

Abstract for UVM's Student Research Conference

Title: Cuban Revolutionary Healthcare

Author: Anna Hilton

Universal health care continues to be one of the Cuban Revolution's chief achievements. The socialist revolution has prioritized health care as one of the pillars that best tangibly reflects the values of the revolution. The material backing of the revolution has faltered since the fall of the Soviet Union, but the material shortage will not be as harmful as the ideological change it creates.

The initial success of the socialist revolution can be attributed to Fidel Castro's ability to tap into preexisting ideologies and frustrations with the neocolonial past. Key sectors such as healthcare symbolize the revolution's promise to the populous. This belief in the system has led to one of the highest levels of compliance for both health programs and individuals alike. This health care system has been directly responsible for levels of public health equivalent to developed countries with many times the GDP of Cuba, however, there has been little research on the material conditions of contemporary Cuban healthcare, especially the extent to which the economic crisis of the Special Period has compromised the Cuban state's ability to deliver the standards of healthcare created under socialism. Additionally, the effect of current capitalist reforms into what remains a socialist project have had a broad cultural impact that affects the ability of Cuban leadership to tap into the same past ideologies and frustrations.

Due to the growing disparity between the resources promised and delivered

by the Cuban government, there has been an erosion of the moral support system for the socialist cause. This has thus effected the quality of the healthcare system and the uniquely high compliance it has enjoyed. In particular, this research analyzes the moral and cultural responses of Cuban citizens to these material transformations, asking how Cubans are reimagining their relationships to each other and to the Cuban state.