

Change in Cuba



It's easy these days to know what change is in Cuba: You write the word "change" in a text and send it to 8888. You then receive a message that details the exchange rates for convertible currency, the Euro, the U.S. and Canadian dollars, the Pound Sterling, and the national currency. That's what change is about in Cuba today: money.

These days the new ideology on the streets is money; nobody cares if we're a socialist or capitalist country. What matters is how much money you have. Cubans on the street aren't and do not want to be "flag bearers for a better world"; they are instead survivors of the two-currency system, of salaries that can't provide for basic necessities, and of merciless policies that price everything in convertible currency.

There's a new social conformity in Cuba: those who serve and those who give orders. It's all a game, and the game consists of trying to be like the rest of the world; that's the new aspiration. The game favors "those who left," those who've become wealthy by virtue of their proximity to power, those who've learned the ways and the rules of the black market, and those who managed to resist lowering their self-esteem during darker periods. As the popular saying goes, so much paddling just to die on the shore.

Tania Bruguera
February 5, 2015