

Jorge Trinidad  
Department of History, UW-Madison  
Working Title of Dissertation: "Afro-Cuban Retrospective Politics: Revolution, Historical  
Consciousness, and Socialist Film Production"  
July 2022

### **IRIS Fieldwork Awards- Research Summary, 2022**

My research project explores and analyzes the construction of historical consciousness and Afro-Cuban identity through the lens of film production. In short, I analyze film production to explore historical consciousness and issues of racial and cultural identity in Cuba during "the socialist period" (1958-1989). I uncover the ways that Afro-Cubans inscribed historical narratives into the Cuban revolution's "grand narrative."

The IRIS Summer Fieldwork Award and IRIS Area and International Studies Award for Incoming Graduate Students made it possible for me to study in Havana, Cuba between January-June 2022. My main goals were to establish professional relationships with archivists in Cuba in order to gain archival access and to begin archival and ethnographic research for my dissertation.

In Cuba, my first goal was to establish professional relationships with contacts at the Cuban institute of film (or Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematograficos). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic I was unable to travel to Cuba for short trips during 2020-2021 and when I arrived to Havana in mid January, many state run cultural institutions were operating at less than half capacity and with reduced hours. But I was lucky enough to be given access to the Cuban film Institute's archival collection at the Cinemateca de Cuba.

I found access to the ICAIC/Cinemateca's collections of films scripts that I am planning to analyze for my dissertation. These films scripts allow me to study the process of film production as a means of systematically exploring how historical narratives are constructed. I was also given access to their catalogue of all of the ICAIC film productions (documentaries, feature films, shorts, etc) and, upon request, given access to digital copies of the films. The ICAIC has catalogued over 3,000 film productions. Thanks to these grants I was able to start analyzing about 1/6th of their entire film collections. All of these materials are valuable sources for my project. I also was given access to the ICAIC/Cinemateca's institutional library, which contains the institute's various publications (such as *Cine Cubano* magazine) and all the monthly issues they published.

Additionally, I started to develop the relationships with the archivists and programmers at the Cuban film institute in order to build a series of ethnographic interviews for my project. I was able to interview the Cuban actor Samuel Claxton, who participated in the production of almost a dozen films that I plan to analyze for my project.

Thanks to these IRIS grants, I was able to accomplish my main research goals for the semester. Conducting research in Cuba is complicated for various reasons. For one, most of the major U.S. research grants (such as Fulbright, etc) are barred from providing funding to academic research projects based in Cuba. The funds provided from IRIS were essential for me to study for a full semester in Cuba. Without these funds, my Cuba-based research would not have been possible.