

**A RING THAT
OCCASIONALLY
BORDERS
THE SUN**

Collected here are interviews with children living in Cuba. They were conducted in the summer of 2015.



Lorena, 5 years old

Where do you think the Earth came from?

From a seed.

And where did that seed come from?

**From another seed... and then another and another.
This all happened before I was born.**

What do you like to play?

Barbies.

What do you do with them?

I dress them and speak as if they were talking.

Do you play by yourself?

With my friends.

At school?

In my house, because my mom will not let me take my barbies to school. The friend I play barbies with is older than me; she is seven. My mom lets me play on Saturdays and Sundays, and yesterday we played a lot.

What would you like to do when you grow old?

I'd like to do nails.

Why?

Because I like to put on nails.

If you could make a law that everyone had to obey, what would it be?

To plant plants.

If you were to move to another country, which would it be?

Paris.

Why?

Because it is very cute and has the Eiffel Tower. I like it.

Have you seen it?

On television.

Tell me a dream.

One day I went out with my mom, and it was my birthday. I was wearing a blouse that I don't own. It was a blouse with straps, open on the back and made from yellow lycra.

Is that what you would like to get as a present?

No, I want a tablet. [giggles]

Why do you want a tablet?

Because many of my friends have one. And I want to play [the game] *Angela* and do my doll's makeup.

Tell me about one of your favorite presents.

The day of my fifth birthday, my mom and dad took me to a farm. That's where you can get ice cream and hop on inflatables.

What do you think is the best invention in the world?

A song.



Mario Andrés, 13 years old

How would the world be if animals could talk?

More fun.

What would you do?

I would talk with my kitten.

What would you say to your kitten?

I would tell her personal things; she'd be my confidant, but she'd have to be only a kitten to the rest of the humans.

What is the most difficult thing about being a kid?

To be treated as a kid when you really want to be treated as an adult.

And the best?

[laughs] To be treated as a kid when you misbehave.

What is confusing to you about adults?

Boring things are fun to them.

If you could send a message to anyone in the world, to whom would you send it? What would you say?

I would send a message to Messi and ask him if we could play soccer one day. Or maybe, if by coincidence, we could be related! [laughs]

What advice would you give to your parents?

That's a difficult one. I'd tell them I want them to give me a baby brother.



Claudia, 12 years old

Tell me the weirdest thing you've ever seen.

When I went on a field trip to the zoo and I saw a monkey doing the same things as a human. The other kids started to do silly things and the chimpanzee started to act just like them.

What is the best gift that you have ever received?

A cellphone.

What do you do with it?

I call my girlfriends.

Describe your idea of a perfect day.

I would go to Varadero and just stay at the beach all day and eat whatever I wanted. My parents wouldn't be there, telling me what to do!

What would you do if you were president?

Help the economy and live well.

What is your favorite food?

Spaghetti.

What advice would you give to your parents?

To leave me alone and let me use the computer whenever I wanted.

Do you remember any of your dreams from when you sleep? If so, tell me one.

Yes, sometimes. Once, I dreamed about a world made of food. First, I fell in a river of chocolate, then I went into a cotton candy cave and climbed a tree of gummy snakes. Then my mom woke me up.

What do you see yourself doing in 20 years?

I think I might be traveling, visiting other places; maybe even living outside the country.



Gabriella, 5 years old

What is the gift that you'd most like to receive?

I'm not sure what I'd like to receive now, but someone did bring me a very big doll. It is almost as big as me.

What do you do with it?

I don't play with her; she's only on display.

Why don't you play with her?

I don't like putting her in the bag with the other toys.

What's your favorite food?

Rice, beans and chicken.

Do you remember your dreams?

I don't dream. I get up at 9am.

What advice would you give your parents?

My dad doesn't live in Cuba. He lives in the United States.

Then what advice would you give to your mom?

To clean.

Tell me something funny that has happened to you.

Nothing happens to me.

Something sad?

Nothing sad happens to me.

What scares you?

Nothing scares me, not even ghosts.

What about aliens?

They don't exist.

What would be the best thing about being a dog?

I wouldn't like to be a dog.

Why?

Because a dog killed my chickens. It jumped into their box and ate them.



Daniela, 8 years old

What is the best gift you have ever received?

A baby doll that my dad brought me. It cries and says “Mommy” and “Daddy.” I have the doll on display but when I get up and make my bed, I place her in my bed.

Why don't you play with it?

My mom told me to not play with it until my other doll breaks.

What would you do if you were the president of Cuba?

I would have more get-togethers.

Why?

I don't know.

What is the saddest thing that can happen to you?

Getting in trouble.

Why do you get in trouble?

Because I misbehave. They tell me, “Sit right there!” And I have to stay there all day or lay in bed.

What question would you like to ask an American kid your age?

I'd like to see how he or she talks.

What country would you like to visit? Why?

Italy because my dad and my grandma live there.

What would you say to an animal that can talk?

Why are you talking if you are not a human?

Tell me a joke.

Once upon a time, a boy named Pepito went to school. At the end of the school day, his teacher told him to write three sentences for homework. When he got home, he asked his mom for help and she said, “No, right now, I’m going to buy bread.” So, Pepito decided to write that down and use it as his first sentence for the homework. He walked into the other room and his brother was watching sports and said, “Goooooaaaaaaal!” So Pepito wrote that sentence down for his homework. Then his grandma, who was fighting with the neighbor, screamed, “Bring me that crazy old lady! I’m not afraid of her!” So now Pepito had his third and final sentence for homework.

The next day at school, the teacher asked him to read his homework sentences. Pepito read: “No, right now, I’m going to buy bread.” The teacher was annoyed and asked him how he thinks he’ll score behaving this way. Pepito continues to read the sentences: “Goooooaaaaaaal!” The very mad teacher tells him that she’s going to call the principal, and Pepito reads: “Bring me that crazy old lady; I’m not afraid of her.” [laughs]



Cossette, 13 years old

What did you do yesterday?

I went to school, went back home and watched TV, studied, played on the computer and called my friend. That's it.

What's the best thing that has ever happened to you?

When my brother was born. I knew he was going to be another person to have fun with.

Do you think there is life in other planets?

Perhaps yes or no. In the TV show *Passage to the Unknown*, they talk a lot about that. Maybe we could find out if we can visit other planets in the future.

What do you think aliens look like?

Green people, in shiny suits—just like in the movies.

What are your favorite animals?

Dolphins and dogs.

If you could talk to a dolphin, what would you say?

I would ask him to teach me to swim as fast as he does and to breathe under water.

What would you do if you were Cuba's president?

I'd keep a lot of things the same, but I would also change others. Since I'm a kid, I would want to change things that would benefit kids, such as only going to school until noon.

What do you think you'll be doing in 20 years?

I would like to be an actress or something like that. I could be doing some TV work... or maybe I could continue going to school to have a better future... or I could be under water with the dolphins.

What is your favorite food?

Pizza.

What advice would you give to your parents?

To not stress out so much; to look at life in a happier way.



Andy, 9 years old

What did you do yesterday.

Yesterday, I went to school, and then I played ball with my classroom friends and ate lunch. When I went home, I played with water guns with the kids from my neighborhood, and we ran around the block. After that, I went to my friend Fabio's house to play cards. Then I came back home, took a shower, ate and went out to play again until my dad called me inside to go to bed.

What is your favorite food?

Chicken and beans.

What would you like to be in 20 years?

A policeman.

Why?

My dad's a cop. He captures thieves.

What would you ask a child living in the United States?

I would ask if he likes school, what he likes to eat and what games he likes to plays.

What would you do if you were president of Cuba?

I'd help people who do not have houses and give food to those who don't have any. And for those who are sick, I would give them medicine and pills.

Tell me the weirdest thing you've ever seen.

A mouse, because it is disgusting.

Tell me a dream you had.

One day I was on the beach and I thought I was going to drown. I was swimming and something grabbed me. It was pulling me down to the bottom! But fortunately, I woke up.

But that's a nightmare.

Also, the other day I dreamed that I was going to get married.

With who?

With a girl in my class.



Ariel, 14 years old

What is the strangest thing that you have seen in your life?

The ring that occasionally borders the sun, like a halo. I have shot many photos of it.

What would you do if you were president of Cuba?

Improve this shit. I would raise wages.

What do you think has been the most important invention?

The computer.

What do you see yourself doing in 20 years?

I think I will be a cook. I'll cook fast food and stuff.

What would a world be like if animals could talk?

Better.

Why?

Because we would understand more things in nature.

What would you say to the animals? Your dog, for example.

I would make fun of him, because he acts like a monkey. He's always trying to bite his own tail.

What is the best gift you have ever received?

Pants.

What is your favorite food?

Macaroni pasta.

Who would you send a message to?

Messi.

What would you say?

Give me your shirt.

What advice would you give to your parents?

To improve their defects.

What is the best thing that happened to you?

Having my parents, because there are many who do not.



Arian, 11 years old

What do you do in school?

Not much. I don't like school.

What do you like?

Parties.

Tell me what you did yesterday.

Yesterday was Sunday, so I slept in. I began to clean the yard, ate lunch, watched TV, went to a friend's house, went back home, took a shower, ate and went to my friend's house again. Then I went back home to sleep.

What is your favorite food?

Spaghetti.

What is the best gift you have ever received?

A square pattern shirt that my cousin gave me.

If you could meet a boy your age who lives in the United States, what would you ask him?

What does he do on the weekends? What games does he like? What soccer team does he like?

What will you be doing in 20 years?

Working. I will be a veterinarian.

What advice would you give to your parents?

To go out more.



Carlos, 13 years old

What would you do if you were Cuba's president?

I'd tell people that they have to obey the laws. In schools, I would make it a four-month vacation break instead of a two-month break. Also, I would review education methods. At school sometimes teachers are absent, so we don't learn much.

What do you think is the best invention in the world?

It is a Leonardo da Vinci invention that was a war machine. I can't remember the name. It was made to be used against France. It was a moving wheel with several cannons.

Why do you like the invention so much? It only works for killing, right?

That's true, but it was a smart invention. It was used as a strategy.

If you could send a message to any person in the world, to whom would you send it?

To my uncle who lives in the U.S. He is a doctor. I'd like him to send us an invitation letter, so my mom and I could go to where he lives to spend a week together as a family.

What's the best present you have ever received?

When my grandma bought me a bunch of clothes and shoes from Spain.

What was it that you liked the best?

It was a pair of lycra pants. The pockets had England's flag.

Why do you speak in the past tense about your pants?

Because I used the pants so much, I wore them out.

When would you wear your pants?

When I'd go to a restaurant, to a party, or to the Malecon [a roadway and seawall which stretches along the coast in Havana]. Those are the places I like to go.



Rafael, 12 years old

What would you do if you were Cuba's president?

Well, on top of the laws that already exist, I would make more, such as putting more traffic lights so there's no more accidents. I'd send the PNR [National Revolutionary Police] every time there was disorderly conduct at the bus stop so they could establish discipline. I would also try to restore more relationships with countries that could help Cuba.

What countries?

I think right now the one most likely to help is the United States. I think that's the only country I know of that does not get along with Cuba.

Why do you think there are people with more money than others?

Well, people who have enough money committed a crime or something and got rich. But there are others that work hard and become people with enough money. And maybe there are others that don't have a good job, but because they are good people, they get donations.

What do you like to do at school?

Play with friends and study when the final tests approach. I don't like to study so much. My thing is to study a few days before.

Since you do not like to study, what do you want to do when you grow up?

I would like to be a doctor. But I think I won't be able to because I don't like to study.

Then what will you do?

Be an engineer? I do not know. Or maybe a pilot.

These careers are very close to medicine in terms of difficulty; however, you would have to study a lot.

Well, I want to study something good.

What is the best thing that has happened to you?

To have been born.

And the worst?

When my grandmother died two months ago. It's difficult to know that I will no longer see her.

What would you like to know about the life of a boy your age living in the United States?

What kind of home do you have? Does it look like any home I have seen? What are the stores and hospitals like? I've been told that it's all very different. I hear they don't treat you as well in U.S. hospitals as they do here. I think if my grandmother had not been in the hospitals here in Cuba, what happened would have been uglier. Perhaps that American child has also lost someone and knows about that.

If you could spend a day with a child from the U.S., where you would like him to take you?

To the Statue of Liberty! If he lives in the U.S., for sure he can take me. And after that, to go to some shops to buy clothes and stuff. I might buy a tablet, a cellphone, or a laptop.

What could you teach him?

A magic trick. [laughs]

Who would you like to send a message to?

To Obama.

What would you say?

That I thank him very much for trying to restore relations with Cuba and for not trying any tricks on us—Cuba does know how to defend itself, you know. Oh yeah, and thank you very much for sending back the Cuban Five!

To which country would you like to travel? To the United States?

No, to Egypt. Because I would like to know their history and be in places that are always shown on television, talking about Cleopatra and everything.



Erica, 9 years old

What is your favorite food?

Pizza.

If you could make decisions in Cuba, what would be the first thing that you would do?

I do not know. Well, I wish people would not drop food on the floor or trash on the streets because that's why there are trash cans.

Are any of your friends very funny?

Yes, my friend John.

Tell me some of his jokes.

John reminds me of a good movie I saw called *The Mask*, where this man has a green face that changes all the time. John makes some really crazy faces, even during school. Once, when the teacher came into the classroom, we could not stop laughing at John. John just sat very still in his chair. The teacher got so mad and wanted someone to tell her what had happened. But no one said anything so John would not get in trouble.

Is John a good kid?

Yes. In the classroom, we love him very much. He makes us laugh. He shares everything. And he is very smart. He doesn't have to study much. His mom doesn't have much money, and he almost never

brings lunch. Someone always gives him a piece of their lunch.

Why do you think there are people with more money than others?

Because money is distributed poorly.

Tell me about a dream you recently had.

I dreamed that my brother came to Cuba. But when he came, I was asleep, so he woke me up with lots of kisses.

Where does your brother live?

In the United States.

How long has he lived there?

For three years. I really want to see him. He's coming to visit next week!

What else did you do in the dream?

We went to a swimming pool, rode horses, ate pizza, and my mom let me play in the rain with him.

What do you think is the best invention in the world?

To be with my family.

What is the best thing that happened to you?

One day I went to a pool with my brother when he still lived in Cuba.

And the worst?

The day he left.



Rocio, 8 years old

Would you like to live on another planet?

No.

Why?

Because it is not as nice as this.

What rule should all people obey?

To not throw trash on the floor and to not destroy the playgrounds.

What is the most beautiful dream you've ever had?

The one where I could fly; although I know that this can't be unless you have a plane or a parachute.

What was the best thing about flying?

To see the world from above.

What is the best gift you have ever received?

Well, I can't even choose—I have been given so many nice gifts!

Tell me one.

Once I did well on my exams, and my parents bought me four mermaids who could move their tails.

What did you do with them?

I put them in a bowl, and I made believe that I could swim with them and see the seabed.

What do you think the seabed looks like?

It's full of corals, fish and sharks.

Are there many sharks?

I think so. I know that they eat people that go swimming along the Malecón.

What do you like to eat?

I like chicken breasts.

What is the best invention in the world?

Once I saw a friend of mine who made a robot with wires. I liked that.

What story do you like?

“Little Red Riding Hood.”

Do you know it?

Yes. Little Red Riding Hood wanted to take soup and honey to her ailing grandmother. Ignoring her mother's advice, she took a shortcut to her grandmother's house. All of a sudden, a wolf appeared to yell at her for not listening. Then he ate her... and her grandma, too. Luckily, a hunter appeared who got her out of the belly of the wolf. But I know this is a huge lie. My mom tells me this story so I will listen to her. But I remind her that, in the end, Little Red Riding Hood is saved. So, I guess I really don't have anything to worry about!



Melany, 7 years old

What would you change about adults?

Their age.

Why?

So they can be younger.

What else?

Their size.

What else?

I would make them cook more.

What will you be doing in 20 years?

I want to be a doctor.

What would you like to learn?

Everything. I want to know more.

Tell me what did you do yesterday.

First, I woke up, drank some milk and combed my hair. Then I played make believe house with my friends at my house. After lunch, I played Super Mario on the computer. Then I went to my friend's house to play, and after that, I went to my grandmother's house to spend the night.

Where do you think Earth came from?

From abroad.

Do you know any jokes?

Yes. Once there was a child, and he walked into a store and said to the salesman, "Give me a pair of glasses, please." And the salesman asks, "For the sun?" And the child says, "No, for me!"

If you could send a message to anyone in the world, who would you send it to?

To my cousins, who are in a different country.

The United States?

Yes, that's right.

What would you say?

That I miss them a lot.



Jessica, 10 years old

What do you think is the best invention in the world?

Beaches.

And what else?

Houses.

What do you like most about your home?

The bathroom.

Why?

Because it is new and very nice. It makes me want to bathe a lot. And it is blue.

Do you spend much time at your house?

It depends, since my grandmother is sick. I stay a few days at home and the rest of the days at my grandmother's house so that we can take care of her. The other day, she went outside and fell and broke her head. I was very sad because she was in so much pain. She is already very old.

What would you do if you were president?

Put everything in order.

Why do you think some people have more money than others?

Because they work more.

Where would you like to travel?

To Spain.

Why?

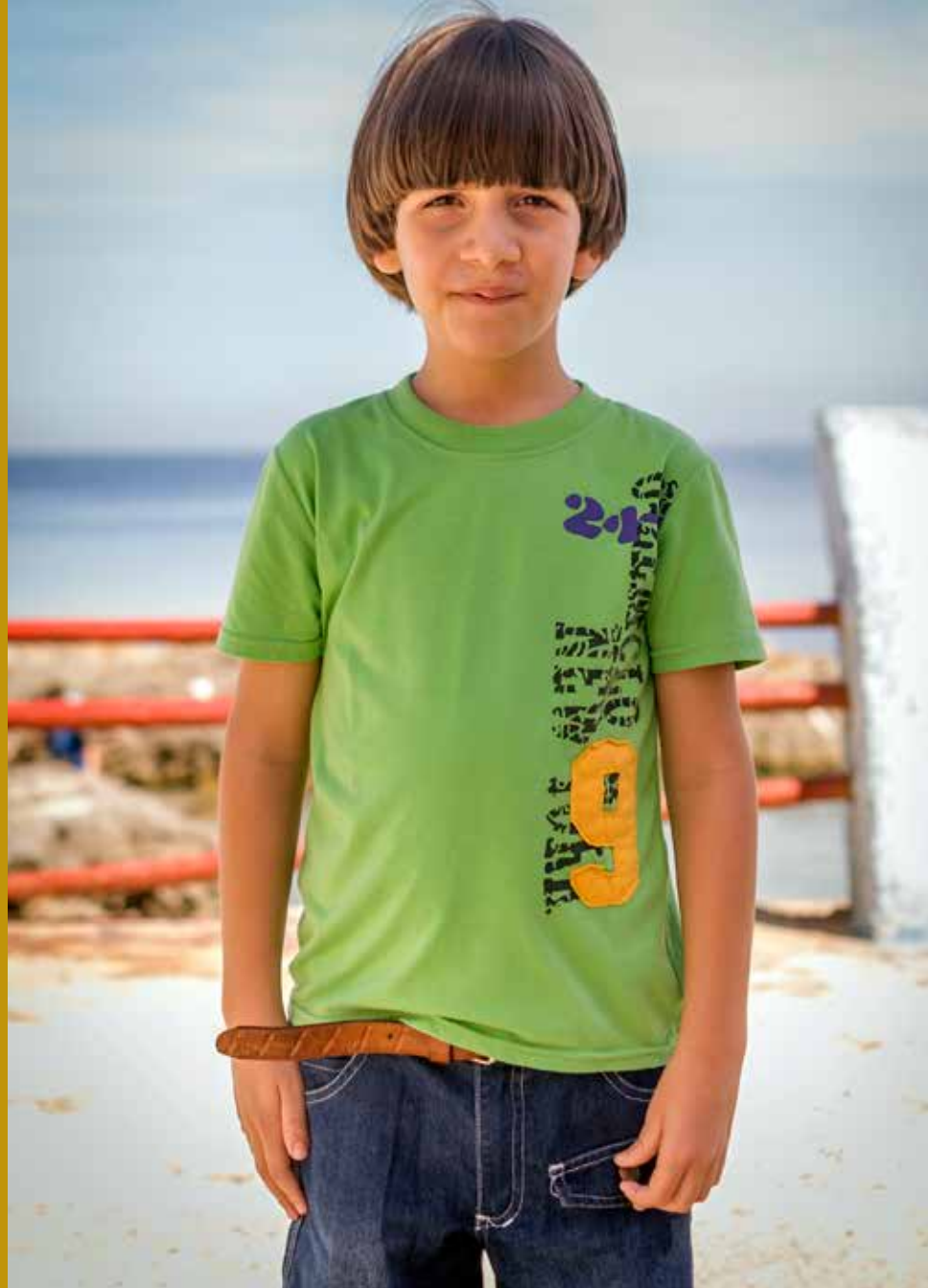
Because I like how they talk.

When have you heard them talk?

In the cartoons I watch.

Tell me a joke.

A psychologist enters a room full of lunatics. Four of them are playing cards, and there's another one standing on a shelf. The doctor asks the madmen who are playing cards, "Why is he up there?" And the lunatics respond, "He believes he is a lamp." And then the doctor gets mad and says, "I have told you not to climb furniture, get down now!" And the lunatics who are playing cards yell, "Doctor, please, don't get him down! Without the light, we can't play!" [laughs]



Iroelio, 7 years old

What would you like to learn?

Physics.

Why do you like physics?

Because it explains everything that happens in life.

What would you do if you were president?

I would remodel everything that has been destroyed here in Cuba.

Like what?

**The old houses, some buildings, the old markets.
I would renovate everything.**

*If you could send a message to anyone in the world,
who would you choose?*

The first would be to one of my cousins.

Where is he?

He lives right around the corner.

What would you say?

**That when we are teenagers, I will be sending him
many text messages to go out together.**

*What would you like to know about a child your age
that lives in another country?*

If he plans to spend the rest of his life there.

Do you know any physics jokes?

Yes.

Tell me one.

A very depressed neutron walks into a bar and orders a drink. Then he asks for another drink and then another. When he is finished, the neutron looks at the bartender and asks, "How much is it?" And the bartender replies, "No charge for you, my friend."



Maomali, 9 years old

What would you do if you were president?

I'd remove the blockade.

Why?

So that no more countries are against Cuba.

What will you be doing in 20 years?

I will be a cop.

What for?

To catch thieves.

Tell me a dream.

I was a firefighter.

And what happened?

There was a fire in a building in Havana. I searched for a fire truck, and I started to put the fire out with my friends, who were also firefighters.

And what else?

We saved some old people.

Would you like to live on another planet?

No.

Why?

Because on the other planets we can not breathe.

If you could send a message to anyone, who would you choose?

To astronauts.

What would you say?

I would ask them to seek new planets where there is oxygen.

Why?

Because this planet is dying, and we're going to have to move. In addition, some children or people here are homeless, and we need to find homes for them.

And why is that happening?

Because their houses were destroyed by fire or high tides; or because someone took their houses away from them.

Tell me a joke.

A teacher enters the classroom, and asks Pepito for his homework. Pepito says, "The thing is that my dog ate my homework." The teacher asks him why he didn't reprint his homework, and Pepito says, "The thing is that my dog ate my printer." The teacher becomes very upset and says, "I'm going to call your parents," and Pepito says, "The thing is that my dog ate my parents."



Armando, 9 years old

What do you think is the best invention in the world?

Someone should invent a city with banks that give away free money.

Are you sure?

Well, it would be a better invention than the soccer ball.

If you could send a message to anyone right now, who would it be?

To an adult.

What would you say?

That they should not party and not drink too much alcohol.

Why?

Because that could be a catastrophe for the human body.

Why do some people have more money than others?

Because some are unable to work and others live in places where there is big money. And here most people are not so rich.

How do you know that?

Because my mom says she pretends to work and they pretend to pay.

What would you do if you were president of Cuba?

Increase salaries.

What if you could travel to another country, where would you go?

To Miami.

But Miami is not a country.

Well, then Tampa.

Why those two?

I could work there when I grow up.

Who lives there?

My dad, my grandmother, my aunt and my cousins.

And what is the best gift you have ever received?

A PlayStation, but it broke.

What is your favorite story?

“Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.”

Why is that?

Because I got the book when I was little and I learned it.

What is the part you like most?

When he discovers the “Open Sesame!”

What would you advise your parents?

Open Sesame! [laughs]

Interviews conducted throughout Cuba by Rachel Domínguez.
Photographs by Carlos Ernesto Escalona Martí.

Design by Brett Yasko.

Conflict Kitchen is a take-out restaurant that serves cuisine from countries with which the United States is in conflict. Each Conflict Kitchen iteration is augmented by events, performances, publications and discussions that seek to expand the engagement the public has with the culture, politics and issues at stake within the focus region. The restaurant rotates identities in response to current geopolitical events.

Conflict Kitchen is funded primarily through food sales. Additional support comes from The Benter Foundation, The Sprout Fund and the Studio for Creative Inquiry.

www.ConflictKitchen.org

© Conflict Kitchen, 2015

