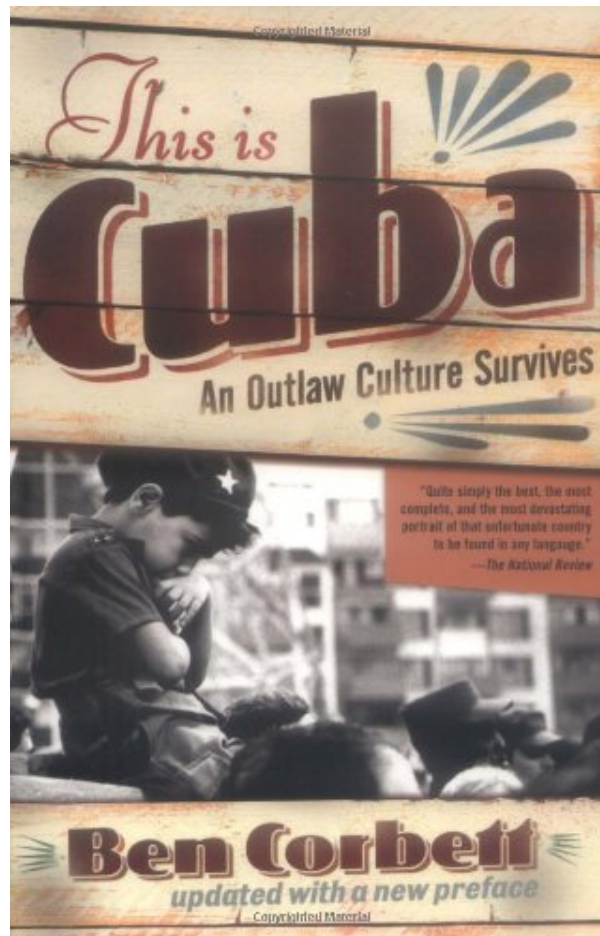
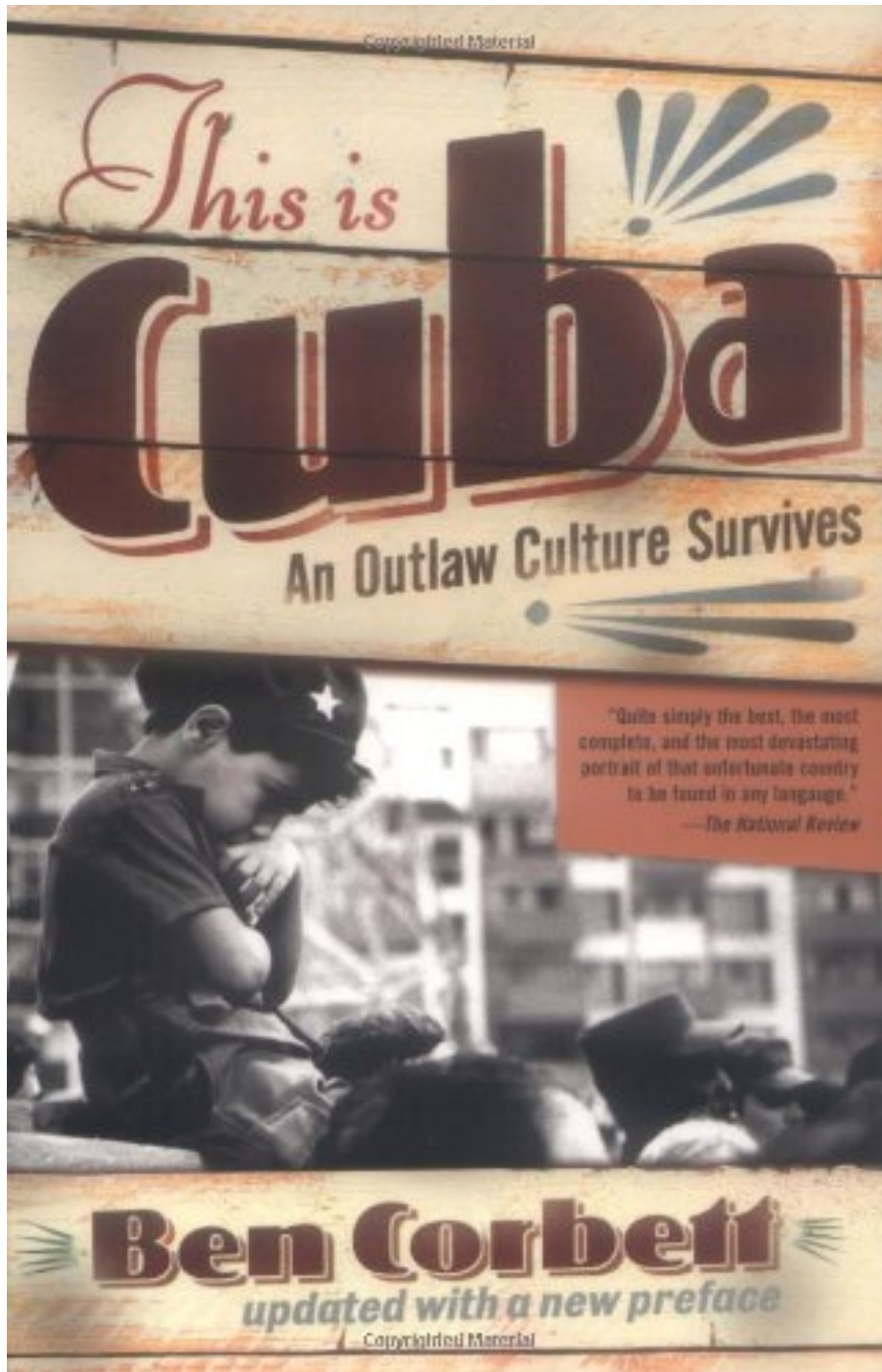


THIS IS CUBA: AN OUTLAW CULTURE SURVIVES BY BEN CORBETT



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With its provocative subtitle, freelance journalist Corbett's new book on Cuba certainly is not sponsored by the Cuban department of tourism. Nor is it a treatise from the Miami exile community. Rather, it is an honest, behind-the-scenes look at everyday Cubans dealing with life and survival. They are pawns in the great chess game between two looming ideologies: the capitalist United States, which never recognized the legitimacy of the Cuban Revolution, and the Socialist government under Castro, which is determined to continue the struggle. These ordinary folk spend an inordinate amount of time trying to make ends meet and stretch their meager resources (and ration books) from month to month. Where contrary political expression is dangerous, they resist in subtler ways: buying or selling goods on the black market, making illegal money off the tourist trade, or even getting tattoos. More daring Cubans take to the seas. Yet perhaps Fidel's stubbornness and belief in Cubanidad ("Cubaness") has paid off in an unintentional way. "They are now prepared to defend Cuba's destiny," concludes Corbett of Cubans. "And in the preparedness, perhaps Castro achieved the greatest victory of all." Recommended for all large academic and public libraries.

Lee Arnold, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

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Review

"Let it be said immediately that "This Is Cuba is quite simply the best, the most complete, and most devastating portrait of that unfortunate country to be found in any language."

About the Author

Ben Corbett is a freelance journalist who has spent several years researching and writing almost exclusively on Cuban culture, politics, and economics. Some of his features on Cuba have appeared in Salon, Tattoo Magazine, Easyriders, Fringe Golf, and Relix. He lives in Colorado.

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Beyond the throngs of tourists streaming through Central Havana's broad Prado Avenue, and outside the yoke of Castro's 43-year-old Revolutionary program, there exists a parallel Cuba - a separate evolution of a people struggling to survive. With personal stories that depict a people torn between following the directives of their government and finding a way to better their lot, journalist Ben Corbett gives us the daily life of many considered outlaws by Castro's regime. But are they outlaws or rather ingenious survivors of what many Cubans consider to be a forty-year mistake, a tangle of contradictions that has resulted in a strange hybrid of American-style capitalism and a homegrown black market economy. At a time when Cuba walks precariously on the ledge between socialism and capitalism, *This Is Cuba* gets to the heart of this so-called outlaw culture, taking readers into the living rooms, rooftops, parks, and city streets to hear stories of frustration, hope, and survival. Updated with a new preface.

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Most helpful customer reviews

22 of 26 people found the following review helpful.

Cuba: Good and Bad

By Andrew Desmond

I visited Cuba in March 1997 and have always been drawn back to books that allow me to vicariously revisit the country.

Ben Corbett's book manages to walk a fine line between an admiration for Cuba (especially her people) and often stern criticism of the Castro regime. It differs, therefore, from many other books about Cuba. Corbett is no Miami based Cuban exile with a chip on his shoulder but nor is he a naïve promoter of the Communist Party government. In short, Corbett has real credibility.

From another angle, Corbett is clearly no blow in visitor who, after a week or two in the country, regards himself as some sort of expert. Instead, Corbett has visited the country on a number of occasions and for considerable lengths of time in each case. He has immersed himself in the country from a variety of perspectives and has clearly travelled widely and met a host of individuals, many of whom he now counts as friends.

It seems to me that Corbett has a love for Cuba but a distinct distaste for the regime. Yet for all this, he has no axe to grind. Far too many critical Cuba commentators are allied with the exile communities in Florida. Unfortunately, for all the errors and flaws of the regime, its hasty end may well herald the return of the exiles and a still less than positive outcome. There may be no velvet revolution.

I recommend this book to all readers interested in Cuba and its future.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Simply amazing

By Carlos Delgado

I am a 32 years old cuban who left Cuba in 1999. I was born into the "revolution" and was able to witness most of the stories told on this book. However, this book goes deep into the real heart of Cuba discovering things that even me as a Cuban, I was unaware of. Great Job!!!!

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

exactly what I was looking for

By KB

Great book, easy, enjoyable to read. I had no knowledge of Cuban life. Was curious of what life is like over there. This book gives you an idea of the day to day in Cuba along with the political climate and background, all the while entertaining. Excellent read.

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