

Martha Burk

From the moment we landed in Havana I knew I was in a foreign land, in more ways than one. “Viva Fidel,” and “50 Years of the Revolution” posters and paintings were everywhere, as were images of “Che,” the national hero. As we plunged into a heavy schedule of delegation meetings organized by the U.S. Women and Cuba Collaboration, the role these revolutionaries played in insuring the prominent place of women in the economic and political life of Cuba was emphasized time and time again.

We met women in leadership in virtually every facet of society -- from academics to labor unions to agricultural co-ops. Still, after 50 years, the women's biggest complaint was lack of equal participation at home from the men in their lives. Child care and housework are unfortunately still the female burden to bear -- meaning less time to pursue better jobs (or outside work itself) for many women. Even so, we can learn a lot from our sisters across the Florida straits. We've gotten a glimpse of what an armed revolution backed by fundamental principles of equality can produce for women, and what it can't. Even if all of the goals of the revolution have not been realized, the women of Cuba are strong, smart, and bold.