This lecture examines the emergence of free colored labor in Cuba in the first half of the nineteenth century as a perceived, unanticipated peril for the stability of the Spanish colony in the view of local authorities. By merely existing as free and colored on a slaveholding island, these subjects unwittingly constituted a radical, non-revolutionary threat to colonial power—until, that is, racial terror and violence became the colonial régime’s response to this burgeoning, colored, petty bourgeoisie.

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