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I don't talk about Cuba with the FBI

Posted on July 10, 2023 by [Yimel Diaz Malmierca](#)

“The Cuban people are suffering, because in addition to the decades of US blockade, their condition has been aggravated by the pandemic, climate change and the effects of the global economic crisis. Join us in educating and mobilizing people to oppose US criminal policies against our Cuban neighbors, resume unrestricted travel between countries, and kick the US Government boot off the neck of the people of Cuba once and for all!”

These words correspond to one of the most recent calls by the *United States Hands off Cuba Committee*, founded in 2019 to denounce the hostility of the Government of Washington towards the Caribbean nation and work for the normalization of relations between the two nations.



Photo taken from <http://www.ushandsoffcubacommittee.com/>

This initiative is one of the visible faces of a movement that has gained considerable momentum in recent years. This is confirmed by the arrival, last May, of the largest delegation of Americans to participate in the activities for International Workers' Day, including the internship for union leaders that the CTC usually organizes on that date.

Behind this “contagion” in the desire to do for Cuba there are many good wills, such as that of Mark Friedman, a retired professor, former activist of the Northwest Airlines union (International Association of Machinists), a company devoured by Delta Airlines, and activist for justice in the world.

Friedman was one of the many young Americans who joined the fight against the war in Vietnam. He was barely 17 years old, and those protests marked him forever. In this environment of social struggle, he met socialist militants who spoke to him about the Cuban Revolution and the opportunity it represents for the world working class.

In 1995, he traveled to the island for the first time in search of rebuilding a part of the family history that had been suspended in time after losing track of that Jewish great-grandfather who decided to live and die in Cuba.

Cuba, lighthouse and hope

“Cuba is a beacon of hope against brutal imperialism, that is why it must be defended”, assured Friedman at the meeting held at the CTC headquarters. This country is different from the rest of the world, it is something that those who come to it can see. The internship organized by the CTC, for example, offers an excellent opportunity to exchange with delegations from other countries, you learn a lot from them and from Cuban trade unionists. We took the *Labor Code* from here and several unions are studying it”.



Mark Friedman, founder and a coordinator of the Hands-off Cuba Committee, in Los Angeles. *Photo: Yimel Diaz*

“We founded the **Hands-off Cuba Committee** in Los Angeles, but it has spread to other cities and states. We seek to create a broad, democratic front that is linked to dissimilar causes.

“Our three-point demands —an end to the blockade, the lifting of all sanctions, and that Cuba be removed from the list of terrorist countries— has found support in diverse communities, such as that of the Filipinos who demand the removal of military bases. from the Asian archipelago, that of the San Diego and Los Angeles teachers, who are demanding better wages; the Koreans who ask for the reunification of their peninsula; and also, among a part of the Cuban community based in Los Angeles.

"We have put a lot of interest in linking young people, they are the future of the cause, that is why they occupy a leading place in our marches and meetings," he stressed.

Friedman's most recent trip to Cuba was to participate in the **XIV Convention on Environment and Development**, where he presented his teaching experience in the port of Los Angeles. He was accompanied by Lowell Iporac, a young Doctor in Biological Sciences who studies the impact of sargassum in coastal areas and is an active member of the **Hands-Off Cuba Committee**.



From right to left, Lowell Iporac, Mark Friedman, and a Cuban university student. *Photo: Yimel Diaz*

«I come from Miami, explained the young scientist, where it is very difficult to work in favor of Cuba, but we do it. It is important to organize and prepare ourselves, something particularly complex after all that neoliberalism has done to fracture society, to keep us isolated from each other.

"Cuba is proof of what imperialism is capable of when challenged, said the young man of Filipino origin, and also of what solidarity achieves, a value that I have been promoting in my own community."

“Most of the people return shocked as Lowell did on his first visit to Cuba. These testimonials are part of the face-to-face and virtual meetings that we promote and to which more and more people are linked”, stressed Friedman.

Tireless activism

The **LA Hands Off Cuba Committee**'s strategy is to disseminate the reality of Cuba, seeking to arouse interest and the desire to know, first-hand, what is happening in the Caribbean nation. **Hands off Cuba** currently has 40 activists in Los Angeles, an average audience of 75 people in face-to-face activities, and another 1,600 with whom they stay connected via email.

“We arrive at the mobilizations with printed propaganda that we made ourselves. For example, we made a flyer that talks about the spaces conquered by women, entitled *Women in Cuba: Revolution within the Revolution*. Other texts are *Why There are no George Floyds in Cuba?* and a briefing on the new *Family Code*. Out of every thousand that we distribute, we receive 1 or 2 requests from people who want to know more about Cuba, some join the movement and that is perfect”.

On July 22, the Committee will hold a mobilization in Los Angeles to celebrate Cuba and for August they will organize a charity show in which Cuban jazz player Dyrimir González and a dance group, **Omoache** (Chicanos and Cubans) will perform. The funds raised will be used to purchase supplies and medicines for the island's health system.

“Those of us who work for Cuba suffer reprisals, he acknowledged, the authorities carry out intimidating interrogations, as they did to colleagues from Puerto Rico who were returning to their country after a trip to Havana in 2022. We have seen the same behavior against activists from the group of Carlos Lazo and his **Bridges of Love** project. They have visited me several times, but my position is firm: I do not talk about Cuba with the FBI”, concluded Mark Friedman.



Mark Friedman and Lowel Iporac met with leaders and officials from the CTC's International Relations Department and college students doing an internship at union headquarters. *Photo: Yimel Diaz*