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Moro or Congrí

(Or Why I Consider Myself to be From Marianao,
Where My Mother is from, Instead of Matanzas,
Where My Father was Born)

Though I have not been, and
at this rate will never be,
in Cuba, I have certain
allegiances already forged
in my head. I am a fan of
Marianao, for instance. That's
where my mother's family
is from. In Cuban baseball,
I back the Tigers of Marianao,
even though my mother's family,
who actually lived there, cheer
for Almendares, the Scorpions,
who play God knows where.
The other, more important reason
I think of myself as being
from Marianao has to do with food
(Of course! *Doesn't everything,*
you're probably thinking, *This guy*
must weigh about a thousand pounds.
I do.) Growing up mostly around
my mother's family, we called
black beans and rice *moros*
y cristianos, or *moro*, for short,
and red beans and rice we called
arroz congri, though my father
always pointed out that it didn't
make much sense. *Congri* sounds
like *con gris*—with gray—
the color of the rice cooked
with black, not red beans; *los moros*,
the Moors, weren't black but dark,

reddish-skinned people. Wouldn't
it make sense if *moro* was red
beans and rice, and *congrí* rice
with black beans and I say Yes,
echoing my aunt: *but so what,*
who cares, I call it
what we call it in Marianao.