



U.S. AGENCY FOR
GLOBAL MEDIA

UNITED STATES
BROADCASTING
BOARD OF
GOVERNORS

Embarking on Reform of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting

May 21, 2019

Introduction from USAGM CEO

The U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) and its networks are mandated by law to abide by “the highest professional standards of broadcast journalism” (22 USC 6202). All of its networks, including the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), support the Agency’s mission of informing, engaging, and connecting people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. Adhering at all times to the journalistic values of accuracy, fairness, and balance is fundamental to that mission.

In May 2018, OCB aired a blatantly anti-Semitic video segment about George Soros that was deeply offensive and wholly inconsistent with USAGM’s professional standards and ethics. Upon learning of the situation in October, I ordered a thorough and multi-faceted review of OCB content, operations, and personnel.

As part of this wholesale review, a panel of independent experts examined an extensive sample of OCB content to identify and address any patterns of unethical, unprofessional, biased, or sub-standard journalism. The results of that panel are presented in the following report.

In addition, the Agency internally reviewed OCB’s journalistic standards, editorial processes, and personnel practices. Furthermore, a comprehensive human resources investigation of the incident was completed and the agency has terminated, or is in the process of disciplinary action against, employees and contractors who have been deemed responsible. Collectively, these reviews highlight some urgent needs at OCB – particularly in shoring up journalistic principles and practices.

With reform in mind, I have assembled a joint USAGM-OCB working group to take up and carry out the recommendations from these reviews. To start, the working group will focus on five areas:

- Updating journalistic standards, reinforcing editorial processes, and producing relevant, engaging and balanced journalism consistent with the legislative mandate;
- Clarifying strategy and strengthening leadership;
- Bolstering workforce planning and personnel management;
- Ensuring the right balance of media platforms and effective distribution of content into Cuba; and
- Deepening coordination and collaboration with USAGM and its other networks.

We commit to making this process collaborative and transparent. We will be reaching out to stakeholders to solicit their input and will report out our progress and next steps at quarterly intervals.

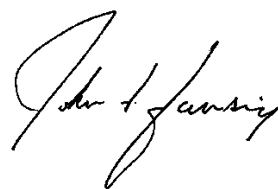
These efforts are part of a longer arc of modernization and reform at OCB. In June 2018, Tomás Regalado was appointed as Director of OCB. Tomás brings to this leadership position an impressive journalism career and a history of public service, having served as City Commissioner and two-term Mayor of Miami. Since day one, Tomás has led on an ambitious program of revitalization for OCB, and he will remain a key driver of these continued reform efforts.

In addition, OCB appointed a new Central News Director to lead the newsroom in reinforcing editorial and ethical standards and implementing long-term newsgathering strategies. USAGM has also initiated the search for a Standards and Best Practices Editor, a new position at OCB, to provide oversight of OCB's editorial and journalistic processes.

In the interim, the Voice of America (VOA), which operates as a separate news operation but is also under the USAGM umbrella, has sent their Editor for News Standards and Best Practices to Miami to conduct mandatory training for all OCB employees involved in content and programming. VOA is required by law to produce fair and unbiased journalism. It has a rigorous set of standards for stories and social media, and has established editing and production practices that enforce these standards. Additional training covering fairness, objectivity, balance and bias in coverage will be required for all OCB employees going forward; the Anti-Defamation League has already provided training for staff.

I know that the path ahead will not be easy, but I – and all of USAGM – stand committed to the challenge. OCB is at all times required to adhere to the highest standards of professional journalism and any deviation from that is unacceptable. Our audience in Cuba has an urgent need for news that is representative of the highest professional standards, and we will not let them down.

John F. Lansing

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John F. Lansing". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

Chief Executive Officer and Director

About the Report

After TV Martí's airing of the egregiously false and anti-Semitic story about George Soros came to light, U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) CEO and Director John F. Lansing asked me to oversee a third-party, independent assessment of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting's (OCB) programs. The purpose and scope of this review was straightforward and broad: to study content produced by Radio and TV Martí and identify whether or not it met our standards for quality and professionalism.

Drawing from my academic training, I structured this assessment to be scientific in research design, independent in analysis, and fair to the journalism being reviewed. I organized a panel of experts with notable professional experience in journalism, Cuba, and multimedia.

The five experts were each asked to review a representative, random sample of OCB news and opinion content from the previous eight months. Grounded in their own areas of expertise, the reviewers evaluated the subject matter independently of one another to ensure an objective assessment. Then, the group convened to share findings only after all content was individually reviewed.

Throughout the process, I assured the panel's independence, asking only that they assess the programs vis-à-vis our established journalistic standards, as well as OCB's and the Agency's mission to provide objective news and information programming. Paired with a proper literature review, I can say with confidence that this study would pass the peer-review process of any major academic journal in the field of media and journalism studies.

This report is limited to OCB, and thus to Radio and TV Martí, and it does not and should not be construed to assess any of the other USAGM networks. Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Middle East Broadcasting Networks Inc. (MBN), and Radio Free Asia (RFA) each routinely and systematically review their content to ensure the highest professional standards are applied throughout their language services.

The issues raised here are unique to OCB. That certain OCB news programming would purposefully promote a single viewpoint or policy is a situation, as the experts state at the outset, "unlike that of any of the Agency's other news services." The experts also note that the Agency's journalistic guidelines "reflect the principles that for more than a century have guided the independent news media in the United States and, over time, most other democratic countries." This stems from the Agency's legal mandate to be a "consistently reliable and authoritative source of accurate, objective, and comprehensive news."

We take this mandate seriously. As the CEO has stated, law and Agency policy require that such content always "adhere to the highest professional standards of broadcast journalism." This report reflects our collective commitment to transparency and accountability. The independent assessment provides a crucial starting place for much needed ground-up reform at OCB, which is already well underway.



Shawn Powers, Ph.D
Acting Chief Strategy Officer
U.S. Agency for Global Media

Expert Panel Assessment of OCB Content

Study Concluded April 29, 2019

Introduction

The expert panel was asked to review Radio Televisión Martí's video, radio and web content based on the standards of Martí's ethical guidelines, and to review its production quality. Martí is produced by the Office of Cuba Broadcasting in the United States Agency for Global Media.

Those ethical guidelines, adopted from the agency's Voice of America (VOA), reflect the principles that for more than a century have guided the independent news media in the United States and, over time, most other democratic countries, including in Latin America. Reinforcing those ethics, Martí's mission statement, published on its web site, states that its mission is "to serve as a trusted and authoritative source of accurate, balanced and complete information for the Cuban people."

The panel's unanimous conclusion, reached with no reservations, was that the video, radio and web content of Radio Televisión Martí falls far short of those ethical standards and stated mission.

Two questions have long surrounded the U.S. Agency for Global Media and its predecessors. One is whether it should produce propaganda, meaning information expressly designed to influence a foreign population or undermine a government—so much so that at times the information can be misleading, biased, incomplete or even inaccurate. The other is whether the agency and its media should be a direct instrument controlled by the secretary of state to carry out each given administration's foreign policy, thereby tailoring information to meet changing policy and political objectives. Congress and every administration since at least that of President Dwight Eisenhower have decided against both courses. They charged the agency instead to reflect American ideals of a free, objective and fair press, and in that way seek to influence foreign populations by demonstrating how a democracy works, warts and all. The agency, and its predecessors, were made quasi-independent. The agency's oldest outlet is VOA, whose charter, signed into law by President Gerald Ford in 1976, explicitly states that the "VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American society," and that it "will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies."

The expert panel recognizes that there continues, nonetheless, an inherent tension in the agency's mission as a part of the U.S. government. Nowhere is that tension and the two debates about mission more evident than in the Office of Cuba Broadcasting and Martí. Much of Martí's content is unlike that of any of the agency's other news services. Martí openly engages in both propaganda and the promotion of a current administration's foreign policy, in this case towards Cuba (as well as Venezuela and Nicaragua).

The panel unanimously decided that it was not its place to take a position in whether Martí is correct to do so. That is a political decision to be made by Congress and the White House. Rather, the panel decided to judge Martí on its own terms. Are the many programming attempts at propaganda and promoting a single foreign policy effective in influencing Cubans in Cuba to change their government? There is no good way to measure that, but it was the unanimous professional judgment of the panel—based on what each knows on how to use

communications to engage and influence an audience, and based on the success of the tactics that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union—that Martí’s one-sided attempts are misguided and are almost sure to fail.

It is important to note that each of the panelists came to these conclusions independently, before meeting for the first time. Nor did the U.S. Agency for Global Media ever ask any of the panel members about their politics or opinions about Martí during the selection process. In no way afterwards did the agency try to steer the panel to any conclusion. But what did become immediately apparent to the panel members themselves when they gathered to discuss the initial findings, most of them meeting each other for the first time, that each is a deep believer in liberal democracy and individual freedom, as enshrined by the United States Constitution. Said another way, none of the panelists are sympathizers of communism or of the Cuban dictatorship. This becomes an important point to make in the hyper-partisan and emotional political atmosphere that surrounds Martí, especially in its home base among the large Cuban refugee community in South Florida.

[Andrea Sarralde](#) is an Emmy-nominated contributor and former reporter for Telemundo, the Spanish language television network based out of Miami. Telemundo represents a deep and rich variety of Spanish language news sources in the United States that practice the highest ethical standards of democratic journalism. Telemundo reaches Cuba itself, digitally and through different contraband services. Ms. Sarralde has also been a reporter for the Voice of America, bringing to the panel the additional valuable experience of having upheld the standards and ethics of the flagship news media outlet financed by the US Government.

[Laura Castañeda, Ed.D.](#), a professor of practice at the Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California, was the academic-at-large officer of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. She has been a writer and editor at the *Dallas Morning News*, *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Associated Press*. She is co-author of the book, *The Latino Guide to Personal Money Management*, a free market guide for Cuban and other Hispanic Americans. Ms. Castañeda is widely recognized as expert in almost all types of print and digital news reporting, writing and editing, and has taught them all to generations of journalists coming out of USC.

[Maria Fernanda Sandoval](#) is not a journalist but rather a marketing and social media expert who brings great technical and communications experience to the panel. Ms. Sandoval is an authoritative judge on production quality in television, radio and social media, and of media strategies to reach and engage a Latin American market. A Colombian who lives in Colombia, she also brought an independent Latin American view to what is a Cuban and American drama, not to judge it politically, but rather to doubly assure both cultural understanding and political neutrality in reviewing Martí.

[Roberto Suro](#) is the founder and former director of the scrupulously non-political and highly authoritative Pew Hispanic Center in Washington. Mr. Suro now holds a joint appointment as a professor in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism and the Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California. He is also director of the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute at USC and a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institute. He is co-author or editor of four books and more than 100 major studies. Before going into research and teaching, Mr. Suro was a reporter for the *Washington Post*, *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun Times*. He has been in and out of Cuba regularly over the years as a journalist and academic.

[Edward Schumacher-Matos](#), the chairman of the panel, is director of the Edward R. Murrow Center for a Digital World at Tufts' Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Mr. Schumacher-Matos was the founding editor and associate publisher of *The Wall Street Journal Americas*, the founder and CEO of the *Rumbo* chain of Spanish language dailies in Texas, *The New York Times* bureau chief in Buenos Aires, a member of a team to win a Pulitzer Prize at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and ombudsman separately at NPR and *The Miami Herald*. The only reporter to be inside Mariel Harbor during the Mariel boatlift, he witnessed firsthand the yearning of more than 100,000 Cubans fleeing the island, and crossed with them on an overloaded boat to freedom in Key West. In the interest of divulging conflicts of interest, Schumacher-Matos is married to a Peter Pan child refugee from Cuba. His late father-in-law was a Catholic intellectual and writer who escaped to the U.S. after being imprisoned by the Castro regime for a year. His mother-in-law was held under virtual house arrest in Havana as punishment for a year more. Born in Colombia and on the board of the Latin America Program at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, Schumacher-Matos has also been a longtime friend of several board members of the International Institute for Democracy, which produces a Martí show.

Each member of the panel reviewed roughly 29 hours of radio and television programming and another 40 written web reports. The material given to each was picked and assigned randomly by the agency and did not overlap.¹ Panel members on their own further followed Martí's current television and radio production online, as well as its web edition.

Each member of the panel stated the same conclusion the moment after the panel first came together in Washington, D.C. The sports, arts and light content was fine. The news wrap-ups online consisted largely of wire reports and were fine, too. The problems lie with the news shows on radio and television, and especially the steady daily diet of political talk shows and background reports. They were peppered with bad journalism. And yet they also were ineffective propaganda.

Production Quality

From a technical and aesthetic point of view, the production quality of Martí's radio and television is mediocre. The vast majority of radio programs have distracting noises in the background. On television, the quality of camera handling, lighting and graphics is uneven, reflecting what seems to be shortage of technical expertise and professionalism. As a result, many of the productions look obsolete and old, if not sometimes embarrassing.

In one of the TV talk shows reviewed, for example, the camera cut off the heads of some of the guests. During the show, a lighting bulb broke, creating a big shadow on top of the hostess. Yet, the show continued, even though it was a pre-recorded show and could easily have been stopped to fix the lighting.

The anchors and presentation of the two main daily *Noticieros*, or news round-ups, are for the most part professional. But the reports and interviews on the many background, analysis and talk shows regularly are too long, repetitive and difficult to understand or follow. They quickly become boring for the viewer.

¹ USAGM officials provided each panelist a random selection of episodes from OCB's radio and TV news and information programs and web articles aired/posted between March 1 and November 30, 2018. OCB officials were not involved in the selection of content for review.

In the digital edition, a large part of the news articles are obtained from EFE or Reuters. This is mostly just copy and paste work, with little additional contribution from OCB journalists. That does not make it bad. Smart aggregation has a value of its own, and Martí has been a good source for some of the reports by independent journalists in Cuba. But the wire material is available on other sites online. The panel did not do a review of those sites, but cautions that cutting and pasting may have no particular value added in drawing and engaging an audience.

News Standards

Sourcing and Attribution

Most of the digital, radio and TV reports include on-the-record sources, meaning someone willing to be named and quoted. However, the problem is that the sources often a) have one point of view and/or b) it is not clear what their expertise is and why they are part of the story. Clearly, there should be a greater range of sources with different points of view included in stories, as called for by Martí's standards.

Similarly, too much information was presented without attribution, leaving the impression that it was pulled out of mid-air. Although no plagiarism was detected, sloppy sourcing can lead to charges of plagiarism.

Here are some everyday examples of these shortcomings drawn from the web version, where due to greater space it is even easier than on radio and television to source and attribute correctly:

A digital story on 9/12/18 about the deterioration of the historic Colegio de la Salle included lots of voices in Cuba and Florida but lacked any response from Cuban government officials. Even a "no comment" or "Cuban officials did not respond to repeated requests for comment" is better than nothing.

A digital profile of Mariela Castro on 4/13/18 appears to be an aggregation of many other news articles and statements from various political organizations and NGOs. It would have been strengthened by including in-depth interviews with Cuba experts from a wide spectrum of political leanings, as well as human rights activists, religious leaders, etc. Of course, every effort should have been made to seek comment from Mariela Castro, too, and the report should have said so, no matter how unlikely it is that she would have responded.

A digital story on 8/13/18 about an elderly educator now living in poverty is really an account of a short film produced by one of the educator's former students, who is now a human rights activist. No effort is made to talk to the educator herself, to get a response from the church that sits across from her house nor the nearby office of Jorge Jesus Hernandez, president of the Popular Power Assembly, which has been notified of her situation.

A digital story about Raul Castro's successor on 4/19/18 appears to be an Op-Ed. If so, it should be clearly highlighted as such because it is just the author providing all details without any attribution or links to support what he says.

That said, the panel found almost no use of anonymous sources, which was commendable.

Balance and Fairness

An *Encuentros* episode April 18 encapsulates the failure of so many politically oriented shows to live up to Martí's own ethical standards on balance and fairness.

The 30-minute show is admirable in the time it gave to spokespersons from the State Department and the National Security Council and to South Florida Congressmen Mario and Lincoln Díaz-Balart to fully explain themselves. The interviews dealt with the Trump Administration's announcement that it would lift the suspension of Title 3 of the Helms Burton Act. Title 3 allows American former owners of properties expropriated by the Cuban government to file suits in US courts against whoever might be occupying or "trafficking" in the property today. Roughly 2 million Cuban-born American citizens and their descendants could bring suits under the law. Every U.S. Administration, Republican and Democrat, has suspended the implementation of Title 3 since Helms Burton was enacted in 1996. They did so for a legion of reasons considered beneficial for the United States and for democratic transition in Cuba. Among them are the potential chaos and costs this could cause for a new democratic government in Cuba, the interference of US courts in what is a Cuban matter, the precedence set after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, and the need for all societies sooner or later to close the door on history, as most US and other nations' businesses already have done. Not one defender of those or other reasons was presented, nor were such reasons addressed by the anchor. Instead, the anchor turned to being a cheerleader and referred to the Trump Administration officials who are lifting the suspension as the "dream team" for Cuba policy. The issue here is not whether lifting Title 3 is good or bad. It is that while the defenders of the policy change were given full time to defend it, not one of the opponents were, and these include many Cuban Americans, American business leaders, allied governments, foreign policy experts and ordinary Cubans on the island.

This anchor on air, especially in the nighttime one-hour *Noticiero* he anchors, is generally professional and straightforward. The same can be said for the 5 PM *Noticiero* co-anchors. The news stories themselves by journalists who clearly seem to be Martí reporters did not fabricate, distort or overly dramatize an event, although many did not present all the nuances of an issue. The story selection, however, on both programs is heavily weighted towards stories critical of the governments of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. The heavy emphasis on the latter two for an audience in Cuba—as opposed to in Miami—is questionable.

But what is more questionable is when you get away from the two *Noticieros* to look at the many news oriented talk and background shows.

The host of *Temas y Opinión* spent 16 years in jail in Cuba and since coming to the U.S. has been honored as a brave leader and selfless contributor in the Cuban American community in South Florida. But like many of the show hosts, commentators and even reporters appearing on these other shows, it is near impossible to know her or their status as an employee and journalist. Commentators normally have more freedom to editorialize, but even for them there are standards that must be followed to ensure that their statements are responsible and that the audience knows the distinction between their views and those of Martí itself. Hosts are normally more neutral. Martí day in and day out totally fails in these distinctions—hence, the panel's consideration of Martí as purposeful propaganda. An everyday example was when this individual on her show as the host—not someone being interviewed for their views, but the host—referred to the Cuban government as a "cancer." On another show, *Tras la Noticia*, she said that Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro was Castro-like in that "he takes the food off the plate of his own children."

Similarly, opinion articles online are not identified as such. Nor is a distinction made among authors between who is a straight Martí news reporter and who is an outside contributor. One individual, for example, is identified in his bio as a “writer and journalist of MartíNoticias.” That suggests he might be a staff reporter. Yet, in a piece on the Castros and culture, he wrote that Fidel is “the anti-culture and, in consequence, the anti-nation.” Raúl, he continued, is so uncomfortable with culture that “if obliged to say the word in some pig roast, he chokes on it like on a big piece of sweet potato stuck in the alcoholic breath of his mouth.” This writer is clearly colorful with words, but is he writing on behalf of himself or Martí? This question alone undermines Martí’s credibility with the audience—any audience, including a Cuban one.

One of the hosts of *En Debate* told his audience on air that he was a Republican. To be fair, he said he was married to a Democrat, and that he was making the point that in the United States, there could be multiple points of view. Still, the question remains, is that appropriate for a journalist? Meanwhile, he and all the hosts openly give their opinions on the subject at hand, more as if they were panelists themselves and not the host. One can say that cable news in the United States is moving in that direction on its night time talk shows, too. But in addition to this being inappropriate on a U.S. government sponsored news service meant to represent all Americans, there is a question about its effectiveness inside Cuba, a question which we will return to in the last section of this report.

The above examples are not cherry picked. Almost any criticism of the Cuban government and its leaders appears to be allowed on Martí, on radio, TV and online, day in and day out, in news commentary and shows and online reports throughout the day. Television appears to be the worst. The hosts and guests are so anti-Castro that their language is often raw. The hosts insert themselves and their own experiences into the stories being told. There is little or no attempt to obtain a response or provide balancing information, in that program or another one.

The television talk show *Libertad y Democracia* provides an example of how Martí also often looks at the rest of Latin America through tinted lenses. The show is produced by the Interamerican Institute for Democracy, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting democracy in the Americas through studies and events in Miami. The executive director of the institute is host of the Martí show. His own politics are readily apparent, but not just about countries like Venezuela and Nicaragua, but also democracies like Brazil. In one show he defended Brazil’s new right-wing president, Jair Bolsonaro, as a democrat disdained by democracy-hating groups. Many Brazilian democrats would take issue with that characterization and argue the opposite. The point here is not to say who is right or wrong, but that Martí should not have a show that takes sides. And here, neither communist dictatorship nor the Castros are at issue.

The panel agrees that Martí should not allow itself to be used as a platform to defend dictatorship or communism. There are subjective lines based on American values that have to be drawn in selecting content. But most everyday concerns of the Cuban people have to do with government policies and many other factors on which any audience wants to be accurately informed, including on impacts that are good and bad. We also need to know the adversary and hear what it has to say from time to time. Martí is derelict on these grounds. It has let the pendulum of being guided by well-meaning subjective values swing to an extreme position that is undemocratic and self-defeating.

Accuracy, Context and Comprehensiveness

Even taking the anti-Castro broadsides on their own terms, there is no effort to explain or contextualize them. For example, guest and hosts often refer to events from the 1960s with no explanation for an audience not intimately familiar with or too young to know about the early stages of the Cuban revolution. Even when contemporary matters are discussed, whether in a news or talk format, precious little contextual information is provided to make the content comprehensible to someone who does not follow controversies about Cuba as they are portrayed by anti-Castro propagandists of the old school. Often times this commentary assumes that information, or coded language, is known to average individuals on the island today. As such the broadcasts are of limited utility even in a propagandistic effort to undermine support for the regime.

Meanwhile, there did not appear to be enough coverage of the political, geographical, cultural, ethnic, religious and social diversity within the U.S. and the rest of the world.

To Martí's credit, on the other hand, the panel found few factual errors in its straight news stories, and those that were found were corrected fairly quickly.

Recommendations

"The mission of United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) is to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy."

"The Office of Cuba Broadcasting's mission is to promote freedom and democracy by providing the people of Cuba with objective news and information programming."

Source: [USAGM website](#)

Are OCB's mission and that of its parent agency reflected in Radio Televisión Martí? The panel's review raised significant concerns, including these findings:

1. Well-established norms of objectivity in journalism are routinely disregarded in favor of overtly propagandistic communications tactics.
2. The content presentation on radio, via video and online seem unlikely to succeed in promoting freedom and democracy given the demography, culture and political circumstances of Cuba today.
3. Shortcomings in both intention and implementation reflect the extent to which Martí operates as an anachronism.

Lacking access to newspapers or television, immigrant Cubans in Miami in the 1960s turned to AM radio as the medium for political expression and community-building. The content and style of those broadcasts reflected a shared identity, as exiles awaited a vengeful return to the homeland from which they had been forcibly expelled by an illegitimate regime that their host nation was committed to overthrowing. Stations like Radio Mambi, La Poderosa and WQBA became essential listening by loading their schedules with talk-format shows that provided a constant stream of hostile commentary about the Cuban Revolution. Reflecting the island's

style of political discourse, the conversations were rapid fire, overtly emotional, highly personal, and lacking any commitment to veracity.

Moreover, the norms that limit incitement to violence or hatred in public statements did not apply to Miami Cubans speaking about the Castro regime. The radios operated as if they had the kind of wartime exception that applied to American depictions of German and Japanese just 20 years earlier. That can be explained by the fact that this community was indeed involved in a form of warfare against the Castro regime that endured with engagements large and small over many years, with the full support and sanction of the United States government. Along the way, the Miami Cubans suffered many casualties that they memorialized with long and oft-repeated eulogies on the radio.

Radio Martí, the progenitor of OCB, took its personnel and programming directly from the Miami Cuban radios and pointed it at the island. As depicted in our content analysis, these origins continue to characterize the style and substance of both news and information programming produced by OCB. The content has been updated to the extent that discussions focus on contemporary events and personalities, although reflections back to events through the long history of the Cuban Revolution appear in frequent interludes. The talk show format both on radio and television persists unchanged as the predominant form of communication on Martí. The tone of the conversations is no different than what could have been heard on the Miami radios 50 years ago.

One important exception is that even implicit calls for violent actions against the Cuban government have gradually fallen away, reflecting changes in U.S. policy. Instead, the emphasis, in both Washington and Miami, has shifted to dissent on the island, with emphatically supportive coverage of those who favor regime change, while giving less attention to those who seek reform. Traditional norms of journalistic objectivity are irrelevant to this form of broadcasting. As our review has shown, OCB makes no effort to provide any measure of balance in the viewpoints expressed in its content.

Meanwhile back in Miami the airwaves have changed. Both Radio Mambi and WQBA have changed ownership and format, leaving only La Poderosa to provide the old style Cuban talk, albeit with a diluted schedule that also provides contemporary fare. Nostalgia has given way to demographic reality in Miami. The generation that lived the exile drama is now almost extinct, replaced by generations of Cuban-Americans born and bred in the United States.

Similarly, and this is critical, the population of Cubans on the island with a living memory of Castro's triumph in 1959 is greatly diminished and small. Indeed, a majority of today's 11.5 million Cubans on the island have no living memory of the Revolution from even prior to the collapse of its essential patron, the Soviet Union. Forty percent of Cubans were born after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The 30 years since have been marked by a series of political and economic zig-zags intended to put Cuba on a secure footing again.

The period since Fidel Castro first became sick in 2006 and began a decade-long withdrawal from public life has seen significant changes in the political landscape as well. The Roman Catholic Church has increasingly asserted itself as an actor in public discourse. A still small but growing and prominent segment of the labor force has left government employment for a nascent private sector. Also, in the last few years, growing access to smartphones and internet connections has exposed Cubans to a multiplicity of information sources unavailable when OCB was trying to break the Cuban government's monopoly over communications media.

Cuba today, in other words, seems ripe for change. But Martí's content is fundamentally ill-suited to promote a switch to democracy. This is due to two reasons. One is that much of its content and style is anachronistic. The other is that while its one-sided talk shows and combative hosts might seem to mirror trends witnessed in U.S. cable news, they miss a fundamental difference between the two audiences. The highly politicized American talk shows exercise influence by affirming views already held by their audience. The power of these broadcasts lies in activation not persuasion. They harden divisions and polarization. But affirming views and hardening divisions is not the way to bring change to Cuba. Most of the opposition who hold views hostile to the entirety of the Cuban Revolution long ago left. They are in Miami and other Cuban refugee centers. The great mass of Cubans on the island today have more mixed feelings or are not overly political. The challenge is to reach out to these Cubans and connect with them in their mixed reality, and not the fevered false reality that refugee communities everywhere typically hold about their home countries.

A primordial rule of successful political messaging and modern marketing is that to influence people, you must usually first establish empathy with them. You must show that you understand them and their current situation, that you sympathize with them, that you appreciate the good as well as the bad of their lives and the issues they confront. OCB's broadcasts and postings do that far too little. They seek instead to activate overt opposition and hostility to the entirety of the Cuban Revolution in all its social, political, cultural and economic manifestations, and it attempts to do so with a rhetorical and ideological approach unchanged since the hottest days of the Cold War. It failed then, and it is failing now.

And then there is a second fundamental issue. In what possible way does this kind of broadcasting promote democracy? Perhaps opposition to a Communist regime inherently translated into support for the Western democracies in the bipolar world of the Cold War. But, that world, too, is long gone. Whatever its impact on the ways Cubans think about their government, Martí's content makes no effort to depict, let alone to promote, an alternative democratic world or otherwise.

And, this singular point of view—attacking the Cuban government by any means possible—carries over to coverage of news far beyond Cuba. Whether it is a concert in Buenos Aires by a Cuban musician or a change in Brazil's policy on pay for Cuban doctors, the news is assessed only by its relevance to a single objective. The news judgment that values information on the basis of the harm it might inflict to the inheritors of the Castro regime leaves little room for news coverage or commentary about events that might serve as examples of democratic governance to a contemporary Cuban audience. That kind of content is readily accessible to Martí in great volume, if only it will use it.

Objective, explanatory coverage of American society and politics, even with all its shortcomings and contentiousness, would offer powerful witness to the workings of a democratic society with a free and vigorous civil society, including a free press. Neutral, explanatory coverage of news in Cuba, especially the government's increasingly complex and sometimes contradictory efforts at economic reform, would provide a unique and potentially useful service to a Cuban audience. Presenting commentary from multiple points of view, including supporters of the Cuban government, would model the functioning of a democratic system. And, routine news service coverage of non-controversial developments in Cuba, such as successful hurricane evacuation efforts or happenings at a book or film festival, would show a potential audience that OCB could produce content without an overt, political agenda.

With a new editorial line and a clear production format, Martí could reach Cubans in Cuba in a more neutral way. Once Cubans are enthralled with controversial issues, but in neutral television and radio formats, they can absorb the news in a respectful way. In Cuba, there are many interesting things to show, and many ways to reach young people with current material, without talking about the regime and events of years ago. News shows could focus on current events and trends, with fresh news, to enrich both the message and the content. Experts in controversial topics can be brought into debates, but the show itself must keep a critical and unbiased view. All this would allow the introduction of fresher and more current programs, with the possibility of captivating and influencing a greater audience.

There is nothing new or revolutionary about these recommendations. They are the approach used by the Voice of America and the other services of the U.S. Agency for Global Media. It is the approach that worked in helping to bring down the Iron Curtain with the Soviet Union and moderate China from what it was in the days of Mao, even if there is backsliding in both countries today. It is the approach being used to moderate Muslim extremism in the Middle East and Africa.

The Cuban regime's misdeeds and shortcomings, and the resultant difficulties of life on the island, should legitimately dominate any news feed. Nothing here is meant to suggest that Martí downplay those topics. But they do not need to crowd out every other topic, as is now the case. Constant, monotonous discussion of Cuban affairs in the style of a Miami radio station will not and cannot achieve OCB's mission. In the judgment of the authors of this report, beginning an effort to accomplish that mission will require a substantial reduction of the time and space devoted to Cuban affairs and a categorical change in the way Cuba is treated.

Simultaneously, Martí will have to develop multiple new categories of content in multiple new formats that are designed to appeal to Cuba's current population, especially its young people. These tools would then allow OCB to craft a strategy that deliberately and methodically seeks "to promote freedom and democracy by providing the people of Cuba with objective news and information programming."