Beginning in 1959, the Cuban government outlawed private ownership of cars. Only recently, 2011, did it restore private ownership for cars made after 1959. Due to the inability of the people to get new cars, they had to maintain these cars from the 1950s.

These cars became masterpieces of ingenuity. The owners were creative with how they maintained their cars and where they got the parts. Both of the gentlemen I interviewed stated that their cars had new engines put in them recently. One of them being a Soviet era 4 cylinder gas engine, and the other being a V6 Diesel engine from a tractor.

When speaking with the owners/drivers, you can tell they take great pride in their vehicles. A man who drove a 1956 Chevrolet Bel Air said his dream car would be a Ford Fair liner and that he wouldn’t trade it for a brand new Ferrari.

Most of the vintage cars found in Havana are used as taxis by the owners to secure additional income for themselves and their families. This is one of the only ways they can afford to maintain these cars to the standard that they do. While most are in decent shape, there are some that show their age worse than others.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the culture surrounding the vintage American cars found in Cuba and how it compares to the car cultures in the U.S.

While the owners and drivers of these classic American cars take great pride in their cars, the current economic situation is not ideal for the growth of a car culture similar to those found in the U.S.

Cubans have developed a culture that centers around catering to the tourism around major cities. The main use for vintage cars was found to be as taxis, but just because they are used as such does not mean the Cuban people think any less of the cars. They view them as a source of great pride and their views are confirmed by the growing number of tourists visiting the island.

References