

My recent work has centered on exposing the falsehoods within American identity by examining the effects of imperialism and colonialism in various countries. I've been traveling abroad to learn the sordid histories in which America has had tremendous, and often devastating, consequences. But I've always been incredibly intrigued by Cuba: it's a David and Goliath story. It still baffles me that this small country, so close to our shores, was able to have a successful communist revolution and to maintain their socialist visions all these years, even as they've continually transformed. When I was in Cuba, I was most mesmerized by their most popular religion: Santería. Santería is a direct product of colonialism and the slave trade--it's a blend of Catholicism and African pagan religions. And of course, Catholicism borrows heavily from pagan religions with its stories of ancient saints, so this religion seems to be this startling blend of myth-making that undergoes this kaleidoscopic metamorphosis throughout history, and the secret rituals and ceremonies during the times when Cuba was strict in its outlaw of religious practice (this has changed today) were certainly a communal pulse that ran through the history of their own unique revolution. The video features a practitioner of Santería performing a musical ceremony in which they dress as various gods, goddesses, or saints. The woman in this video is embodying the power of Yemaya, goddess of the living ocean, considered to be the mother of all.