music starts at noon in front of the José Martí statue in Central Park, but some of us are meeting beforehand in front of the Starbucks on 59th and 6th. If I'm going to march in silence all day, I need a venti caramel latte. Oh, and wear all white. No, we only supply the shirts and wristbands but we're supposed to wear all white. Well, okay, try. (*hangs up*) New Yorkers don't wear white. I don't own a single white garment. Why, for example, would I put on a white parka, to get lost in the snowflakes? Or a white suit, to run the risk of soiling my threads while scurrying along the dirty, crowded subway platform? I must rub up against a hundred busy fellow urbanites during my daily commute—and most of that is unintentional—and I tell you white just doesn't make sense. The standard uniform for every New Yorker is a sensible combination of black and gray, sometimes accented by a very dynamic splash of brown. But, white...is the most forgiving hue against sweltering flesh in the hot Havana sun. (*Toying with the manicure set*) I'm going to give myself a French manicure—with gleaming white tips.

Projection: An image of Raúl Castro wearing a milk mustache and a July 26th movement flag with the words "Got Milk? A GUARD carries a tray full of tiny cups through the audience.

COMANDANTE

With new successes in farming reform, I am here to offer you the fruits of our collective labor in the form of cool liquid refreshment. Nourishment, not just for children, for every Cuban. Here I have a glass of milk for anyone who desires one. A glass of milk—for every Cuban!

The little cups are distributed to audience members. Each of the cups are empty but for a strip of paper folded inside stating: "Sorry, no milk today."

YOANI

Of all Raúl Castro's promises, the most incredible one is that every Cuban can drink a glass of precious milk whenever he likes. We might put a man on the moon, take first place in the Olympics, or discover an AIDS vaccine before restoring the forgotten morning café con leche to every person on the island. I have to hear this again.

FULANA

I watched it twice. What glass of milk?

YOANI

For once, *Raúl* was censored.

FULANA

He didn't say anything about a glass of milk.

YOANI

His promise of milk for everyone is gone. Edited out of both print and video versions. I wonder, in our food deliriums...did we dream about our glass of milk, or—

FULANA

Did it really exist? (*Phone rings. She answers the phone while gazing into the computer.*) Buenas Tardes, Cambio Incorporated—! ...yes, I just placed a lunch order online to be delivered asap, but not enough special instructions options were displayed. I'd like to substitute for where it says I have a choice of whole milk or half and half or two percent. Sure, I'll take one order with soy milk. Or how about almond milk...better yet, can you make it with coconut milk, please? And what's the difference if I add coconut water or coconut milk? Oh, and add a wad of fat-free whipped cream on top. Can the delivery guy please hurry? I'm absolutely *famished*.

CONGUERO (*sings:*)

Island of rumbling bellies
Land without leche or cash
Fly here, to our land of plenty
Where we throw surplus milk in the trash

Projection: Yoani Sánchez's Twitter feed:

YOANI

I must decline invitations to speak at your free institutions around the world...they deny my passport even one "permission to exit" from my own country, but I keep insisting...

COMANDANTE

(*storming on with a GUARD*) What do you mean we can't ration the internet? Yes, we can, like everything else. Rationing is fair; rations are not censorship, censorship is not a ban—we lifted the ban on cell phone usage for those who can somehow afford one. Now they arm themselves with little digital handheld weapons. But *bandwith* we can still ration from our internal enemies.

YOANI

Enemies?

COMANDANTE

Enemies of the internet. "Alternative bloggers." Cybermercenaries. A whopping two percent have found ways to circumvent our obstructions and wire their way online to the net—why so many? I mean—if it is a *net*—why can't we catch them?

YOANI

The world is watching. It is not like before. Technology allows everything to come to light.

COMANDANTE

Anyone may bring things to light, under surveillance in RedSocial: a virtual space for Cubans!

YOANI (*to audience*)

Calling all bloggers! Let's enhance web literacy for people taking their first steps into the blogosphere. Each of you gets a pair of wings to express themselves in cyberspace...!

COMANDANTE

I warn you, Señora Sánchez. You have transgressed all limits of tolerance with your rapprochement and contact with counterrevolutionary elements.

YOANI

Okay, could you put this warning in writing?

COMANDANTE

This totally disqualifies you for dialog with Cuban authorities. We, for our part, will take all measures, file the relevant reports, and take the necessary actions.

YOANI

Can you transform this rhythmic recitation into a written document, please? It sounds as if the entire Interior Ministry is programmed to read from a script, so if you could tear out the page—

COMANDANTE

We are not obliged to give you anything!

YOANI

Is that why, when I ask for my passport, I get a beating instead?

CONGUERO

Ayyyyyyy. (*To YOANI, indicating the audience*) Show them all your bruises.

YOANI

I can't. They only got me on my backside.

CONGUERO

How convenient.

YOANI

Exactly.

COMANDANTE

Get - her - OUT of here!

A GUARD forces YOANI off. FULANA appears holding a take-out paper coffee cup overflowing with milk and cream. She is naked but for a pair of white underpants and glistening with sweat.

FULANA

Steam heat drives me crazy. I mean, it's free, but a New York City winter is so looooooong and so I crack and window in my fourth floor walkup apartment which I have all to myself at the top

of my tenement building and strip down to my skivvies to survive the night before I set back answering phones and typing up orders. Sometimes I stick an electric fan on top of the open sill to fall asleep listening to that white noise comfortable hum of knowing that I bought the sucker at the corner Duane Reade and not some black-market dump to be questioned by the *comite del cuadro* WHY I HAVE IT to cool myself—a poor quality thin plastic, generic, used, frayed, non-UL-certified, crappy little electric fan—and how I could afford it with what dollars or pesos and how did I get them and don't I know my comrades are equally hot, too? There—but for the grace of God's capricious wind—blows my immigrant ass—straight from el Malecón and right down the East River promenade...

Projection: The spinning blades of a large electric fan. Upstage, a wind machine whirs and blasts the audience with its breeze. The gust blows the foam of FULANA's latte, everyone's hair, programs, and paper cups left over from the milk scene. It only ceases after it has made the audience very uncomfortable. Sound: A mosquito buzzing. Projection: A mosquito flies across the screen. Fulana chases it with a flyswatter. Buzzing morphs with various Apple/Mac/PC alert sounds as the insect flies, lands, does somersaults, etc. It disappears. Silence. Then:

FULANA

It got me! Landed on me...and it is biting me. It's burrowing inside my skin. It's inside me.

COMANDANTE

OYEME, Fulano. ¿Eres un hombre o una niña? ¿Tiene huevos, Fulanito? Vamos a ver: si no puede atrapar la pelota, no tiene huevitos, si puede cogerlo, si tiene huevitos.

PROJECTION: Image of the 2013 robot mosquito drone developed by the US Government.

CONGUERO (as commercial voice)

Introducing the latest innovation in military miniaturization: a biologically inspired microdrone mosquito! Complete with compound eyes, flapping wings, and honeybee-like hairs, the tiny metallic bug is as stealthy and undetectable as its organic counterpart—but better. This petite predator can sense biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. It can inject enemies with toxins. Sponsored by the US Air Force. Aim high...fly, fight, win.

FULANA

Sometimes I'll be clicking along silently down the sidewalk and some idiot will try to trip me, hurl an insult, or jab me in the ribs. But nothing like Fulano's playground at age six. That was much worse. That was like—bueno, you saw what happened to Laura Pollán on the news? Could have been me, had I remained there, a defenseless woman fighting for my life. So from the safer sidewalks of Manhattan island, I activate myself and a little tiny part of the tiny non-profit for a really good cause back home on my Cuban island. I mean, what is happening with las damas, is getting big. Serious. This is something that needs... ya tú sabes, *t-shirts*.

Projection: Fulana's design of a "damas de blanco" tshirt. She toggles to a tab Yoani's blog entitled "Soft Diet." Sound: The clamor of prison bars. Projection: A dirty bunk mattress strewn with primitive dental instruments improvised from spoons, scraps, and wire.

YOANI (*blogging out loud*)

That afternoon the last of his canine teeth would be extracted. He would show his smooth-gummed mouth to the prison authorities and say they had fallen out on their own, as had happened to the character in the film *Papillon*, which he had seen as a boy. (*Projection: Stills of Steve McQueen in Papillon.*) In that film the prisoner had suffered from scurvy, but he, no. He had renounced his teeth to get access to the soft diet given to prisoners who could not chew.

COMANDANTE (as Adolfo, a prisoner)

Pssst. Psssssst...! ¿Oye, Cojo?

CONGUERO (Cojo)

¿Oye, Adolfo!

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

¿Cojo, me oyes?

CONGUERO (Cojo)

Por supuesto.

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

(*Lowering his voice*) Bueno, ven aca.

CONGUERO (Cojo)

(*Dragging himself up onto the stage*) ¿Qué quieres, Adolfo?

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

Me? ¿Sabes lo qué quiero? ¡Plátanos maduros!

CONGUERO (Cojo)

¿Plátanos maduros? Too bad, I don't have any. Goodbye.

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

Esperate, Cojo. Compañero. Amigo.

CONGUERO (Cojo)

You forget my most valuable designation: Dentista.

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

Claro, dentista. Only you have the power leave me toothless. A profitable predicament guaranteeing that I be served some piping hot puré de maduros, my friend.

CONGUERO (Cojo)

I see your last tooth is a sweet one.

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

My last tooth is rotten, yellow, and twisted.

CONGUERO (Cojo)

¿Entonces... ?

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

¿Y tú, Cojo, qué quieres?

CONGUERO (Cojo)

¿Hoy? Hoy, como siempre: cigarillos. I'm out.

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

How many cigarettes will you require to pull out my last eye tooth? More than ten?

CONGUERO (Cojo)

How would you get so many. What favors are you trading the guards for their cigarettes?

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

Nevermind, Cojo, it's your favor for me I want to talk about.

CONGUERO (Cojo)

Extraction is not a favor. It is a service.

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

Claro, claro, dentista. You are the best.

CONGUERO (Cojo)

I am the only.

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

Have I not been your best customer? From the first time I came to declare to you that, with the crap they give us to chew on, the teeth surrounding my tongue are useless? This is the final time I will be able to engage your services, Dr. Cojo. After this, I will be only gums.

CONGUERO (Cojo)

¿Estás listo...y estás seguro?

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

An empty mouth means never again will I have to sink a tooth into rancid, maggot-infested meat.

CONGUERO (Cojo)

¿Todavía no quieres comer, ni morder ni masticar?

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

What good is my bite against the sting of the mosquitos who always get me in my sleep. Each night I slap my own skin, but it has already been bitten. Besides, this last yellow twisted tooth is full of cavities. Please take it, Cojo. I want my next meal with be what the toothless prisoners get: those little aluminum trays with mountains of mashed plátanos and sweet potatoes...

CONGUERO (Cojo)

(After a beat) Abra la boca. *(Adolfo does. Cojo sticks a finger in. Another beat.)* Twenty. Twenty cigarettes. My standard going price for a canine.

COMANDANTE (Adolfo)

Bueno, it is settled. Tonight, you will taste tobacco. Tomorrow, I will savor maduros.

YOANI *(blogging out loud)*

Cojo prepares his instruments as if he held a diploma in dentistry.

CONGUERO *(sings)*

Chiseling with a cuchara
A small scrap of spoon pries it loose
Two wires twisted like pliers
Yank out the tooth by its root

YOANI *(blogging out loud)*

Adolfo slept through the throbbing around the hole that had once sheltered his eyetooth, dreaming of an aluminum tray brimming over with soft puree.

Sound: High-pitched noise of dental drilling and polishing. Projection: the dirty bunk mattress to a brightly upholstered dental chair. FULANA turns to the audience with sugar on her face.

FULANA

Sure sweeties, so I'm stashing seven—okay, now six—sugar sopapillas—but balanced by this box of sugar-free tiny toffee truffles —and all this just adds up to office drawer snacks for a whole week—which I have promised my hips I will only dip into with cautious moderation. *(Pops a toffee truffle into her mouth.)* Porque tú sabes, a moment on the lips—*(stops suddenly and plasters a hand over her cheek in pain, eyes large, followed by a string of curse words in espanglés:)*—ayyy shit-coño-carajo-hijo de puta golosina...¡¡MI MUELA!!! *(jumps up and down in pain)* Ya, ya, tranquila Fulanita, calm yourself. Count to ten. Porque my therapist says that, with a little patience and perspective, tragedies are transformed into opportunities. *(quickly)* One-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten! Coño, it hurts! Damn you, truffle! Unless...wait, unless... *(switches back to nibbling on a sopapilla)* Aaaauggghh where is my phone, my phone, my phone...I think it's in my murse—my man purse, you know, murse? Where is it, where is it, where is it.... aha!

Projection: FULANA Googles “dentist nyc”—a lot of colorful, noisy ads pop up.

CONGUERO (*commercial*)

Wanna get that game-show host smile? Dial your dream dentist now for 100% realistic, 1000% fabulous Lightening Lumineers™. Sensitivity-free, insurance-free, toll-free 212-222-TOOTH. No down payment, no problem. Quick. Simple. Do it on your lunch hour and still have leftover time to chow down on complimentary cuisine with your brand new teeth!”

FULANA *dials the number.*

CONGUERO (*sings*)

Purchasing porcelain perfection
Choppers from Park Avenue
Chipped your tooth on a confection?
Don't panic; buy a new you!

FULANA

As a new patient, I do paperwork and drop down a deposit in exchange for a sticker designating me a “Lightening Luminary.” I clock 44 minutes skimming that vital periodical that Americans read only waiting rooms: *National Geographic*. I feel edified, enriched. I study a map of the volcanic cones of Kilaminjaro. I learn that, though we say that mosquitoes bite, they are toothless. That instead of biting, a mosquito sucks a feast of our blood through a long tubular appendage—its *proboscis*. When the receptionist announces my name through a little trap door in the glass window, I'm feeling really good about myself, like *Geographic's* yellow frame is floating around my face. I'm smart, radiant, and about to upgrade my smile—but before I can pass through that glass or get to slink down into the hydraulic chair or slip into a luxurious paper bib, the nurse takes one look at me and steps back. Next thing I know the dentist makes an appearance on *my* side of the glass—I mean he makes an exceptional waiting room call, coming out there special, just for me. He glares, pulls on an extra layer of latex and curls his mouth down. And just like that, frowning and double gloved, has the nerve to ask me—

COMANDANTE (Park Ave Dentist)

Do you have AIDS?

FULANA

What?? Why??

YOANI (as Receptionist)

Sir, I think you just made a mistake on your form. You checked “female” instead of “male.” An accident, right?

FULANA

What does that have to do with having AIDS?

COMANDANTE (Park Ave Dentist)

I don't approve of this kind of...*thing* in my office.

FULANA

Well I don't approve of genderphobic dentists. But notice I put down a Washington Heights address, so most of my barrio agrees with you. Ever go up there?

YOANI (Park Ave Receptionist)

Sir—or, um (*clears throat*)...this is a medical office... you *must* specify the correct gender—

FULANA

What difference does it make—is my chipped tooth a girl or a boy?

COMANDANTE (Park Ave Dentist)

Listen, Mr. or Ms. *whatever* you are —

FULANA

Yo, really, dentist? Am I really in F-ing NYC right now? 2013?

YOANI (Receptionist)

Sir, please be careful. There's a *baby* in the waiting room.

FULANA

I look around for the first time at my waiting room neighbors who are unusually attentive, listening, and nervous. There *is* a baby. And teenage twins dressed in matching “Upper East Side High School” Lacrosse jerseys. Sitting opposite a couple of married couples—married as in the *real* kind of married—one man and one woman—one white heterosexy pair of which clutches the baby. All standing a little too near menacing ol' me. So—I don't know why—but I take a step back myself, real cowardly-like...and I take my pride, along with my toffee chipped tooth—and their copy of National Geographic—back on the 1 train, getting weird looks all the way back to my humble walkup on 182nd. Where I pray. I pray. For the pain to subside in what's left of my tooth. I pray. For my liberal New York City brothers to bring it back around. I pray. For my repugnant and repentant damned ex-communicated soul, for my pseudo-Manhattanite, poseur fashionista, sorry ass not-for profit, phone answering self.

Projection: Huffington Post: *When will Transgender New Yorkers Gain Acceptance in Hospitals?*; The Advocate: *Transgender Woman Reported Gang Raped in New York*; La Jiribilla: *El socialismo no puede ser homofóbico*; Workers World: *Cuba's CENESEX proposes Groundbreaking Transsexual Rights*; USA Today: *“NY Man Guilty of Hate Crime in Transgender Death”*

YOANI (*blogging out loud*)

Mariela Castro is pushing new measures to allow citizens access to sex change surgery. What about coming out of the closet with our political opinions? How can we invoke a tolerance that is parceled out and unfinished? (*shifting to her Twitter account*) @marielacastro: Tolerance is total or is it not? When will we Cubans be able to come out of other closets?"

Projection: Mariela Castro's response to Yoani:

FULANA (as @marielacastro)

@yoanisanchez: Your focus of tolerance reproduces the old mechanisms of power. To improve your 'services' you need to study.

Projection: Twitter erupts against @marielacastro in support of @yoanisanchez. Text on top of text on top of text dissolves among a flock of frenzied blue twitter birds in cyberspace. Sound: The CONGUERO beats out a rapid sequence to capture the collective tweeting and typing.

FULANA (as @marielacastro)

Despicable parasites: did you receive the order from your employers to respond to me in unison and with the same predetermined script? Be creative.

CONGUERO (as @asombra)

"Parasites"? Castro, Inc. is the ultimate parasite and always has been. *(laughs wickedly)*

[Projection: A mosquito sucking blood with the cartoon Twitter bird flapping overhead.]

COMANDANTE

The internet. El Red. Reading 200 internet articles a day has revived me. I now even write again, I “blog.” The *Los Angeles Times* calls me a “resuscitated revolutionary.”

YOANI

Just like Rip van Winkle, awakened in the 21st century.

COMANDANTE

Look: *Granma*, our national revolutionary newspaper, is now granma.com.

YOANI

And since that is Cuba’s only newspaper, the program to modernize the press is complete.

COMANDANTE

It was easy. Anyone can do it. Anyone. You know what that means, comrade? It means—

COMANDANTE & YOANI

The Internet has put an end to secrets.... it is within reach of the whole world...

YOANI

...well, not the whole world. Cubans can’t get online. For us it’s not INTERNet, but INTRANet, connecting only inside, reading only what they want us to read. The reign of *Granma* continues. Less than thirteen percent of the population have ever touched a keyboard.

COMANDANTE

It’s just that it’s too expensive to grant satellite access to Cuban citizens, since the damned U.S. blockade denies us use of its underwater fiber optic cable...it only runs as far as our shore...

YOANI

To the shore. It would be so easy to just reach over and plug the island in.

CONGUERO

El Red censored, blocked,
filtered and slow
Not plugged in?:
blame the U.S. Embargo!

YOANI (*blogging out loud*)

Twitter's 140 character limit has made me a more tolerant and respectful person.

FULANA (as @MARIELACASTRO)

Your focus of tolerance! (*a blow from the CONGUERO*) You need to study!

YOANI (*blogging out loud*)

To evade a question by attacking the other's lack of education borders on arrogance. The voice can be trained, tolerance acquired, the ear opened to listening to others.

FULANA (as @MARIELACASTRO)

Despicable parasites!

YOANI

Those mosquitoes finally award me my passport—because millions of other eyes are following. The price of forcing me to stay was becoming too high. They've uncaged me for 80 days.

Projection: Image of Yoani Sánchez's 2013-issued passport.

COMANDANTE

You see? Everyone is free to move about the cabin.

YOANI

A true revolution is occurring. One without bearded men or rifles, no leader shouting from a platform. Instead its commanders carry strange names like Gmail, Wordpress, Skype and Facebook. Will the technological revolution last more than fifty years?

COMANDANTE (*to audience*)

Pupils of the School of the Holy Rosary! Listen UP! This institution is now nationalized and renamed School for the Agrarian Reform. Do you miss your GOD? Do you want ice cream? Yes to both? No problem. Pray to your God for ice cream and see what he says. I'll wait...

CONGUERO

Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee
Unless you're a liberal or homo
That's religious democracy

FULANA

Four rosaries and two bags of chicharrones later—biting down with my back teeth only—all my purple candles burn down from praying. The wax cries right off the table and onto the floor, puddling at the feet of the crucifix above my makeshift altar. I let the dripping hot mess burn my knees as penance for my sad episode at the dentist, and to distract me from the throbbing in my front tooth, and suddenly I remember why I do everything I do. (*Projection: CAMBIO, Inc. logo. FULANA stands, the words covering her.*) Staring at the length of wax extending my crucifix to the floor, I experience a vivid memory of my last day of school before I left Cuba. I was 6 years old. El comandante was visiting former Catholic schools to shift our focus from religion to Revolution. In the chapel they asked all of the children—

COMANDANTE

How many of you believe in God?

FULANA

(*raising hand*) I do.

COMANDANTE

How many of you like ice cream?

FULANA

(*raising and waving hand around excitedly*) I do, I do, I do!

COMANDANTE

Bueno, then why don't you try praying to your God for ice cream? (*Taps foot, checks watch.*)

FULANA

It was indoctrination in the worst way. Of course I didn't realize it at the time. I didn't know what to think.

COMANDANTE

Give up?

FULANA

No ice cream appeared. It wasn't the first time I remember being disappointed in God.

COMANDANTE

Now try praying instead to Fidel for ice cream!

FULANA

When we opened our eyes every miliciano in the chapel auditorium held an ice cream cone. The new government brought us the ice cream that wouldn't fall from God. Everyone in my row got to take a lick. It was real.

COMANDANTE

You see?!

FULANA

But it didn't stop there. One soldier took down the crucifix from the altar and laid it along the threshold of the egress. So in order to return to the classroom...we had to step on Jesus Christ.

COMANDANTE

God is not here.

FULANA

I don't want to step on it...I am petrified of sacrilege.

COMANDANTE

Patria o muerte.

FULANA

When during my last confession I asked the priest why was I a little boy and not a little girl he prescribed penance and great shame. The six year old me was already aware that I was a stranger in my own body and in my own church. So at six, I came out of both the closet and the confessional with residual shame. I tried to die and resurrect like Jesus, with outstretched arms, but felt my limbs were someone else's. And the *church* was stepping on *me*. (*FULANA—head cocked and arms extended as in crucifixion—convulses from the core, experiencing a mental stampede of the stomach. CONGUERO beats out stomping footsteps to correspond with each crushing blow.*) When I left home, I floated away from the port of Mariel among a small crowd of beautiful queens of the highest order. They held court on that boat, organizing and clapping and cheering and singing—like midwives redelivering me from one shore to another. I concluded we all must be traveling to some utopian place where it will finally be okay to express who you are. For a change. (*Projection: The Cambio Inc. logo reappears.*) For a change. But now there is evidence that things are changing faster on the Cuban island than in the Manhattan one. Collective minds are opening up in Cuba. Mariela Castro, daughter of el jefe, has founded CENESEX: a government funded, free-for-citizens national center devoted to guaranteeing and promoting the *full* exercise of sexual rights for *everyone* on the island! (*Hand on her hip.*) Beat that, U.S.A. (*Flourish from the CONGUERO*) Wake up! (*flourish*) In Washington Square, an increase in intolerance and hate speech. But in Revolution Square, thousands chanting “Genderphobia, no! Socialism, yes!” Castrocare covers sex changes! Wake up!

CONGUERO

Deeeeeeeeeespierta America! Ahora mismo, aquí en canal 23, en vivo, los ataques contra los ciudadanos homosexuales en parques alrededor de la isla de Manhattan.

FULANA

What have we been doing? Sitting by, watching, enabling, drowning, profiting? Stubbornly sustaining this pointless embargo? And the atrocities in Guantanamo, you know that is us—as in *us* –U-S—doing that. What are we thinking? I've got to find out for myself...what Fulano would have become. I have to return and experience—the change. I am going back home to finally become Fulana. To be repatriated as a woman—a *Cuban* woman. CENESEX will restore me, finally, and gracias a Dios. Because I can't afford these Park Avenue plastics.

CONGUERO (*sings*)

Castro's pinkwashing has duped him
Lauding false liberality
Masking repression with tolerance
So yanquis believe we are "free"

FULANA

And with the recent lift on travel restrictions, I can even make a pit stop through Miami. So I can eat some real Cuban food before going to Cuba. And so I can pop open the family safe deposit box at Pan American—I want to pick up the keepsake key to unlock our old Havana mansion on Calle 50.

CONGUERO

(*shrugs*) Twelve families live in there now, all crammed together. One of them will let him in.

Projection: an image of a Café Versailles or La Carreta stand at Miami International Airport.

YOANI

At Miami International Airport I'm immediately greeted by the intoxicating, forgotten but familiar smell of café con leche, pasteles, and fresh Cuban bread wafting through the terminal onto the jetway.

CONGUERO

(*announcing*) People, please be ready at the front of the line. Have your passport out and flexed open to the picture page, please. Su pasaporte, por favor...Passport, please...

FULANA

(*to YOANI*) Excuse me. I notice you are carrying your Cuban documents—

YOANI

Are you following me?

CONGUERO

(*interrupting, to YOANI*) Passport, please.

FULANA

No, no! Well, only on your blog, Doctora Sánchez...I—it's just that—

CONGUERO

(*To YOANI, stamping her passport*) Ah, you are Cuban. So am I.

FULANA

That is what I was trying to say: I'm Cuban, too!

YOANI

Oh...!? Well, how about that, we are all Cuban!

COMANDANTE

Me too.

YOANI

(Moving downstage to address the audience) And you all? Are there any other Cubans? *(she smiles)* Well, then...I guess, it appears...that I am home.