

# The Fierce Green Fire

A Newsletter of the Wofford College Environmental Studies Program



*The pink and orange sunset over Havana during Dr. Leebrick's and Dr. Telligman's visit to Cuba for the Association for Humanist Sociology Conference.*



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## *Conference in Cuba by Dr. Rhiannon Leebrick*

This year's annual meeting for the Association for Humanist Sociology (AHS) was held in Havana, Cuba where Dr. Amy Telligman and I presented our paper, "Operationalizing Sustainability: Bringing Social Justice and Inequality to the Conversation," in which we discussed social equity as a valuable dimension of sustainability.

Havana is a grid of grand boulevards and gritty streets, weather worn mid-century architecture and faded colonial era buildings, everything a nod to the past. At sunset, the city turns pink and orange softening the worn edges. On the Malecón, a boulevard that runs along the sea, a hum of Cubans and tourists alike gather at dark, using the sea wall as a bench, a spot to let the briny air (and diesel exhaust) wash away the day, while 1950s era cars speed by.

Cuba is a fascinating place geopolitically and has long been a source of curiosity for me. In terms of sustainability, Cuba gets frequent praise as having made great strides in urban organic farming. Cubans are quick to point out that this was in large part done out of necessity rather than on principle alone. After the fall of the USSR, Cuba lost 80% of its imports and nearly the

same in exports almost overnight. With the US embargo, Cuba's main trading partner had long been Soviet bloc countries. With very limited access to petrochemicals and a population facing famine, more people had to farm on whatever land was available and were doing so using organic methods. Today estimates say that about 90% of fresh produce—cassava, citrus, potatoes, garlic, herbs, corn, onions, lettuce—in Havana is grown on local urban farms.

As part of the conference, Dr. Telligman and I spent an afternoon on a fieldtrip to the *Organopónico Viver Alamer*, an organic farm just outside of the city. Here we toured the 25+ acre farm and got to see a variety of techniques they use, including oxen to plow and fertilize, earthworm troughs, a variety of plants grown together to create a confusing smell for bugs in a successful effort to deter them, and a vast expanse of crops. The system certainly is not perfect; Cubans still rely heavily on imports, there is countrywide debate over the food rationing system, and tourism, especially if doors open wide to Americans again, could change everything. Nonetheless, the work being done on organic farms in Cuba is exciting.



*Above: Dr. Leebrick and Dr. Telligman exploring Havana. Below: Organopónico Viver Alamer, an organic farm just outside of the city.*



## Upcoming Events and Opportunities

November 15<sup>th</sup>  
7:00pm  
Leonard Auditorium

**“From Spartanburg to Accra: My Journey in the Study of International Education”:**  
Lecture by Regina Fuller '11, Presidential Scholar, Fulbright Scholar, Ford Foundation Fellow, and University of Wisconsin PhD student in Educational Policy Studies.

November 16<sup>th</sup>  
7:00pm  
Richardson Family Art Gallery

**Gallery Talk by Sheridan Kate Murray:** Join us for a gallery talk by 2017 Whetsell Fellow Sheridan Kate Murray. Murray will be discussing her exhibit *Dying on the Vine*, on display November 7-December 21. This event is free and open to the public.

November 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>

Happy  
Thanksgiving!

December 1<sup>st</sup>

**Applications open for summer research internship:** This paid summer internship runs May 29-August 3, 2018 in the Lake Champlain Basin in Vermont. Research will be conducted in lake & stream ecology, climatology, water chemistry & microbiology, soil nutrients, environmental policy & management, and land use management. Visit: <https://epscor.w3.uvm.edu/2/node/111> for more information and to complete an online application. Deadline to apply: January 31, 2018.

## PROFILE OF THE WEEK:

### *University of South Carolina – Master of Earth and Environmental Resource Management*

The School of Earth, Ocean and Environment at the University of South Carolina offers five graduate degrees including the Master of Earth and Environmental Resource Management (MEERM) degree for graduate students interested in management positions in earth resources or environmental resources.

MEERM offers these graduate students the opportunity to create individualized programs based on their own interests and goals.

The school's website quotes, “To ensure a truly

*interdisciplinary education, at least one third of the student's coursework must be in earth and environmental resources and one third in management, finance and economics, with no more than 50 percent in either field.”* This gives students the flexibility to create their own individualized degree within a structured program.

In cooperation with the USC School of Law, the program also offers a JD-MEERM dual degree.

For more information on the MEERM degree and other degrees, visit

<http://www.seoe.sc.edu/graduate/>