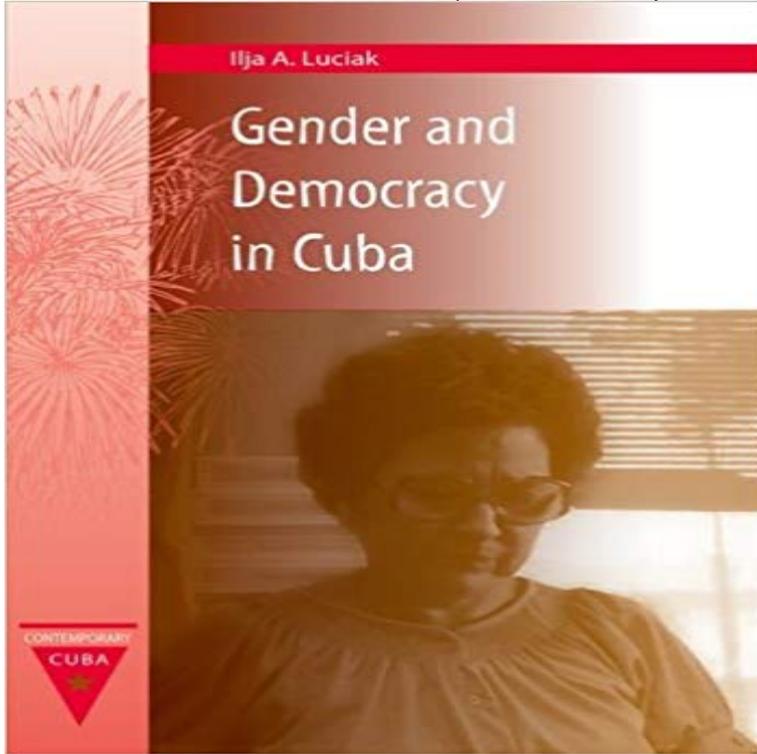


Gender and Democracy in Cuba (Contemporary Cuba)



In this in-depth view of Cuban gender politics and democracy, Luciak considers the role that women played in the Cuban revolution. The women who joined Castro's revolution were considered indispensable, and a select group of women held leadership roles. Che Guevara in particular recognized the important contribution women could make to the revolutionary struggle. Most women engaged in open civil dissent and staged demonstrations, while some, such as Celia Sanchez, supported clandestine armed operations at great personal risk. Luciak maintains that Cuba's revolutionary government made great progress in advancing women's social and economic rights and proved successful in guaranteeing women's formal political participation. Ironically this success had an unintended consequence: It inhibited public debate on how to transform prevailing gender relations and preempted the emergence of an autonomous women's movement that could effectively advocate for change. As a result, women hold very limited decision-making power in the current regime. Sanchez was a lifelong confidante to Fidel Castro, who considered women's emancipation to be a revolution in the revolution. But Cuban feminists see Sanchez as a symbol of women's invisibility, noting that her image adorning the Cuban 20-peso note is part of the watermark, which can be viewed only when held against the light. Drawing on interviews with high-ranking Cuban officials, Luciak argues that democracy cannot be successfully consolidated without the full participation of women in the political process--and the support of men--both at the party and societal levels.

In this comprehensive examination of Cuban gender politics and democracy, Ilja Luciak examines the indispensable roles women played in the Cuban revolution. The Center for Democracy in the Americas published the results of our two-year study on gender equality in Cuba. In it, we write about Cuba's A five-week, 6-credit study abroad program in Cuba. levels? -

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