

## BOOKSHELF

# FIU's Pérez-Stable discusses book on U.S.-Cuba relations

BY DOREEN HEMLOCK

Relations between a great power and its weaker neighbor are rarely easy. The United States and Cuba have never had normal relations that are mutually beneficial and respectful. That task is still pending.

So begins *"The United States and Cuba: Intimate Enemies,"* the latest book by Cuban-born academic Marifeli Pérez-Stable, a sociology professor at Florida International University and non-resident senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue, a think tank known for its progressive stances.

Pérez-Stable's 208-page book (ISBN 978-0-415-80451-6; paperback, \$38.95) takes a pragmatic approach to U.S.-Cuba ties. She argues that it's up to Washington and Havana to commit to what will be "a slow, incremental, sometimes regressive process of overcoming mistrust accumulated over more than five decades" to establish normal relations.

"Conditioning the process to impossible demands — the United States that Cuba move toward a democratic transition, and Havana that Washington life the embargo wholesale — only extends the stalemated *status quo*... Both capitals sorely need to make a concerted effort at *realpolitik*," she wrote.

Pérez-Stable presented her new work at a Coral Gables book store Feb. 24 to about 50 people in a session that was brief with few fireworks, highlighting the shift in South Florida's Cuban-American community away from ideology and toward greater pragmatism.

The long-time scholar described herself as straddling two worlds, living in the United

States and keeping Cuba in her heart. Havana hasn't let her back into the island since 1991.

Pérez-Stable said U.S.-Cuban relations are influenced by far more than the Cold War. For at least a century, Cuba has held an expectation that the more powerful United States would treat the island as an equal. "But Cuba never will be a great power, even though we Cubans may think it is," she joked.

In writing the book, Pérez-Stable said the hardest task was describing the Cuban-American exile community. She wanted "to be fair," giving credit when due but also criticizing as needed — for example, denouncing violence against moderate exiles.

Although that community has long allied itself with Washington, it has its own agenda, separate from that of the U.S. government. Those differences may emerge more starkly once the United States relates to a democratic Cuba, she said.

Asked why Cuba isn't seeing the kind of protests now shaking the Arab world, Pérez-Stable cited two key reasons: first, the high hopes many held for the Cuban revolution ended in disenchantment. Ordinary Cubans today don't necessarily believe in fighting for something else, she said.

Also, Cubans have one of the world's lowest rates of Internet usage, so spreading information or planning protests is more difficult.

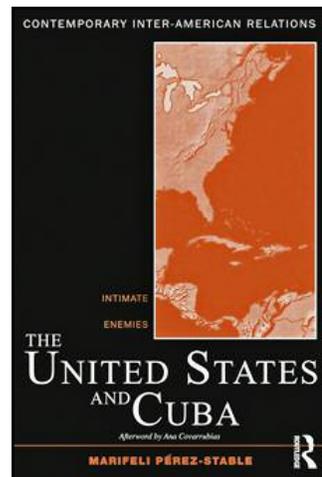
Remarking on current U.S.-Cuba relations, Pérez-Stable rejected the embargo as a tool for regime change in Cuba. She said the nearly 50-year-old U.S. policy has not isolated Cuba, gives Cuba's leaders a scapegoat and unintentionally props up the Cuban government.

"We have to de-Americanize the problem of Cuba," she said, quoting Cuban dissident Oswaldo Payá. Cuba's woes are fundamentally the responsibility of Cubans themselves and not outsiders, she added.

Asked about future U.S.-Cuban ties, Pérez-Stable saw Cuba losing importance for the United States except on issues linked to immigration and drug-trafficking.

She said Cuba will need to adapt to its role as a weaker neighbor. In the end, Washington may find that it best serves its own interests "to look on from afar as Cubans, and to a lesser extent, Cuban-Americans, determine the island's future." □

*Details: Routledge Publishers, c/o Taylor & Francis Inc., 7625 Empire Drive, Florence, KY 41042-2919. Tel: (800) 634-7064. Fax: (800) 248-4724. Email: orders@taylorandfrancis.com.*



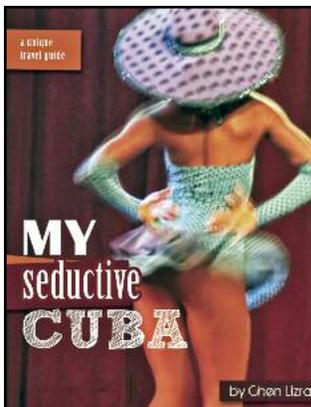
## 'My Seductive Cuba' a uniquely personal travel guide

Enough books have been written about Cuba to fill an entire library, but few take the approach Chen Lizra does with *"My Seductive Cuba."*

Deeply personal and always engaging, Lizra — an Israeli-born dance instructor and entrepreneur now living in Canada, fuses history and politics with her real-life experiences among the people of this often-visited but little-understood island.

The result is a moving portrayal of Cuba on the verge of historic change.

Edited by Larry Luxner (who also happens to be editor of *CubaNews*), Lizra's book will be published this summer. In addition to lots



of practical information on where to go in Cuba, what to pack and how to get there, *"My Seductive Cuba"* is also filled with advice on fun subjects like how to spot opportunists and where to find Havana's best reggaetón, flamenco, jazz and salsa clubs.

A glossary of Cuban slang and a description of the Santería religion — along with a vivid chapter titled "Getting Possessed" — makes this travel guide even more captivating.

When she's not writing, the Vancouver-based businesswoman devotes her time to perfecting her dance moves and leading specialized tour groups to her beloved adopted island.

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## Daughter of the Caribbean

"Daughter of the Caribbean," a rich saga by Norma Jennings that ties Jamaican history, politics and culture with a riveting family tale, also includes two key chapters that connect the family tree to Cuba and the 1959 revolution.

Chapter 9, "Letters from Cuba," describes how members of the Jennings family winds up in Cuba and eventually how the revolution tears them apart until all communication is broken.

Later on, in Chapter 14, "A Trip to Cuba," these family members reconnect under difficult circumstances — including a harrowing escape attempt that puts the main character out to sea only to find himself landed at Guantánamo Bay.

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