

## BACKGROUND

The word *resolver* is a Spanish term coined in Cuba to refer to the various means by which one "gets by" with what one has. The instinct for survival is an inherent part of human nature that seemingly has become a source of nationalism to the point of pride within Cuban society. Although always in existence as a Spanish word, many argue that the use of *resolver* became more prevalent in the early 1990s after the fall of communism in the Soviet Union, a historical milestone that devastated Cuba's domestic economy. It goes without question that a widespread desperation took hold during what Fidel Castro called the "Special Period in times of peace" of Cuban society, and during that time the need to *resolver* changed from a secondary mode of living to a primary one.

Many would argue that although, to a certain extent, everyone in the world needs to fight to survive, the manner in which Cubans do so is unique, and stems from their cultural values as well as their past political and economic hardships. Many of the subjects interviewed for this project agreed that Cubans take great pride in their ability both to provide for themselves and their families, and to use their ingenuity to reuse, recycle, and repair the old when the new is unavailable or unattainable.

On the other hand, it would seem that Cubans do not, in fact, have the monopoly on problem-solving (or on self-proclaimed ingenuity, for that matter.) An investigation of different world languages has led to the discovery of multiple words with similar patterns of development in various countries' vernacular across the globe. Research and personal interviews have uncovered words and opinions that parallel Cuba's term *resolver* from Brazil to Poland. Even in the U.S. we say "I'll make do." The difference lies in the sense of hiding the illegal, doing things outside the system, and surviving against the odds.

This thesis project, while aware of the comparable words in other cultures, will focus specifically on Cuba's story in an attempt to uncover the linguistic trajectory, the cultural implications, and the predictive significance of this pervasive word.