Life in Cuba
One World Student Ambassador: Jorge, Grade 7

Most people think that Cuba is a struggling, communist country, full of bad people and no money. Technology is old and the cars are ugly. United States citizens can’t even get in without special permission from the government. To me, however, Cuba is a beautiful, special country that gives me a lot of freedom and lets me have independence to do whatever I want without worrying about my safety. Cubans are warm and friendly and everyone is welcoming and treats you like you are one of the family. Every time I go to Cuba, I get to experience the sights and sounds of an amazing country with my family who I don’t see too often.

When I step off the plane, it’s almost like I’ve entered a different world. The culture in Cuba is exciting and full of life. There, everyone speaks Spanish. All Cubans can communicate and understand each other. No one looks at my family funny and judges us for speaking Spanish in Cuba. Students go to school for only half a day. Students can ride their bikes to school and never worry about getting them stolen. They focus on their work and are serious, but then get to play all afternoon with their friends. After school, they are active and athletic. My friends get together and play sports like baseball, soccer, and boxing all afternoon on fields near the school. Sports are played every day, and can be done at any time, right outside the school building.

One of the best things about Cuba is spending time with my active and hard-working Cuban family. Although my friends here might miss their Facebook, cell phones, and video games, I love spending time in nature and doing outdoor activities. We go horseback riding, swim in the gorgeous blue oceans, drive around in old-fashioned cars, and play in the water with dolphins. We also do activities that my American friends have never even heard of. My cousin and I hunt snakefish, go to my grandpa’s farm, and raise chicken babies.

Most people see their families any time they want, almost every day. I have to get on a four-hour flight just to see my grandfather, my grandmother, my aunts and uncles, and my cousins. Cuba is my second home. I would never take my family for granted, because every time I see them is so special and infrequent. When I leave I get sad, because I have gotten so used to having my Cuban family near me, and I don’t know when I will see them again. I wonder whether some of my American friends treasure their family as much as I treasure mine.

Some activities in Cuba are much more fun than the ones here. For example, my Cuban friends and I race around on 4-wheelers, we ride bikes to the ocean, and take dips in a refreshing pool. I never get worried about playing outside and getting hit by a car or annoyed by a potential kidnapper. In the US, I have to stay inside and play video games, because my mother and father get nervous about my safety. In Cuba, I have a lot more freedom. I get to experience how my grandfather lived, and can play with the chickens, ride horses, and pretend I’m a farmer. I love to escape the city and the
disgusting pollution. It’s nice to be able to stay outside all day and play with my cousins.

In the US, we sometimes hear salsa music on the radio, and probably just change the channel. In Cuba, salsa music is played live in the streets, and people start singing and dancing when the music starts. The food there is interesting and different from the food here. We eat rice and beans, fresh lobster from the ocean, and fried tamales home-cooked by my grandmother. Crafts are all hand-made and tell about the history of the people. Paintings and murals give a look into the fascinating history of Cuba. Jewelry is made out of interesting materials, like soda cans. Even though I was born here in the United States, I feel like Cuba is home, and almost like I should have been born there.

There are many good reasons to live in Cuba. School is free and open to all students. There is very little crime, and no guns, and drug use is little. Some things, though, should be changed. The country is communist and should be changed to a democracy so the citizens have freedom of speech and can choose what they want to do. Communism is a theory/system, which is based on all people sharing all wealth and property equally. This idea can have drawbacks, however. Currently, Fidel Castro, the leader of Cuba tells people what they have to do, and people can get arrested and hurt if they disobey. In the US, people can speak against the president, and nothing will really happen to them. It is hard for Cuba’s economy to grow when everything is shared and even hard work won’t gain a person more money. Therefore, a lot of technology in Cuba is really old. Cars are run-down and used. Very few people have cell phones, and the towers don’t give a lot of signal. Only people with money can purchase computers, and there is no Wi-Fi and it is hard to send emails.

Cuba will hopefully be better in the near future, when the embargo is lifted and anyone can travel there. The embargo is a block so that no one in the USA can trade with Cuba. They need new technology, and stores opened so everyone can buy computers and cell phones. It is very important that Cubans can say and do what they want, so they have more freedom and won’t be arrested for doing the same things we do here without worry. When people can open their own businesses and earn more money, Cubans will have more opportunities, and have extra money to travel and buy the supplies they need.

People should not think of Cuba as a communist and old country. For me, it is like a second home filled with interesting culture, freedom to be outside without worrying, and welcoming and loving people. As soon as my parents say we are travelling to Cuba, I get so excited, but when we have to leave I get very, very sad. Everyone should take at least one trip to Cuba to experience the amazing country that I think of as my second home.