

Orlando Luis PARDO LAZO, Cuban writer, editor, journalist and photographer currently hosted by the "refuge city" of Reykjavik

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1) Why did you have to leave your country?

My book of short stories BORING HOME was censored in 2009 Havana International Book Fair, when it was about to be launched by Letras Cubanas. The president of the Cuban Book Institute (Iroel Sánchez), the president of the Cuban Artist and Writers' Union (Miguel Barnet) and the Minister of Culture (Abel Prieto) approved this for considering me "counterrevolutionary". The official editor Vladimir Zamora published that I "must not be considered Cuban anymore" in a defamation campaign that was launched against me. The editor of the official UNION magazine Ernesto Pérez Chang claimed "they would not allow me to be a creator in Cuba anymore". The director of the influential official magazine EL CAIMÁN BARBUDO accused me of "receiving remuneration" from USA government and of "progressive degradation" as human being. Other official websites have called me "sociopathic", "egomaniac", "mercenary" of the "transnational monopolist enterprises" to organize free-lance events in Cuba, of being a "CIA's pet" and a "State Department's puppet", and of promoting a military invasion to the Island in an Arab Spring-like scenario in Cuba. I have been physically expelled from public spaces in Havana, like the presentation of cultural magazines, hip-hop concerts and cinema festivals. My name is forbidden in all the national press, books presentations, and film documentaries. My Cuban mobile phone was monitored on real-time and his service was routinely blocked. My home started to be under surveillance and microphones were attempted to be installed, making coercing friends to turn them into agents of Castro's State Security. My neighbors have been interrogated by the State Security about my work and status outside Cuba, in order to spread rumors and worry my family. Before 2013, I was prevented several times to leave my country. Agents of Cuban State Security have interrogated me during hours. I was threatened with beatings, jail, and rape if I persisted as a free writer. I was imposed an Official Warning of Dangerousness Status, which implies a judicial aggravating and puts me in high risk of being trialled and sentenced up to 4 years according to the Cuban Penal Code. I have also been arbitrarily detained with violence three times in Cuba, without any charges. As a consequence of all these repressions against me in Cuba, in 2012 both Inter American Press Association (IAPA) and Pen Club International included me in their reports about repression against writers in the world.

2) What are you doing in the ICORN city you are living now?

I am writing a book that it is half biography and half novel. The life of all Cubans that they don't dare to tell by themselves, even if they have already "committed exiled". It's my legacy. And my love.

3) What represents the importance of ICORN for you?

ICORN is an NGO that stands up against totalitarianism, authoritarianism, despotic populisms and all kind of corrupt regimes. It is of utmost importance to support ICORN's struggle to save the voices

and the lives of so many artists about to be annihilated in the word right now.

4) What will you do after the ICORN residence?

I am planning to study a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature in the United States of America. Within the U.S. academy there are still many battles to be fought against the intellectual castroism that is so widespread, from Seattle to Washington, DC.

Biography :

Writer, editor, journalist, photographer

Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo is an award-winning Cuban writer, blogger and photojournalist. Arriving in Reykjavik in September 2015, Pardo Lazo came straight from an IWP fellowship at Brown University, a residency scholarship given to writers subjected to political harassment, imprisonment, or oppression in their country of origin.

Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo left Cuba in 2013, following the advent of migratory reforms launched by the government of Raul Castro. Labeled variously a ‘dissident’ and ‘counterrevolutionary’ in his native Cuba, Pardo Lazo was often targeted for his critical writings and peaceful activism. His struggle for freedom of expression in art and in social activism made Pardo Lazo subject to official censorship, including public defamation in governmental websites, job exclusion from the Cuban Radio and TV Institute (ICRT), anonymous threatening, interrogation by the political police, and arrests without charges.

Graduated a molecular biochemist in 1994, in 2000, Pardo Lazo began working as a freelance writer, blogger and photographer, publishing nationally-awarded short-fiction books in Cuba, including *Collage Karaoke* (2001), *Empezar de cero* (2001), *Ipatriás* (2005) and *Mi nombre es William Saroyan* (2006). His latest collection of short stories *Boring Home* (2009) was censored from being published in Cuba.

Pardo Lazo represents a movement in Cuban literature often called *Generación Año Cero* (Generation Zero), a group of writers in Cuba who started publishing in the 00’s. Seldom translated into English or distributed internationally, most of the new Cuban literature is rather unknown in the rest of the world. In 2014, Pardo Lazo edited an anthology of 16 short stories from “post-fidel” writers, translated into English, revealing a deconstruction in the perception of Cuban reality and mentality. The anthology is entitled, *“Generation Zero: An anthology of new Cuban fiction”*.

Pardo Lazo is also a prolific contributor to renowned **Cuban magazines and international digital and printed journals**. He publishes literary criticism, creative writing and opinion pieces on a range of topics, including the human rights situation in Cuba. Among others, they include *La Gaceta de Cuba*, *Diario de Cuba*, *PanAm Post*, *Sampsonia Way Magazine*, *The Huffington Post*, *In These Times*, *All Voices*, *Penúltimos Días*, *Cronopio magazine*, *Qué Pasa*, *The Prague Post*, *Cubaencuentro*, *Letras Libres*, *El Nuevo Herald*, and *El Nacional* (Venezuela).

Since 2008, Pardo Lazo has edited a number of **underground literary online magazines** including *Cacharro(s)*, *The Revolutionary Evening Post*, and *Voces*. He also runs a blog *Lunes de Post-Revolución* (and its English version *Post-Revolution Mondays*). In a parallel blog, Pardo Lazo publishes his photography. His photography has been celebrated by the New York Times Lens blog. See his photos [Abandoned Havana](#) on Restless books.