

NEWSLETTER Amistad

canadacubafriendshiptoronto.ca



Sep/Oct 2025



Bi-monthly newsletter of Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto



July 26 Moncada Day in Toronto



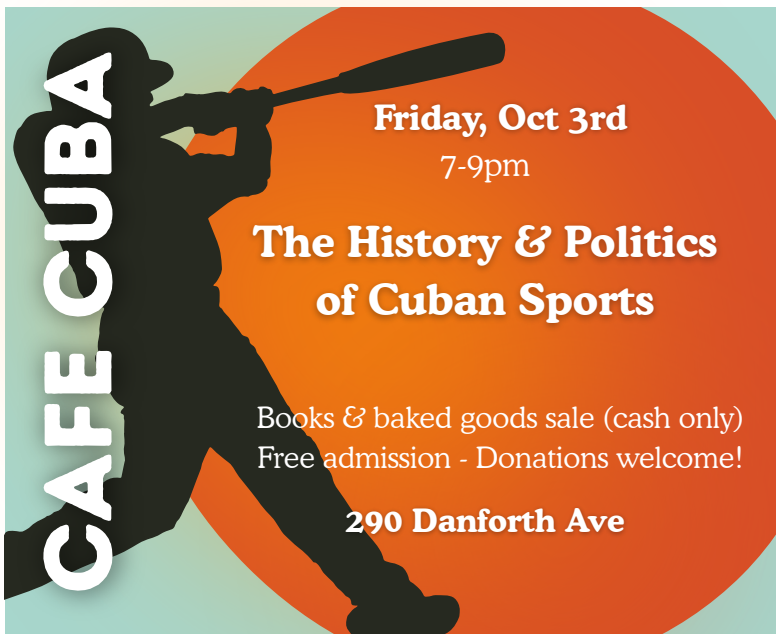
CCFA Toronto together with the Association of Cuban Residents in Toronto and the Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network organized a spectacular BBQ event celebrating the 72nd Anniversary of the Historic Moncada attack. Lucho and many friends gathered early Saturday outside the Steelworkers Hall to start barbecuing the large pig. Two lively games of dominoes kept them busy while the dinner slowly cooked.

Inside the hall volunteers worked in the kitchen, preparing the rice and salads, while others decorated the hall with flags and posters. Over a hundred people came out to mark this occasion and enjoy the delicious food, greetings and music. Cuban Consul, Anailyn Ruiz Casas, brought a warm message of appreciation for the support from the solidarity groups in Toronto.

A new music group, called "Life To Liberation" performed several beautiful songs.

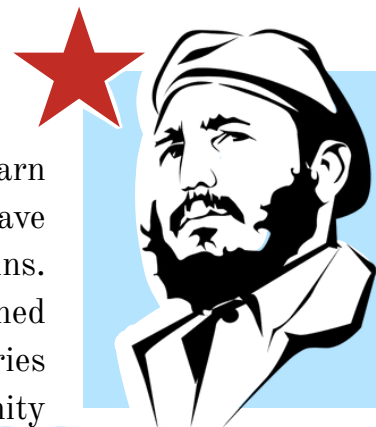
It was a lively, enjoyable afternoon, for everyone who participated, and resulted in over \$800 raised to support solidarity with Cuba.

Elizabeth Hill, CCFA Toronto



“Humanity can learn from those who have broken their chains. Those who have chained humanity for centuries cannot teach humanity anything.”

Fidel Castro



★ CCFA TORONTO UPDATES

CCFA Toronto at the People's Fair



Photo: CCFA Exec members Alexandra Moss, Adam Kendal and Olga Filiushkina at our table at the People's Fair

CCFA was invited to attend the first People's Fair, hosted in Toronto at 31 Wellesley St on August 24th. The event aimed to unite some of the various left organizations across the city which are focused on either promoting radical political thought in diasporic communities and or solidarity with nations in the global south. The result is meant to be an opportunity for people in the city to learn about clubs and organizations which are anti-imperialist in nature. CCFA fit right in, handing out dozens of copies of *Amistad*, building connections to other organizations. We are grateful to the organizers of the People's Fair and can't wait to participate in the next.

Alexandra Moss, CCFA Toronto



We'd love to hear from you! If you have articles, editorials, or letters you'd like us to share, send them to canadiancubanfriendshiptoronto@gmail.com before October 15th (indicate "**Amistad Submission**" in the subject line). Please keep it under 1,200 words.



CCFA Toronto's 2024

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Nov 2, 2 - 4:30 pm

Shevchenko Museum
1604 Bloor St. West
(Dundas West Subway)

RALLY FOR CUBA



SEP 28 & OCT 26
1-2PM

361 UNIVERSITY AVE,
TORONTO

Join our monthly protests against
the US Blockade!



Join the
**2025 Calixto Garcia
Solidarity Brigade**

NOV 23 - DEC 5

Visit **Santiago de Cuba, Baracoa, Guadalajara & Holguin.**

Special program dedicated to to the Indigenous people of Cuba, and the 65th Anniversary of the *Institute of Friendship with the Peoples* (ICAP), the *Committees for the defence of the Revolution* (CDRs) and the *Federation of Cuban Women* (FMC)

Email calixtogarciabrigade@gmail.com to secure your spot

Over \$9.5 million raised for Cuba just in three days

HÀ NỘI — A fundraising programme named “65 Years of Việt Nam – Cuba Solidarity” had collected 249.9 billion VND (over 9.5 million USD) by Saturday noon, with more than 1.15 million contributions, nearly four times the set minimum target.



Nguyễn Hải Anh, General Secretary and Vice President of the Việt Nam Red Cross Society (VRCS) – the body tasked with leading the national campaign – said that, immediately after the launching ceremony on August 13, millions of people had joined the effort.

Within just 48 hours, contributions were said to have exceeded 200 per cent of the initial goal, surpassing VNĐ130 billion (US\$9.5 million), reflecting the special place Cuba holds in the hearts of the Vietnamese people.

According to Anh, the VRCS Central Committee is working closely with the Cuban Embassy in Việt Nam, the Cuban Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and relevant ministries and agencies to ensure the timely, transparent transfer of the donations to the Cuban people.

The campaign’s results were seen as a reflection of the enduring solidarity and loyalty of the Vietnamese people towards Cuba, as well as the trust placed in the VRCS to channel this support.

Anh highlighted the collective spirit and humanitarian values of Vietnamese citizens at home and abroad, expressing gratitude to all contributors.

He added that the process of receiving and reporting donations would remain fully transparent, with account statements made publicly available from Saturday.

Anh also expressed hope that this spirit of solidarity would continue to mobilise resources for Cuba, demonstrating to the world the enduring friendship between Việt Nam and Cuba. The fundraising programme, organised by the VRCS in coordination with ministries and central-level agencies, is part of the Việt Nam–Cuba Friendship Year marking the 65th anniversary of diplomatic relations (1960–2025).

Running for 65 days from August 13 – coinciding with the 99th birth anniversary of Cuban leader Fidel Castro – until October 16, 2025, the campaign aims to support the Cuban people with food, essential goods and sustainable

humanitarian activities.

Source: Việt Nam News
Published on August 16, 2025

Editor’s note: According to *Vietnamnet Global*, 15 million USD was raised as of September 1st.

The 65th Anniversary of the Federation of Cuban Women

For 65 years, the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) has been at the forefront of profound social transformations, winning rights, expanding spaces for participation, and dignifying the lives of Cuban women. Thanks to our organizational strength, Cuban women have gained a presence in all areas of society as a result of decades of struggle and dedication.



We celebrate with pride and gratitude each member who, with resistance, dedication, and dignity, has sustained the Revolution and strengthened the FMC. In the face of the blockade, the main strength has been in the unity of women: together they face it, resist it, and overcome it with creativity, intelligence, and commitment, finding alternatives, building solutions, and defending life with tenderness and firmness.

At every stage, the Cuban federated women have demonstrated deep loyalty to the legacy of Fidel and Vilma Espin our founder, to the FMC as their common home, and to the Socialist Revolution as the only path toward the just and equitable world we deserve. Their loyalty is not just memory: it is action, continuity, and future.

The FMC is more than an organization: it is a symbol of struggle, unity, and transformation. And each member is a protagonist of that legacy, which is renewed in every gesture of solidarity, in every victory for justice, in every step toward equality.

Thank you for resisting, for caring, for building. Thank you for never giving up.

Thank you for making these 65 years of Revolution possible, with the face of women!

Source: National Secretariat of the FMCs
Accessed through Resumen Latinoamericano
Published on August 23, 2025

Fidel Castro's Centenary Begins: A Legacy for Today's Troubled World

August 13, 2025, marks the beginning of Fidel Castro's centenary—a hundred years since the birth of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution. As we enter this centenary period, we do so not with statues or monuments, for Fidel himself rejected such commemorations. Instead, we honour him in the most profound way possible: by continuing the struggles to which he dedicated his life—against exploitation, imperial domination, and injustice; for socialism, peace, dignity, and the complete emancipation of humanity.

His legacy is not entombed in stone, but alive in the trenches of resistance across the globe. Fidel does not require marble or bronze to be remembered. From the youth marching in defence of the planet, to communities fighting for healthcare and housing, to movements resisting settler colonialism and racial capitalism, Fidel is there - present in spirit and example. He lives in every act of courage that dares to imagine and build a world founded on human dignity. More than a political leader, Fidel was a revolutionary in the fullest sense of the word: someone who not only dreamed of a better world but organised and mobilized the people to bring that dream into being.

With the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959, Fidel and the Cuban people broke the chains of U.S. domination. They opened a new chapter in the history of Latin America and the Global South. They showed that it was possible to seize control of a nation's destiny and to place human needs above private profit.

Fidel's leadership was always rooted in a deep ethical commitment to justice. His was a politics of principle—dignified, consistent, and unbending in the face of the most formidable enemies. Despite more than six decades of blockade, sabotage, and vilification, Cuba under Fidel remained steadfast: abolishing illiteracy, eradicating preventable disease, advancing gender equity, and offering sanctuary and solidarity to the oppressed - a revolution of principles, not privilege.

Fidel's internationalism was never rhetorical. It was lived, practiced, and institutionalized. In southern Africa, Cuba played a crucial role in the decisive defeat in Angola of the racist armed forces of the apartheid South African state, which led to the immediate independence of Namibia, accelerating the end of racist rule in South Africa.

Thus, Cuban medical brigades saving lives in Africa, Latin America, and even in wealthy nations like Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic are not anomalies—they are the natural outgrowth of the revolutionary principles Fidel instilled.

From Angola to Haiti, Cuban internationalism has been a beacon of what human solidarity can look like in action.

We live in perilous times. Around the world, fascism rises, genocide is normalized and routinized, the gap between rich and poor ever deepens and widens, and the planet edges closer to ecological catastrophe. In the face of such crises, Fidel's life and legacy illuminate a different path—one based not on accumulation and domination, but on solidarity, justice, and the flourishing of humanity.

His example calls on us not to despair but to organize, not to retreat but to resist, to struggle - to build the new world. In Fidel, we see the power of commitment fused with clarity of vision; the power of revolutionary love grounded in rigorous struggle.

Bertolt Brecht once wrote: "There are those who struggle for a day, and they are good. Some struggle for a year, and they are better. Some struggle for many years, and they are better still. But some struggle all their lives: These are the indispensable ones."

Fidel was, and remains, one of those indispensable ones. In today's global context, Fidel's vision is not a relic of the past but a roadmap for the future: in a world adrift, a compass.

As we commemorate the 100th anniversary of Fidel's birth, let it not be merely a remembrance, but a renewal of commitment. Let it inspire not nostalgia, but revolutionary responsibility. This centenary must be a time to rekindle the fires of resistance, to deepen our internationalist commitments, and to build the better world Fidel knew was possible—and necessary. Fidel is not a figure of the past. He is a living force in the present, guiding us toward a better future yet to be won.

We declare, with conviction and clarity:
¡Fidel Presente! ¡Hoy, mañana y siempre!
¡Hasta la victoria siempre!
¡Venceremos!

Isaac Saney, member of Executive Committee of Canadian Network on Cuba and professor at Dalhousie University



Photo: CCFA Toronto Co-chair Elizabeth Hill at the Celebration of Fidel's 99th birthday at the Cuban Consulate

May 16, 2024, CCFA Niagara lost a very valued charter member



Photo: Vince with Mariela Castro at Kingston Conf. 2009

Only two months previously, Vince Baldo attended our March 12th meeting. The membership was understandably taken aback by his rapid decline and passing.

Vince immigrated to Canada in 1961 from the Village of Grotte, Sicily. A carpenter by trade, in Canada, he worked building custom yachts before ending his 30-year career at General Motors, St. Catharines plant.

Vince was very active in union work well into his retirement years as part of CAW Local 199's (now Unifor) Peace and Disarmament Committee. It is known that his interest in Cuba dates back at least to the early 1990s, with vacations in Cuba, which led to his solidarity work in his union, then with the newly chartered CCFA Niagara.

Vince was part of every solidarity project CCFA Niagara undertook. He attended every meeting plus served for many years as treasurer. He attended several Worker to Worker Canada-Cuba Labour Solidarity meetings in Canada and in Cuba. He has participated in both the Che Guevara Brigade and the Calixto García Brigade. In the process, he introduced his loving partner, Josephine Callaghan, to Cuban solidarity. He hosted guests from Cuba in his home and held receptions.

Upon his passing, CCFA Niagara, with the assistance of Manitoba's Iris Cogger set up a Vince Baldo memorial fund. It was closed last November, and the proceeds of over \$3,000 were transferred to the CNC Hurricane Relief Fund. Some additional money was added directly to the CNC fund after the transfer.

This fund represents the high respect and friendship built up over a lifetime, and therefore, amounts to the final act of solidarity from Vince to Cuba's Revolution. A Better World is Possible!

David Thomas, CCFA Niagara

Granma Rebelde International Festival



The Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), in collaboration with the Union of Young Communists, is pleased to announce the **Granma Rebelde International Festival**, scheduled to take place in **Havana** from **October 17 to 20, 2025**. This festival marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Granma and Juventud Rebelde newspapers by Fidel Castro Ruz, the Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution.

The Festival will serve as a vibrant venue for political, academic, cultural, and grassroots exchanges, promoting dialogue, solidarity, and cooperation through critical thinking. Together, we will tackle the numerous challenges confronting peace and social justice on the global stage today.

We invite communist, left-wing and progressive youth parties and organizations, as well as social movements, the media and academic and cultural entities to join this People's Festival. Let us unite to challenge the media manipulation and fourth-generation warfare tactics of imperialism, which are designed to instigate hatred, misrepresent the realities of our countries, and fuel the growth of fascism and neocolonialism.

For sixty years, Granma, the official organ of the Communist Party of Cuba, and Juventud Rebelde, the voice of Cuban youth, have maintained their unwavering commitment to the truth. They have promoted unity and solidarity, actively contributing to the creative construction of the socialist project championed by Fidel Castro.

This Festival, concluding on October 20, Cuban Culture Day, will also honour the approaching 100th anniversary of Fidel Castro's birth, set to be celebrated in August 2026.

Similarly, from October 15 to 17, Havana will host the Third International Meeting of Theoretical Publications of Leftist Parties and Movements, a well-established platform for exchanging new political theories and practices that address the challenges of our era.

We look forward to welcoming you in Havana!

Cuba Approves Landmark Legal Gender Change



In a major win for Cuba's LGBTQ+'s community, the country's parliament passed a new law granting people the right to legally change their gender.

The Law of Civil Registration does not require "a previous modification of appearance" or gender-

affirming surgery. Individuals can use the law to change their gender twice as long as the first time happened when the person was a minor.

In recent years, Cuba has blazed a trail for LGBTQ+ rights in the region. The 2019 Constitution opened the door to progressive reforms and the 2022 Family Code legalized same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples.

Until now, it was nearly impossible for people to change their gender without gender-affirming surgery. Previously, trans people could not legally change their name unless the new name corresponded to their legal gender. That provision was revoked in 2022, but the process remained long and difficult, according to activists.

Cuba's first gender-affirming surgery occurred in 1988, and they became more common in the 2010s. But none have been performed in recent years as hospitals have been forced to stop many surgeries due to the country's economic crisis.

Source: Belly of the Beast. Published on July 21, 2025

Paul R. Carr: My story with Cuba

My story with Cuba began in 1982, when I was a student in France. Young, naïve, open-minded but without a lot of nuances on things that were shaping the world, I started to consume, almost insatiably, a lot of literature in the form of newspapers, journals, magazines and books, everything in paper, at the library in Montpellier.

I learned that Cuba was building something, and, despite the interminable onslaught from the self-proclaimed political, economic and military leader to the North, it was extending a hand to countries around the world, in the Global South, in the form of doctors and teachers. My image and interpretation were perhaps altruistic and utopian, but there was an incredible feeling of euphoria in knowing that a society could transform itself. In 1984, while undertaking my undergraduate degree in political science, I researched and



Paul: "Here's a photo of me and Gina during our first trip together to Havana in 2003."

wrote a paper on *los círculos infantiles* (daycare centres) in Cuba. Again, I was humbly learning and was not an expert on Cuba whatsoever. Still, I was astounded by how a society could collectively transform itself with political will, notably through its literacy campaign. I started to learn Spanish in 1984, and met a lot of refugees from Chile and throughout the Americas, often fleeing US-backed dictatorships.

Years passed, and I went to Cuba for the first time in 1997. Everything then accelerated, and I immediately jumped on or into the Cuba solidarity movement. I became a member of the board of the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto, where I met some exceptional people. We organized events, hosted Cubans, including Aleida Guevara, in their Canadian trips, we put together material aid missions (I remember going with Steve O'Brien to the Toronto airport every few days loading up educational supplies for a several-ton shipment that we sent to Cuba), we developed relations, networks, proposals and projects across the country, and we generally did everything that we could to support Cuba.

I saw Fidel speak at the biannual Pedagogia conference in Havana in 1998, a five and half hour meandering through political life, problems, proposals and insights about what is happening, without notes or breaks but with a few glasses of water (I've never seen a crowd, of about 6000 at the Karl Marx Theatre, act the way it did during that experience, singing, yelling out questions and support, and denouncing all sorts of injustice all over the place, the complete antithesis of the scripted, tightly-controlled speeches we see in the North). There were many special moments, and I remember fondly sitting around the dining-room table at Lisa Makarchuk, Liz Hill, David Warner, and others' homes, where we discussed how best to support Cuba. We spent a wonderful evening

Continued on the next page

with Fidelito, Fidel's son, and met many other exceptional Cubans, including Consuls, Ambassadors and other officials.

I went to Cuba several times, notably Havana, Holguin and Santiago, played baseball (it was hot, many of the guys drank a street-rum that made me shiver, and then threw the ball around like it was on a string, and I enjoyed it), developed a relationship with an elementary school in Havana and tried to twin it with a school in Toronto, helped organized Canada-Cuba friendship meetings in Cuba, and ultimately had a long series of really joyful and memorable encounters with Cubans, many of whom became good and meaningful friends. Speaking in front of City Hall in Toronto as we raised the Cuban flag to honour Canadian-Cuban friendship is another moment of joy, as is the annual July 26 boat cruise that our association organized to bring people together for some sun, salsa and solidarity. Meeting friends at ICAP (Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos) has been wonderfully uplifting; they provide a gateway to building relations and also to making Cuba a place, an idea, and a movement that is connected to the world.

I wrote a book of poetry, *My Malecón*, largely in English with some Spanish poems, in 1999 about Cuba. I then collaborated with Richard Grove and two Cuban poets/friends of mine, Manuel Leon and Manuel Verdecia, on three books of poetry that included Canadian and Cuban poets. Another book of poetry, co-authored by Hugh Hazelton and ten Canadian poets of Latin American origin, each writing in both English and Spanish, entitled *Iguana*, was another key moment in the trajectory. I mention the *Iguana* book because groups of Latin Americans intensely supported all of our Cuba solidarity activities. Not all Latin Americans support Cuba, but many do, and this is the case around the world, despite the (mis)information largely diffused by the neighbour to the North of the Island. I completed another book of poetry in 2023, *Democracy*, which contains many poems about Cuba, as well as some in Spanish. Despite the distance and the fluctuating fluency, this is a real anchor in my attempt to understand the world.

For the past several years, I've been immersed in academic life, which has been a tremendous experience and a blessing, but one that can sometimes overshadow my once central interests. So I'm still here and there, and still with Cuba, knowing that there is a lot of complexity to how societies function, dialogue, contest, resist and exist. I'm happy to return to Havana. I've learned and benefited greatly from Cuba, and I would like to offer my thanks and solidarity. Viva Cuba!

Paul R. Carr, Professor of Education at UQO | Université du Québec en Outaouais

Cuba Sings and Blossoms Festival October 10-11th

Cuba Sings and Blossoms Festival will be the first of its kind, showcasing Cuban, local Latin American and Indigenous artists. The festival, happening on **October 10th and 11th** at the **Tranzac 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

Tickets are \$35 in advance, \$40 at the door

CUBA SINGS & Blossoms

OCT 10TH, 11TH 2025
Tranzac Club 292 Brunswick Ave. Toronto, Canada

PANEL DISCUSSIONS • WORKSHOPS • CONCERTS

DIRECT FROM CUBA

RAÚL TORRES
Singer-Songwriter

FIDEL DÍAZ
Journalist/
Singer-Songwriter

ERDWIN VICHOT
Lute

LOCAL ARTISTS

LUIS ORBEGOSO
Drums/Percussion/Trombone

BENY ESGUERRA
Percussion

FABIÁN CARVAJAL
Electric Bass

ERNESTO J. ESPINOZA
Composer/Violin

DANIELLE BOISSONEAU
Poet/ Anishinaabe writer

CHYLER SEWELL
Poet/ Anishinaabe writer

RODRIGO CHAVEZ
Guitar/Percussion

\$35 In advance
\$40 At the door

SHOWTIME 9pm

FREE WORKSHOPS & PANEL DISCUSSIONS
Sat. 11th 12-5pm

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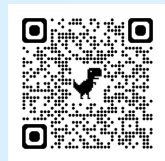
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**Help us fight the cruel
US blockade on Cuba!**

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☐ I wish to donate to CCFA Toronto

Newsletter delivery options (please note, in order to to save costs on printing and mailing, email delivery is the default method)

☐ Email only (full-color version)

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☐ Email and physical mail

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 15th of even months.

Editorial Committee:

Brandon Earnest, Brien Young, Elizabeth Hill,
Olga Filiushkina, Samantha Hislop, Adam Kendal