

UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL BULLETIN
ANNOUNCEMENT

Florida International University
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Doctoral Dissertation Defense

Abstract

Shades of Liberalism: Lawyers and social, political and legal transformations in nineteenth century Cuba

By

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In 1819, Ferdinand VII ordered the creation of two Colegios de Abogados in Cuba to prevent the expansion of the number of legal professionals, as well as the unauthorized practice of law. The strategy, however, failed, and lawyers increasingly became a force of political and social change in the island, being mostly inspired by the debates about the implementation of liberal agendas in and out of Cuba. Some Colegios de Abogados eventually became centers of anti-Spanish conspiracy and lawyers even led recurrent uprisings for Cuban independence. Ideas of reform among Cuban lawyers, however, were diverse, and different interpretations of liberalism surfaced, especially under the influence of other movements such as annexationism and autonomism. This variety of ideas encountered one another at the Constitutional Convention of 1901, where self-proclaimed liberal delegates still questioned, for example, free education and universal suffrage, which made evident the many shades that liberalism still had in Cuba at this time.

This study takes legal professionals to be a strategic window to approach and explain key social, political and intellectual transformations in nineteenth century Cuba, while unveiling the leading role lawyers themselves played in those processes. Relying on personal and professional documentation, correspondence and job applications, the dissertation recreates lawyers' political, intellectual and social positions, and shows how they had a decisive participation in historical change in late colonial Cuba. Their ideas survived in periodical publications, newspapers, and political writings that they established or where they participated, as well as in legislations that they enacted, applied or commented on. Being the most influential professional group of the period under study, lawyers represent a perfect tool to understand the end of Spanish times in Cuba and its transit, under the flags of liberalism, to an independent republic.

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Time: 11:00 am

Place: Modesto Maidique Campus, DM 370

Department: History

Major Professor: Dr. Victor Uribe