



To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society (H. Eugene and Lillian Youngs Lehman Series)

Louis A. Pérez Jr.

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To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society (H. Eugene and Lillian Youngs Lehman Series) Louis A. Pérez Jr. For much of the nineteenth century and all of the twentieth, the per capita rate of suicide in Cuba was the highest in Latin America and among the highest in the world--a condition made all the more extraordinary in light of Cuba's historic ties to the Catholic church. In this richly illustrated social and cultural history of suicide in Cuba, Louis A. Perez Jr. explores the way suicide passed from the unthinkable to the unremarkable in Cuban society.

In a study that spans the experiences of enslaved Africans and indentured Chinese in the colony, nationalists of the twentieth-century republic, and emigrants from Cuba to Florida following the 1959 revolution, Perez finds that the act of suicide was loaded with meanings that changed over time. Analyzing the social context of suicide, he argues that in addition to confirming despair, suicide sometimes served as a way to consecrate patriotism, affirm personal agency, or protest injustice. The act was often seen by suicidal persons and their contemporaries as an entirely reasonable response to circumstances of affliction, whether economic, political, or social.

Bringing an important historical perspective to the study of suicide, Perez offers a valuable new understanding of the strategies with which vast numbers of people made their way through life--if only to choose to end it. *To Die in Cuba* ultimately tells as much about Cubans' lives, culture, and society as it does about their self-inflicted deaths.

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