

Interviewee: Candi Sosa
Interviewer: Miguel Gonzalez-Pando
Date: July 1997
FIU Number: 528

Candi Sosa= CS
Miguel Gonzalez Pando= MGP

MGP= No estamos en el [19]97, vamos a remontarnos al año [19]60. [19]97, [19]87, [19]77, [19]67, [19]66, [19]65, [19]64, [19]63, [19]62, Cierra los ojos, [19]60. Estamos en el año [19]60, manten los ojos cerrados un momentico y mira al rededor. Mira tu casa, mira La Habana, oye los sonidos, el olor de tu casa. Trata de evocar todo eso, de traerlo. Cuando habras lod ojos, tu vas a tener que edad, diez años?

CS= No hara eso como siete u ocho.

MGP= Vas a tener siete u ocho años y vas a estar en tu casa. Y vas a oir toda la bulla de las guaguas, el olor, el calor, todo eso. The only difference is that we are going to be speaking in English, okay?

CS= Al right.

MGP= Now you can open your eyes.

CS= [Opening her eyes]

MGP= Dulce Maria

CS= Sosa Menendez

MGP= Dulce Maria, acuerdate. Cuentame un poquitíco de aquéllos años de la Revolución, del principio. La vez que tu cantaste, que te vió Fidel y todo eso. Let's set that up

CS= There's like a two part thing that I go back and forth from because I was raised mostly in Las Villas. And then when my father resigned for his work to be able to leave. For a bit before that I was sent to La Habana with my grandmother. Now my first impressions were, I remember, like the fences in the backyards in Las Villas, my mother hanging up the clothes in the clothes lines and the talk about Batista. How things were bad and about this Fidel guy being out in La Sierra Maestra and how people were excited and expecting a lot of changes for the best. So there was a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of hope around this whole process that was going on.

Because there was so much with the militia and los milicianos and the whole movement, there was so much excitement around that. I remember getting very excited about being somehow a participant. You know? That was like the happening. So I asked my godmother to buy me an outfit, a miliciano outfit. Soon thereafter I remember a lot of commotion all of a sudden, we would be playing out in the dirt, just climbing trees and doing the things that we did out the country, it was great. And I remember like there were bombs or all of a sudden big commotion and you'd have to come hide inside the house.

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That was my first impression that there was something very wrong. Then there was a lot of fear soon after. You would hear rumors that some of the... My father's and my family's friends were accidentally killed or others were being shot. That whole kind of things. Now at one time the milicianos would march across the street from my house in Las Villas, in the country, and since I had my outfit, I would tag along at the end of the line with my plastic rifle and I was, I mean, I was still like very much an illusion with this. That somehow I was under the impression that there was some kind of savior. Going to, you know...hmm, and then I was sent to La Habana.

And it was very difficult for me to break with this world. First of all, my parents had stayed behind. My brother, my younger sister, my whole upbringing. My whole life as I had known it, that whole freedom and. But that's where this transition happens in La Habana. I was already singing in El Central Covadonga. Uh, I don't know there's too many stories, so excuse me I jump from one to the other 'cause they all seem to...

MGP= That's okay, because I'll edit.

CS= Okay.

MGP= It is better that you extend yourself.

CS= The first thing how I arrived in La Habana already singing. There was a singer, his son Ramon Veloz, he had a son Ramoncito Veloz. And it was during this time of all this excitement in this whole patriotic enthusiasm, and in this whole national fever. And I had already been singing songs that my mother and my grandmother sang, like all traditional songs in tongue twisters. There was always music in the house and I was always very impressed how that felt so alive in my body and yet it was invisible like the God that I had learned. I'd been taught to love. So when I heard this little boy singing this patriotic song, I had to learn it. I mean, I was hooked. And there was no tape recorders, we didn't have any available. **There was [07:15]**, so I had to learn it from memory every time that I listened to it on the radio. So I waited and waited and waited by the radio all day waiting for the song to play. To make a long story short, I learned this song. It was called Sueños de un Guajiro. It is a very patriotic song. So there was this whole sense of patriotism that I had from very early on, and belonging to this movement.

I go to La Habana with my grandmother, who had already immigrated from Spain because of the civil war in Spain. And there's some very interesting stories around that.

MGP= We do not need to get into those, we are going to focus more in here.

CS= Okay. Which they have to do anyway. She was aware of what was happening, because she had already experienced something like this. And she was very voicetress about it. So she would gather like a little can, a little box of Coca-Cola and stuff and she should stand on it and give her speech. Wake up! Despierten que esto es comunismo. Yo lo he vivido! La Gallega, ella es asturiana, she is from Asturias. At anyway, this was around the time I

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am in La Habana, where you would see the soldiers all over the streets, fully armed. And there was already the chivato, and you know the committees in the block to spy on whoever was not in agreement with movement and all of a sudden there was a lot of fear. There was a lot of strange people coming in, the Russians that were strange to us. At that time, I remember, in all Havana like with their cameras and [inaudible, 09:10] tourists in. Because my grandmother was so expressive about her sentiments, often times they would come to get her. To reprimand her. And a lot of the times she was saved because she was at church and you know at that time there were knocking down all the statues from the churches in La Habana and there were soldiers inside the church and very menacing. And she did not care, her faith was so incredible. She lived all her life dressed in and deep blue as a promise. So I mean she was fervently faithful.

What happens is they start to fear for me, because I 'm exposed to this and there is so many horror stories going on already. My uncle, at the same time, is involved in a counterrevolution that has begun. They were accumulating arms and a group of men were gathering to raise an army to go against the Castro government after he had already declared himself Communist Marxist. So what happens is one of the members that was with my uncle in this movement turned out to be one of the spies from the committee and they denounced him where we were going to be holding the arms. Right, he was. Right around the same time in La Habana close by there was a little, like a liquor store, and where they sold a lot of cigars. And a little before, that I have to talk to put the story in motion, a little before that there is a Cuban composer, Osvaldo Farrés, who is very famous and he lived like two blocks down. I mean two buildings down from where I was at that time. Right next to the building ahí en Calzada entre H e I, there was the Instituto Cultural Cubano-Norteamericano. And there was a group of boy students and musicians would come and vocalize outside and I was fascinated by this. So I would stand by the by the gate. And just observant, listen and then I would go and repeat what they were doing. And then this man came up to me, and he says, you like music? Do you like to sing? And I say, Yes, I sing. He says can you sing something? and I sing a little bit for him and he was very impressed. So he asked for permission to coach me. And it turned out to be Osvaldo Farrés. I had no idea. And then on one occasion they gave him an homage and I sing. So the people around knew me.

And then they called the prodigy child, right. So at the same time I am walking, which by the way, I found here in Miami, it was like my first little infatuation. And he and I had gone to the liquor store to get something from my grandmother and Castro came in. He was buying cigar, so everybody started telling him hay la niña canta, Dulce, Dulce, canta. And he kept pulling me by the arm and he said no, no let's go, let's go, don't do that, no. But you know that such insistence, so I sing Sueños de un Guajiro. Of course, sueño a Cuba mi tierra, herencia de los mambises. This very strong patriotic. It was perfect for him, so he lift me up in his arms, and he says, this is an example of, you know.

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MGP= Repiteme esto pero cuando en vez de He, Fidel.

CS= Hmm

MGP= Okay. [To the videographer] I know that my smoking is getting to the shot, but I am doing it in purpose.

CS= So I went ahead and sang the song Sueños de un Guajiro with **that hope and [13:34]** patriotism and I had a lot of passion about it. I mean, I was very passionate about my singing. So Fidel picked me up in his arms and he made a speech there. People were already all gathered around. He was already the main figure in the country. And so he was telling everybody that this was symbolism of the youth and the patriotism we needed. An example of what Cubaness was and ta-ra-ra-ra. It was very interesting to me that, probably the whole attention that this brought to me was quite fascinating for me. It was a new experience.

And I knew there was something wrong, but I didn't really know what. I have fear but I didn't know exactly what. And particularly because they made an effort to not tell me because being a child. You know you're too easy. People ask and you say so. It's better not to know, but there's always all the talk going around. So right around the same time when I am calling all this attention to us, because with my activities, my uncle gets denounced by his best friend. He has to, in the middle of the night, he escapes and he runs to the American Embassy and jumps the fence. So he is the first one to immigrate into the United States. But of course then all kinds of stories go on from there.

MGP= At some point...

[Break in recording to change tape]

[Interview continues in FIU Number 529]

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