Consensus editorial reflects the majority opinion of the Editorial Board of the Technique, but not necessarily the opinions of individual editors.
Breaking out of the Tech bubble into the local community

"There is poverty less than 5 miles from Tech, yet campus is under going an incredible spurt of construction."

Robert Hill  
Photography Editor

As students at Georgia Tech we live in a microcosm of technology: a complex network of internet and wireless technologies that allow us to ‘stay connected’ to one another in ways that even our parents could not have imagined just 2 decades ago. The bubble. The same technologies that defined our wired existence foster an estrangement from the very world in which we exist. Like in an airport with flights delayed from high-pressure academic systems, we are beguiled by the illusion that we are supposedly in touch with.

Like in a backyard. Within the Tech village, we are surrounded by countless examples of construction that are as ubiquitous as life on the Tech campus.

The reality of it all is that we are the most connected among us却 are only conscious of our shared existence on the Tech campus. The fact is, Tech is a small village. Since then we have witnessed technological innovation in ways that even our parents could not have imagined just 2 decades ago. The bubble. The same technologies that defined our wired existence foster an estrangement from the very world in which we exist. Like in an airport with flights delayed from high-pressure academic systems, we are beguiled by the illusion that we are supposedly in touch with.

In 1999 the Cuban government instituted broad sweeping economic reforms that fundamentally changed the course of the island. The legalization of the U.S. dollar as a currency, legalized a specified number of private small businesses, and legalized tourism. Though the reform legalized the dollar, it continues to pay salaries to its employees, which constitute the vast majority of Cubans, in pesos, the value of which falls short of the dollar. These changes have economically revolved the government, stimulated the entrepreneurial spirits of some Cubans, and exposed Cubans to visitors and ideas from the U.S. and the world.

Our group saw this economic transition in action. Indeed, as students who have been engaged in the phenomenon we were studying—a concept that early I had trouble to grasp. We saw an odd class stratification emerging in what was once, in the logic, a egalitarian society. We noted that our tour guide, a young Cuban involved in the tourist economy, where he receives access to dol- lar, no longer needs to use his ration book. We observed a Cuban family with relatives in the U.S. that owns small businesses, and the family is the leading edge of a transformation that has not yet even dreamt about obtaining. These Cubans, the entrepreneurial Cubans in the “dollar economy” and those with family members in the U.S., are a new generation of Cubans—new winners in the socialist system designed to reward good revolutionaries. We saw this stratification up close, indeed, we encouraged it with our spending in the nation. We both monetarily supported the Castro regime by spending dollars in the economy and also undermined the regime by supporting the private capitalism in the form of in-home restaurants and street artisans. Pres- sure was directed at achieving two goals: both legitimizing the regime by his criticism of the U.S. embargo and under- mining the regime by openly dis- cussing the Varella project, an internal movement by 11,000 Cubans to hold a national referendum on the government, in his nationally-rele- vant speech at the University of Havana. Carter’s speech marked the first time since 1959 that such an uncensored broadcast was made live to the Cuban people—a sign of pos- sible change.

In the midst of so much change it seems the only constant regard- ing Cuba, other than its aging lead- er Castro, is U.S. policy towards the island. I returned to the States just in time to hear President George W. Bush pander to the Miami-based Cuban exiles by reaffirming his adher- ence to the 43-year old U.S. embargo of the island. President Carter cer- tified this policy of the status quo while in Cuba; he recognizes the benefits that Cuba been receiving American dollars, people, and, undoubtedly, ideas would have on Cuba. The U.S. embargo of the island is a parable that illustrates the futility of American policy toward Cuba.

Both President Carter and the members of my study abroad group have learned much about the current state of affairs in Cuba; we recognized the current opportunity for engage- ment with the Cuban government, and we took advan- tage. Perhaps the solution to this foreign policy dilemma just requires a little Cuban Tech engineering—logical thought to expose the illogic of the U.S. embargo of the island. If only George W. Bush were a little Cuban engineer.
Question of the week
“What did you do for Memorial Day?”

Moeko Wallis
Management
“Went to swim practice and lifeguarded - about 9 hours in the pool!”

Colette Cowie
Mechanical Engineering
“Cleaned my new house.”

Jang Sik
Language Center
“Watch TV.”

Hye Sok
Industrial Design
“Worked at my dad’s store.”

Jamila Hinds
Industrial Design
“Went to the Piedmont Park Jazz Festival.”

Moeko Wallis
Management
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Jamila Hinds
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Milnes David
Mechanical Engineering
“Saw ‘Star Wars.’”

Krit Athikulwongse
ECE
“Went shopping.”

Nick Hasara
Civil Engineering
“I went rafting at the Chatahoochee.”

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Feature and Photos by
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