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### **The Traveling Memories Project: A Digital Collection of Lived Experiences of Teachers Who Served in the 1961 Cuban Literacy Campaign**

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THE TRAVELING MEMORIES PROJECT:  
A DIGITAL COLLECTION OF LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS WHO SERVED IN  
THE 1961 CUBAN LITERACY CAMPAIGN

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Antioch University New England

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Kimberly Waller

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January 2022

## THE TRAVELING MEMORIES PROJECT

This dissertation, by Kimberly Waller, has been approved by the committee members signed below who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of Antioch University New England in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

### Dissertation Committee:

Alesia Maltz, Ph.D., Chairperson

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## ABSTRACT

### THE TRAVELING MEMORIES PROJECT

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The 1961 *Campana de la Alfabetización* (CLC) [Cuban Literacy Campaign] looms large in the Cuban historical imagination as a moment of transformation, sacrifice, and triumph. Yet, until recently, the unique aspects of the CLC that made it a national success were in danger of being forgotten, thus losing its potential as a model for future ways to mobilize a nation toward an important social goal. The primary objectives of this project were to: (1) expand the scope of the discourse to include a much larger range of lived experiences; (2) collect and preserve lived experiences as shared by the teachers themselves; (3) create a bilingual, digital, community archive, composed of oral interviews, participant ephemera, and survey data; and (4) facilitate access to this data for both public and private scholars. This research examined public history by applying a decolonizing lens to research tools that integrated oral interviews, surveys, short responses, artifact collection, and archival research.

Prior research focused on a narrow segment of CLC participants, the urban youth who traveled into impoverished rural areas without running water, electricity, or beds to teach illiterate adults how to read. My approach builds on previous research to include a wider array of teachers who were equally effective in eradicating illiteracy in Cuba. I analyzed conflicting statistics regarding the CLC and provided an explanation of the discrepancies. This research employs decolonizing research methodologies by implementing a culturally responsive, reflexive approach to the research collection and collaboration. *Alfabetizadores* (teachers) helped shape

the interview and survey questions and interviewed each other. Participants continue to assist in curating a digital collection of ephemera, survey data, and oral interviews that will be accessible to the public.

*Keywords:* Cuba, literacy, oral history, decolonizing, artifacts, archives, Digital Humanities, teachers, youth, campaign, interviews, surveys, illiterates, Spanish, narrative, *brigadistas*, methodologies, peña

**This dissertation is currently under embargo. It will be made available when the embargo is lifted.**