NEWSLETTER
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The report from Cafe Cuba on March 8



Photo: speakers Joe Pateman and Alexandra Moss

This year on International Working Women's Day, CCFA hosted a Café Cuba after the annual women's rally. We had originally planned for Café Cuba for the purpose of raising money towards CCFA's brigade scholarships. That Café Cuba was planned for the month before, but due to bad weather we had to postpone.

On March 8, we hosted two short educationals, one on anti-racism campaigns in Cuba by Professor Joe Pateman (York University), and one on women's liberation and the Federation of Cuban Women by CCFA's own Alexandra Moss.

Both talks were informative, insightful, and furthered CCFA's goals of solidarity and education about the progressive social force that is Cuban policy. Since the goal of this Café Cuba was also to fundraise for brigade scholarships, we sold books and homemade baked goods, as well as passed the hat. It was an incredibly successful event and the Greek Hall at 290 Danforth was packed with friends and members. Ultimately, we raised $350 which went directly towards scholarships.

In the time since the last Café Cuba, CCFA is pleased to announce we have chosen two successful applicants for the brigade scholarship - Natalie Escalante and Sophia Ilyniak. Each recipient will receive $800 towards brigade costs. We wish them all the best in Cuba and cannot wait to hear about their experiences!

CCFA Toronto Membership Meeting

CCFA Toronto invites you to a membership meeting. The theme of this meeting is **Building Solidarity with Cuba: Reflections at Home and Abroad**. We will give a brief overview of current conditions in Cuba, as well as facilitate a discussion about the role of CCFA, and how the Executive can improve its relationship with our members.

Please join us on **May 24th** at **2pm** at the **Greek Democratic Hall (290 Danforth Ave)**. We would love your insights and feedback!



★ CCFA TORONTO UPDATES

Greetings from the CCFA Executive



Hello members and friends! My name is **Keyda Sloane**, and I am the new co-chair of the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto, alongside our longtime president **Liz Hill**.

I am a 3rd year Critical Equity and Solidarity Studies student at the University of Toronto, and got involved with the CCFA after attending the 2023 Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade, where I was inspired by what Cuba is able to provide their people and simultaneously troubled by the hardships imposed by the U.S. blockade.

This is my second year on the CCFA executive, and I'm pleased to say we have a committed, talented team of folks working to build the movement. **Brien Young**, **Sara Sutcliffe**, **Miguel Figueroa**, and **Samantha Hislop** have been long-term members of the executive, dedicating many years to the movement, and are backbones of the organization. **Alexandra Moss**, **Shaheen Hassan**, and **Tess Stuber** are both here for their second year, and have worked as highly dependable members with valuable perspectives, skills, and ideas. **Brandon Earnest**, **Adam Kendal**, and **Olga Filiushkina** are all in their first year on the executive and have proved to be great assets, particularly in the development of our digital presence (check out our beautiful new website by the way!).

We all share a commitment to solidarity with Cuba, a belief that the U.S. blockade must end, that self-determination is an intrinsic right of any people, and that international law must be upheld. On behalf of the CCFA executive I would like to extend our appreciation of your support of Amistad–without you we could not carry out this work!

With gratitude, Keyda Sloane



Update on the Hurricane Relief campaign

On behalf of CCFA and Canadian Network on Cuba, we thank everyone who contributed to the Hurricane Relief campaign!

The campaign was a phenomenal success, raising **$33,527.25** in total. An ultrasound machine has been purchased and delivered to a maternal genetic clinic in Bayamo, and a container full of medical supplies left Canada on April 1st, and delivered to a hospital in Matanzas city.

Your solidarity and generosity has brought critical care to the people of Cuba!





CNC Presents

IN DEFENCE OF THE REVOLUTION

Podcast on Cuban politics from Canadian perspective

Available on all podcast platforms!

A short history of the Federation of Cuban Women

We present an abridged version of Alexandra's talk from Cafe Cuba on March 8th

The Federation of Cuban Women (Espanol: Federación de Mujeres Cubanas) is an organisation directly tied to the Revolutionary movement in Cuba. Even during Fidel's speech after the flight of Batista, there was an effort to position women as equal and to acknowledge women's efforts both in the Rebel Army and on the civilian front, and to combat general sexism in the masses. When the Federation of Cuban Women was founded in 1960, eight months after the revolution, the reason given was as follows: "Cuban women, doubly humiliated and repressed by a semi-colonial society, require their own organization, one that would represent their specific interests and work to achieve their greater participation in the economic, political and social life of the Revolution". This organisation would be the Federation of Cuban Women, spearheaded by guerrilla fighter and chemical engineer Vilma Espin. The task the Federation was given was "to organize Cuban women, help them gain access to education and culture, help them advance in every conceivable way… ".

Today the Federation is a mass organisation with over four million members. This is particularly impressive considering there are 5.5 million women in Cuba. While every member may not be active, there are 300,000 women in active leadership roles within the FMC. The growth of the Federation and its fundamental importance in Cuban society is reflected in a quote from Vilma. When asked about the origins of the FMC, she said it "arose not so much as a decision of the revolutionary leadership but as a response to the demand from masses of women from different layers of society who were already in action."

The first campaign the FMC undertook was the Literacy Campaign of 1960. This project is quite well known, but less well known is how the campaign was, almost in entirety, designed by Cuban women. Beyond Vilma Espin, women like Celia Sanchez, a guerrilla fighter and revolutionary archivist, and Dr Ana Canizares, an Afro-Cuban scholar, directed the entire Campaign for mass literacy, including building the pedagogical tools and theory used for the project. The results of the year-long campaign to end illiteracy speak for themselves- over 700,000 Cubans were taught to read, with 55% of that 700,000 being women. The rate of illiteracy was decreased nationally to 3.8% as early as 1961 and it has only improved in the decades since. Today, the literacy rate in Cuba is 99.67% or 99.9% depending on the source used, higher than Canada and the USA.'

The success of the literacy campaign was just the beginning. The FMC also tackled the systemic barriers that kept women isolated in the home, paving the way for greater economic and social participation. Around the world, the long fight for women's integration and recognition in the workforce is naturally also a long fight for women to escape the isolation of the household. The emancipation of women can only happen if the domestic duties of a woman do not require all her time and energy. In Cuba, this meant creating accessible daycare centres where children could be educated and cared for while their mothers worked or went to school. The Daycare centres in Cuba are known as 'Children's Circles' were a direct result of FMC theory and practice, and are still a staple of State managed care in Cuba today. They focus on offering holistic education including emotional, moral, and artistic development and operate from 8 am to 7 pm, ensuring accessibility for working mothers.

Caring for the quality of life for children necessarily means caring for the quality of life for women. To this end, another large campaign of the FMC was to put an end to the rampant organised prostitution which had been common during the years of the US-backed Republic. Before the Revolution, tens of thousands of Cuban women, especially Black women, were living truly horrific lives in brothels in Havana and beyond. The Federation of Cuban Women determined that the best way to eradicate organised prostitution was to offer real alternatives for these women. The FMC traveled across Cuba to speak with sex workers, offering them education, housing, employment, independence, and healthcare including psychological support for their trauma.

These are just a few of the fights for a better Cuba that the FMC designed and worked towards. I try to imagine how these women felt during the Revolution. To be ignited by the possibility for fundamental change. I think about the housewives who left their families to volunteer in the Rebel Army, and later in the campaigns the FMC organised. I think about Vilma Espin and how proud she must have been to see Cuban women take to the streets, fight for a collective future that was truly independent and Cuban-led. Vilma once said that during the early days after the flight of Batista she

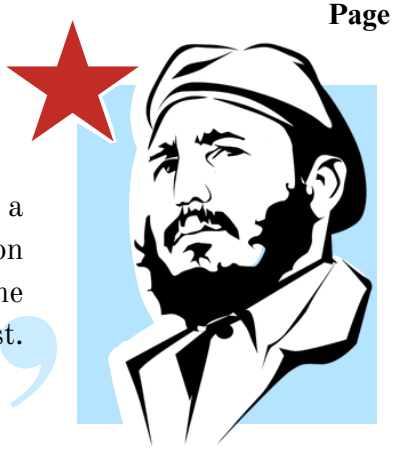
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"remembered being struck by the large number of women, some carrying babies, who took part in demonstrations and street actions, there was a strong support for the revolution, even before it had demonstrated its full meaning".

By improving the material conditions of Cuban women, all Cubans would experience an improvement in conditions as so much of "women's work" is directly tied to producing and reproducing a society. The role of revolutionary women is dual natured - we struggle to build a new world which can support basic needs of all people, but also to encourage a higher consciousness where women take on more leadership roles outside of the household. A revolutionary woman must both shed the role of a woman while providing for women who have yet to shed these roles. I have offered this short essay about the Federation of Cuban Women for the purpose of inspiring others, but it serves also as a reminder for myself. A reminder that the work we do is valuable even if it's nameless or faceless. It is the long, slow work done by anonymous people which matters most of all, more so than the idols of our movements. We can change the world if we organise, if we fight, if we build solidarity. Together, we can build a world with our hands and our hearts- a world where all people regardless of class, race, gender, or nationality can thrive as human beings. Viva Cuba! Viva la revolucion!

Alexandra Moss, CCFA

> "A revolution is not a bed of roses. A revolution is a struggle between the future and the past."
>
> **Fidel Castro**



Marco Rubio's attempt to threaten Cuban health care falls flat

Secretary of State Marco Rubio began a diplomatic journey to the Caribbean on March 25 armed with several threats to the countries he visited. Rubio demanded that these countries reject services by Cuban medical teams, or their diplomats would face the withdrawal of U.S. visas. Rubio justified his actions with bogus claims that Cuba is engaged in human trafficking and forced labor involving Cuban doctors working in other countries.

Washington thinks in terms of how much money socialist Cuba could lose, and the rejection of Cuban medical services could cost Cubans billions of U.S. dollars in revenue. Cuba's medical system is one of the mainstays of its economy.

However, what the U.S. government doesn't take into account is the power of international solidarity. Cuba has practiced this solidarity since 1960, when the socialist country sent doctors to Chile following a devastating earthquake.

Cuba has never stopped sending medical teams to where they are needed, from sending medical personnel in 1963 to Algeria after that country's revolution to sending tens of thousands of health care workers to 165 different countries — offering anti-colonial health care to millions of people.

Cuba also provides free medical schooling to students who otherwise would not be able to afford it, including U.S. students for whom they maintain 10 openings each year.

Rubio was in shock when Jamaica's Prime Minister, Andrew Holness, made it clear on March 26 that Jamaica has no intention of severing ties with a medical partnership it considers vital to its health care system. "Let us be clear, the Cuban doctors in Jamaica have been incredibly helpful to us," Holness declared at a joint press conference with Rubio, according to Wired.

In addition, "Earlier this month, Antiguan Prime Minister Gaston Browne also sharply criticized the American position, warning that the absence of Cuban doctors would 'literally dismantle our health care services and put our people at risk.'" (March 27)

Nearly all of the Caribbean leaders vehemently rejected the U.S. administration's allegations of forced labor. They insisted they would prefer to give up their U.S. visas than jeopardize their public health systems' cooperation with Cuba.

Guyanese President Irfaan Ali said, in advance of Rubio's Caribbean trip, "I don't see abandoning Cuba as part of this equation." (Guyana Times, March 23)

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley stated that her country couldn't have gotten through the COVID-19 pandemic without Cuba's doctors.

Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent and the Grenadines said, "I would prefer to lose my visa than have 60 poor and working people die," about hemodialysis patients treated under Cuban care. (Wired, March 11)

The U.S. government typically distances itself from the reality that human needs are more important and powerful than financial deals and threats of power. Multiple Caribbean countries' denial of Rubio's demands indicates a sea change in international relations.

Source: Sue Harris for Workers World
Published on April 2, 2025

Visit of Cuba's Deputy of Foreign Affairs to Toronto in March



On March 21, 2025, a number of Cuba's friends and solidarity activists were invited to the Cuban Consulate to meet with **Gerardo Penalver Portal**, the first deputy minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba (MINREX).

The First Deputy Minister warmly greeted everyone, explaining this is his first visit to Canada and he has met with Global Affairs and attended events celebrating the 80th Anniversary of Canada-Cuba diplomatic relations, in Ottawa and Montreal. His comments were frank and quite comprehensive, but also encouraging.

Here is a brief summary of his remarks:

"Canada is important to Cuba and we share many things in common – justice, equality, respect for sovereignty. Cuba remains very vulnerable however to the economic and financial impact of the U.S. Blockade and we are working to overcome the difficulties. There is a long history of foreign attempts to provoke the Cuban people; this has not changed for 60 plus years. Our enemies don't count on the strong leadership in Cuba or the power of world solidarity, which together is how we have survived.

I came to Canada for a round of meetings with Global Affairs Canada, marking the 80th anniversary of our bilateral relations. I have spoken on trade, investment, culture, tourism, bilateral relations. We have a relationship that does not depend on which political parties are in power. We have exchanges with parliamentarians, businesspeople of different sectors, Cubans living in Canada. Soon, I will meet with Ontario premier Ford. We stress our commonalities in an atmosphere of respect. Canada is special to the Cuban people. Millions of Canadians have visited Cuba in people to people contacts.

The world cannot function with a hostile policy of "might is right". The best attributes of humans are solidarity and cooperation. Common sense will prevail. In answer to a question about priorities in our solidarity work, there are two ways.

The two most important tasks are political solidarity and material support. The new US administration has taken 11 regulations to provoke Cuba. This is not well known as Trump has not spoken publicly about Cuba since his inauguration, but there is an inner circle of anti-Cubans [e.g., Secretary of State Mark Rubio] who have been given free hands to tighten economic pressures on Cuba. The Title III clause of the Helms Burton Act has now been activated by Washington, meaning that now private individuals and corporations can now sue Cuba for compensation, not only for their losses dating back to 1959, but also for 'foregone earnings' ever since, as well. Other measures – more restrictions affecting the international operations of Cuban companies; a sharp increase in denials of U.S. visas for Cuban academics, sports and cultural figures, etc.; new regulations making it difficult if not impossible for officials to travel; threatening 60 countries who make arrangements for Cuban medical missions in their countries, or other forms of medical cooperation with Cuba. Cuba is living through a war and needs political solidarity more than ever.

The second way to help is material solidarity. ICAP has an update on what is important. For example, insulin, and medicine for children.

In terms of the Cuban economy, we have good reason to believe that 2025 is when our economy has hit rock-bottom, and we expect the economy to recover gradually from 2026 onwards.

The first thing we need to do is to stabilize energy production and repair the energy grid. There are 55 solar parks now operating or under construction as well as wind and hydro electric projects. By the end of this year, we will be out of daytime blackouts, especially in the countryside. By 2026, we will be out of blackouts during night.

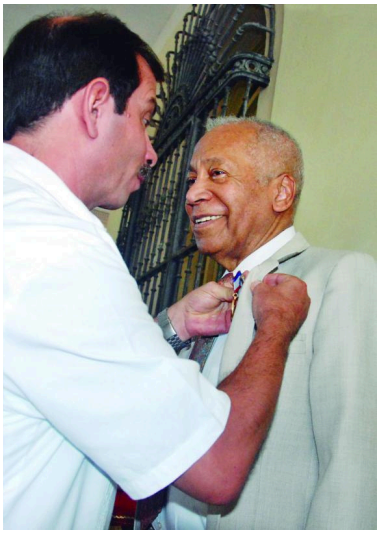
We are gradually reducing the state deficit. We are developing alliances between state and non-state enterprises. Foreign investment is slowly picking up, including foreign investment in agriculture. We are working to produce rice to reduce imports. Tourism is an important source for the economy. 2019 was our best year in terms of overall tourist numbers, and then we were hit by COVID and the intensification of sanctions by the Trump administration. Last year, there were approx. 900,000 Canadian tourists, but this remains about 20% below highs in 2017 & 2018. Flights from Canada have been cancelled, but this will be solved and we will recover. We have a long-standing relationship with Canadian tourism operators.

Regarding BRICS, Cuba is now a partner state. We are a small country but have major strides in some sectors, including pharmaceutical and biotechnical industries, and Cuba can cooperate with BRICS countries in these and other fields."

Based on notes from Elizabeth Hill & Miguel Figueroa

In honor and memory of Keith Ellis

A panel composed of Nancy Morejón, Denia García Ronda and Abel Prieto honored the renowned intellectual



Keith Ellis receiving the Friendship Medal from Fernando González Llort. Photo: Maylin Guerrero Ocaña

"The Cuban example has never taught me to be passive," read the screen in UNEAC's Villena Hall. The message, accompanied by images from its author, was part of a presentation by the Nicolás Guillén Foundation to begin its posthumous tribute to Keith Ellis, the renowned Jamaican-Canadian humanist who passed away last December at the age of 89.

The event highlighted Ellis's spontaneous generosity, his honorary doctorate from the University of Havana, and the Friendship Medal awarded by ICAP. Yet what lingered most was his unwavering conviction—rooted in his deep understanding of Cuba—leaving no doubt that the celebrated intellectual was both an admirer of the island's reality and a steadfast defender of its ideals.

Chaired by Nicolás Hernández Guillén, president of the Nicolás Guillén Foundation, the panel featured poet and translator Nancy Morejón (National Prize for Literature laureate), professor and essayist Denia García Ronda, and writer Abel Prieto Jiménez, president of Casa de las Américas. Hernández Guillén noted Ellis's legacy as the author of 20 books and over 100 academic articles, cementing his status as a global authority on the work of Cuba's National Poet, Nicolás Guillén. A professor at multiple universities, Ellis specialized in Hispanic and Latin American literary and political figures, particularly José Martí, José María Heredia, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Roberto Fernández Retamar.

Nancy Morejón, reflecting on Ellis—an Honorary Member of UNEAC and the Nicolás Guillén Foundation—emphasized his vision of the Americas, where Simón Bolívar, Martí, and Guillén were foundational to our culture. She praised his translations as one of his most vital contributions, noting how his worldview intertwined literature and society, science and humanity. For Ellis, she added, the Caribbean was a tapestry of diverse literatures, not a singular tradition.

García Ronda chose to focus on Ellis's humanity, recounting how, despite his failing eyesight, he once drove friends from Toronto to Niagara Falls so they could witness its beauty—and the plaque honoring José María Heredia, whose installation he had championed.

Abel Prieto addressed the audience, calling Ellis "the kind of intellectual we need today": a scholar who never let academia confine him, an activist whose solidarity was quiet yet unwavering. "He carried the spirit of a founder," Prieto said, referencing Ellis's role in establishing the Network in Defense of Humanity.

A sentiment echoed throughout the tribute—and by attendees who shared their thoughts—was Cuba's duty to ensure his legacy endures. It was also announced that further memorials in his name are planned.

Source: Madeleine Sautié for Granma
Translated & edited for style
Published on March 26, 2025

Venezuela received 30,000 doses of polio vaccine from Cuba

A shipment of 30,000 doses of polio vaccine arrived in Venezuela today from Cuba as part of the alliance between the two countries, reported Health Minister Magaly Gutiérrez.

The senior official posted on her Instagram account that the shipment arrived at Arturo Michelena International Airport in the northern state of Carabobo.

He emphasized that this effort is part of the Fourth of the Seven Transformations of the 2025-2031 Government Plan, which "seeks to guarantee the well-being of the youngest members of the household."

Gutiérrez explained that the vaccines are intended for newborns and children under five years of age, and the goal is to continue strengthening the Expanded Immunization Program.

He noted that despite the economic blockade the country is facing, "President Nicolas Maduro continues to secure the necessary doses to protect the health of our children."
He reiterated that in this fight for life and health, we reaffirm our commitment to Venezuela's future.

Expanded Immunization Program Director Nury Valderrama explained in the accompanying video that "the vaccines will benefit all children in the country's 24 states, in the 593 Community Health Areas."

Source: Sue Harris for Workers World
Published on April 2, 2025

Congratulatory Letter to Elected Prime Minister Mark Carney

To The Right Honourable Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada,

The Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC) congratulates you in being elected to lead Canada as Prime Minister. Founded in 2002, we are an organization consisting of twenty-four member groups ranging from Vancouver to Halifax, and many more affiliated organizations and unions that we also work closely with across Canada, as well as internationally.

Our network was formed to bring together people in Canada who feel an affection for Canada and Cuba, and strengthen the ties that connect our nations, who have enjoyed uninterrupted diplomatic relations now for over 80 years – Unlike the United States who does not respect Cuba's right to sovereignty and self-determination (neither that of Canada nor Greenland), and have been interfering via political subversion and imposing an economic, financial, and commercial blockade against the Cuban people for more than 63 years. Moreover, the U.S naval base sits on the illegally occupied Cuban territory of Guantanamo Bay.

One of the CNC's principal objectives is advocating that Canadian foreign policy regarding Cuba remains based on equality and respect for sovereignty and the right of self-determination. Our work also consists of organizing and participating in cultural, educational, academic, and aid campaigns and projects involving Canada and Cuba, and disseminating information about the achievements of the Cuban people in areas such as education, public health, culture, and democracy and human rights, despite the United States' blockade which costs the island nation's economy billions of dollars annually.

We are committed to the strengthening of friendship and solidarity between the peoples of Canada and Cuba to promote social, cultural, political and economic relations between Canada and Cuba, based on mutual respect and national sovereignty, and we aim to uphold, and hope to expand on, the current relations between our two countries.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully, *May 1st, 2025*

Samantha Hislop and Julio Fonseca, Co-Chairs, Canadian Network on Cuba

Cuban doctor breaks the silence



My name is Milagros Caridad Pupo Ocampo, and this is my story.

I was born in the province of Holguín, in the municipality of Cacocum, in a small sugarcane town called Cristino Naranjo. I am the daughter of working-class parents who were never rich, the daughter of Black parents who always worked to give me the best and with great honesty.

From a young age, my calling to medicine became evident. Whenever there was a situation in that small town clinic, I was in the spotlight. I didn't care about blood or anything else, but was always there investigating what had happened. A nurse whom I always esteemed because her calling was greater than great, and may God rest her soul, would say, "What is Milagros doing here, the forensic doctor?" That's what she called me. And she wasn't wrong. I became a doctor. I became a doctor thanks to the Cuban Revolution, and no one can deny that. I learned everything I know thanks to the Cuban Revolution. I saved many lives thanks to the Cuban Revolution, both inside and outside the country.

I had the opportunity to travel on missions to two great countries, Venezuela and Brazil, and the experiences of the grateful people were countless. I endured the terrifying pandemic in Venezuela, more than 36 red zones, tirelessly watching people die, thinking of my loved ones back in Cuba. But I never gave up and continued because medicine isn't a business; it's a sacrifice, as they didn't teach it, and I continue practicing it despite all the difficulties.

I treated thousands of people in those two countries, and everyone can attest to a Cuban doctor's good treatment, professionalism, and accurate diagnosis. That's why I don't want them to discredit my Cuban healthcare system, for which I am so grateful. A healthcare system that has helped and saved thousands of lives. It seems like no one remembers Ebola and how thousands of Cubans went to an uncertain world, leaving families behind, by their own choice; no one forced them. It seems like no one remembers Pakistan, when a group of Cubans went out to help. No one remembers COVID, when several groups went to different countries

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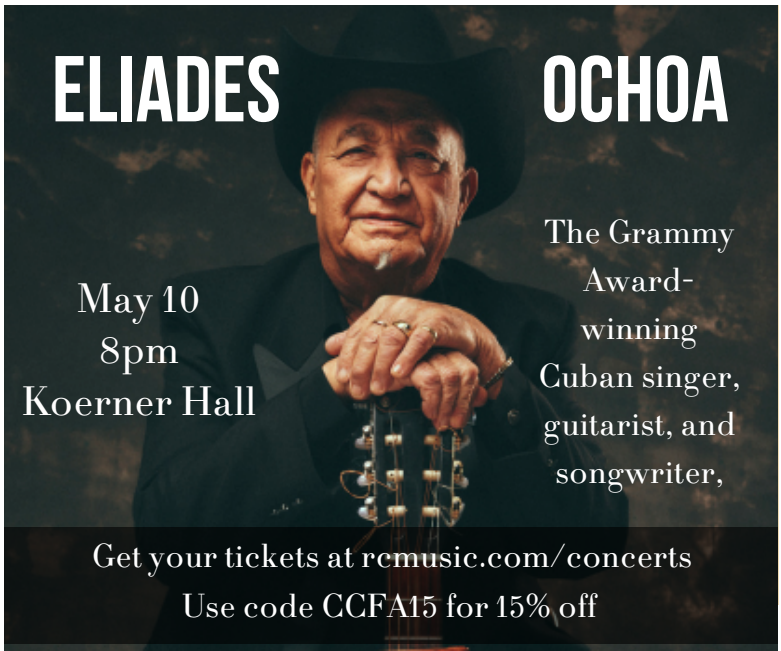
worldwide, including Italy. It seems like no one remembers all our Cuban doctors' achievements worldwide.

In my case, despite the blackouts, despite the little rest, despite the many shortcomings, despite being the daughter of Black, working-class parents, I became a terrific Cuban doctor with principles that I truly value, and all thanks to my Revolution and thanks to my family. You can post negative comments, horrific lies, I don't care. That will only make me stronger and won't make me change my principles or thoughts. I am Dr. Milagros Caridad Pupo Ocampo, a leftist and eternally grateful to our commander, Fidel Castro Ruz. Blessings to all. And this doctor, MINSAP, is present and at your side for whatever may come.

Ebola and how thousands of Cubans went to an uncertain world, leaving families behind, by their own choice; no one forced them. It seems like no one remembers Pakistan, when a group of Cubans went out to help. No one remembers COVID, when several groups went to different countries worldwide, including Italy. It seems like no one remembers all our Cuban doctors' achievements worldwide.

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Source: Facebook, translated by Walter Lippman
Published on March 31, 2025



Cuba Sings and Blossoms Festival May 30 -31st

Cuba Sings and Blossoms Festival will be the first of its kind, showcasing Cuban, local Latin American and Indigenous artists. The festival, happening on **May 30th and 31st** at the **Transac Club** in **Toronto**, aims to immerse audiences in the magic of collaboration between cultures with an educational component during which panel discussions will be led by Cuban artists, as well as workshops. Please see the flyer below for the full schedule of the festival.

For tickets and more information visit cubacantayflorece.com
Phone: (905) 745-312
Email: quetzali75@gmail.com



Naval blockade of Cuba

An African country with coastlines on the eastern Atlantic decided to donate 3,000 tons of horse mackerel to Cuba, the delicious oily fish that swims in shoals from the Canary Islands and Senegal to the Gulf of Guinea and Baía dos Tigres, in Angola. As 2024 began, and since the island has no merchant ships, the nation that made the donation asked a local company to take charge of processing and transporting the cargo.

No shipping company was willing to make the direct voyage to the port of Mariel in Cuba for fear of US sanctions, according to a report published by the daily Granma, which addressed specific examples of the US blockade of the island. A test container was sent to evaluate the costs via a much longer itinerary, which included several stops at ports in China. The voyage began on February 18, 2024, and ended on May 3, 75 days later. According to estimates, transporting the full cargo along this route would cost $9.7 million. The African country, in solidarity, could not afford such a sum and decided to sell the 3,000 tons of horse mackerel and use the money to buy frozen fish in a port near Cuba. “The money raised was only enough to buy 386 tons in nearby waters,” says Granma.

The sophistication of the blockade has reached indescribable levels, with measures to frighten shipping companies and make it increasingly difficult for cargo to arrive by sea in Cuba, which, after all, has no other means of regular trade for large containers of food and fuel. What was previously prevented by warships patrolling territorial waters is now made impossible by sanctions, regulations and legal threats that turn every Cuban port into a risk zone for any shipping company.

In 2024, an amendment to the US National Defense Authorization Act established that any port under the jurisdiction of a government considered to be a state sponsor of terrorism, as is the case with Cuba, according to Washington’s unfounded accusations, will be evaluated as a port with insufficient security measures. Therefore, US customs controls were tightened, which were already very strict (any ship arriving on the island had to wait six months to travel to the US). The 2024 regulations apply to all commercial vessels arriving in US territory after visiting Cuban ports, except those that have docked at the Guantanamo Naval Base.

Last week, another bombshell went under the media radar, a common practice of the US administration, which has turned the world upside down with the tariff war. In contrast, the State Department’s little wars are carried out with equal perfidy but greater stealth. Thus, they established special conditions for all commercial ships that had visited Cuban ports during their last five stopovers before reaching US territory. Even those that comply with this requirement will be subject to special surveillance; coastguards will guard them, and the guards must have total visibility of the ship's exterior on the land and sea sides.

Apart from the new blow aimed at shipping companies that dared to trade with the island and carry a test container with horse mackerel, the new measure nips in the bud the transportation from the US of food, electrical appliances and cars that were allowed during the Biden administration, under one-sided conditions and operated by the private sector in Cuba. The measures are aimed at further deteriorating cooperative ties on security issues and increasing the extraterritoriality of the blockade.

The difference between the direct naval blockade and this one is purely formal: if before a military vessel was enough to prevent trade, today the threat induced through a sanctions system that suffocates as much or more is enough, without the need for a single gunboat.

This week, the White House special envoy for Latin America, Mauricio Claver-Carone, acknowledged in Miami that the Trump administration is taking a “more surgical” approach against the government of Miguel Díaz-Canel, intending to strangle the Cuban economy. What he does not say is that this cruelty has a direct impact on the civilian population and leaves unbearable images linked to an increasingly precarious daily life in Cuba, where not even the horse mackerel escapes.

Source: Rosa Miriam Elizalde for La Jornada
Published on April 10, 2025



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CCFA Toronto Statement

The Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto is active in promoting friendship, respect, and co-operation between Canadian and Cuban peoples. We work with other Canadian groups and international organizations.

Our activities aim to:

- Provide information and organize events related to Cuba for the public and media, focusing on culture, health, education, sports, and Canada-Cuba relations
- Counteract the deliberate misinformation about Cuba spread by the U.S.
- End the illegal U.S. blockade of Cuba and defend Cuban and Canadian sovereignty from U.S. interference

About Amistad

Amistad is the newsletter of the CCFA Toronto, posted six times a year with volunteer labour. The Editorial Committee reserves the right to edit submitted material. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Editorial Committee.

We encourage everyone interested to submit media articles, editorial ideas, and letters.
Email canadiancubanfriendshiptoronto@gmail.com
Deadlines are the 10th of even months.

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