

Los Angeles CUBA Teach-in Expands Cuba Solidarity, Action Campaigns

Today, the solidarity with Cuba is more important than ever. – Yasser Ibarra (Cuban Embassy)

With activists participating from San Diego, Orange County, and throughout Los Angeles, new unions, politicians, religious leaders, and organizations joined in demanding that the US remove Cuba from its list of alleged terrorist nations, SSOT.

Chaired by *LA Hands-Off Cuba Committee* (LAHOC) leader Roxanne Mendoza, the crowd welcomed by Zoom, **Yasser Ibarra representing the Cuban Embassy in Washington, DC.**

“Thank you for allowing me to bring the Cuban voice to this space, and above all, for considering and working for solidarity with Cuba.” After discussing the gains and achievements of the Cuban revolution, he added “One of the things you should know about Cuba is that this policy of solidarity has also allowed my country to have numerous friends around the world, and it is precisely here in the United States where we have one of the largest forces of friends of Cuba who have led countless battles in support of the Cuban people. We can mention several for example, the event for the return of the child Elian Gonzalez, for the return of the Cuban five heroes, or the constant answers in protests against hostile and genocidal policy developed by the government of this country against Cuba for more than six decades.”

“That is why the struggle of Cuba's friends in these countries to end the blockade, the exclusion of Cuba from the list of the state that sponsors terrorism, against all the hostile measures and sanctions that continue to be generated from the north and that cause incalculable damage to our people is today more important than ever. And Cuba is grateful for everything you have done and for what you will continue to do.”

Discussing the impact of the SSOT listing Ibarra noted “All this aggression generates today a difficult economical, economic situation for my country though the most difficult situation in our recent history, which increases popular discontent due to the lack of food, medicine, and problems with oil, transportation, and electricity generation.”

“In short, friends, the daily life of the Cuban People, looking at the current scenario after the election of Trump everything seems to indicate that our battle is still long. Cuba will continue to succeed, but we do not doubt that we will continue to count on the support of the US, people of your solidarity organization, union, religion, and institution in charge of everyone.

“Finally, don't forget, an important help is to travel to Cuba because it allows all of you to see the reality of Cuba with your own eyes and to know the truth first hand, not the one told by a manipulative international press... We look forward to seeing you in Cuba next May Day.”

The International Association of Machinists, Local 1484 has led the way in advancing resolutions against the blockade, SSOT, and is a formal member of the LAHOC. They were integral in getting resolutions passed through the LA Federation of Labor and the California Conference of Machinists. Then, along with Bill Camp of Building Relations with Cuban Labor succeeded in passing similar resolutions at the CA AFL-CIO convention (representing 2.3 million workers). Speaking at the teach-in, for his first public presentation was **Kevin Kucera, President, of District 190, S.CA IAM.**

“We have been inspired by all the incredible, incredible organizing, and incredible work that you've been doing and support for our Cuban neighbors. You have my deepest and profound respect for all the hard work to put into this movement. This is inspiring and will eventually lead to a successful outcome for the Cuban people. *Machinist Union Local 1484* and our state political PAC *California Conference of Machinists* representing more than 40,000 working families, stand with the Cuban people.

“But more than hope, this is a movement, a movement fueled by solidarity, local, regional, national, and international solidarity. All of this gives us an opportunity to bend the arc of justice and dignity and support of our Cuban neighbors...The US needs to lift all sanctions, alleviate the suffering, and allow oil shipments from Venezuela and others; the US needs to normalize relations with both countries and end the blockade.”

Last May a delegation of eleven leaders of the **Amazon Labor Union** participated in May Day activities and the *Central of Cuban Workers (CTC) Pasantia* with the “*Labor and Youth Activists*” delegation. Upon return,

they participated in NY Cuba solidarity events. Speaking at the teach-in by Zoom is **Brima Sylla, Vice-President of the Amazon Labor Union**, now affiliated with the *Teamsters Union @ JFK8* in New York City.

“It is an honor to be part of this great movement, and also for this specific project, which is to try by all means necessary, to end the embargo on Cuba, because we believe that Cuba has been deprived of all the rights this beautiful nation is supposed to enjoy. So as vice president of Amazon labor union, we always keep solidarity with the Cuban people. Last year, was fantastic when we visited Cuba. We saw things with our own eyes.... Big corporations care about their money. They just want to make sure how much money they have, but the people are left behind, and that is not the case in Cuba.

“We always believe that the labor movement would be with the Cuban people, because of what the Cuban people have been doing, especially in my own experience with the African continent, in South Africa, in Angola, especially also in other countries like Tanzania, Guinea, they send medical doctors to take care of the people, not to suck their blood, steal mineral resources and impoverish them. This is wrong...This is the mentality of Dracula. I always say that to my friends. So as a labor movement leader, I believe that we need to stand with Cuba to make sure the sanctions are lifted...We just need to fight for Cuba. Our leaders in Africa have always been with Cuba.”

Brima updated the audience on their fight at Amazon for a contract saying “We are fighting Jeff Bezos right here at Amazon, JFK8 in New York. We won the election, but Jeff Bezos doesn't want to negotiate a contract. We're going to go on strike. So, we need you guys to support us too. “

The successful campaign for union resolutions at the *International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU)* and the *Inland Boatmen's Union (IBU- the marine division of the ILWU)* has been led by **Mike Vera**. The ILWU also donated \$10,000 to the **Global Health Partners “Pacemakers for Cuba** campaign”.

Vera, a leader and activist in the LAHOC explained why he is passionate about Cuba.

“I took the opportunity to travel to Cuba in 2023 with the LAHOC and spent a couple of weeks leading up to a May Day celebration. This transformed me and my view.

“I met a beautiful and loving culture of kind and resilient people. People whose only crime is to live in a country that for over 60 years has had economic warfare imposed on them by a foreign government. The unjust and genocidal policies of the US towards Cuba have decimated all aspects of the Cuban economy and the ability to live a normal life. The blockade and designation as a state sponsor of terrorism (SSOT) are simply political warfare. While in Cuba I was able to meet trade unionists from all over South America and Latin America countries who share this view and uphold our solidarity with the Cuban people.”

“Upon returning from Cuba much of my objective has been to educate those around me and to bring to light that the struggles imposed on the Cuban people cannot be rectified unless we, the people of the US change the political will of those who create and uphold these injustices.”

“Resolutions alone hold little value, but together with other unions and advocacy groups, both nationwide and internationally have strength...We are about to enter into an even further challenging and dark period for the Cuban people with Rubio/Trump policies almost certain to be a renewed attack.

“The ability to organize and send humanitarian aid and financial support to Cuba by any means necessary will be more important than ever. As you fight for workers conditions within your own contracts and bargaining units, you should be fighting for those workers all over the world who are marginalized and oppressed. Fighting for workers and the human condition worldwide is union business. The peace and prosperity of workers worldwide is union business. The right of people to exercise self-determination is union business.”

Guadalupe Cardona, president, La Raza Educators Association and leader, Union del Barrio

“I offer today an opportunity, a call to action for those of you who are educators or are very knowledgeable on issues that our next generations need to understand about Cuba and work towards a society here where we can emulate what they are doing in Cuba. Because we know that socialism is the way. It is the way for our people, it's a way for our Mother Earth. Capitalism is so destructive, and the next generations want something different. They want something better, but they're being fed conflicting information, a future where we can all survive and thrive and we don't continue this destruction that is happening to all of our relatives, both the two-

legged, the four-legged, and the winged and because of capitalism and extreme consumerism. When I went to Cuba, I saw the people sharing their food, enjoying time, and creating activities and games that did not require the consumption of mass-produced goods. It was inspirational, quite honestly.”

Jodie Evans, co-founder of Codepink

“The Cuban doctors that now are caring for people around the world, that the freaking Human Rights Watch called slaves. I mean, it is up to us to be beautiful in the face of ugliness. It is up to us to raise up, and build power, because that's what the Cubans are going to need from us desperately in the coming years, and it's what all liberation needs from us. “

Cynthia Geary, organizer, Western Service Workers Association, Orange County,

“It was clear after visiting Cuba, attending the May Day parade and the solidarity conference, that our international brothers and sisters are sick and tired of being sick and tired all over the world, people are rising up, but what we and they need most of all is systemic change here in the US. Cuba is a beautiful country filled with beautiful people, but what I saw was unacceptable. Doctors want to save lives, but literally can't because of the shortages and medical supplies and medication due to the blockade, civilians facing shortages in electricity, fuel, and basic necessities due to the blockade. This inhumane blockade is being used to strangle the Cuban people to the point of collapse. “

Senator Steven Bradford

“We should work to normalize relations with Cuba. That means the Administration must reconsider its damaging policies, particularly Cuba's inclusion on the State Department's “State Sponsors of Terrorism” (SSOT) list...I stand with the CA AFL-CIO and the Cuban people and look forward to seeing a brighter and more constructive future for our two countries.”

Nathan Cuenca, leader, LA Hands-off Cuba committee

“The International Monetary Fund refuses to give loans to Cuba at the order of US imperialism. So, it is up to us. As a revolutionary optimist, I have an undying vision of a world free from oppression, and I believe that it is not a matter of if, but a matter of when. It is our turn to stand up and help Cuba, as they have helped the world.

“Our new campaign launched tonight between *Global Health Partners*, **ELAM** doctor, Uriel Rodriguez, *Not Just Tourists*, is to send 26 pallets, a large truckload of prenatal and neonatal pediatric supplies to the William Soler Pediatric Hospital in Havana. First, the LAHOC will take responsibility for loading the truck here, then driving to New Orleans with volunteers, and then loading a ship to Cuba, which *Global Health Partners* has already arranged and has the legal licenses for. Please dig deeply. We know that you are all hit up for aid, for Palestine and Haiti and all that is important, but Cuba also needs help.”

Bitá Amani, a public health professor and social epidemiologist

“I'm in the public health profession. I teach. I work in public health. I have been taking students to Cuba since 2018 taking numerous delegations, taking close to 100 health professionals there. I cannot emphasize enough the important examples that have been given in terms of both what Cuba is offering to its people when it comes to healthcare, as well as the important examples that were given when it comes to Cuba's commitment to people globally. Cuba's medical internationalism is something that we're always going to be indebted to Cuba.

“And , the students that we take to Cuba, black and brown students, were given an opportunity to go and see a system that puts principles and values into practice. And when I'm talking about principles start from a very important place that nobody is disposable, right? And we go because we teach them that Cuba's revolution was a public health revolution. They also go to Cuba to see, what it means to invest in a biotech that develops drugs that are directly applicable to the needs of the people.”

Mwezi Odom- African People's Socialist Party and coordinator of the UHURU 3 defense.

“I want to salute this profound teach-in today and salute the dynamic makeup of this committee, students, organizers, labor, and youth solidarity. You know, this is what Cuba is asking us to do...We all fight in our various struggles that are valid but when Cuba is free, and the rest of the world is still oppressed, that's a

problem... Cuba through its revolution, a marvelous revolution is a proud example, and a threat and an example of power in the hands of the working class. And part of what it also shows is that it has a vanguard leadership, a leadership that is not at the beck and call of imperialism. Cuba is a blueprint for humanity ...

“Cuba has been unconditional in its solidarity with the people and on behalf of the African people. Our comrades are facing imprisonment because we built economic and political power in the hands of the African working class. We stand unconditionally with Cuba, With the people of Cuba, and we understand that this fight for Cuba is the central one in our lifetime.”

I'm a member of the central committee of the *African People's Socialist Party* and a proud member of the *US hands-off Cuba* cttee here in LA as well. I am also here to speak on behalf of the *UHURU 3*. Our newspaper, the *Burning Spear*. highlights the trial that took place in September and the pending sentencing of members of our organization facing imprisonment and up to \$250,000 fine for fighting for reparations, fighting for self-determination, fighting for power, which we understand Cuba has done and has done a marvelous example.”

Asia Medley- Venceremos Brigade, All African Peoples Revolutionary Party

“I am part of the *Venceremos Brigade* and also part of the *LA Hands off Cuba committee*, organizing with the *All African People's Revolutionary Party*, and a teacher at Youth Justice Coalition in the free LA High School.

“So, in July, I was able to go to Cuba, and it was my first time leaving the United States...In the United States, they intentionally miseducate us so we never know what freedom looks like. To be able to be in Cuba and stand on liberated land was something that I had never thought I'd get to experience in my lifetime, Cuba is an example that another world is possible.

“So, it gives you a lot of revolutionary optimism to be able to organize in the belly of the beast and keep going as the state continues to suppress organizers in the US and across the globe. I was able to witness a deep sense of community and love for each other that is missing in the United States because we are programmed to be individualists.

“In Cuba, you see socialism in action, despite the blockade while here in the US, we see capitalism in action, constantly killing us. The US deems itself the richest, best country in the world, and the most developed, but infant mortality rates are sky-high. Medical neglect is extreme, In Cuba medical care is free for everyone. The US is intent on starving the Cuban people and destroying the legacy of the Cuban Revolution. The United States is the biggest violator of human rights. To this day, the world stands with Cuba, so much so that the UN vote shows it. The only countries that want the blockade to continue are the United States and Israel.”

CK representing the Philippines-US Solidarity Organization.

“The *Philippines-United States Solidarity Organization of Southern California* (PUSO) is a solidarity organization composed of Filipinos & non-Filipinos in the United States that is committed to support and defend people's rights, justice, and peace in the Philippines, as well as strengthen ties of solidarity and resistance between the Filipino people, the people in the United States, and peoples all over the world.

“We are a member of the *International League of People's Struggle (ILPS)*, a global network of anti-imperialist organizations. Members in our network have attended solidarity trips to Cuba, and others participated in the “*Labor and Youth Activist Delegation*” last May Day, and the recent Cuba meeting at the DNC organized by the *Chicago Cuba Coalition*. In its 7th International Assembly held in Malaysia this year, ILPS passed a resolution on the campaign to Lift the US Blockade and Remove Cuba from the US List of States Sponsoring Terrorism. This assembly was also attended by the Cuban ambassador, Florentino Batista González.

“We want to speak to why PUSO defends Cuba, and also the removal of Cuba from the SSOT. The U.S. State Department has listed Cuba as a “state sponsor of terrorism” for allegedly “providing support for acts of international terrorism.” Yet, given that the United States has treated Latin America and the Caribbean as its own backyard for over a century and a half—exploiting the masses, plundering natural resources, and orchestrating coups and regime change operations—the real question must be: who is the true terrorist?

“Cuba has made profound contributions to the world, driven by its revolutionary principles of solidarity, internationalism, and social justice. This has included global health and medical solidarity, an exemplary free education system, support for national liberation and anti-imperialist movements, and humanitarian aid. Its commitment to healthcare, education, and justice has had a lasting positive impact on the lives of millions worldwide...“Despite relentless efforts by U.S. imperialism to destabilize Cuba, including economic sanctions and blockades, the Cuban people have remained steadfast in their commitment to anti-imperialist resistance.

“Cuba has supported the Philippines in various ways, particularly in areas of medical cooperation, education, and political solidarity. Cuba has sent medical teams and healthcare professionals to help address public health challenges in the Philippines.

“Cuba has consistently criticized the U.S. military presence in the Philippines. Cuban leaders have publicly supported Filipino efforts to resist U.S. military bases and interventions, reinforcing solidarity between the two peoples in their shared opposition to U.S. imperialism and foreign intervention.

“We demand the immediate lifting of the economic blockade against Cuba by U.S. imperialism and express our unwavering solidarity with the Cuban people in their struggle for self-determination and the defense of their national sovereignty.”

Cal Saunders from the Democratic Socialists of America, Orange County

“Socialism is a word that has a negative connotation here in the West, Cuba is one of the most inspiring places that I've ever visited in my life. During the *US Hands-off Cuba* delegation, I came to see a nation where compassion and common sense have been written into the Constitution, a nation where their constitution is written and rewritten to be fluid and compatible with the evolution of global society, we have a 300-year-old constitution in this country. Cuba rewrote theirs multiple times... I encourage all of you to cut through the Western narratives that we all grew up with surrounding Cuba and educate yourselves. Coming here was an excellent first step. Doing some reading is a fine second step. But the best education you can get is to go to Cuba and see for yourselves.”

“Let's educate, organize, and agitate to end the blockade so that it can shake the shackles of Western imperialism and show the world that a better vision for the future is possible.”

Tracker Gina Marie (First Arrow). Leonard Peltier, Defense Committee, American Indian Movement.

“We are here to say that we stand side by side with Cuba and the elders gave us some information to share with you. So, something that we wanted to talk about was Leonard Peltier. He's a political prisoner, and he is somebody who has been a martyr and held hostage for many, many years, and so we are trying to release him through clemency, not pardon. The difference between pardon and clemency is that pardon means that they will release him, but that he is guilty of the charge which he is not.”

“We have a petition in the back from Amnesty International if you'd like to sign that. Even though we're First Nations, we work together with the communities that are here from other countries.”

Rev. Kelvin Sauls, board member of Pastors for Peace, Founder BAJI

“I come before you today, first and foremost, as a black South African.

“Secondly, I come before you as a black immigrant here in the United States.

“Thirdly, I come before you as a co-founder of The *Black Alliance for Just Immigration*, where we seek to connect and bridge black immigrants with African Americans to see how we can connect the immigrant rights movement with the unfinished agenda of the civil rights movement so that we can develop and deploy a global human rights movement.”

“...Cuba has proudly supported the liberation and freedom of my country in South Africa. In solidarity and support for ending the blockade in Cuba, making sure the US relocates or gets expelled, if you will, out of Guantanamo. That's very important. And then deal with the deception and the denial around having Cuba on the list as a terrorist nation.

“Let’s connect in solidarity with one another, whether it is the fight for the freedom of political prisoners, or to make sure that Cuba has what it’s it needs as it faces blackouts, Let’s walk together now more than ever beyond ideological differences and see how we can center the humanity and the dignity of our Cuban citizens, to try and see how we can elevate and participate in a struggle that is about global solidarity. So, I’m proud to be part of the *LA Hands-off Cuba Committee*.

**U.S. HANDS OFF
CUBA COMMITTEE**

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END THE US EMBARGO OF CUBA. Normalize Relations.

Remove Cuba from Washington's list of nations supporting terrorism

End the sanctions, trade & travel bans of Trump/Biden.

Transcript of the meeting by AI with notes, clarifying additions by Mark Friedman, Member, **International Association of Machinists union #1484**, activist **LA Hands-Off Cuba Committee**.