# LA HABANA 500

A New York Salute to a Timeless City

LA HABANA 500 explores the arc and trajectory of this city's fascinating story, identifying and exploring points where Cuban and United States history intersect.

**November 12 – November 15, 2019**

Presented by:
**Eugenio María de Hostos Community College**
**John Jay College of Criminal Justice**
**The City College of New York**

**of The City University of New York**

**In collaboration with the School of Visual Arts**

Panel Discussions:
**The 500-Year Arc of La Habana's History**
**La Habana and New York City, an Enduring Relationship**
**The Restoration of La Habana: Accomplishments, Projections**

Walking Tours:
**Martí's New York**
**The Bronx, Incubator of Cuban Music**

Film screening:
**Suite Habana**

Concert:
**HAVANA JAM**
**Yunior Terry & Son de Altura featuring David Oquendo**

**Introduction**

Founded on November 16, 1519—St. Christopher's Day—La Habana became, in the course of a scant 70 years, the nexus of the first trans-oceanic empire in history. The architect of the new order, Phillip II of Spain, referred to La Habana as the "key" to his empire. Virtually all the riches which Spain extracted from the far reaches of its power – from Asia and almost the full length of the western hemisphere – were funneled through the port of La Habana imposing upon the city a host of responsibilities as safe harbor, provisioner, shipbuilding facility and foundry.

This made of La Habana a unique city with a population of transients like no other at that time. "…It was," write historians Dick Cluster and Rafael Hernández, "…a city where viceroys in transit rubbed shoulders with itinerant vendors, priests with prostitutes, Andalusian soldiers and sailors with Chinese traders and African slaves." It was also a city that attracted some of the great intellects of the last half millennium, from Bartolomé de las Casas to Alexander von Humboldt to Winston Churchill, Ernest Hemingway, Jean Paul Sartre, Julia de Burgos, Graham Greene and Gabriel García Márquez. It was a truly cosmopolitan city at once rough around the edges, baroque, romantic and beautiful.

For roughly the first half of its existence, the city of La Habana served as a maritime center serving the Spanish Empire. Then, in 1762, the city fell to a British expeditionary force in one of the culminating campaigns of the Seven Years War. While the British occupation lasted but eleven months, La Habana would emerge from that war profoundly changed with the lifting of restrictions on the African slave trade and its harbor flung open to foreign ships. In short order, most of the new trade was with a newly independent power to the north, the United States, ushering in a new era in Cuban history. No longer would La Habana be tethered economically and culturally to Sevilla or Cádiz; instead, it would look north to ports such as New Orleans, Mobile and especially New York City. The relationship with the latter would be complex and multi-faceted with profound commercial, political and cultural ramifications.

Through a series of seminars, walking tours, a film screening and a concert on three City University of New York campuses, **LA HABANA 500** explores the arc and trajectory of this city's fascinating history identifying and exploring points where Cuban and the United States history intersect. It consists of four major themes:

- The founding and early history of La Habana.
- The rise of Cuban nationalism and the relationship between La Habana and New York City.
- The efforts to restore La Habana and establish a trajectory for future development.
- Cuban music focusing on New York-La Habana links.

## TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12

## Film Screening & Panel:

***Suite Habana*** (2003)**, Fernando Pérez,** film director**.** Post-screening panelists: **Sonja E. Gandert** and **Marta Gutman**; **Jerry Carlson,** panel moderator
6 PM | Sciame Auditorium (room 107), Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture, 141 Convent Avenue, Manhattan | **The City College of New York**

A documentary focusing on a day in the lives of thirteen *habaneros*, from a ten-year-old boy with Down syndrome, to a ballet dancer, to a 79-year-old lady who sells peanuts on the street. The film has no dialogue, using sound and images to evoke emotional effect. *Variety* called it "A lyrical, meticulously crafted and…melancholy homage to the battered but resilient inhabitants of a battered but resilient city."

**Sonja E. Gandert** is a Ph.D. student in art history, at the Graduate Center, CUNY, where she researches Latinx and Latin American art. In 2017, at Casa de las Américas, in Havana, she curated the exhibition *Movimientos en intersección: Rastros de protesta en #BlackLivesMattter, #NoDAPL, y lxs DREAMers,* as part of Casa Tomada, a gathering of young Latin American creators and activists.

**Marta Gutman**, professor at the Spitzer School of Architecture of City College, is an architect and architectural and urban historian. She also teaches at the Graduate Center, CUNY. She is the author of the prize-winning *A City for Children: Women, Architecture, and the Charitable Landscapes of Oakland, 1850-1950.* Gutman is a founding editor of PLATFORM, an open forum for conversations about buildings, cities, landscapes, politics and history.

**Jerry Carlson**, moderator, is chairperson and professor at the Department of Media Communication Arts, The City College, CUNY. He is a specialist in narrative theory, global independent film and the cinemas of the Americas. At the CUNY Graduate Center he is a member of the doctoral faculties of French, Film Studies and Comparative Literature and a Senior Fellow at the Bildner Center for Western Hemispheric Studies.

## WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13

**Panel Discussion**
**The 500-Year Arc of La Habana's History (Opening Event)**
with **Alejandro de la Fuente** and **Dick Cluster; Hal Klepak**, panel moderator
4-6 PM | Longwood Art Gallery @ Hostos, 450 Grand Concourse, The Bronx | **Hostos Community College**

**Alejandro de la Fuente**, professor of Latin American history and economics at Harvard University, is author of *Havana and the Atlantic in the XVIth Century*, perhaps the definitive book on the subject. De la Fuente will examine the early years of the sleepy *Villa de San Cristóbal de La Habana*, as it was officially known, and its improbable transformation into the hub of the Spanish Empire.

**Dick Cluster** is a widely published writer and translator of fiction, history, economics, politics and culture. Co-author with Rafael Hernández of *History of Havana*, which has been characterized as "a beautifully written…account of the extraordinary human dimensions of an extraordinary people." Cluster will focus on the achievements and character of *habaneros* over the last five centuries.

**Hal Klepak** is an historian, lecturer, professor emeritus at the Royal Military College of Canada and former president of the UN-mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica. He is author of the critically acclaimed *Raúl Castro and Cuba, a Military Story* and *Churchill Comes of Age, Cuba 1895.*

**Reception:** 6 PM | Longwood Art Gallery @ Hostos | Hostos Community College

## THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14

**Walking Tour:**

**The Bronx, Incubator of Cuban Music**
**Elena Martínez,** guide
2-4 PM | Starts at the Hunts Point Station, #6 train, The Bronx, at the plaza above elevator

Folklorist **Elena Martínez** (City Lore, Bronx Music Heritage Center) will conduct a walking tour/discussion of the role of the South Bronx as hotbed of Latin music, in which Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians took the leading role. The tour will include many of the old venues for this music and a stop at **Casa Amadeo**, the oldest continuously operating Latin music store in New York City, where proprietor **Mike Amadeo** will share stories about the Latin music scene in the Bronx. Participation is limited. To register call: 718-518-4410.

**Panel Discussion:**

**The Restoration of La Habana: Accomplishments, Projections**
with **Miguel Coyula, Guadalupe García, Belmont Freeman** and **Herman Portocarero; Marta Gutman,** panel moderator
6-8 PM | Sciame Auditorium (room 107), Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture, 141 Convent Avenue, Manhattan| **The City College of New York**

**Miguel Coyula** former executive at the Group for Integrated Development of the Capital, the leading Cuban government think tank that advises the Havana government on issues of urban development. Since 2001, he has lectured widely at over 20 universities and research institutions throughout Latin America, the United States and Europe.

**Guadalupe García**, associate professor of history, Department of History, Tulane University, specializes in colonial Latin America and the Caribbean. She is the author of *Beyond the Walled City: Colonial Exclusion in Havana* and co-editor of *Imprints of Revolution: Visual Representations of Resistance.* Her research has examined the intersections of colonialism, empire and urban space in Havana.

**Belmont Freeman** is the founding principal of Belmont Freeman Architects, an award-winning design firm in New York City. He is an adjunct associate professor at Columbia University GSAPP and a columnist for the journal *Places*. An American of Cuban descent, Belmont Freeman has done extensive research, writing and lecturing on the subject of Cuban architecture.

**Herman Portocarero** was the Belgian ambassador to Cuba, from 1995 to 1999, and ambassador of the European Union to Cuba, from 2012 to 2019. He is author of *Havana without Makeup*, an acclaimed memoir/travelogue that plumbs the soul of the city.

**Marta Gutman**, professor at the Spitzer School of Architecture of City College, is an architect and architectural and urban historian. She also teaches at the Graduate Center, CUNY. She is the author of the prize-winning *A City for Children: Women, Architecture, and the Charitable Landscapes of Oakland, 1850-1950.* Gutman is a founding editor of PLATFORM, an open forum for conversations about buildings, cities, landscapes, politics and history.

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15

**Walking Tour:**

**Martí's New York**
**Orlando J. Hernández** and **Elena Martínez,** guides
11 AM-1 PM |
West 4th Street Subway Station - Meet in front of IFC theater

The father of Cuban nationalism, José Martí, himself an *habanero*, lived in New York City for 14 years (1881-1895), working as a journalist, poet, essayist, diplomat and, most importantly, revolutionary. He was fascinated by its people and its landmarks, which became part of his journalistic and literary work. Professor Orlando J. Hernández and folklorist Elena Martínez will conduct a walking tour of Martí's New York focusing on some of these landmarks, as well as the neighborhoods and sites of the Cuban and Puerto Rican exile community. Participation is limited. To register call: 718-518-4410.

**Panel Discussion:**

**La Habana and New York City, an Enduring Relationship**
with **Lisandro Pérez**, **Nancy Raquel Mirabal** and **Orlando J. Hernández**; **John Gutiérrez**, panel moderator
3-5 PM | 9th Floor Conference Room, New Building, 524 W 59th St., Manhattan | John Jay College of Criminal Justice

**Lisandro Pérez,** professor in the department of Latin American and Latinx Studies at John Jay College, CUNY, and author of the acclaimed *Sugar, Cigars and Revolution: The Making of Cuban New York,* will explore the long relationship between La Habana and New York City, one of the incubators of Cuban nationalism. (The book received a 2019 literary honorable mention for studies on Latina/os in the U.S. from Casa de las Américas in La Habana.)

**Nancy Raquel Mirabal**, director of the U.S. Latina/o Studies Program at the University of Maryland and author of *Suspect Freedoms: The Racial and Sexual Politics of Cubanidad in New York, 1823-1957.* The work has been characterized as "A remarkable book that rescues the rich history of Cubans of color in the United States from obscurity."

**Orlando J. Hernández**, professor emeritus at Hostos Community College, CUNY, critic and translator. He has published articles on José Martí and Eugenio María de Hostos and their contributions to the 19th-century anti-colonial struggles in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. His forthcoming book, *Eugenio María Hostos: Adalid de la inclusividad,* is about Hostos's advocacy for equality and human rights.

**John A. Gutiérrez,** assistant professor in the Department of Latin American and Latinx Studies at John Jay College, CUNY, is a researcher exploring the intersection of medicine, modernity and politics in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and its diasporas in the United States. He is currently at work on a history of the anti-tuberculosis movement in Cuba and is conducting additional research on the Cuban medical community in *fin-de-siècle* New York City.

**Reception:** 5-6 PM | New Building | John Jay College of Criminal Justice

**Concert:**
HAVANA JAM
**Yunior Terry & Son de Altura** featuring **David Oquendo** with special guests **Eddy Zervigón**, **Gema** and **Adolphus González**
7:30 PM | Repertory Theater, Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture, 500 Grand Concourse, The Bronx
Reserved seating: $25 (Seniors $20, students $5)
Tickets: www.hostoscenter.org or Box Office 718-518-4455

Bassist/ violinist/ composer **Yunior Terry**, a member of one of Cuba's most gifted musical families, directing an all-star salute to honor the 500th anniversary of the founding of La Habana and its musical heritage. Yunior leads his band, **Son de Altura**, featuring vocalist **David Oquendo**, with special guests, flutist extraordinaire **Eddy Zervigon**, the acclaimed song stylist **Gema** and piano virtuoso **Adonis González**.

## VENUES:

**Hostos Community College, 500 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY**
**The City College of New York, 160 Convent Ave., New York, NY**
**John Jay College, 524 W 59 St., New York, NY**

**For information and to register for the walking tours, call: 718-518-4410, or Email: Habana500@hostos.cuny.edu.**