

## **Jeniffer Calleja**

One of my greatest impressions from the 2010 Women's Research Delegation to Cuba was visiting the Escuela de Instructores de Arte in Matanzas. The school is the result of a well thought out federal initiative to replenish the short supply of art instructors in Cuba over a 10 year period with young adults from all provinces, particularly the rural areas. Participants commit to eight years of teaching in their communities following graduation.

The primary focus is on art appreciation over building artistic skill. Their philosophy is that art elevates the spirit and provides intellectual balance and all Cubans learning to appreciate the arts promotes collective harmony. This approach is effective as a way to provide long-term career opportunities for young people. It benefits all ten provinces of Cuba as it prepares participants for jobs back in their community. In addition to training the next generation of instructors, the school works in partnership with educational, corrections, and health institutions to address behavioral issues through the arts. This model was very inspiring. Students and staff were passionate and inspired. I would say wide accessibility to arts and culture helps compensate for the lack of material possessions and commerce. In a way, the arts are a healthy distraction from daily limitations and scarcity brought on by an aggressive blockade from the world's declining hegemon.