An Anarchist View from Havana: 
Isbel Diaz Torres

The Final Straw Radio

Isbel Diaz Torres, a participant in the Taller Libertario Alfredo López / ABRA in Havana, Cuba, speaks in an interview recorded in late 2018. In this chat, Isbel talks about the ABRA which is the only openly anarchist organization in Cuba at the time, about the LGBTQ movement and abortion right, political discourse and difference, government co-optation, neoliberalism, animal rights, repression of dissent and the erasure of anarchist history.

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Isbel Diaz Torres is a participant in the Taller Libertario Alfredo López / ABRA in Havana, Cuba. This text is a transcription from an audio recording shared by comrades, from late 2018. In this chat, Isbel talks about the ABRA, which [at the time of recording] is the only openly anarchist organization in Cuba, about the LGBTQ movement and abortion rights which are both facing repression due to pressure from Cuban Evangelical and Catholic churches on the Cuban government, political discourse and difference, government co-optation, neoliberalism, animal rights, repression of dissent and the erasure of anarchist history.

To learn more about ABRA, they have a website at CentroSocialABRA.Wordpress.Com as well as a fedbook page as AbraCuba and one for Taller Libertario Alfredo Lopez. ABRA is affiliated with the Federacion Anarquista de Centro America y el Caribe, or the Caribbean and Central American Anarchist Federation, which can be found in Spanish at f-anarquista-cc.blogspot.com.

Also of interest may be: Frank Fernandez’s book, Cuban Anarchism, which you can order online or read for free online at The Anarchist Library. Another book suggestion is Anarchist Cuba: Countercultural Politics in the Early Twentieth Century by Kirwin Shaffer.
The Final Straw Radio: I guess, just tell us who you are and what this space is.

Isbel Diaz Torres: OK, my name is Isbel Diaz Torres and I am a member of Taller Libertario Alfredo López which is, I guess, the only anarchist organization here in Cuba – but it doesn’t mean that we are the only anarchist people – who are organized and public as us from my knowledge. We’ve been working for almost 10 years as an anarchist organization but before that, we were one of the anti-capitalist organizations in general, independent ones, in Cuba. Eventually, we decided that we wanted to form an anarchist group, so we made it. And the space, although it is run by us, by the people of the Taller Libertario Alfredo López, is not exactly an anarchist space only. It’s open to communitarian activities, anything that we like because we feel it is coherent with our view of what life is and what development is, what culture is, etc. The space is ABRA, it’s just a word in Spanish that has about seven different meanings. Over there, you can see the word ABRA. It also means ‘open’, by the way, ‘open the door = abra la puerta’.

We started this place almost a year ago, in May 2018. We made crowdfunding on the Internet because first we were touring in France and Spain and the comrades there had all kinds of different libraries, cafes, physical spaces where they could gather and have meetings. They all the time asked us, ‘Do you have a place?’ We didn’t have a place. So the ideas started there: why don’t we create a physical space for us to meet.

With the help of all the comrades we met in France and Spain, we made the crowdfunding, the got the money and bought the house. It’s not completely ready yet, we are still working and deciding what kind of activities we want to do here. We don’t want to go very past, because we want to be inserted in the community more organically. We don’t want to look like aliens who come here and tell people what they need to think or do. We just want to be neighbors and propose activities, get to know what they need or want. We have pretty much the same needs because we live here, this is what we are trying to do with this space.

The Final Straw Radio / An Anarchist View From Havana
TFSR: The first thing that caught my attention was the big, rainbow flag. And also, we went to a sub-cultural event in Santa Clara at Mijunque. I couldn’t tell if it was a gay bar or just had gay nights, but there seemed to be some overlaps there. Is anarchism and counter culture very linked to the LGBT movement in Cuba? What’s the history of the relationship between them?

IDT: I don’t think you can say that anarchism and the LGBT movement have a link. A link in a way are some of us who are gay or lesbians, or queer people. But not because of the history of the movements. If we go to the history of the movement of anarchism in Cuba, it was pretty much anarcho-syndicalism. I wouldn’t say it has any relation to a gender topic or LGBT topic. The only link that I can identify is quite interesting: some of the anarcho-syndicalist groups in the 40-50s of the past century had these naturist groups who went to the wild naked and had this kind of interaction, it was very cool. It has something to do with sex or gender. But this is just something I want to say about, but this is not that they were really thinking in these terms like the LGBT movement or feminism.

The thing is that my boyfriend and I are a gay couple. So we are promoting this topic inside our group. In most other groups, the majority is heterosexual males, so, in a way, that is a process of learning how to break all the paradigms of hetero-sexism. The difference is that we have access, we’ve been in touch with people with different perspectives on it. When people come to the common LGBT movement in Cuba they receive the information that you can see on the Internet, but they don’t know about radical LGBT or queer people, radical feminism, etc. We have a lot of materials like that, we want to promote these ideas. In our library and the stuff that we publish, we have the materials that we want to be promoted. That is something different when you see the LGBT spectrum, you can see right-wing people, leftists, and us – we are more radical about it.

TFSR: What is right wing in Cuba? And also, you talk about being in anti-capitalist groups. What does being an anti-capitalist mean in Cuba? Does everyone think that they live in an anti-capitalist country?

*The Final Straw Radio / An Anarchist View From Havana*
IDT: I guess people don’t think in those terms anymore. That was part of our language 20 years ago but not anymore. People don’t think about it. That’s why we use the word anti-capitalist, and even for a Cuban it’s like, come on, man, what are talking about? Nobody cares about it. In fact, if you ask them, they will say they love capitalism. Although they don’t really accept it, they don’t say it in those terms. But they love consumption, international corporations that come and invest in Cuba, they agree with the credits or the whole economic structure related to capitalism. They don’t have questions about it. In fact, when they make demands to the government, it’s pretty much asking for that kind of economic liberties. So they like capitalism in many ways.

It’s very difficult, cause you have different discourses. On the one hand, you have the speech of the government and they would say that anyone who opposes them are right-wing. You just need to be loyal to the system, not to the idea of emancipation, etc. You have to be loyal to the government and its leaders, that’s the idea of what a leftist person is, of what anti-capitalism is.

On the other hand, all people recognize capitalism as what it is – a system of relations where people are alienated in many ways. From my perspective, everything is there, what social class you are, if you are a worker or an owner, but also your gender, race, the color of skin, where you come from, what part of the island you are, what’s your job, how much money you have. Everything has to do with being anti-capitalist. They don’t want to acknowledge that, of course. For us, we can identify right-wing movement or right-wing persons or collectives here in Cuba, both in the system and independent ones. For example, there is one organization here in Cuba named Estado de SATS, it’s pretty much the most prominent right-wing organization here. Of course, they are against the government, the government represses they as much as they can, and they are like think tanks, they propose designs of the colony?? that has to do with free-market or private property. They want to privatize pretty much everything, including the healthcare and educational systems. That’s obvious that they are right-wing in that sense, but when you try to find out what their position is regarding other topics like abortion, relationship...the

The Final Straw Radio / An Anarchist View From Havana
position on LGBT people in society or racism, etc., they might have a progressive position about it.

Then you have other sectors in the society that... Maybe they are not promoting this kind of free market, but they have a very conservative position, they are members of very orthodox Christian churches, they are against gay, equalitarian marriage. We’ve been fighting with them last months. So, that’s another part of society. Maybe they are not organized politically, like challenging the government, but they do have the means and resources to promote these ideas.

And then, inside the government. I first mentioned the right-wing opposition, then I mentioned Church and all the families who are gathered around that. And the third place in my opinion, inside the government, there are a lot of people who are promoting economic activities that include lifting any... Do you call it the opposition of protectionism? No taxes for foreign investors to come to Cuba and do what they want, or no workers unions inside those businesses, international corporations, that kind of design of economic relations – this is what they promote. And in my opinion, they are right-wing.

**TFSR And is abortion legal in Cuba?**

**IDT:** Abortion, yes. It is a struggle that we already won. We are afraid that it can be strictly regulated. I’m worried because the government is in constant dialogue with the Catholic church and with protestant churches. Both of them opposed the possibility of gay marriage to be included in the Constitution recently. They made strong statements saying that the people who go to their churches would vote NO to the new constitution if they didn’t change that, regarding the equalitarian marriage. And the government complied, accepted it and changed it. So they know that they have enough strength, to challenge the government, to do what they want them to do. And on the other hand, those conversations are never public. You never know what they are talking about. They have meetings but they are not open to the press. It really doesn’t matter, because the Cuban press doesn’t care what happens anywhere. So I’m concerned in that sense.
TFSR: I want to go back to the history of anarchism before the revolution...

IDT: I will do my best, but Mario is the one who knows it better. I could give some relevant...

TFSR: Yeah, a broad picture...

IDT: First, I recommend reading the book Anarchism in Cuba by Frank Fernandez. He lives in Miami and the book is both in Spanish and English. You can download it or buy it on Amazon. This is a good version of the history of the anarchist movement in Cuba before 1955, before the triumph of the revolution.

As I mentioned, it was mainly anarcho-syndicalist movement and there was this person, Alfredo Lopez, that guy over there (pointing to a poster) who was connected with the liberation movement in Cuba.
But, of course, at some point, because of the link of the leaders – Fidel Castro and there were some leaders of the 26th of July Movement – with the Partido Socialista Popular (there was this party in Cuba who received direct orders from the USSR Communist Party), after the triumph of the revolution, most anarchists were sent to prison, were killed or sent to exile. So it collapsed. Mario has the exact date of the last public meeting they held to place maybe one year after the triumph of the revolution, that was the last time we heard about it. And there was no anarchist movement for decades. Maybe you can find on the internet some references to other groups, Zapata Group or something like that. But we don’t have any certainty if they existed during the 80-90s. You can have a look on the Internet, but we don’t have any direct information. As far as we know, we are who took the spirit of anarchism again and tried to make a movement with that.

On the other hand, I can say that the anarchist spirit in a way was present in the common sense of the people of Cuba. That’s part of the work that Mario does: trying to identify the anti-authoritarian structures of people who decided to organized beyond the government or with no relation to the government. For us, it’s a symptom of anarchist feeling. Maybe for you, it has nothing to do, but for Cuba, everything was related to the government for decades: we had no private property, the state checked every single activity you can imagine – economic of even your personal relationship, culture, art – everything was controlled by the government. So when you find something that tried to exist outside those barriers, then you consider it a symptom of anarchist spirit.

**TFSR:** I read the Frank Fernandez book years ago and it described anarcho-syndicalist unions that had tens and hundreds of thousands of members and wondering, where did they go after the revolution? He talks about some of them that were exiled or killed, but 10’s of thousands of members?

**IDT:** The activity of the Communist Party, because they infiltrated into those organizations and turned that into vertical unions and communist structures. So when we talk about people who were exiled
or killed, we talk about the heads of movements, but common workers were the victims of the Partido Socialista Popular (the name of the previous communist party).

**TFSR:** That’s a good segue. I understand that the modern Cuban authoritarian state uses a subtle and soft touch in order to exert its influence politically, but what does it look like today, how the state influences dissent or alternative political organizing?

**IDT:** Well, they have an impact. When you are a member, you feel it. If you are just a neighbor, you say, “No, nothing is wrong, nothing is really happening”. For example, you can see this poster here, it was there facing the street. And we received an inspection, not a political one. It said you have no license to put that banner over there, so you have a ticket for 200 pesos and 2 days to remove it. And they inspect the whole house, cause they said that they received an anonymous complaint that we were illegally constructing here, which was a lie, just an excuse to get into the house, inspect the whole house.

For example, the most common thing they do is out of the structure of employment has changed in the last years, but maybe 10-15 years ago, I’ve been working for almost 20 years, all employees were state employees. So if you receive a visit at your workplace, and this political police talks to your boss, like, this guy is having meetings with counter-revolutionary people, you can be fired. My boyfriend has been fired, and he is an optometrist. So that kind of pressure is over us, but that’s for us who have a public face, we consider ourselves anti-capitalists and we have friends and comrades of different movements all around the world. But when you go small organizations (yeah, we are very small), the ones that just started, that have no history, it’s very easy for them to dismantle that, with one phone call they will stop them. It’s very real. And it’s not what they do, it’s also the history that still is in the imagination of people. It triggers something there that says, OK, I cannot say this or that in a public place because it can be repressed. And they say, there is no repression, but the people repress themselves, they don’t express themselves freely, and it will work.

*The Final Straw Radio / An Anarchist View From Havana*
So when you make a comparison, like you say there is repression in Cuba, but we never saw a policeman beating people on the street with rubber, with gas or anything like that. But what I think is much worse is that they don’t even need that. The control is so well-installed in the brain of people, in the common sense of the communities, that they don’t need that kind of stuff.

That’s the reason why people, very few of them have come inside this house. Most of them want to know what is happening, but they are not brave enough to come up here and see what’s inside.

For example, you need to be very careful with the things that we do because they can use anything against us any time. For example, we started this space, we painted it anew, you see the door and the wall here are painted. We did it ourselves, but the kids from the neighborhood, you hear them out there when they already came this morning. They say, “We want to draw something, we are bored, we have nothing to do”. And we were all the time proposing stuff for them to do, and they were involved in painting all these walls. The next day, a security of the state officer came to us and said, “I know who you are,
what you are trying to do, and we won’t allow you to do it with the kids. We said, “Why?” “I know you were taking pictures of the kids”. We were taking pictures of the whole process, because that is part of our history and we want to have a record of that. “Yeah, but you were taking pictures of black kids who are poor”, the officer said. We said, “OK, that’s what they are. I don’t know how you can change the color of the skin, but poverty, you can’t do anything about it”. The next day we printed all pictures and we went to those kids’ families and gave them the pictures as a gift. And everybody loved it, cause they cannot afford to print, to have a photo of their kids. With our money, we printed the photos, took it to parents and informed them that their kid, son, daughter was yesterday with us painting, and we took a picture, here are the pictures, is that OK? Everybody liked it, it was super cool. We have no problem with the community, parents or anyone, but that was a measure that we needed to take in order to face any demand in the future or manipulate using the image of children.

So, it’s there all the time, you need to watch every single step to not make a mistake. This is how repression is expressed.

But there are so many other ways, for example, they can stop you from leaving the country. A lot of people have been stopped at the airport for no reason. They just stop them, wait until the plane leaves and then release the person. What it means to means a flight, it’s a lot of money. They needed to pay for the passport, for the visa, to legalize all the documents, buy the tickets. And you can lose all that money just because of the security stopping them at the airport for no reason.

Or when you come back. For example, the first time I visited the US, I was stopped at the airport. They took Frank Fernandez’s book, I had a copy signed by him. They also took my laptop, all hard drives, pen drives, materials, books. Ten days later they returned everything, except Frank Fernandez’s book and a newspaper. But they checked all my information, my telephone. They kept everything. That’s the way they control and it works.

*The Final Straw Radio / An Anarchist View From Havana*
For people like us, who are a bit trained in this fight, we can deal with that, but for some young university student who suffers that for the first time, he will never come to this place anymore. That’s why it’s so difficult for us to grow in membership. It does work. For example, the environmentalist group “Guarda Bosques,” another group that is connected with this movement here, has approached young people saying that we receive money from the CIA. And they believe it, why not? This is the information they receive all the time on television in Cuba. Then five years later they come to me and say, “You know why I never came back to your space? We received a visit from an officer saying that you received money from the CIA”.

**TFSR:** How do people in Cuba become anarchists? How do they hear about it, how do they learn besides the CIA paying them? (chuckle)

**IDT:** (laugh) I don’t know, I don’t think people just become anarchists.

**TFSR:** Is there anything about the anarchist movement in University history classes or anything?

**IDT:** No way. One of the members of our collective is a student at the history and philosophy faculty of the Havana University. Just yesterday we were talking about it. Because they started studying political movements in this course, and I asked him if anarchism was there. He said that his professor didn’t even know what it is.

**TFSR:** Camillo Cienfuego’s parents were anarchists I think. Cienfuego’s parents were in the CNT in Spain during the Revolution there.

**IDT:** In Spain, yes. But it’s not in the history. Cuban students don’t know that.

**TFSR:** Did Che and Fidel kill Camillo Cienfuegos?
IDT: (laugh) How can I tell? You know, Camilo is a very... We really love Camilo. I guess because he didn’t have the chance to become like the others.

TFSR: Like Rosa Luxemburg?

IDT: Exactly. But he was a very plain person, people from the street could approach him. He was not like an intellectual, he was nothing thinking in terms of ideology, I guess. But he was just a fighter, who fought for freedom, liberties, justice, whatever. So in that sense, I’m not saying Camilo was an anarchist, but he was a figure that is very close to the Cuban people, and that’s why we use his image in one of our... Let me show you: it’s a Bakunin, he has nothing to do with Camilo, but anyway. We have those bookmarks, that’s the symbol of Observatorio Critico, so we play with that. And we are in the neighborhood where Camilo Cienfuegos was born.

TFSR: Oh, really? Oh, yeah, La Avenida Cienfuegos is right there...

IDT: But nobody says Avenida Cienfuegos, Dolores Avenida and his house was there, and there was a plaque on the wall that was stolen about six months ago, and nobody cares.

TFSR: The government didn’t just put it on a plane and...

IDT: I don’t know. (laughs). What else?

TFSR: What kind of issues are you and your group tackling in the community? Do you mostly focus on the LGBT community or are there other things? In our communities, often projects focus on prisoner support or anti-fascist work.

IDT: When I say community, I’m talking about this community over here, this block and surrounding blocks, we are thinking in a very small space. We just want to develop the idea that you can do stuff by yourself, you don’t need to ask for permission to do anything. We

The Final Straw Radio / An Anarchist View From Havana
don’t want them to think in any direction, we don’t want to extend any ideology for them to be part of, we just want to create spaces where they can decide when and where to meet, what to do.

We have a knitting workshop here, both young and adult women, kids of thirteen years old come together and spend time here. Every Friday afternoon we talk and knit. This is an example. They are exposed to everything here, but we don’t invite them to read or take anything. They are just here, we want them to feel free and eventually, they will ask or do what they want.

We also have been working on a corner, because all the trash over there is a huge issue for the community and we have transformed that corner because all that trash that was on the street was where the garden is right now. We built a garden together with the neighbors, so the trash is not inside the block anymore. It really has an impact on people, because they don’t wait for the government to come and fix that corner, we have to fix it by ourselves. Eventually, we are going to do something with it. We will start recycling, reusing. In fact, we used a lot of stuff from the trash, transformed it into something else, and neighbors started to do the same. They also take some herbs that we planted there and use them. Getting them involved in some direct transformation of the environment.

We also have movie, cartoons projections, and neighbors don’t go to movie theaters, most of them don’t have computers, tablets or laptops at home, so they watch what the Cuban television provides. So we provide something new from here. It’s very funny, it’s a huge screen at night, it dramatically changed the logic of the neighborhood. What’s that light? The sound is very loud, and we try to find Cuban films.

We also have the project, ion in here, but with other contents, we have LGBT nights, now we are planning to have another night in the month for anarchist films, or a night for environmentalist documentaries or films. With the space out there we don’t want to go with very political content because that will not attract people, so here come the people who are interested in the topic, member of LGBT commu-
nity, students of the Havana University, researchers, environmentalists, whatever, they come directly to the film and talk about it.

We also have developed some dialogues or chats on topics related to something that the community feels necessary. For example, the Afro-Cuban religion. We promoted a dialogue between Afro-Cuban priests and environmentalists, animal defenders. Because these people make sacrifices of animals, so we create a space for both sides to talk about it, about the issue of sacrificing animals and placing the remains in the street, in the corner. And that idea of such conversations appeared because the neighbor that works with us in the garden is an Afro-Cuban priest. And we talked about the issue of sacrificing animals, how much we like animals, and we decided to make a serious conversation about it, let’s bring specialists from both sides to talk about it. It was very relevant for the first time in Cuba when environmentalists and priests were talking about animal protection. And then we discovered that there are some priests who made no animal sacrifices. They do the same ceremonies with no animals. It was something new even for some priests that were here, they were not accepting that practice but...
So this is what we are trying to do, to identify topics that have some connection with the community and make conversations. Sometimes they could be here or there.

TFSR: Is there ever a tension...you’re working with the community out here but I’m obviously a gringo, dressed weird. Is there ever a tension between it being a space that brings people who look like they’re not here here and being able to organize with the neighborhood?

IDT: Not that I know. I guess they will talk about but they haven’t told us anything. Nothing has changed, we have very good relations with everybody.

I guess people feel important when they get visitors from other countries here. Like they didn’t know that we were making anything so important, e.g. the garden – everybody goes to see the garden.

_The Final Straw Radio / An Anarchist View From Havana_
they think, ok, it’s important to have a garden, people are interested in that.

For other communitarian projects with a different perspective, sometimes it has really affected the whole point. Because it has become a place to develop something to show to tourists. We have something like that five blocks from here, it was supposed to be a communitarian project with art...

TFSR: Is that the building on the corner with all the art... I was going to ask what that was...

IDT: That’s a perfect example. And the community is not there, they don’t go to visit or use the space, they just receive foreigners. That’s the danger. But I’m sure it will not happen here because we are very aware of that and we have a political perspective of our own and it’s not the same with those other spaces. They are looking away for survival.

TFSR: Is there ever a dynamic where if you are doing lots of communitarian projects like the garden or film nights, and someone from the government or the party comes over and says “Hey, you’re doing a lot of great things for the community, you should consider becoming the head of your local Comite En Defensa...

IDT: That’s been happening all the time with all the interesting projects. When they see someone who is really active in the community, they try to coopt and make him part of the system. But they won’t even try this with us. But that’s the logic, it’s been happening here forever. In any kind of thing you could imagine, hip-hop, rock, whatever, you will see that.

TFSR: I went to La Madriguerra and thought, I can tell from where this is placed that the government said “Let’s make you a rock club in the middle of a park, far away from houses, over here where you’re not bothering anybody...”
IDT: Exactly, they really know how to do it. They created a Cuban agency of rock, an agency of hip-hop, it killed the whole movement. At first, there were some divisions with some of the bands who wanted to part of the agency, and the others didn’t, they wanted to keep their autonomy, but eventually, they disappeared and the ones that remained are connected with the agency. And all political content, the real stuff in the lyrics was not there anymore. They have a magazine. Having a magazine here in Cuba, it has to be approved by the party. If you have a hip-hop magazine approved by the Communist Party, you really don’t know what’s that. That power of co-opting is always present.

TFSR: For anyone who comes to Cuba or anyone who hears this interview, what can they do to support ABRA and other anarchist initiatives in Cuba?

IDT: The first thing I recommend is when people want to approach the Cuban situation, try to look for personal collectives that they can
identify. Because there is this idea of what Cuba is, an abstract idea with a focus on a rebel, an alternative for the world, and it is not. But you can find people who are really fighting, struggling against Cuban and international capitalism. So if you want to support, you need to identify to whom you want to be related.

On the other hand, for us, the best help that we have ever received is to be completely public. Since we are not that group of anarchists, we are not like insurrectionists, we don’t have the power, the number of people, we don’t intend to be violent, so we can be completely public. Because we want a communitarian transformation and do grassroots work. That is our protection – we never hide from the government.

Just tell them exactly what you think, and international comrades, organizations, helped when they also promote the ideas of ours, or any public statement that we publish, or a call that we make for an international event – it’s a very good help for us. It helps to build that shield that is transparency, being public.

**TFSR: Are there vegans in Cuba?**

**IDT:** That’s interesting. I’m having a fight right now on Facebook. There are, a few of them. It’s very difficult. In my opinion, in Cuba, that’s an option for only wealthy people. We eat whatever we can find, there is no option, if we want vegetables or... Everything is difficult: vegetables, meat, eggs, milk. If you find any of that and you have the money, you get it. I understand the need for being responsible or coherent with that topic, it’s important for us, as we are also environmentalists, it’s quite important. We promote this idea and for example on any event, gathering, meeting that we have here there are always vegan options. We don’t think that they don’t exist. On the contrary, we say, “There are people who are vegan or vegetarian, they need to have an option here”.

We also develop permaculture. We just started a permaculture workshop, we are learning about it, and most people related to it are vegan. But I don’t think that you can really demand from people to have

*The Final Straw Radio / An Anarchist View From Havana*
this position because people don’t have means to have a balance. So we’ve been thinking about it, it’s not the subject that we ignore, but it’s something you need to promote carefully here, not demanding but saying how beautiful it is.

**TFSR:** On that subject, I was curious, it’s not the same as animal sacrifice but I wondered if anyone does anything about birds in cages? There are a lot of birds in cages, here.

**IDT:** There is a whole movement of animal protectors in Cuba right now. It’s something new, from the last three years. There are small groups all around the country, and they focus mostly on cats and dogs, also horses. Eventually, birds, but that is not very common. There is no protection for animals here in Cuba. These groups demand a law for protecting animals’ lives, but we don’t have it yet. We recently discovered a guy, who was in contact with an international network of people who torture and rape animals. They video-record them and upload it to the cloud. There was a Cuban doing that, and people in the US identified the person and sent the information to the Cuban protectors. They identified the guy, complained and the policemen arrested the guy and he was free three days later.

About 1-2 months ago, these activists went to his neighborhood and made a public campaign in a park very close to his house. They went to his house, he was not there, they went to the river and found a lot of corpses of dogs and cats in the river, probably killed by this man. And the guy is free. He was not violating any law.

**TFSR:** When they went to his house they did it as a demonstration to expose him?

**IDT:** They really didn’t know what to do. In Cuba, there are no real social movements or the practice of that. So they were very angry and decided to go and make this campaign for the protection of animals in the park. And then a couple of them decided, “Why don’t we go to the house of the guy”. They didn’t know what to do, they just went. Another part of the group thought it could be dangerous. Nothing
happened, the guy was not there. But it’s a good thing. For the first time, this topic like the LGBT or the animal protection movement is emerging in a way. They are taking positions disregarding what the government thinks about it. So it’s important.

TFSR: It sounds like practicing some form of direct action, going to his house...

IDT: Exactly, but there is no organization yet. They don’t know what to do, they don’t plan anything, but it’s a good thing.

TFSR: When you said that it’s not common in Cuba for demonstrations to happen…. I don’t know if it’s modern Cuba or in Cuba’s past, but that often a practice of the Comités de Defensa de la Revolución is that they would organize a staged protest of just CDR members to make their repression look like a community action...

IDT: That’s what they do, but of course, they don’t do it spontaneously. There is an order from the political police, they prepare everything. In fact, we are very close to one of the dissident group, Damas de Blanco, I guess you heard about them, Ladies in White. They are four blocks away from here, they live with a police car in front of their house all the time. They organize demonstrations in front of his house, tiran cosas contra paredes.

TFSR: Yeah, throw things against the wall. But they’re super patriotic, the Damas En Blanco?

IDT: Damas en Blanco is a dissident group. They are mothers, wives, daughters of a group of dissidents that were put in prison, 75 of them. They were journalists, they were writing and put in prison for very long terms. So the women started demonstrating in the street dressed in white with a flower in the hand and walking in a line in silence. That’s all. They were repressed all the time, and now those people were released, some were sent to Spain, but the movement remained. I think they have connections with the US government and that’s the

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excuse of the Cuban government to repress them. Although what they are doing is just manifest in a peaceful way. But they have support from the US government.

**TFSR:** It sounds very parallel to the Argentinian Madres de la Plaza de Mayo...

**IDT:** Also, the Cuban government never recognized that it wasn’t fair for them to be in prison. If there is a similarity with Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, we are at a very early stage.

**TFSR:** Yah, the government changed there...

**IDT:** Yeah.

**TFSR:** Thank you!

**IDT:** I’m sorry you just had to listen to my opinion about it. Ask people in the street, and they will tell you a different story. You will have a more complete picture of the Cuban reality.

*The Final Straw Radio / An Anarchist View From Havana*
The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world. Since 2010, we’ve been broadcasting from occupied Tsalagi land in Southern Appalachia (Asheville, NC).

We also frequently feature commentary (serious and humors) by anarchist prisoner, Sean Swain.

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