

A CALL FOR ACTIVISTS TO MOBILIZE FOR A NATIONAL CONFERENCE TO FIGHT FOR THE FULL NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA

COME TO FORDHAM LAW SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY MARCH 25-26, 2017

Dear Friends of Cuba:

We are inviting organizations and individuals to help organize an inclusive, broad conference in New York City March 25-26, 2017 focused on US-Cuban relations. The National Conference will be held at the Fordham Law School and will bring together longtime Cuba solidarity activists, opponents of continuing US sanctions against Cuba, as well as representatives from many organizations and cities. We invite you to participate in planning and organizing the National Conference, which will include highly educational and informative workshops, presentations, cultural performances, and films, with the political purpose of promoting an agreed action agenda for the real normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba, and to expand activity around these ends across the United States.

The Electoral College triumph of Donald Trump, and the retention of a Republican majority in the US House and Senate, underscores, more than ever, the need for an independent movement to advocate and fight for the full normalization of US-Cuban relations. During the election campaign Trump publicly pledged to reverse the modest Executive Orders easing ongoing US anti-Cuba sanctions, implemented by President Obama. He has stopped short so far from supporting the termination of the July 2015 restoration of US-Cuban diplomatic relations, a precondition for full normalization. This question, along with many other burning domestic and international issues, will be posed sharply from the first day of the Donald Trump Administration and the transition to it. The National Conference for the Full Normalization of US-Cuban Relations will be one of the first national protest and solidarity gathering under the new Trump regime.

The current Republican House and Senate leaderships in the last years of the Obama Administration have shown no inclination to bring before the Congress several existing bills that are circulating that would end or significantly ameliorate the ongoing US economic and financial embargo against Cuba and also strike down remaining US legal barriers to freedom of travel to Cuba from the United States.

Following the December 17, 2014 announcements by US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro, the United States and Cuba moved to the establishment of diplomatic relations. Despite President Obama using his executive powers, this relationship remains far from "normal." Fully ending ongoing US sanctions against Cuba will require a formal act of Congress. The notorious Helms-Burton legislation, signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996, took that right and ability out of the Executive Branch of the US government.

In one of its last acts before the November 8 election, the Obama White House directed the US United Nations Mission to abstain in the annual vote in the UN General Assembly to condemn, now unanimously 192-0, "the economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba." For over 20 years the vote has registered near unanimous political isolation for Washington in the "international community."

Full normalization also requires returning the US-occupied Guantanamo Bay Naval base on Cuban territory to Cuban sovereignty. It also requires ending US overtly and covertly budgeted, subversive "regime change" programs. All of these ongoing policies represent the continuity of decades of Washington's gross violations of Cuban sovereignty.

In addition Cuba has a sovereign right to give political asylum and legal protections under clear procedures to individuals determined to be fleeing persecution and injustice. We support the repeal of the unequal and discriminatory Cuban Adjustment Act which has been used as a political club against Cuba by successive US Administrations and is the major obstacle to stabilizing and resolving immigration issues between Washington and Havana.

Hence, a large number of individual activists along with local and national organizations from the New York-New Jersey area, with years of united, non-sectarian coalition activities in solidarity with Cuba, and in the successful struggle to free the Cuban Five are issuing this invitation in the spirit of unity and democratic decision-making processes. Specifically, we are inviting you and/or your organization to participate in the organizing of a National Conference to take place after the results of the November 2016 Presidential and Congressional elections, when we will be able to analyze the results and their impact on moving our work forward.

The undersigned propose that the organizers of the National Conference reach out and work closely with organizations in Cuba, such as the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) to bring a number of Cuban representatives to take part in the 2017 Conference.

The visit of President Barack Obama to Cuba March 20-22, 2016 was an important event that should broaden the discussion on US-Cuba relations and ending US sanctions. Normal relations will mean increased political and people-to-people exchanges as more people from the US visit the Caribbean island and more genuine representatives of Cuban society, trade unionists and Afro-Cubans, women's rights and LGBT rights activists, artists and intellectuals, scientists and doctors are able to travel and speak in the United States.

Cuba says it is prepared to discuss anything and everything with the United States, including "democracy" and "human rights." This national gathering March 25-26 will be an opportunity to bring activists together from across the United States to discuss and act on these questions back at their home base and local area. The National Conference will have plenary sessions, dozens of workshops on Cuba and international themes, and proposals for action to demand full and real normalization of US-Cuban relations. In addition to Conference sessions and workshops, we will also hold a major public event in a large space with prominent speakers, including from Cuba, cultural performers, and special video greetings.

This invitation to hold a conference registers a spirit of unity and a perspective to reach out broadly, across different points of view, to all who are opposed to the continuation of hostile US policies toward Cuba, the fundamental obstacle to normalized relations between the two governments.

We look forward to you coming to New York City in the Spring of 2017! We must organize to change US anti-Cuba policy!

END ALL US ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL, AND
TRAVEL SANCTIONS AGAINST CUBA!
RETURN GUANTANAMO BAY
TERRITORY TO CUBAN SOVEREIGNTY!
STOP US-FUNDED COVERT "REGIME CHANGE"
PROGRAMS AGAINST CUBA!

US-CUBA NORMALIZATION COMMITTEE