SPECIAL ISSUE

THE DEBT WE OWE CUBA

PAMBAZUKA NEWS
ISSUE 916

PAMBAZUKA NEWS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Debt is Ours: Cuba, Solidarity, and the Obligation of the World — Pambazuka News Editors 4

The debt is unplayable (2008) la deuda es impagable — Norman Girvan 10

Cuito Cuanavale and the Break from Western Capitalist and Racist Domination: Africa's Debt to Cuba — Horace Campbell 18

Cuba's Healthcare Internationalism: The World's Healthful Debt — Peter Bembir 49

Cuba and Caribbean Sovereignty: An Unpayable Debt — Tennyson S. D. Joseph 70

Trump's Fact Sheet on Cuba: Lies, Blockades, and the Long War Against Cuban Sovereignty — Rosemari Mealy 80

We Owe a Duty to Cuba — David Commissiong 84

Statement by Trinidad and Tobago Civil Society Organisations, Social and Political Movements 87

Michael Parenti, Leading Anti-Imperialist Scholar, Dies at 92 — Essam Elkorghli & Barry Lituchy 95

Don Fitz (2020) Cuban Health Care: The Ongoing Revolution. New York: Monthly Review Press. — Patricia Daley 108

PAMBAZUKA NEWS: ISSUE 916

THE DEBT WE OWE CUBA

FEATURES

- **The Debt is Ours: Cuba, Solidarity, and the Obligation of the World** by Pambazuka News Editors
- **The Debt is Unpayable (2008) La Deuda es Impagable*** by Norman Girvan
- **Cuito Cuanavale and the Break from Western Capitalist and Racist Domination: Africa's Debt to Cuba** by Horace Campbell
- **Cuba's Healthcare Internationalism: The World's Healthful Debt** by Peter Bembir
- **Cuba and Caribbean Sovereignty: An Unpayable Debt** by Tennyson S.D. Joseph
- **Trump's Fact Sheet on Cuba: Lies, Blockades, and the Long War Against Cuban Sovereignty** by Rosemari Mealy
- **We Owe a Duty to Cuba** by David Comissiong
- **Statement by Trinidad and Tobago Civil Society Organisations, Social Movements and Political Movements**
- **Michael Parenti, Leading Anti-Imperialist Scholar, Dies at 92** by Essam Abdelrasul Bubaker Elkorghli & Barry Lituchy
- **Don Fitz (2020) Cuban Health Care: The Ongoing Revolution. New York: Monthly Review Press** by Patricia Daley

THE DEBT IS OURS: CUBA, SOLIDARITY, AND THE OBLIGATION OF THE WORLD – PAMBAZUKA NEWS EDITORS

African and Caribbean peoples owe the Cuban people an enormous debt. Cuba has been committed to the liberation of African peoples and to movements against imperialism in the Caribbean and globally. That support has not remained at the level of political and diplomatic statecraft — it has taken concrete, material form. Cubans have given their lives for the independence of African and oppressed peoples worldwide, intervening militarily in Angola (with an estimated 10,000 Cuban lives lost), Vietnam, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, and more recently in Venezuela. Cuban doctors have saved lives across Africa and the Caribbean, especially among the poor, rural, and oppressed urban populations who have long been abandoned by the international health system. Cuba has been one of the few countries unconditionally committed to the well-being of African peoples, providing much-needed general and specialist care at affordable levels.

All this has occurred while the Cuban people have endured 64 years of the most punitive US sanctions, imposed on a country that poses no credible threat to the United States. On 29 January 2026, President Trump signed an executive order declaring Cuba a threat to US national security, enabling the imposition of additional tariffs on countries that supply oil to Cuba. This is the most recent escalation of the multilevel warfare, including economic, cultural, biological, informational, and military actions, that has been carried out against Cuba since 1959. Economic warfare and sanctions have affected the living and working conditions of Cuban peoples immensely, but have failed to bring down the Cuban government.

The US sanctions on Cuba are built on fictions manufactured by white supremacists in power in Washington, aligned with Cuban exiles who dream of returning to a pre-revolutionary island preserved for US oligarchs. Those who oppose the revolution are predominantly the elements of Cuban society who resented the extension of social services and dignity to the Black community.

No figure better embodies this than Secretary of State Marco Rubio, whose family represents precisely the class interests that the Cuban Revolution displaced. His recent speech in Munich — in which he effectively called for a restoration of colonial traditions — should be read as a declaration of intent, not merely a diplomatic provocation. African and Caribbean states and peoples must take note: the same vision that seeks to strangle Cuba also seeks to undermine CARICOM and reverse the gains of regional integration across the Global South.

What is a Debt?

In the dominant language of international political economy, "debt" has long been wielded as an instrument of discipline — a claim the powerful make on the poor, enforced through conditionality, austerity, and coercion. The contributions assembled in this issue take that logic and invert it. The debt that matters here, these writers collectively argue, is the one the world owes Cuba.

The theoretical foundation for that inversion is laid by Norman Girvan's essay, The Debt is Unpayable (2008). One of the Caribbean's most respected political economists, Girvan reframes underdevelopment not as a failure of governance or initiative but as the structural consequence of colonial extraction and imperial management. The debt accrued to colonized and formerly colonized peoples is not metaphorical — it is material, historical, and moral. That framework sets the terms for everything that follows. We thank our sister Alisa Trotz for permission to reprint

this essay. Pambazuka leads with it because we believe it establishes the conceptual ground for understanding the debt owed to the Cuban people.

From that structural baseline, the collection turns to one of the most consequential expressions of Cuban solidarity with the colonized world: its military intervention in Africa to defeat apartheid. Horace Campbell's analysis of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale shows why that 1988 engagement was a turning point not only in Angola but in the broader struggle against white supremacy. Cuban and Angolan forces decisively defeated the South African Defence Force, shattering the myth of its military invincibility and creating the conditions for Namibian independence and Nelson Mandela's release. Campbell makes clear that Cuba's commitment was simultaneously military and medical — a model of internationalism that refused to separate armed solidarity from the care of human life. Africa's path to liberation bears a Cuban imprint whose full significance has rarely been adequately acknowledged.

That theme of healthcare internationalism is developed further in the essay on Cuba's global health contributions. Cuba's deployment of medical brigades across Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and beyond represents one of the most extensive programs of South-South solidarity in modern history. Rather than charity, Cuban medical internationalism is understood here as a model of human solidarity — one that now demands concrete support in return, as the US blockade systematically undermines Cuba's own health infrastructure. The question the essay poses is not whether Cuba deserves support, but why the global community has been so slow to provide it.

Tennyson Joseph's contribution on Cuba and Caribbean sovereignty brings this argument close to home. Caribbean states have drawn on Cuban solidarity across generations — in

education, medicine, disaster response, and political support for sovereignty claims. Joseph argues that this accumulated history generates a genuine political and moral obligation, not merely sentimental affinity. The Caribbean's responsibility toward Cuba is inseparable from the broader Caribbean project of independence and social transformation. Pambazuka joins Tennyson Joseph in calling for vigilance and commitment in opposing the present racist onslaught on Cuba.

That context makes the documentation of US aggression all the more necessary. Rosemary Mealy's close reading of the Trump administration's "fact sheet" on Cuba performs a methodical work of counter-documentation, exposing the distortions through which US policy justifies what amounts to an economic siege. The blockade — illegal under international law and consistently condemned by the overwhelming majority of UN member states — is not a response to Cuban governance failures; it is a decades-long campaign to force a small sovereign nation into submission. Mealy's six decades of commitment to the process of real change in Cuba lend authority to her analysis. As a long-standing revolutionary who has served liberation struggles in the United States, Cuba, and globally, her voice is especially welcome here. We urge Pambazuka readers to seek out her important book, Fidel & Malcolm X: Memories of a Meeting, which recounts the historic 1960 encounter between Fidel Castro and Malcolm X in Harlem and explores their shared commitments to self-determination and liberation. Recognizing this solidarity, the US military establishment hesitates to attempt another Bay of Pigs–style operation, knowing that the political and social costs would exceed what the United States can bear.

David Commissiong further extends this argument by insisting that the annual UN vote condemning the blockade, however symbolically important, is insufficient. The nations that vote against the blockade must translate formal condemnation into

active material solidarity — diplomatic engagement, trade relationships, and practical support — if those votes are to carry real weight. Commissiong writes with the passion of a Caribbean patriot who for fifty years has led the commemoration of one of the region's most traumatic acts of terrorism: the bombing of Cubana Airlines Flight 455 on 6 October 1976, when two bombs exploded after takeoff from Barbados, bringing down the aircraft and killing all 73 people on board — among them 24 members of Cuba's Olympic fencing team, who had just won gold medals at the Central American and Caribbean Championship. Investigations by the governments of Cuba, Barbados, Guyana, Trinidad, and Venezuela identified Luis Posada Carriles as the mastermind, a CIA-trained operative who had long worked out of Venezuela and maintained deep connections to anti-Castro exile networks. Despite this, Carriles avoided terrorism charges entirely, and was acquitted on immigration and perjury counts in a US court in 2011 — an outcome Caribbean governments rightly denounced as a brazen double standard. It should not go unnoticed that Carriles operated out of Venezuela, a fact that illuminates the regional reach of US-sponsored terror and explains the depth of Venezuela's decades-long pursuit of his extradition — a demand Washington consistently refused. We urge Pambazuka readers to visit our archives to read further about this crime.

The statement from Trinidad and Tobago civil society organizations, social movements, and political movements gives these demands an organized, grassroots voice. Representing a broad coalition of actors, the statement calls unambiguously for an end to the illegal blockade and connects that demand to a larger vision of Caribbean and Global South solidarity. It offers a model of how civil society pressure can move beyond symbolic gestures toward concrete political action. This statement carries resonance because the political leadership of Trinidad and Tobago has betrayed the non-aligned traditions of Eric Williams, aligning instead with the current US war against the Venezuelan people.

The issue closes with two pieces that anchor the conversation in its wider intellectual context. The tribute to Michael Parenti — the prolific anti-imperialist scholar who died at 92 — honors a lifetime of work demystifying US power and insisting on analytical clarity about imperialism's operations. Parenti's legacy reminds us that solidarity is not only a moral stance but an intellectual one: understanding what Cuba is being defended against is inseparable from the act of defending it. Patricia Daley's review of Don Fitz's Cuban Health Care: The Ongoing Revolution (Monthly Review Press, 2020) closes the collection on a concrete note, offering a careful account of how Cuba has built and sustained one of the world's most effective public health systems under conditions of sustained external pressure.

Together, these contributions — spanning political economy, military history, public health, Caribbean politics, and anti-imperialist scholarship — build a case that is historical, analytical, and accessible. The unpayable debt does not belong to Cuba. It belongs to those who have benefited from Cuban solidarity and have yet to respond in kind. This issue asks, in practical and principled terms, what honoring that obligation looks like.

THE DEBT IS UNPLAYABLE (2008) LA DEUDA ES IMPAGABLE – NORMAN GIRVAN

Following the abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores, the United States has set its sights on Cuba, announcing a fuel embargo – on top of a brutal embargo more than six decades in the making – and threatening economic penalties on any country that sends oil to Cuba. The Mexican government has announced that it will be sending over 800 tons of humanitarian aid to Cuba. And the Caribbean? Shamefully missing in action. Here's what's being reported: Caribbean countries are quietly ending their medical partnerships with the Cuban government (Guyana was the most recent Caribbean country, according to the Stabroek News report yesterday). No reports of regional heads coming together to deliberate, strategise. There is a distinct sense that countries are being picked off one by sorry one. CARICOM feels like CARI-GONE.

On December 3, 2008, the late Jamaican economist Norman Girvan gave a remarkable speech at the Great Hall of the University of Havana on receipt of the degree of Doctor of Economic Sciences, Honoris Causa. We carry an excerpted version, to underscore what we owe Cuba, to urge us to consider what Caribbean unity and solidarity mean in these times, to remind us of Cuban José Martí's call for "Nuestra América," an anti-imperialist vision of hemispheric unity, independence and regional pride. In the midst of this vicious embargo and the unilateral bullying of any country that seeks to reach out, what does it mean to come to a sister country in need, one that has held so many of us up for so long – that is the question we should be asking, and the answer will tell us what kind of Caribbean people we are.

…I was a child of 12 when Fidel and his comrades stormed the Moncada Barracks. As teenagers, we would tune our radio dials to

the Miami stations to get the latest in rock and roll. Sometimes we hit on Radio Rebelde, broadcast from the Sierra Maestra. Radio Rebelde was my introduction to the Cuban Revolution.

At the time of the Triumph of the Revolution I had just left High School and started my first job. The events of 1959—the trials of the criminals of the Batista dictatorship, the Urban Reform, the Land Reform—were followed with great interest and mounting excitement by my generation in Jamaica.

Our imagination was captured by the literacy programme by which young Cuban boys and girls left the cities to teach poor peasants in the countryside; learning as much or more from their host families as they were imparting to them.

I listened to the First Declaration of Havana during my first year at the University in Jamaica, courtesy of a recording of the address obtained by a fellow student. Fidel's passionate denunciations of Yanqui imperialism—the profits of American corporations obtained at the price of undernourishment and infant mortality in Latin America—are still ringing in my ears.

The image of a million Cubans, assembled in one place as the National General Assembly of the People of Cuba, expressing their approval of the social and economic measures taken by the Revolution, and declaring their independence of foreign domination, was a transformative experience for me, a young man of eighteen. It helped to shape my view of the world.

Jamaica and the other West Indian territories were then preparing for national independence. The Cuban Revolution was a source of inspiration to many of us on the ability of a small Caribbean country to chart its own course of social justice, economic transformation, and national independence by relying on the mobilisation of the entire population, by relying on the will and

energy of its people; with a leadership that trusted the mass of the population and refused to bow before threats, intimidation, economic punishment and counter-revolutionary violence from the greatest military power on the planet; just 140 kilometres from its shores…

During Playa Giron, I moved a resolution in the University Students Council condemning the shameless attempt to crush the Revolution by an illegal invasion launched from the territory of the United States. My collaborator in that Resolution was a young student from Guyana by the name of Walter Rodney. As you know Walter visited Cuba several times and was profoundly affected by the Revolution. You also know that he was victim of political assassination in 1980.

At the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, I had just arrived in London to commence graduate studies. Some of us, like myself, were dismayed at the way in which Cuba had been drawn into a confrontation between the two super-powers, one that could end with a nuclear holocaust of global scale. Others argued that Cuba had no choice but to secure an alliance as a means of protecting its Revolution and its national sovereignty. The debate continues to this day.

In the late 1960s I was a member of the New World Group, founded by Lloyd Best…In a famous essay entitled "Independent Thought and Caribbean Freedom", Lloyd Best argued that Cuba's turn to the Soviet Union was a symptom of the failure of the rest of the Caribbean to provide moral, political and economic support for its struggle for self-determination.

In 1959-1960 Dr Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago was campaigning for the return of the Chaguaramas Naval Base from the United States to the Government of Trinidad, to be the site of the capital of the newly formed West Indies Federation. In the end

Dr Williams made an agreement which left the US in control of the base. Lloyd Best argued that an historic opportunity had been missed for a linkage of anti-imperialist issues across the Caribbean, from Trinidad in the east to Cuba in the west; to forge an 'integration of the regional consciousness'. He challenged us to:

> "Consider what might have happened if the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had declared the (Chaguaramas) base nationalised, proclaim independence and joined Cuba in taking over the sugar industry. The colonial answer is to say that the marines would have come and that the other Caribbean governments would have sold out as they did in 1953 when the PPP ran into trouble in Guyana. But…Castro's movement (and) the PNM … had struck their roots in a Caribbean consciousness and it would not have been easy to cut them down.

> "And even if the marines had come. Would we not have fought them as the Cubans were in any case to do against their agents at the Bay of Pigs and the Constitutionalists, in Santo Domingo in 1965? How much territory could they have held if they had had the whole Caribbean roused against them? And even if they did hold territory – for a while – they would never have enjoyed any moral conquest and the satisfaction of seeing Cuba turn to another imperialism for support. And the Caribbean would have emerged from the struggle as morally and politically integrated as it has always been culturally..."

> "If the opportunity was missed then, it was largely for lack of political experience. But the time will come again."

The time will come again! That vision of a united and independent Caribbean was central to the motivation of the New World Group in the 1960s, a vision that was deeply rooted in the consciousness

of a common history of colonialism and metropolitan rivalry, of the plantation system, of slavery and indentureship, of resistance and rebellion, of continuous assertion of an indomitable human spirit, of humanity in the face of brutality, of love of freedom and of life itself, of a Caribbean aesthetic permeated by a sense of the natural beauty of our islands and mainland, infused with the rhythms of our people and our music and our language, which are often so closely intertwined, and with their creative imagination.

And Cuba is an integral part of that Caribbean consciousness, of the Caribbean family.

I want to say that we in the Caribbean, especially those of my generation, will never forget the contribution made by Cuban men and women to the liberation of southern Africa from the scourge of apartheid.

I want to say that we will never forget—or we ought never to forget—the 70-odd young men and women of Cuba, Guyana and other countries who were taken to their deaths off the coast of Barbados in 1976, victims of one of the most heinous acts of terrorism in the history of our region.

I want to say that we will never forget the support provided by Cuba to the people of Grenada during their revolutionary process in 1979-1983; nor the unequivocal condemnation by Cuba of the murder of Maurice Bishop and several others when that process came to a tragic end, and the Cubans who gave their lives in the invasion that followed…

But the thing that stands out most of all, the quality that want to mention above all, is the internationalism of the Cuban people.

The Guyanese revolutionary Walter Rodney, whom I mentioned earlier, is reported to have said once that "West Indians live more in time and than in space"…

What did he mean by this? I believe he was saying that the West Indian sense of himself, of his place in the world, is governed more by a consciousness of the historical forces that have shaped us than by the geographical confines of our existence.

It cannot be an accident, for instance, that Marcus Mosiah Garvey, the first person from the English-speaking Caribbean to create an anti-imperialist mass movement, was a Pan-Africanist. His political organization took in most of the English speaking islands, with branches in Cuba, Central America and the Continental United States. Garvey lived more in time than in space.

He helped to inspire Mandela, Kenyatta and Nkrumah.

He was followed by outstanding Pan Africanists from our islands and mainland, like George Padmore, CLR James, Sylvester Williams and Walter Rodney.

People could not understand how Michael Manley, leader of a tiny nation of 2 million people, could have the audacity to campaign for a New International Economic Order.

Bob Marley called for "World Citizenship, and the Rule of International Morality".

And Jose Marti spoke not only of 'Nuestra America'. He proclaimed "Patria es Humanidad"—the Fatherland is Humanity—the message of welcome that greets visitors to Cuba arriving at the airport in Havana that bears his name…

And that sense of internationalism, dare I suggest, is a psychic bond between us as Caribbean people. And the practice of international solidarity that flows from it is the one I think of most, when I think of the Cuban Revolution.

In 1985 I attended a Conference here on the External Debt of Latin America and the Caribbean. Fidel proclaimed 'La Deuda es Impagable'—'The Debt is Unpayable'!

…I want to acknowledge to Cuba that la deuda es impagable.

But I do not mean the debt that is owed to the banks by the people of the Latin America and the Caribbean, and is measured in United States dollars. I mean the debt that is owed to the Cuban people by the rest of the Caribbean and indeed by all humanity, that is measured by their sacrifices and their solidarity and the unshakeable resolve of their leadership.

For the 185,000 Cuban medical personnel who have served in 103 countries in the last ten years alone, la deuda es impagable.

For the nearly 350 million visits carried out by Cuba's Global Health Programmes in poor communities abroad in the past seven years, for the one million four hundred thousand lives that have been saved, and for the 327,000 persons who have had their sight restored under Operation Milagro, la deuda es impagable.

For the 2,451,000 persons in 13 countries who have learned to read and write through Cuban literacy programmes, la deuda es impagable.

For the 27,000 students from 120 countries studying in Cuba and for the thousands of scholarships granted the sons and daughters of the Caribbean to gain a higher education, la deuda es impagable.

For the 330,000 Cubans who served in Angola from 1975 to 1991, and for the blood of 2,000 of them who gave their lives in the struggle against the racist regime, and for the families whom they left behind, la deuda es impagable.

For doing all this, while withstanding an economic embargo for nearly half a century from the mightiest power on the planet, that cost an estimated $93 billion dollars, equivalent to 12 times the foreign debt of Cuba, for the material sacrifices and hardship you have endured, providing hope and inspiration to the rest of the world, la deuda es impagable.

For invoking the immortal words of your National Hero Jose Marti, that 'Patria es Humanidad', and for living it, day by day, month by month, year by year and decade by decade, la deuda es impagable.

For giving universal meaning to the 'Patria' in the pledge, 'Patria or Muerte, Venceremos!', la deuda es impagable.

Norman P. Girvan (28 June 1941 – 9 April 2014) was a Jamaican professor at the University of the West Indies and Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States between 2000 and 2004. He was a member of the United Nations Committee on Development Policy from 2009-2014, and in 2010 was appointed the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's personal representative on the Guyana-Venezuela border controversy.

* The article was first published on Stabroek News

CUITO CUANAVALE AND THE BREAK FROM WESTERN CAPITALIST AND RACIST DOMINATION: AFRICA'S DEBT TO CUBA – HORACE CAMPBELL

"The history of Africa will be written as that of before Cuito Cuanavale and after Cuito Cuanavale"[1] Fidel Castro

The government of the United States is attempting to crush the Cuban Revolution. This is an effort that has been undertaken since 1959 with invasions (Bay of Pigs), executions, sabotage, biological and chemical warfare, sanctions, blockades, trade embargoes and every possible measure that a government could undertake to overthrow a regime. These projects failed. The Cuban independence project survived.

In 2026, in the aftermath of the capture of the President of Venezuela, and the blocking of free travel across the Caribbean, it is now being said that the Venezuela operation was but a dress rehearsal for the removal of the Cuban government. This is the moment when people around the world are calling for recognition of the debt owed to the Cuban people for their struggle to uphold the principles of independence and self-determination. This intervention calls for support for the Cuban people while reminding us of their role in challenging the myths of white supremacy and the supposed superiority of the capitalist system.

The Cuban commitment to self-determination was forged through independence struggles in the 19th century and has been sustained ever since, all while living ninety miles from the United States. This history means the Cuban people carry concrete, lived experience in resisting colonial and neocolonial domination. In this

period of profound trials for Cuba, it is essential that we join with others in reminding the world of what Africans owe them.

Over the course of the international struggles to defeat apartheid, Cuba dispatched more than 337,000 soldiers and 43,000 civilians to defend the Angolan people against a regime that represented the most extreme expression of white racist power. The 1988 victory at Cuito Cuanavale marked a seismic turning point in African and world history, delivering a decisive strategic blow to apartheid and announcing in unmistakable terms that the liberation of southern Africa could not be reversed.

By halting the South African Defence Force (SADF), the combined Angolan and Cuban forces shattered the long-standing myth of Pretoria's military invincibility. This battlefield triumph fundamentally altered the region's political landscape, forcing the South African government to abandon its military ambitions and engage in the diplomatic negotiations that would eventually redraw the map of Southern Africa. The battle at Cuito Cuanavale was, up to that point, the largest military engagement on African soil since World War II and the defeat of General Rommel at El Alamein in 1942. That battle was the turning point in the defeat of fascism, just as the victory at Cuito Cuanavale became a turning point for African independence and the opening of a new road toward social and economic transformation.

Despite being driven out of Angola in defeat, most students across Africa know little or nothing of this extraordinary military and diplomatic battle. Every child in Europe learns in school about the struggles against fascism, yet in Africa the imperial counter-narrative has worked hard to obscure what actually happened. Apartheid apologists insisted that the South African army was never defeated, framing Pretoria's withdrawal as a voluntary retreat toward negotiation made possible by the approaching end of the Cold War. American pundits took the lead in advancing the idea

that it was the United States that brokered peace in southern Africa and brought apartheid to its close.[2] The African National Congress (ANC) government has been complicit in this erasure. For the ANC leadership, teaching the truth about Cuito Cuanavale would undermine the myth that the ANC itself was the singular force that ended apartheid. It is this same evasiveness that explains why South Africa today is not taking the lead within BRICS to oppose the current U.S. blockade and the campaign to strangle the Cuban people economically. For the intellectual defenders of apartheid dominating the Universities and educational apparatus, the notion that white forces could be defeated in battle was and is simply inadmissible.

For a brief period after the ANC came to power, the South African government hosted the World Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001. This was a moment when the push for reparative justice was high on the global agenda. But as the post-apartheid project increasingly oriented itself around the promotion of Black capitalism and the rise of figures such as Patrice Motsepe, Jacob Zuma, and Cyril Ramaphosa, a virtual silence descended over the sacrifices made by the peoples of Southern Africa and Cuba in the struggle to end apartheid. To this author's knowledge, Ronnie Kasrils stands alone among former ANC liberation leaders in writing seriously about the significance of Cuito Cuanavale. Kasrils rightly described the battle as the "Stalingrad of Apartheid" — a decisive strategic defeat that forced the South African regime to concede Namibian independence and confront its own eventual demise. [3]The outcome directly accelerated Namibian independence and the broader process that led to the dismantling of apartheid and the formation of the African Union.

Fidel Castro summed up the importance of this event when he stated that, “The history of Africa will be written as that of before Cuito Cuanavale and after Cuito Cuanavale”

Nelson Mandela noted that Cuito Cuanavale was a symbol. The battles at Cuito Cuanavale in Angola “destroyed the myth of the invincibility of the white oppressor . . . [and] inspired the fighting masses of South Africa . . . Cuito Cuanavale was the turning point for the liberation of our continent—and of my people—from the scourge of apartheid.”[4]

In this commentary we will deploy a fractal analysis of the break from recursive patterns of white supremacy that is represented by the struggles of the peoples of Africa and Cuba. Critical perspectives on the obsession of elements of the US ruling class in its opposition to the Cuban revolution highlight that the opposition to Cuba is often rooted in a White Supremacist framework that seeks to restore the pre-revolutionary racial and class hierarchies. If white supremacy matured over 400 years, it would be premature and reductive to claim that one battle could dismantle apartheid and racial capitalism entirely. In this commentary, we want to underline the importance of the indelible break from the enduring myth of white supremacy. Racial Capitalism and white supremacy had functioned as a fixed systemic constant, a recursive loop of perceived invincibility that dictated the "physics" of African geopolitics by rendering black resistance seemingly futile. The victory at Cuito Cuanavale acted as a definitive symmetry break, transforming a seemingly ‘eternal’ rule into a shattered variable and triggering a structural collapse of the entire apartheid system.

As the progressive community rallies in solidarity with the Cuban people, this commentary invites the reader to consider ten interconnected episodes that together illuminate the depth and durability of the relationship between the Cuban revolutionary process and the peoples of Africa. These episodes are not discrete or isolated events. They constitute a cumulative historical architecture, each one building upon and reinforcing the others, tracing a continuous thread from the ideological foundations of anti-colonial thought through to the contemporary struggle against

imperial strangulation. Taken together, they reveal the fractal logic of Cuban-African solidarity — a pattern of mutual commitment that repeats and deepens across different theatres, different decades, and different forms of struggle, culminating in a rupture from which there can be no return.

The ten episodes are organized as follows:

I. The Foundational Ideological Framework: Anti-Colonialism, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Revolutionary Internationalism.

II. First Engagements: Algeria and Zanzibar in the Early 1960s.

III. The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba and Its Global Reverberations: Victor Dreke and Che Guevara in the Congo, 1965.

IV. Cuban Support for Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and the PAIGC, 1965–1974.

V. Amilcar Cabral and the Weapon of Theory

VI Angola: From Operation Carlota to Cuito Cuanavale, 1975–

VII. Ethiopia and the Ogaden War: Solidarity Under Pressure.

VIII. Medical Internationalism and the Long Arc of Revolutionary Care, 1963–2026: From Early Missions to Fighting Ebola and Biological Warfare.

IX. Cultural and Educational Dimensions of Cuban African Solidarity.

X. The Contemporary Conjuncture: Imperial Efforts to Strangulate Cuba and the New Point of No Return.

We begin this reflection on Cuito Cuanavale and the historic break from the recursive logic of white supremacy with the idea of our common humanity, an idea that was forcefully placed on the historical agenda by the defeat of the apartheid army. The African philosophical tradition of Ubuntu, expressed in the foundational principle that a person is a person through other persons, provides the deepest grounding for this idea. Martin Luther King Jr. was among the great peace activists of the twentieth century who understood the indivisibility of that humanity. In his opposition to the war against the Vietnamese people, he warned that a nation that continues year after year to spend more on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

King recognized the possibility of a genuine break with the old mechanistic, atomistic, and deterministic paradigms that construct human beings as rational actors driven by competition, greed, and self-interested calculation. Ubuntu offers a counter-paradigm rooted not in the isolated individual but in the web of mutual obligation and shared existence that constitutes genuine community. That break from a recursive system that endlessly reproduces its own logic is precisely what the victory at Cuito Cuanavale made concrete and irreversible, and it is what the African philosophical tradition has always known.

I. The Foundational Ideological Framework: Anti-Colonialism, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Revolutionary Internationalism

Cuba's engagement with Global Africa was not primarily strategic in the Cold War realist sense. It was rooted in the revolution's understanding of Cuba itself as an Afro-Latin nation with deep and unresolved ties to the African continent. Fidel Castro was among the first heads of state to articulate what C.L.R. James would later theorize as the revolutionary Black world — the Global African experience understood as a shared historical community bound by

reciprocal obligations. The centrality of the African presence in Cuba's own independence struggle, from Antonio Maceo onward, constituted what Havana called its historical duty to support African liberation. Cuba did not identify with Africa merely as a fellow Third World nation. It understood itself as part of the same anti colonial community, defined its revolutionary identity from 1959 as explicitly anti-racist, and made opposition to apartheid and colonial racism central to what the Cuban revolution meant.

This ideological foundation found its counterpart across the African continent and with anti-racist fighters in the belly of the beast such as Malcolm X. The connection between anti racism, liberation and full independence had been articulated by every major political movement and leader in twentieth century Africa. Yet every significant leader who demanded genuine sovereignty was branded a communist. Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Félix Moumié, Eduardo Mondlane, Amílcar Cabral, Samora Machel, Agostinho Neto, Nelson Mandela, Assata Shakur and Deolinda Rodrigues — each of them found that the articulation of freedom was treated as subversion within the Cold War media ecosystem. The African Liberation Committee of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)withstood this sustained disinformation campaign and continued to support the decolonization of the continent.

It was in Angola that these converging forces came into sharpest conflict. The communist branding of African liberation movements became the ideological instrument through which the United States and apartheid South Africa forged their alliance against Angolan independence. That alliance endured for over four decades, systematically delaying the liberation of Southern Africa, until it was broken decisively on the battlefield at Cuito Cuanavale. The shared ideological foundations of Cuban internationalism and African liberation were not merely rhetorical — they were tested and proven in blood, and it is that common ground that makes the

victory at Cuito Cuanavale inseparable from the broader story of both Cuban and African freedom.

II. First Engagements: Algeria, Zanzibar and the Early 1960s

Cuba began its engagement with Africa almost immediately after the revolution. In 1961, Cuba sent weapons to the Algerian National Liberation Front as it fought for independence from France. The ship Casablanca carried arms to North Africa and returned to Cuba with wounded fighters and war orphans who received medical care. When the French were defeated after the epic struggles, when Algeria achieved independence in 1962 most French doctors left the country at once. Cuba responded in 1963 by sending fifty-eight medical professionals. This act became the model for many later missions in medical internationalism. From the beginning Cuba linked military assistance with public health support and combined solidarity with efforts to build new national institutions.[5] Piero Gleijeses has written extensively on Cuban support for African freedom fighters drawing extensively from his unprecedented access to Cuba's closed archives. This access had been granted by Jorge Risquet Valdés, the senior Cuban official who served as Fidel Castro's primary advisor and ‘point person’ for African affairs.

Drawing directly on Piero Gleijeses’s research, especially his 1996 article and his 2002 book, the evidence shows that Cuba pursued an independent revolutionary internationalist policy in Algeria from 1961 to 1965. It was guided by anti-imperialist commitments rather than by Soviet direction. Gleijeses documents Cuba’s military and humanitarian support for the National Liberation Front and for the post-independence government. He details deliveries of weapons, treatment and care for war orphans, and the

dispatch of a Cuban military task force to assist Algeria during the 1963 border conflict with Morocco.

The politico/diplomatic work and the writings of Frantz Fanon helped many readers around the world understand the importance of the Algerian struggle. Yet the present leadership in Algeria often reduces Fanon's role and reduces the historical importance of Cuban support for Algerian independence. Algeria is a major oil producer, and it now operates a sovereign wealth fund known as the Revenue Regulation Fund. The most recent internationally tracked snapshot places the fund at about $16.3 billion United States dollars in assets. Algeria has the resources and capacity to offer meaningful support to Cuba, yet it chooses not to act at the scale its wealth allows. At the same time the leadership restricts its youth from learning the true history of their liberation struggle, limiting an honest understanding of the role played by international solidarity in winning independence.

In East Africa, the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution introduced a new and influential force in radical African politics. As Amrit Wilson shows, the United States worked hard to curb this radical momentum by restricting emerging ties between Cuba and Zanzibar. [6]This period also saw figures such as *Ali Mahfud Mohamed*, who headed the Zanzibar Nationalist Party's office in Havana and facilitated Cuban linkages before the revolution, further deepening external ideological networks that Washington sought to disrupt. At the same time, the Tanzanian army (then the Tanganyika army, later the TPDF) became an increasingly decisive force in shaping events, as Tanganyika's leadership engaged directly with Zanzibar's revolutionary factions and later absorbed the island into a union that strategically constrained its radical experiments. Mahfudh later played a notable role *after* Mozambican independence, when he went to Maputo to serve as a

defence adviser to President Samora Machel—a work remembered for its contribution to Mozambique's efforts to resist apartheid-era South African destabilisation.

III. The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba and Its Global Reverberations: Victor Dreke and Che Guevara in Congo, 1965

When Patrice Lumumba was assassinated in 1961, anti-colonial movements across the world recognized the gravity of the crime and affirmed their commitment to support the people of the Congo in their struggle for genuine independence. The same anticommunist forces from Belgium, South Africa and the United States that orchestrated Lumumba's killing were also involved in planning the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April 1961. In *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, Susan Williams draws on declassified documents to expose how the CIA conducted covert operations to undermine African nationalist leaders like Patrice Lumumba and Kwame Nkrumah. Books on the Dulles Brothers have exposed the worldview of the military and intelligence networks that targeted revolutionary movements and that continued to direct operations against Cuba. [7]The United States and its ally Mobutu Sese Seko carried out massive violence in Congo, deploying paratroopers and backing Belgian and French intervention in order to secure Mobutu's rule, a campaign that led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands.

The alliance between Cuba and African liberation forces deepened at the United Nations General Assembly in 1964 when Che Guevara addressed the world. During meetings held on the sidelines of the General Assembly, Che Guevara, Malcolm X, and A M Babu agreed to send a Cuban team to support the freedom fighters in the Congo. Four months after this meeting Malcolm X was assassinated.[8] Cuba intensified its support for the anti-colonial forces in the Congo. Victor Dreke and Che Guevara's

secret mission to eastern Congo in 1965 marked Cuba's first major military engagement in Africa. Guevara led a Cuban expeditionary force in support of Laurent Kabila's Lumumbist rebels who were fighting the Mobutu regime backed by the Central Intelligence Agency. Victor Dreke, the Afro-Cuban commander who served in this mission, documented the Cuban perspective on African liberation and described how the campaign fostered new forms of cooperation between Cuba and Tanzania.[9]

When the Cubans realized that Kabila lacked the political discipline and organizational capacity needed for a successful guerrilla campaign, they withdrew. Both Dreke and Guevara concluded that the Congolese leadership did not yet possess ideological clarity, political maturity nor the level of mass organization required for sustained revolutionary struggle. Guevara left the Congo with renewed purpose to oppose Yankee imperialism. The mission helped build important relationships and led to the training of young Congolese activists who continued their studies in Cuba. These exchanges strengthened Cuba's long-term role in supporting African liberation movements. The experience in the Congo also broadened Guevara's insight into the political and social conditions that can help a revolutionary movement succeed.

IV. Cuban Support for Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and the PAIGC, 1965–1974

The relationship between Cuba and FRELIMO[10] is especially significant for Syracuse University students and faculty. Mondlane resigned from his faculty position in the Anthropology Department at Syracuse University in early 1963 to dedicate himself fully to the Mozambican liberation struggle. He then moved to Dar es Salaam, establishing his base of operations there as the newly elected president of FRELIMO. Che Guevara and Eduardo Mondlane met in Dar es Salaam while both were involved in the

networks of African liberation movements based in the city. Their time in Tanzania overlapped during the mid-1960s, when Dar es Salaam served as a major hub for revolutionary exchanges among figures like Mondlane and Guevara.

FRELIMO of Mozambique, PAIGC[11] of Guinea and Cape Verde, and MPLA were all liberation movements rooted in African nationalism and anti-colonial ideology, each committed to ending Portuguese rule in their respective territories. All three organizations embraced forms of socialism and Marxist-influenced thought, drawing on the ideas of figures like Amílcar Cabral and aligning at different times with the Soviet Union, China, or broader Pan-African left currents. Together they worked within transnational networks such as the Conference of Nationalist Organisations of the Portuguese Colonies (CONCP), sharing ideological frameworks and strategies that linked their struggles across Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau/Cape Verde, and Angola.[12]

In January 1966, Havana hosted the landmark Tricontinental Conference — 500 delegates from 82 countries including virtually every African liberation movement: the ANC, ZAPU, MPLA, SWAPO, FRELIMO, PAIGC. Cuba used the conference to institutionalize a framework for coordinated anti-imperialist struggle across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, founding OSPAAAL (Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America). The Tricontinental magazine and OSPAAAL's internationally distributed propaganda posters became major vehicles of Third World political culture throughout the 1970s. Che Guevara's "Message to the Tricontinental" — calling for "two, three, many Vietnams" — was published by OSPAAAL in 1967. The conference represented Cuba's most ambitious attempt to position itself as the organizational hub of global decolonization, independent of both Soviet and Chinese tutelage — a claim that generated friction with both Moscow and Beijing, who resented Havana's autonomous Third Worldism. It was at this

moment when Cuba took a leading role in the nonaligned movement.

V. Amilcar Cabral and the Weapon of Theory

Cuba's relationship with Amílcar Cabral and the PAIGC proved to be among its most intellectually and politically significant African engagements. Guevara had met Cabral during his 1965 African tour and recognized in the PAIGC something qualitatively different from the Congolese situation: a disciplined mass political movement with deep organic links to the peasantry, its own theory of liberation culture, and a leadership that refused to import foreign revolutionary models uncritically. Cabral's famous dictum that Cuba could not provide mountains, so Guineans had "to become the mountain themselves," captures the terms of engagement. Cuba sent military advisors (50–60 at any time), arms and medicine from 1965 onward. Cuban doctors embedded with PAIGC guerrillas in the liberated zones from 1966, simultaneously treating fighters and training local health workers — a dual military-medical model unique to that campaign. Guinea-Bissau won independence from Portugal in 1974, and Cuba subsequently assisted in establishing one of Africa's first post-colonial medical faculties in the country.

For Amilcar Cabral intellectual and ideological independence begins with the insistence that liberation movements must root their strategies in the *historical and social realities of their own societies*, rather than copying models from abroad. Amílcar Cabral warned that many national movements suffered from “ideological deficiency,” meaning they adopted slogans or borrowed theories without understanding their own class structures or internal contradictions. He argued that genuine liberation required a *scientific analysis* of local conditions so that the movement could define its own objectives, identify its own allies and adversaries, and avoid reproducing colonial hierarchies after independence.[13]

Cabral's theory also emphasized that ideological independence depended on recognizing that not all members of a colonized society shared the same interests. Some social groups benefited from colonial rule and could not be expected to support national liberation, a reality that liberation leaders had to confront rather than evade through vague appeals to "the people." This perspective placed political education and theoretical clarity at the heart of revolutionary practice, since only by understanding class relations and material conditions could movements avoid manipulation by internal elites or external powers.

Amílcar Cabral delivered his famous address "The Weapon of Theory" at the First Tricontinental Conference of the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America held in Havana in January 1966. It was in Cuba where the liberation movements were grappling with the emerging Sino Soviet disputations where these themes of intellectual and ideological clarity, as Cabral addressed an international gathering of movements seeking to define a unified anti-imperialist front. There he argued that solidarity required more than shared slogans: each struggle must produce its own ideological tools, its own analyses, and its own forms of organization. He pointed to the Cuban Revolution as an example of a people forging an authentically grounded ideology that shaped a "new life" and a "New Man," and he encouraged African, Asian, and Latin American movements to develop similarly independent intellectual frameworks rooted in their specific histories.

VI. Angola: From Operation Carlota to Cuito Cuanavale, 1975–1991

Of the societies with the greatest debt to the Cuban people, Angola stands out.

Angolan independence on November 11, 1975 was achieved in the midst of war and imperial destruction in Africa. It is not here

necessary to detain the reader with the machinations of the United States in Africa after the military coup d'etat in Portugal in 1974 and the military defeat of the United States in Vietnam in April 1975. The military defeat of the USA in Vietnam had a direct bearing on the thinking of Henry Kissinger and the Foreign Policy Establishment in determining that the USA had to intervene in Africa to combat 'Soviet expansionism.' In short, the independence of Angola was not an aspiration based on the will for self-determination, but the Angolans were simply puppets of external forces. Incorrect analysis and flawed understanding of the self-determination project were bound to lead to the military, political and moral defeat for USA and South Africa.

The historical record is now open with reams of texts to document how the United States government encouraged the apartheid army to intervene in Angola in 1975 in a failed attempt to derail the independence of Angola. The Cuban mission in Angola in 1975 was named *Operation Carlota* in honor of Carlota Lucumí, an African-born enslaved woman who led a major rebellion at the Triunvirato sugar plantation in Matanzas on November 5, 1843.

It is worth restating why the archives of the South African state institutions are unreliable in conveying the extent of the importance of the victory of the peoples of Angola and Southern Africa in 1975. The Cubans have opened their archives to the scholar Pierro Gleijeses who documented the history of Cuban involvement in the war of 1975-1976. The book *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa* provide one of the most comprehensive studies of the role of the Cubans in the 1975 war. Yet, the documentation of Pierro Gleijeses has a clear deficiency in so far as the documentation does not cover the extent of the conspiracy against Africa that culminated in the assassination of Murtala Mohammed throwing Nigeria into a spiral of deepening counter revolution that had gained a fillip in the genocidal wars to enrich the oil companies and their surrogates in Nigeria from that

historical moment. Neither does his second book do justice to the influential diplomatic work undertaken by leaders such as Julius Nyerere and the Frontline States of Southern Africa.

Thus far, the Angolan rendition of that war is memorialized by the state, without a coherent intellectual paradigm that is linked to African independence. A small memorial site at the Battle of Quifangondo has been constructed, but the real details and importance of this battle are not known to youths. The most prolific scholarship has come out of the USA consistent with the negative energies that had been invested in that failed enterprise to support apartheid in Angola. John Stockwell, the CIA operative who had coordinated with the Kissinger committee to support the Zairian army of Mobutu and the South African state has documented this war in the book, *In Search of Enemies*.[14] Books with titles such as *Angola and the Politics of Intervention: From Local Bush War to Chronic Crisis in Southern Africa* cemented the Cold War narrative that was imposed on an African independence struggle.[15] But despite the political and military defeat of the USA and the South African apartheid army, the events around the independence of Angola in 1976 were only the dress rehearsal for the extent of the destruction that was awaiting Africa in the next twenty years.

Angola Part II: From Operation Carlota to Cuito Cuanavale

The road to Cuito Cuanavale was shaped by the intensity of the anticommunist fire of the Reagan and Thatcher period of neo liberalism and counter revolution. “In this tense period—when the Soviet army was bogged down in Afghanistan and strategic missteps and heightened frictions between Havana, Luanda, and Moscow—the Cuban-Angolan alliance endured a series of political and military strains. Yet these pressures ultimately set the stage for their greatest triumph: the historic victory at Cuito Cuanavale, which decisively shifted the regional balance of power. Between

1985 and 1987, the Angolan military command, advised by Soviet generals, launched a series of frontal assaults against Jonas Savimbi's UNITA[16] positions that Fidel Castro had explicitly warned against. Castro characterized the Soviet-influenced offensive strategy as a mistake, one that nearly produced a catastrophe for Angolan forces. The Cuban position, which emphasized flexibility and terrain-sensitive tactics, had been rejected by the Angolan leadership, and the consequences proved severe.

In July 1987, FAPLA[17] launched Operation Salute in October, deploying four reinforced brigades with Soviet air defense systems toward Mavinga. The combined UNITA and South African forces halted the FAPLA advance at the Lomba River, after which the South African Defence Force (SADF) launched Operation Modular, a four-phase campaign whose ultimate objective was the capture of Cuito Cuanavale. The SADF committed approximately 9,000 troops across nine battalions, including elite white units and Namibian conscripts from the territorial forces. Two of those conscript battalions mutinied during the battle, refusing to serve as what they described as cannon fodder for UNITA. The political context intensified the stakes considerably.

The assassination of Mozambican President Samora Machel in October 1986, when his plane came down in South African territory, galvanized the Frontline States and deepened Cuban commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle. Castro had attended the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Harare in September 1986 and stated Cuba's unconditional opposition to apartheid, explicitly rejecting the linkage arguments advanced by Washington and Pretoria. Following Machel's death, Cuban revolutionary leadership moved to monitor the Angolan theatre with greater precision and urgency.

When the Angolans requested Cuban assistance to defend Cuito Cuanavale, Castro made the most decisive intervention of the entire conflict. On November 15, 1987, he authorized Operation Maniobra XXXI Aniversario del Desembarco del Granma, committing Cuba's most modern tanks, virtually all its mobile antiaircraft systems, and its best pilots to Angola. Before this decision, there were 38,000 Cuban soldiers in Angola. By August 1988, that number had risen to 55,000. It is worth registering the full scale of Cuban commitment across the entire Angolan operation: Cuba deployed more than 337,000 military personnel over the course of the struggle, a figure that speaks not to Cold War calculation but to the depth of revolutionary solidarity with African liberation. Cuba's own territorial defense was made vulnerable by this deployment, a sacrifice that underscored the revolution's understanding of African liberation as a matter of principle rather than geopolitical strategy.

The first Cuban special forces arrived in Cuito Cuanavale on December 5, 1987, and immediately reorganized the command structure and defensive positions. In major engagements in January, February, and March 1988, the SADF failed repeatedly to take the town. South African forces fired more than 20,000 artillery projectiles per day without adequate air cover, while thousands of mines destroyed their armored vehicles. By the end of March, the siege had collapsed. The SADF was effectively trapped on the eastern bank of the Cuito River, bogged down by the rainy season and unable to advance.

Fidel Castro's strategic genius lay in his understanding that Cuito Cuanavale was not the end but the pivot. As he later described it, the defense of Cuito Cuanavale was the left hand that blocked the blow, while the right hand assembled Cuban, Angolan, and SWAPO forces for a southwestern offensive that surrounded the South African forces and brought their entire Angolan campaign to a decisive end. [18] Cuban engineers and Angolan construction

workers then built two complete airstrips on the Namibian border in under two months, establishing air superiority at the very threshold of apartheid's regional power.

The human and political cost to apartheid South Africa proved unsustainable. The mass opposition to apartheid in the townships meant that the South African army was overstretched. White conscripts were returning home from Angola in body bags, and the End Conscription Campaign among young white South Africans was gaining momentum. Senior SADF commanders acknowledged internally that white casualties were becoming a serious political problem. It was at this point that South Africa agreed to direct negotiations with the Cubans and Angolans, negotiations the Reagan administration had previously refused to countenance by insisting the Cubans were merely Soviet proxies. Chester Crocker, the principal American diplomat, moved urgently to provide South Africa with a diplomatic exit from a military defeat it could no longer deny.[19]

The Military and Diplomatic Endgame

Trapped and militarily exhausted, South Africa entered negotiations with the Cubans and Angolans brokered by U.S. representative Chester Crocker, whose talks began in London in May 1988 and continued through Cairo in June. Despite their defeat on the battlefield, the South African negotiating team entered the talks without genuine intention of honoring UN Resolution 435 on Namibian independence. Defence Minister Malan and President P.W. Botha insisted South Africa would withdraw from Angola only if Soviet forces and their allies did the same, conspicuously avoiding any mention of withdrawing from Namibia. Cuban delegation leader Jorge Risquet exposed this bad faith directly, telling the South Africans that the time for military

adventures pursued with impunity was over, and that South Africa would not obtain at the negotiating table what it had failed to achieve on the battlefield.

That lesson was delivered conclusively at Tchipa on June 27, 1988, when South African forces attempted to break out of the encirclement and were decisively defeated. More than twenty-six white conscripts died in the engagement. In an air battle over the Calueque dam, the Angolan air force demonstrated that South African control of the skies was finished, a devastating symbolic reversal given that the same dam had served as the launching point for South Africa's original invasion of Angola thirteen years earlier. South African forces fled on foot across the border. The news of the defeat accelerated white resistance to the draft at home, and the South African press described the battle as a crushing humiliation. South Africa had no option remaining but to negotiate in earnest.

The Long War and Angola's Debt to Cuba

Of all the peoples of Southern Africa, it is the Angolans who owe the greatest debt to Cuba, for it was on Angolan soil that the decisive battles were fought and it was the Cuban commitment of military personnel over nearly three decades that made Angolan sovereignty possible. The withdrawal of South African forces from Angola did not end the destruction. UNITA, sustained by conservatives in the United States, South Africa, and Burkina Faso, continued fighting through a failed peace accord in 1991, elections in 1992 that UNITA lost and then refused to accept, and a regional war that drew in Angola's neighbors and did not end until Jonas Savimbi was killed in battle in February 2002. The end of that war brought to a close thirty-seven years of uninterrupted destruction spanning five distinct phases: the anti-colonial struggle against Portugal up to 1974, the first war of independence from 1975 to 1980, the intensified war against South African occupation from 1981 to 1988, the post-election war from 1992 to 1994, and the

deadliest phase of all, from 1996 to 2002, when UNITA sought to bring the war to every province in the country. That this nation survived and ultimately prevailed is inseparable from the revolutionary solidarity of the Cuban people.

Today, the current society seeks to conciliate the elements of UNITA under the banner of reconciliation. Angolan elite capital flows overwhelmingly into Portugal, which remains the largest and best-documented destination for investments abroad. Significant sums are also believed to be routed through offshore jurisdictions —including Switzerland—where wealthy Angolans frequently establish intermediary companies to hold assets outside Africa. For the comprador elements in Angola, support for Cuba in this historical moment is the furthest question away from their agendas.

VII. Ethiopia and Other Military Engagements

Cuba simultaneously maintained military presences across multiple African theatres. After the first defeat of the USA and South Africa in 1976, the United States, France, Morocco and Saudi Arabia went into full gear to create a strong anticommunist front in Africa. The Ethiopian Revolution in 1974 had brought the Derg to power in Addis Ababa. The Derg requested Cuban assistance when the USA and its allies supported the Somali invasion of Ogaden in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, Cuba sent 12,000–16,000 troops in 1977–78 to assist the Derg regime against the Somali invasion of the Ogaden — a more controversial engagement given the Derg's brutal internal repression, which exposed the tensions between Cuban revolutionary principles and the demands of Soviet-aligned realpolitik. It was in Ethiopia where Cuba showed its political principles clearly. The Cuban government refused to support the Derg in the battles against the Eritrean independence movement.

Cuban military and medical presence extended to Congo-Brazzaville, Benin, and support networks for SWAPO (Namibia), ZAPU (Zimbabwe), and the ANC (South Africa). The ANC's military wing, uMkhonto we Sizwe, trained at Cuban-run camps in Angola from 1977.

VIII. Medical Internationalism and the Long Arc of Revolutionary Care, 1963–2026

Running parallel to and ultimately outlasting the military engagements, Cuba's medical presence in Africa constitutes one of the most extensive and consequential programs of South-South cooperation in history. To understand how Cuba became capable of this extraordinary international contribution, one must understand the internal transformation of Cuban medicine after 1959. As Don Fitz documents in *Cuban Health Care: The Ongoing Revolution*, the revolutionary government dismantled the pre-existing elite medical system oriented toward private practice and rebuilt it from the ground up around the principle of prevention, community-based care, and the training of physicians as social actors rather than market professionals. Cuba developed a polyclinic model that embedded doctors and nurses directly within neighborhoods, creating one of the most comprehensive primary care systems in the world. This foundation, combined with massive investment in medical education and biotechnology, produced a surplus of highly trained health workers whose skills were offered freely to the world's poorest peoples as an expression of revolutionary solidarity rather than commercial interest. Cuba's capacity to combat dengue fever further illustrates this depth of expertise. Through its integrated surveillance system, community mobilization, and vector control programs, Cuba developed protocols for containing dengue outbreaks that have been studied and adopted across the Global South, demonstrating that epidemiological mastery built at home can be deployed with devastating effectiveness against infectious disease abroad.

Between 1960 and 2000, Cuba dispatched an average of 3,350 health workers annually to developing countries, of whom 31,181 served across 33 African nations over four decades. Cuba built or helped establish nine medical faculties on the continent between 1963 and 2004, including in Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Uganda, Ghana, Gambia, and Equatorial Guinea. By 1984, 1,800 students from 75 developing nations, the majority African, were receiving medical training in Cuba. The founding of the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana in 1999 deepened this commitment further, enrolling students from across sub-Saharan Africa on full scholarships with the explicit obligation to return and serve in underserved communities.

Cuba was inspired to develop its medical facilities after the USA launched a series of biological warfare attacks against Cuba. The outbreak of Dengue fever in the Caribbean in 1977 was followed by an even bigger outbreak in Cuba in 1981. In 1981, a severe dengue hemorrhagic fever epidemic in Cuba, which caused 158 deaths including 101 children, led to allegations of U.S.-sponsored biological warfare. Fidel Castro stated categorically the virus was introduced by the CIA, citing the unusual, simultaneous outbreak in three separate locations. While the National Security Archive documents various, often failed, CIA actions against Cuban livestock during this era, direct, definitive proof linking the U.S. government to the 1981 dengue outbreak remains a subject of intense historical debate rather than a widely accepted,

- 1981 Epidemic & Allegations: The 1981 outbreak involved the dengue-2 strain, which was not previously endemic in Cuba. Cuban officials and various technical reports suggested the rapid spread was not natural, proposing the virus was artificially introduced.
- The 1981 Context: In July 1981, Castro publicly alleged that "Yankee imperialism" might have introduced the plague. [20]

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs documents refer to this event as a "sinister act of biological warfare" as described in certain academic or political narratives. These episodes underscore the need for a strong international treaty on biological weapons—one that the United States should fully support and sign.

Ebola and Biological Warfare

As defined by Harriet Washington, bioterrorism utilizes microorganisms—bacteria, viruses, and fungi—or their derivatives to sicken or kill via infection and poisoning. While these agents can occur naturally, their systematic deployment by state actors transforms biological science into a weapon of political control.[21]

During the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) institutionalized this practice as a strategic instrument of counter-insurgency and white supremacy. By targeting nationalist guerrillas, rural African communities, and essential livestock, the RSF initiated the largest recorded anthrax outbreak in history. Once dismissed as wartime rumor, the veracity of these operations was later substantiated by intelligence chiefs Ken Flower and Henrik Ellert, who documented the transition from conventional defense to clandestine biological warfare.[22]

These doctrinal foundations were further refined in neighboring South Africa through "Project Coast." Under the direction of Dr. Wouter Basson, this secretive initiative expanded beyond traditional military applications to develop weaponized pathogens and specialized delivery systems tailored for use against anti-apartheid activists. Evidence presented before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) reveals that these programs did not operate in isolation; Project Coast served as a logistical conduit, supplying the RSF with anthrax and cholera cultures in the late 1970s. This regional infrastructure was bolstered in the 1980s by American physician Larry Ford, who provided Basson’s

operatives with cultures of typhoid, botulism, and anthrax while consulting on offensive techniques.[23]

This history illustrates a recursive pattern where imperial powers, having historically extracted African labor and resources, generated the very scientific infrastructure in which dangerous pathogens were studied and weaponized. While there is no conclusive scientific evidence that hemorrhagic fevers like Ebola were "created" via these programs, the historical convergence is significant. The 1967 Marburg outbreak among European lab workers and the 1980s interest of Cold War planners in filoviruses reflect an institutional framework where the Global North controls the means of both biological threat and medical response.

The 2014 intervention of Cuban medical internationalism in West Africa, which reduced Ebola mortality from 50% to 20%, represents a structural counter to this cycle. As Washington argues in *Medical Apartheid*, when ethical safeguards collapse under the guise of public health, biomedical authority is easily twisted into a tool of state repression. Project Coast remains a definitive example of this danger, demonstrating how ideology and secrecy can transform medical science into a weapon against oppressed populations.

IX. Cultural and Educational Dimensions

Often underemphasized in the literature on the relationship between Cuba and Global Africa is the cultural dimension of Cuba-Africa relations which is rich and reciprocal. Cuba's own musical traditions — particularly son, rumba, and salsa — carry profound African retentions, and the 1950s-60s saw intensive musical dialogue between Congolese and Cuban artists. OSPAAAL's poster

art became a significant vernacular of Third World visual culture. Cuba trained thousands of African teachers, agronomists, engineers, and artists. Educational scholarships — free tuition, housing, and stipend — enabled generations of Africans from Guinea, Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia, and later South Africa to study in Havana. The Non-Aligned Movement, which Cuba chaired from 1979 to 1983, provided the multilateral diplomatic framework within which Cuba sustained its African relations independent of superpower blocs. Additionally Cuban intellectuals worked closely with African and Third world intellectuals calling for the cancellation of the debt to the IMF.

X. Post-Cold War Continuity and the Contemporary Conjuncture

The collapse of the Soviet Union and Cuba's brutal "Special Period" (1990s) forced a dramatic contraction of military and civil commitments, but Cuba maintained its African medical presence even through acute domestic scarcity — a fact widely noted as remarkable by African leaders. The 2026 Cuban crisis — in which the US oil blockade following the Venezuela intervention threatens the collapse of Cuba's energy and food systems — has drawn powerful expressions of African solidarity. The African Union's February 2025 assembly reiterated its call for lifting US sanctions on Cuba. The UN General Assembly representative of Guinea-Bissau, speaking for the African Group, cited "the historical ties of solidarity" and "Cuba's contribution to the decolonization of the continent and the advancement of health and education" as the basis for continued African defense of Cuban sovereignty.

The crisis, and the solidarity it has generated completes a circuit: Cuba bled for African liberation when it had almost nothing; Africa now stands with Cuba when the US seeks to strangle it into submission. That relationship — forged in blood at Cuito Cuanavale, in medicine in the guerrilla zones of Guinea-Bissau, in

culture across the Black Atlantic — is among the most consequential expressions of South-South solidarity in the modern world.

Concluding Thoughts: The Break and the New Direction

The debt that global Africa owes Cuba cannot be quantified in monetary terms. States such as Angola, Algeria, Namibia, and South Africa could do far more to oppose the United States campaign to strangle Cuba, but these efforts cannot bear fruit until the popular anti-imperialist forces deepen their understanding of the history of the liberation struggles and the concrete sacrifices that made African independence possible. This commentary has sought to outline that debt while underlining the profoundly interconnected nature of the relationship between Cuba and Africa across more than six decades of shared struggle.

The Cuban Revolution demonstrated how a localized commitment to self-determination and anti-imperialism, rooted in a small island nation, could generate a feedback loop that disrupted the global architecture of imperialist arrogance and white supremacy far beyond its own borders. When Nelson Mandela described Cuito Cuanavale as a turning point, he was naming what complexity theorists would call a bifurcation, a moment when a system under accumulated pressure reaches a threshold beyond which the old order can no longer reproduce itself. Before Cuito Cuanavale, the system was trending toward a permanent steady state of apartheid military domination and destruction.

After the battle, the cost of maintaining that order through war, sanctions, and internal repression exceeded the cost of its collapse. The Cuban intervention acted as the decisive catalyst, lowering the threshold required for the South African alteration to succeed and liberating the energies of an entire continent. Amílcar Cabral argued that liberation required not only armed struggle but also

independent thought, insisting that movements must free their minds from imported ideologies and instead analyze their own realities in order to create an authentic, self-determined path forward. The current struggles in all of Africa are bound up with the struggles against global apartheid that now seeks to expand apartheid conditions in Palestine.

The lessons of Cuito Cuanavale do not end with the formal dissolution of apartheid. The wars of militarism and destabilization that ravaged Southern Africa demonstrated that political independence without economic transformation and health sovereignty remains incomplete. Throughout Africa today, popular democratic struggles have radicalized the understanding of democracy far beyond the procedural questions of elections, generating new values and new visions of collective life rooted in the traditions of Ubuntu and radical Pan-African solidarity. The questions of health, dignity, and economic transformation are now more urgent than ever, and they demand the same quality of commitment that Cuba brought to the battlefields of Angola.

Ultimately, the legacies of Cuito Cuanavale and the Cuban engagement with Africa returns us to the most fundamental question of all: the struggle for human dignity. The end of apartheid was not merely a regional victory. It was a rupture in the recursive logic of white supremacy that had organized the world for five centuries, and it announced the possibility of a genuinely new direction for humanity. It is this struggle for universal dignity, grounded in the revolutionary internationalism of Cuba and the liberation traditions of Africa, that constitutes the living content of what a new concept of world revolution must mean. These challenges call upon scholars, intellectuals, and activists to gird themselves for the current struggles against fascism, imperial war, and the forces that seek to restore what Cuito Cuanavale helped to destroy. At this critical moment, genuine solidarity with the Cuban

people must take the form of concrete material, political, diplomatic, and financial support.

Horace G. Campbell is a peace and social Justice activist. He is also Professor of African American Studies and Political Science at Syracuse University and Chairperson of the Global Pan African Movement, North American Chapter. He is the author of Global NATO and the Catastrophic Failure in Libya, Monthly Review Press, 2013.

Endnotes

[1] Quoted in Ronnie Kasrils, "Cuito Cuanavale, Angola: 25th Anniversary of a Historic African Battle, Monthly Review, Vol 64, No 11, April 2013

[2] Chester Crocker, *High noon in southern Africa: making peace in a rough neighborhood*, WW Norton, New York, 1992 and Herman J. Cohen, *US Policy Toward Africa: Four Decades of Realpolitik*, Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2020, Herman J. Cohen, *Intervening in Africa: Superpower Peacemaking in a Troubled Continent*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000

[3] Ronnie Kasrils, op cit, The earliest historical use of the formulation was from, Isaac Saney *"African Stalingrad: The Cuban Revolution, Internationalism, and the End of Apartheid"* in Latin American Perspectives (Vol. 33, No. 5, September 2006)

[4] Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro, *How Far We Slaves Have Come! South Africa and Cuba in Today's World*, Pathfinder Press, New York 2009

[5] Gleijeses, P. (1996). Cuba's first venture in Africa: Algeria, 1961–1965. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, *28*(1), 159–195.

[6] Amrit Wilson, The Threat of Liberation: Imperialism and Revolution in Zanzibar, Pluto Press, London 2013

[7] David Talbot, The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA and the Rise of America's Secret Government, Harper Collins, New York, 2015. See also Stephen Kinzer, The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War, St Martins Press, 2014

[8] Karim, K. (1992). *The Judas Factor: The Plot to Kill Malcolm X*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press

[9] Dreke, V. (2002). *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution* (M. A. Waters, Ed.). New York: Pathfinder Press

[10] Front for the Liberation of Mozambique

[11] The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Portuguese: Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde, PAIGC)

[12] Aquino de Bragança & Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *The African Liberation Reader: The National Liberation Movements*, Zed Press, 1982.

[13] Amílcar Cabral, "The Weapon of Theory," address delivered at the First Tricontinental Conference of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, Havana, January 1966. Reproduced in Amílcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea: Selected Texts*, Monthly Review Press, 1969.

[14] John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story*, W.W.Norton, New York 1984.

[15] Daniel Spikes, *Angola and the Politics of Intervention: From Local Bush War to Chronic Crisis in Southern Africa,* McFarland Publishing 1993

[16] National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

[17] People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola (FAPLA), the armed wing of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

[18] Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976–1991

[19] For two different versions see Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976–*

1991, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2013. Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1992.

[20] Hernandez Caceres "The US Biological and Chemical Aggression Against Cuba in 1963–1996," Journal of NBC Protection Corps

[21] Harriet Washington, Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present, Doubleday, New York, 2007, pp 360-361

[22] Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record, Rhodesia into Zimbabwe 1964–1981* (London: John Murray, 1987

[23] Gould, C., & Folb, P. I. (2002). *Project Coast: Apartheid's Chemical and Biological Warfare Programme*. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). Geneva: United Nations.

CUBA'S HEALTHCARE INTERNATIONALISM: THE WORLD'S HEALTHFUL DEBT – PETER BEMBIR

The world health gains can hardly be examined without accounting for Cuba's contributions to global healthcare. There are varying reports about the exact number of Cuban health professionals that have served on international medical missions since 1961/1962 across differing periods of accounting. Don Fitz records that by 2012, Cuba had deployed over 124,000 health professionals to work in over 154 countries, and in 2009, 24 per cent of Cuba's 70,000 doctors served in health care "brigades" on international "missions."[1] *Granma*, the official daily of Cuba's ruling party, also records that since 1962, over 400,000 Cuban health professionals have participated in health missions in more than 164 countries.[2]

Cuban healthcare commenced on a new path during the revolution that was led by Fidel Castro. The pursuit of excellence in medicine has made the country worthy of global recognition. While tipped as a major source of foreign currency for Cuba, with an annual income of about $4.9 billion, Cuba's health internationalism mostly occurs under its Programa Integral de Salud, PIS (Integrated Health Programme), where the recipient countries within the cooperation agreement receive the services for free.[3] This has been so at least in the first few decades of the cooperation agreements. The dynamics have changed in recent years, but Cuba bears considerable costs even within the shifting context. Among an estimated 140,000 Cuban health professionals who worked overseas between 2011 and 2016, over a third (30) of the 67 host countries paid Cuba for the assistance. Cuba paid fully or partially for more than half of the countries (37). The cost-sharing arrangement was made with 17 countries.[4]

The country has pursued medical excellence to a degree that many well-resourced countries have yet to attain. Annual expenditure towards the training of medical personnel stood at around 10-15% of GDP in the last two decades of the 20th century, into the start of the second decade of the millennium. Cuba's commitment has resulted in the training of over 60,000 physicians, which represents a national ratio of one physician to 180 persons for a population of about 11 million. Scores of nurses, medical technicians, and physical therapists were also trained across a vibrant training and research environment that boasted "267 hospitals, 440 clinics, 5000 medical and biological scientists, 11 research institutes", including "pharmaceutical and biological facilities and 15 medical schools."[5] The country's life expectancy stands at 78 years, a level similar to that of advanced countries such as the United States.

Cuba's robust, free universal health system is oriented towards community and preventive medicine. The relative abundance of doctors, the highest per capita in the world (8.4 doctors per 1000 population), provides a system that effectively withstands pandemics.[6] It is in these contexts that the country has been caring for its population and providing for the health needs of other countries in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, Asia, Central and North America.

The world owes Cuba for its many contributions towards the management of disease conditions, disaster management, epidemics, pandemics and other public health emergencies of international concern. The Cuban healthcare system has trained several thousand foreign doctors, offered free services and responded to health crises across the globe.[7] These debts should prompt the global community into action at the time Cuba requires support in accessing critical drugs and other resources necessary for the continued functioning of the country's health machinery

The Debt in Pandemics and Other Medical Emergencies Management

In a world where pandemics are increasingly prominent, the international health contributions of Cuba continue to be paramount in the successes chalked in managing health components of disasters, containing the spread, case management, and treatment of pandemic cases.

The country's remarkable disaster mitigation apparatus, emanating in part from experiences in dealing with tropical hurricanes and epidemics have equipped it with well-rehearsed protocols and a culture of trust and compliance with civil defence among distressed populations.[8] This emergency preparedness has been exported to the benefit of the world in managing the medical consequences of natural disasters and the fight against pandemics.

Cuba's emergency brigades have served in many countries, including Algeria, Armenia, Bolivia, Chile, China, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Haiti, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Sri Lanka, and Venezuela.[9]

In 1960, a year after the revolution, when Chile suffered the Valdivia earthquake, Cuba sent doctors to assist in managing medical cases resulting from the devastating natural disaster. The Chile deployment was Cuba's first emergency medical support after the revolution. Cuba has also sent relief to Ukraine during the 1986 Chernobyl crisis. Its medical team also assisted Sri Lanka following the 2004 tsunami, and Pakistan after the country's 2005 earthquake. The country continues to offer emergency assistance to several countries through its Henry Reeve Brigade, the first response team for international disasters.[10] The naming of the emergency response effort was Fidel Castro's strategic choice and goodwill gesture in 2005 when the team became the "Henry Reeve

International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disaster Situations and Grave Epidemics," when he offered aid to the US, which was declined by the Bush Administration, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.[11]

In the particular case of health epidemics and pandemics, HIV/AIDS, Ebola and COVID-19 present two more recent cases of Cuba's healthcare assistance to populations in other countries.[12]

During the 1990s, when Africa was experiencing heavy tolls from the HIV/AIDS epidemic, 400 Cuban doctors were deployed to poor and rural areas in South Africa.[13] The practical solidarity was demonstrated even at a time when there was considerable denialism, and the fight against the virus had not achieved much success.

In 2013-2016, when the Ebola virus became a major epidemic in West Africa, the contributions of the Cuban medical team became crucial for Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and the world. Cubans were among "the first largest foreign medical team from a single country to respond to this outbreak."[14] Cuba deployed 53 medical officers, consisting of doctors, general practitioners, intensive care doctors, epidemiologists, surgeons, paediatricians, anaesthetists, nurses, intensive care nurses, and licensed nurses. By the time the Cuban team concluded their Ebola Response Mission in the West African country, in March 2015, Liberia marked the second week of Zero cases of Ebola.[15]

The international partnership and the quick adaptation of the Cuban team consolidated around pre-deployment basic initial training on Ebola in Cuba, and a second training that focused on occupational safety in their work in an Ebola Treatment Unit (ETU) that operated from the Ministry of Defence premises in Monrovia.

Cuba made similar arrangements to contribute 165 Cuban health personnel in a gesture of generosity and solidarity to fight Ebola in Sierra Leone.[16] By October 2, 2014, the first brigade of the 62 doctors and 103 nurses constituting the pledged 165 personnel had arrived in Freetown.[17] In the 6th months of the Cuban presence, the fatality rate in the emergency treatment centres reportedly reduced from 80%–90% to 24% through the supportive treatment interventions by the Cuban health professionals.[18] Guinea also received 38 Cuban health professionals to help in the fight against the epidemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 2500 Cuban health personnel deployed to some 28 countries to fight the outbreak.[19] Some estimates record 11 more countries received support from Cuban health professionals, bringing the total to 39 by December 2020.[20] Some analyses show that, by May 20, 2020, "it was reporting 29,465 medical workers abroad, or 1,197 more than before it started sending pandemic brigades. From March to mid-June 2020, it had sent at least 2,772 workers to 26 countries to provide care for coronavirus patients."[21]

At the time of the pandemic, many countries which already had Cuban medical brigades received medical emergency response teams to fight COVID-19 without negatively impacting the work of the other teams in the provision of primary healthcare. Angola, Antigua & Barbuda, Belize, Cape Verde, Dominica, Grenada, Guinea, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, South Africa, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, and Qatar. Those with defunct missions, such as Mexico and Peru, and new entrants, including Andorra, Barbados, Italy, Togo and Turks & Caicos, also received Cuban medical emergency support.[22] This support was arguably fundamental among the factors that led to the disappointment in the projected massacre that was expected from parts of global Africa, where health

infrastructure could not have sustained a very high incidence rate for infections and mortality cases.

The Health Debt in Primary Healthcare Assistance

Access to primary healthcare and preventive practices remains severely limited in rural and urban underserved populations in many parts of the world. Observably, financial and academic barriers to medical school admissions mostly favour students from privileged backgrounds. Consequently, many young doctors who emerge from medical school have limited direct experience of the health needs of poor rural and underserved urban communities, and very few choose to serve such communities.[23]

Cuban medical professionals are equipped with essential skills in primary care and prevention. These professionals have been providing much-needed services to rural and urban underserved in low and middle-income countries and poorer regions in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The doctors deployed abroad, especially within paid arrangements, are paid more abroad than their local counterparts.[24]

Since 1995, when South Africa recorded brain-drain of white doctors following the defeat of apartheid, several Cuban doctors have practised in the country.[25] The deployment of the Cuban health professionals not only contributed to preventing the collapse of Johannesburg's health system but has also been essential in providing care in parts of South Africa. Thirty-three years earlier, Cuban health professionals assisted in the rescue of Algeria's health system following the mass exodus of French medical personnel from the country. The French medical staff had left Algeria in the wake of the Algerian War of Independence which ended in 1962 and culminated in Algeria's independence that year. The 58 medical personnel comprising 35 doctors and 23 nurses and technicians were dispatched in May 1963 to offset the shortage of

health personnel and threat of collapse faced by the Algerian health system as well as rebuilding efforts.[26] Cuba had provided medical support during the war by treating injured Algerian National Liberation Front fighters and lost some of its health personnel in that revolutionary act of solidarity. Havana however provided medical services to the new country at that time of post-independence health personnel crises. In the calculus of Cuba's health internationalism, the 1963 medical intervention represents the official start of the country's medical diplomacy.

Cuba has provided health professionals for the most deprived areas of Brazil.[27] In one of the socialist solidarity arrangements that has existed for a considerable time, Cuba has been supplying medical doctors to Venezuela, and the latter has been the mainstay of oil supply to meet part of the former's energy needs. By the close of the first decade of this century, an estimated 14,000 Cuban doctors served in Venezuela, and many of these health professionals work in underserved communities in the Bolivarian Republic. Cuba's cooperation with Venezuela is by far the largest with any single country and perhaps the most critical by proximity and very urgent energy needs. Feinsilver recast the medical diplomacy of Cuba thus:

> "During the almost 50 years Cuba has practiced medical diplomacy, the medical cooperation program with Venezuela has been by far the largest and most far-reaching such program that Cuba has ever attempted. Since the establishment in Venezuela of the Barrio Adentro program in 2003, Cuban medical professionals have gone to Venezuela en masse as part of trade agreements, the first of which was signed in 2000 and the second one in 2005. These agreements allow for preferential pricing for Cuba's exportation of professional services in return for a steady supply of Venezuelan oil, joint investments in strategically

> important sectors for both countries, and the provision of credit. A central part of this exchange is oil-for-doctors, whereby Cuba not only provides medical services, medicines and medical equipment to un-served and underserved communities within Venezuela, but also provides similar medical services in Bolivia on a much smaller scale and at Venezuela's expense" (2008:4).[28]

Countries receiving primary healthcare assistance from Cuba have mostly enjoyed the services, regardless of the pressure on the medical resources of the country in the midst of the consequences of the sanctions on Cuba and sustained demand for Cuban medical emergency services.

The Healthful Debt in the Creation of Medical Faculties/ Facilities and Training of Doctors

Cuba has a range of medical education and training initiatives and has contributed to the creation and capacity building of medical faculties across the world. Within Latin America, the region's School of Medicine has been educating about 1500 doctors annually. The working-class sensitivity to the selection of students ensures that medicine is not the preserve of the elites and the rich but the ordinary person who has the intellectual and determined spirit to study the subject and contribute to wellbeing in Latin America. The institution, which has been in operation since 1998 in the wake of Hurricane Mitch, presented Cuba as a resilient country where medical emergency was transformed into a sustainable centre for the nurturing of the critical force necessary to enhance the doctor-patient ratio and readiness against future disasters.

In the Latin American region, the Cuban-Venezuelan cooperation programme is one of the elaborate arrangements, where solidarity and trade have ensured Cuba trains several hundred of Venezuela's health professionals, and establishes many health institutions to

promote health and wellbeing in the Bolivarian Republic. A 2005 agreement between the two nations requires

> "Cuba's provision of 30,000 medical professionals, 600 comprehensive health clinics, 600 rehabilitation and physical therapy centres, 35 high technology diagnostic centres, and 100,000 ophthalmologic surgeries, among other things. To contribute to the sustainability of these health programs, Cuba agreed to train 40,000 doctors and 5,000 healthcare workers in Venezuela and provide full medical scholarships to Cuban medical schools for another 10,000 Venezuelan medical and nursing students" (Feinsilver, 2008:4).[29]

Venezuela, in turn, agreed to provide 53,000 barrels of petroleum per day (53,000) in exchange for a determined volume of services and goods. In other agreements, however, the benefits to Cuba in the training efforts may best be described as diplomatic goodwill and solidarity in the geopolitical arena. The training of medical students from the global South is a major manifestation of this commitment. For more than 20 years, Cuba has trained many South African medical students. The country is estimated to have graduated 700 South African medical doctors each year from 2018 to 2020.[30]

The South African Cuban Medical Collaboration (SACMC) programme began in 1996 as a government-level initiative between the respective presidents, Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro.[31] Along the lines of Cuba's poor and rural-friendly selection approach for medical students, the SACMC recruits students from high schools in rural and disadvantaged communities in South Africa for medical training in Cuba. While the Cuban training focuses mostly on health promotion and disease prevention, with skills such as clinical training and procedures taken at specialist levels, Cuban-trained doctors have been integrating into South Africa's hospital-based biomedical model following a two-year

internship placement at district-level hospitals and a year of community service.[32]

Cuba has trained medical doctors from many other African countries including Ghana, Gambia, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Angola, and Zimbabwe.[33] Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tonga, Tuvalu and other Pacific island countries have also trained their medical students in Cuba.[34] In the Caribbean and the Latin American region Haiti, Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua have also had some of their medical doctors train in Cuba.[35] Medical students from China, Palestine, Timo Leste representing Asia, and in North America, the United States are among the beneficiaries of medical training from Havana.[36] The scholarships and fundings of these trainings are either provided by Cuba, the sending countries, and/or other means.

Cuba has also been involved in establishing medical faculties in the Caribbean, the Red Sea region and West Africa. Between 1963 and 2004, the country assisted Guyana and Haiti (Caribbean), Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, and Gambia (West Africa), Ethiopia and Uganda (East Africa), and Equatorial Guinea (Central Africa). The support extended beyond these African majority regions to countries such as Yemen in the Gulf of Aden.[37]

The country has also been involved in the development of vaccines and medicines. Its biotechnological and pharmaceutical capabilities and capacity and the scientists involved in these ventures continue to contribute to global public health. Within Cuba, BioCubaFarma, the holding company produces 8 of 12 vaccines of the country's national immunisation programme, and made significant research contributions during the Covid-19 Pandemic.[38]

Whither the US Sanctions?

When Bill Clinton signed the Cuban Democratic Freedom and Solidarity Act (Helms-Burton Act) in 1996, it solidified a series of coercive measures calculated to bring qualitative change, and despair to Cubans to stir them to oppose the 1959 revolution and its outcome. These statutory laws with extraterritorial reach were the outcome of the hostile reactions from American elites and the Washington Administration. The revolution had nationalised Cuba's oil assets and aligned with communists and socialist political alternatives. The geographical proximity of Cuba to the US placed Cuba at the centre of the Cold War between Washington and Moscow. The rift that ensued would create diplomatic animosity that has continued for more than a jubilee.

Following the revolution, an exodus of Cubans to the US provided an exile situation that would be instrumentalised in an attempt to overthrow the Fidel Castro-led Revolution. In November 1960, an invasion plan that had been prepared by President Eisenhower and the CIA-trained "exiled Cuban army" Brigade 2506 was launched by President Kennedy in November of that year. When Brigade 2506 landed at the Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961, using Guatemala as a launch pad, Cuban Forces led by Premier Castro defeated the invading army within two days.[39] A plan to remedy the military failure in 1961 at the Bay of Pigs was set in motion in Operation Mongoose. The CIA and the Department of Defence under the guardianship of President Kennedy aimed at a

> "coordinated program of political, psychological, military, sabotage, and intelligence operations, as well as proposed assassination attempts on key political leaders, including Castro. Monthly components of the operation were to be set in place to destabilize the communist regime, including the publication of Anti-Castro propaganda, provision of armaments for militant opposition groups, and establishment of guerilla bases

> throughout the country, all leading up to preparations for an October 1962 military intervention in Cuba."[40]

The planned actions outlined in Operation Mongoose, which were deployed in 1962, failed and the second military intervention in Cuba could not occur. Between 1960 and 2000, several assassination attempts targeting Castro and the revolution failed, including plots involving mafia hitmen, poisoned diving suits, poison pills, explosive cigars, and even exploding molluscs.[41] Fabian Escalante, Cuba's former counterintelligence chief, in "Execute Power: 643 ways to kill Fidel Castro" reviews over 600 CIA plots to assassinate Castro. The plots failed. Castro and the revolution he led remained.[42]

For a decade starting in 2006, the Bush Administration introduced the Cuban Medical Parole Programme (CMPP) which allowed Cuban medical personnel working or studying in third countries (outside Cuba and the US) to apply for parole at a U.S. embassy or consulate.[43]The programme reportedly issued 7117 visas to medical doctors in return for their defection to the United States.[44] The CMPP was ended by the Obama Administration on 12 January 2017.[45] By 5pm Eastern time that day, the termination took effect, new applications were not to be accepted but all pending submissions were to be reviewed. Following-to-join application however allowed defectors and poached medical personnel to request parole for their spouses and unmarried 21-year-old beneficiaries within six months after being paroled into the US. The Cuban medical practitioners in the US make medical contributions to healthcare provision in the United States outside Cuba's state sanctioned medical diplomacy or through it.

Cuba is a symbol of resistance and successful revolution in Latin America and the Caribbean. The country has been able to achieve these tremendous health impacts despite, and within the one of the world's longest sanctions and blockades. Or have they precisely achieved these outcomes due to the blockade? One of the studies

on the subject contends that the removal of US sanctions will trigger an adverse impact on Cuba's health programme. In that argument, there is the potential for a mass exodus of Cuban doctors if the blockade is removed.[46] While there have been some defections by some of the Cuban medics deployed to other regions, the possibility of mass exodus and its consequences must be viewed within the planning and productive capacity of Cuba. The process of leaving Cuba as a doctor, years of practice required before possible travel, and the rate at which more doctors will be produced will all matter. That health internationalism has become synonymous with Cuba is a national and diplomatic pride that can get deeper into the national psyche of as many Cuban doctors as might be possible within a negotiated arrangement that ensures the welfare aspirations of the doctors and other members of the Cuban society are assured.

With the U.S.'s illegal military intervention in Venezuela and a Trump executive order that further deprives Cuba of oil from Venezuela, the energy needs of the island nation are further threatened. Mexico's shipment to Cuba is also being reconsidered following Washington's tariff threats against that country. Now, Washington seeks to undermine national sovereignty by deciding what countries can trade with Cuba.

Conclusion

The implications of the sanctions for access to health necessities, and the suffering of ordinary people in accessing drugs and vaccines necessitates international rethink of the position on Cuba as it continues to contribute to global wellbeing.

The welfare aspirations of a socialist project are increasingly finding expression in welfare states that are heavily guided by capitalism. It is for the world to reckon with the debt of Cuba's contributions to its overall healthcare and accord the country

sufficient space where its health impact can be more felt as we continue to face pandemics and public health emergencies of international concern that are constantly threatening the existence of our species.

More importantly, it is in the interest of the world after Cuba has given so much, to support the ailing country in accessing critical health needs, such as drugs, and energy supplies required to power its health system, and critical care towards emergency, infants, pregnant women, and the aged.

Peter Bembir (PhD) is a postdoctoral fellow and a multidisciplinary researcher at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. He is an Associate Editor at *Pambazuka News*.

Endnotes

[1] Fitz, D. (2012). Cuba: The New Global Medicine. Monthly Review, 64(4), https://monthlyreview.org/articles/cuba-the-new-global-medicine/#:~:tex….

[2] Cuba Salud reports about 400,000 health personnel in 134 countries by 2018. Fact Sheet Overview of Cuba's medical "collaboration" Update of June 15, 2020. https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FACT-SHEET-Cubas-Medical-Diplomacy-1.pdf#:~:text=In%20November%202018%2C%20Granma%2C%20the%20official%20daily,4%20million%20deliveries%2C%20saving%208.3%20million%20lives. The other data are sourced from Herrera, L.M.L. (2020, March 3). #CubaSalva: Práctica humanista de la Revolución. Granma. https://www.granma.cu/mundo/2020-03-23/cubasalva-practica-

humanista-de-la-revolucion-23-03-2020-01-03-38; See also https://www.biicl.org/projects/combatting-forced-labor-in-cuban-medical-missions#:~:text=Around%20400%2C000%20Cuban%20healthcare%20professionals,2018;%20Guardian%2C%202018).

[3] De Vos et al. (2007). "Cuba's International Cooperation in Health: an Overview", *International Journal of Health Services*, 37(4), 761–776; US Department of State, April 7, 2025. https://web.facebook.com/TIPOfficeState/posts/more-than-26000-cuban-med…

[4] De Vos P. (2019). Cuba's strategy toward universal health. Int J Health Serv, 49:186–92. See also Escobedo, A. A., Auza-Santiváñez, C., Rumbaut, R., Bonati, M., & Choonara, I. (2021). Cuba: Solidarity, Ebola and COVID-19. *BMJ paediatrics open*, *5*(1), e001089. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjpo-2021-001089

[5] Binns, L.A. (2013). Cuba: Healthcare and the Revolution. West Indian Med J, 62 (3): 244

[6] Salas, D. (2020). COVID pandemic: updates from Cuba. *Dialectical anthropology*, *44*(3), 233–237. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-020-09607-0

[7] Escobedo, A. A., Auza-Santiváñez, C., Rumbaut, R., Bonati, M., & Choonara, I. (2021). Cuba: Solidarity, Ebola and COVID-19. *BMJ paediatrics open*, *5*(1), e001089. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjpo-2021-001089

[8] Salas, D. (2020). COVID pandemic: updates from Cuba. *Dialectical anthropology*, *44*(3), 233–237. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-020-09607-0

[9] Cuba Salud. Fact Sheet Overview of Cuba's medical "collaboration" Update of June 15, 2020. https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FACT-SHEET-Cubas-Medical-Diplomacy-1.pdf#:~:text=In%20November%202018%2C%20Granma%2C%20the%20official%20daily,4%20million%20deliveries%2C%20saving%208.3%20million%20lives.

[10] The Henry Reeve Brigade from Cuba is named after Henry Reeve, a New Yorker who fought with the Cubans in the First War

of Independence from Spain of 1868-1878. He died in battle in 1876. As Fitz notes, "the Brigade comes complete with medicines, medical equipment (including autoclaves for sterilization), and tents for examinations and surgery." https://monthlyreview.org/articles/cuba-the-new-global-medicine/#:~:tex….

[11] Cuba Salud. Fact Sheet Overview of Cuba's medical "collaboration" Update of June 15, 2020. https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FACT-SHEET-Cubas-Medical-Diplomacy-1.pdf#:~:text=In%20November%202018%2C%20Granma%2C%20the%20official%20daily,4%20million%20deliveries%2C%20saving%208.3%20million%20lives. De Los Santos, M. (2025, August 28). 20 years since Katrina: How the US refused Cuban doctors as New Orleans drowned. https://peoplesdispatch.org/2025/08/28/20-years-since-katrina-how-the-u…

[12] Escobedo, A. A., Auza-Santiváñez, C., Rumbaut, R., Bonati, M., & Choonara, I. (2021). Cuba: Solidarity, Ebola and COVID-19. *BMJ paediatrics open*, *5*(1), e001089. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjpo-2021-001089

[13] Pan Africanism Today Secretariat (2020, August 02). Cuba's medical brigades in Africa embody a long tradition of solidarity. https://peoplesdispatch.org/2020/08/02/cubas-medical-brigades-in-africa….

See also Kagaayi, J., & Serwadda, D. (2016). The History of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Africa. *Current HIV/AIDS reports*, *13*(4), 187–193. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11904-016-0318-8

[14] WHO, March 16, 2015. Cuban medical team concludes a successful Ebola response support mission to Liberia. https://www.afro.who.int/news/cuban-medical-team-concludes-successful-e…

[15] WHO, March 16, 2015. Cuban medical team concludes a successful Ebola response support mission to Liberia. https://www.afro.who.int/news/cuban-medical-team-concludes-successful-e…

[16] Escobedo, A. A., Auza-Santiváñez, C., Rumbaut, R., Bonati, M., & Choonara, I. (2021). Cuba: Solidarity, Ebola and

COVID-19. *BMJ paediatrics open*, *5*(1), e001089. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjpo-2021-001089
[17] BMJ, (2014). Cuba pledges 165 health workers to treat Ebola patients in Sierra Leone. 349, https://www.bmj.com/content/349/bmj.g5647.long
[18]Pérez-Avila J, Núñez-Monteagudo D, Muné-Jiménez M, et al. (2019). Cuban strategy and medical cooperation to combat Ebola, 2014-2016. MEDICC Rev, 21:53–8.
[19] Salas, D. (2020). COVID pandemic: updates from Cuba. *Dialectical anthropology*, *44*(3), 233–237. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8824730/pdf/10624_2020_Article…
[20] Statement by Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez at the thirty first Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. https://estatements.un.org/estatements/10.0010/20201203/bUaYLBKwgqUv/W9…
[21] Cuba Salud. Fact Sheet Overview of Cuba's medical "collaboration" Update of June 15, 2020. https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FACT-SHEET-Cubas-Medical-Diplomacy-1.pdf#:~:text=In%20November%202018%2C%20Granma%2C%20the%20official%20daily,4%20million%20deliveries%2C%20saving%208.3%20million%20lives.
[22] Cuba Salud. Fact Sheet Overview of Cuba's medical "collaboration" Update of June 15, 2020. https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FACT-SHEET-Cubas-Medical-Diplomacy-1.pdf#:~:text=In%20November%202018%2C%20Granma%2C%20the%20official%20daily,4%20million%20deliveries%2C%20saving%208.3%20million%20lives.
[23] Squires, N., Colville, S. E., Chalkidou, K., & Ebrahim, S. (2020). Medical training for universal health coverage: a review of Cuba-South Africa collaboration. *Human resources for health*, *18*(1), 12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-020-0450-9
[24] Robert Huish and John M. Kirk (2007), "Cuban Medical Internationalism and the Development of the Latin American School of Medicine", *Latin American Perspectives*, 34; 77

[25] Motala, M., & van Wyk, J.M. (2021). Professional experiences in the transition of Cuban-trained South African medical graduates. South African Family Practice, 64(1), part 4. https://safpj.co.za/index.php/safpj/article/view/5390/7087#CIT0009_5390
[26] Kirk, J.M., Erisman, H.M. (2009). Cuba's Cold War Medical Aid Programs. In: Cuban Medical Internationalism. Studies of the Americas. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230622227_3
[27] Castelló González M, Pons Vásquez R, Rodriguez Bencomo D, et al. International medical collaboration: lessons from Cuba. Children 2016;3. doi:10.3390/children3040020. [Epub ahead of print: 18 10 2016].
[28] Feinsilver, J.M. (2008). Oil-for-Doctors: Cuban Medical Diplomacy Gets a Little Help from a Venezuelan Friend. NUEVA SOCIEDAD NRO. 216 JULIO-AGOSTO 2008.
https://static.nuso.org/media/articles/downloads/3537_2.pdf
[29] Feinsilver, J.M. (2008). Oil-for-Doctors: Cuban Medical Diplomacy Gets a Little Help from a Venezuelan Friend. NUEVA SOCIEDAD NRO. 216 JULIO-AGOSTO 2008.
https://static.nuso.org/media/articles/downloads/3537_2.pdf
[30] Squires N, Colville SE, Chalkidou K, et al. (2020). Medical training for universal health coverage: a review of Cuba-South Africa collaboration. Hum Resour Health, 18:12.
[31] Reed G, Torres J. Training and retaining more rural doctors for South Africa. MEDICC Rev. 2008 Jan;10(1):49–51. **https://doi.org/10.37757/MR2008.V10.N1.10**; Hammett D. Physician migration in the global south between Cuba and South Africa. Int Migr. 2014;52(4):41–52. **https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12127**
[32] Reed G, Torres J. Training and retaining more rural doctors for South Africa. MEDICC Rev. 2008 Jan;10(1):49–51. **https://doi.org/10.37757/MR2008.V10.N1.10**; Motala, M., & van Wyk, J.M. (2021). Professional experiences in the transition of Cuban-trained South African medical graduates. South African Family Practice, 64(1), part 4. https://safpj.co.za/index.php/safpj/article/view/5390/7087#CIT0009_5390

[33]Several Ghanaian doctors have been trained in Cuba. https://metrotvonline.com/151-cuban-trained-doctors-return-home-under-gnpc-scholarship/; https://www.theafricareport.com/8189/cuban-government-offers-to-train-250-ghanaian-students-as-doctors/; https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/cuba-to-train-40-medical-students-a-year-from-zongo-and-deprived-communities.html?fbclid=IwAR3hr6IQYH4amWziijQ1_MjTpa2IQzMQGyr4VLJGO3pdfwugooOr34PSPSY; For Angola see https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20081205094931640#:~:text=Nearly%20200%20Cuban%20teachers%20are,to%20investment%20in%20this%20field; Zimbabwe https://misiones.cubaminrex.cu/en/articulo/cubas-solidarity-training-zimbabwean-human-resources-recognized-despite-strong-sanctions#:~:text=He%20(%20Mr.%20Zvinechimwe%20Churu%20)%20added,funds%20to%20finance%20the%20education%20of%20Zimbabweans%E2%80%9D; For Gambia see https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/editorial/applauding-cuba-gambias-medical-relations#:~:text=Many%20Gambian%20doctors%20have%20also,vital%20export%20commodity%20for%20Cuba. See more on other countries here: Squires, N., Colville, S. E., Chalkidou, K., & Ebrahim, S. (2020). Medical training for universal health coverage: a review of Cuba-South Africa collaboration. Human resources for health, 18(1), 12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-020-0450-9

[34] McLennan, S., & Werle, C. (2023). "We are the ones who will have to make the change": Cuban health cooperation and the integration of Cuban medical graduates into practice in the Pacific. Human resources for health, 21(1), 36. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-023-00822-8

[35]https://tnc.xnet.is/thenet-schools/cuba/#:~:text=By%20the%20end%20of%20….

[36] McLennan, S., & Werle, C. (2023). "We are the ones who will have to make the change": Cuban health cooperation and the integration of Cuban medical graduates into practice in the Pacific. Human resources for health, 21(1), 36. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-023-00822-8

[37] De Vos et al. (2007). Cuba's International Cooperation in Health: An Overview, *International Journal of Health Services*, 37(4), 761–776

[38] Escobedo, A. A., Auza-Santiváñez, C., Rumbaut, R., Bonati, M., & Choonara, I. (2021). Cuba: Solidarity, Ebola and COVID-19. *BMJ paediatrics open*, *5*(1), e001089. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjpo-2021-001089

[39] Office of the Historian, US Department of State. The Bay of Pigs Invasion and its Aftermath, April 1961–October 1962. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/bay-of-pigs

[40] Office of the Historian, US Department of State. The Bay of Pigs Invasion and its Aftermath, April 1961–October 1962. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/bay-of-pigs

[41] Campbell, D. (2016, November 26). Close but no cigar: how America failed to kill Fidel Castro. The Guardian https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/26/fidel-castro-cia-cigar-as….

[42] Escalante, F. (2006). Executive action: 634 ways to kill Fidel Castro. Ocean Press

[43] US Citizenship and Immigration Services (2017, January 19). Cuban Medical Professional Parole (CMPP) Program. https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian-or-significant-public-b….

[44] Panichelli-Batalla, S. (2016, November 30). Castro's legacy: Cuban doctors still go abroad, but it's no longer driven by international solidarity. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/castros-legacy-cuban-doctors-still-go-abroa….

[45] US Citizenship and Immigration Services (2017, January 19). Cuban Medical Professional Parole (CMPP) Program. https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian-or-significant-public-b….

[46] Garrett, Laurie (2010). "CastroCare in Crisis". *Foreign Affairs*. ISSN 0015-7120. Retrieved 2020-10-21.

CUBA AND CARIBBEAN SOVEREIGNTY: AN UNPAYABLE DEBT – TENNYSON S. D. JOSEPH

The USA and Existential Threats to Cuba

Closely coinciding with the US government's kidnapping and incarceration of the President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro and his wife Celia Flores, has been a clear and openly acknowledged intention on the part of the US, to isolate, squeeze, starve and ultimately destroy the Cuban government and its people and to crush the Cuban revolution. Drunk on the euphoria of the rapid beheading of the Bolivarian Revolution and the asserting of US control over the oil resources and oil revenue of Venezuela, the US secretary of state, of Cuban émigré origins, made openly declarations about US intentions to control the Western hemisphere and he issued a specific warning to Cuba, declaring that "Cuba is in a lot of trouble" and that he would "be very concerned if he were a government official in Cuba" (in NBC News Online 2026).

Since this declaration, the US has undertaken several decisions in conformity with this new stance of uncompromising aggression towards the Caribbean and Latin America. Significantly, these new actions do not conform to the usual acts of sanction normally associated with an imperialist power seeking to crush a rival state. Instead, the actions undertaken by the Trump administration towards the Caribbean pointed to a new phase in which every day, banal, ordinary internal policy decisions of Latin American states were being "directed" by the US, in ways that seemed deliberately provocatively demeaning and belittling, and were meant to mock and scoff at those countries sovereign claims and aspirations.

As evidence of these intrusive and sovereignty-subverting actions by the US have been a recent revelation by a Caribbean Prime Minister that the US had insisted that citizens of his country should

be disallowed from pursuing medical degrees in Cuba (see Wilkinson 2026a). While the US would later issue a denial to this claim, US officials continued to "call for an end to exploitation and forced labor in the illegitimate Cuban regime's overseas medical missions program" (Wilkinson 2026b). What these events reveal however, is that heightened direct interference in the day-to-day policy decisions of Caribbean and Latin American states, had now become a feature of the new "Donroe Doctrine" of the Trump Presidency.

Linked to these deliberate acts of humiliation have been related US policies intended to undermine the economic livelihoods and social living of Caribbean people and to induce instability and chaos in the region. One such policy was the denial of visas to countries of Latin America and the Caribbean which put in jeopardy the livelihoods and social aspirations of thousands of Caribbean and Latin families (see White House Presidential Actions 2025).

More ominously, have been the bombing of fishing boats in Caribbean waters by the US military, followed by boasts about "new" weaponry. Significantly, these bombings have continued long after the US operation to kidnap the President of Venezuela, and as recently as fishermen from the small Eastern Caribbean states of St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines were killed in the territorial waters of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (see Trumpet News 2026).

These acts of economic and political aggression by the Trump administration towards the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean cannot be dismissed as episodic or as Trump-specific diplomatic failures or as crude actions of an uninformed President who has underestimated the benefits of mutual inter-dependence and soft-power to US hegemony itself. Instead, these developments represent a deliberate and dangerous structural shift in US foreign policy associated with the ending of US global power, but manifesting as heightened militarism and political

aggression in the Western Hemisphere, as a last-ditch effort to project strength, despite its internal economic decline and despite global political competition from regions like China and the BRICS alliance.

Whatever the rationale for this renewed US aggression, one of its most direct and pernicious manifestations is the current policy of isolation and destruction of Cuba. This objective of destroying Cuba has been most directly reflected in the US government's placing direct pressure on Cuba's neighbors to cut off oil supplies to Cuba. This was achieved through an Executive Order of January 29, imposing penalties on countries supplying Cuba with oil, a development which the UN has warned will create a humanitarian disaster (MSN News 2026). According to its specific intentions, the Executive Order, proposes to:

1. impose a new tariff system that allows the United States to impose additional tariffs on imports from any country that directly or indirectly provides oil to Cuba.

2. Authorize the Secretary of State and Secretary of Commerce to take all necessary actions, including issuing rules and guidance, to implement the tariff system and related measures, and it

3. Empowers the President to modify the Order if Cuba or affected countries take significant steps to address the threat or align with U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives (White House Fact Sheet 2026).

The immediate impact of this executive order has been seen in the starvation of oil resources, resulting in severe shortages in Cuba, blackouts presenting a potential humanitarian crisis in that country. Ominously, *MSN Online News* in a headline entitled "Trump Openly Cheers Starvation as a Deal Making Tactic", quotes Trump gloating that "Cuba right now is a failed nation, they don't even have jet fuel for airplanes to take off, they're clogging up their runway… I have Marco Rubio talking to Cuba right now,

and they should absolutely make a deal. It's really a humanitarian threat" (MSN Online News 2026).

No Caribbean Sovereignty Without Cuba

It is in such a context that the states of Latin America and the Caribbean are being called upon to remember their debt to Cuba, and to push back against the US desire to starve and crush Cuba and are being called to identify concrete measures through which Cuba can be defended and supported in this current moment.

As a first step towards pursuing such resistance, it is important to remind global Africa of Cuba's contribution to the Caribbean, and by extension to Third World and Black liberation. Specifically, since Caribbean governments are being coercively enrolled in this current US push to destroy Cuba, it is important that Caribbean leaders and people reaffirm their understanding of why the Cuban revolution has been central to the independence, sovereignty and freedom of the Caribbean region.

It is impossible to accurately quantify the Caribbean's historical debt to Cuba. Without the Cuban revolution, the Caribbean post-colonial experience would have been far more imbued with features of neo-colonialism than is currently the case. The independence of the English-speaking Caribbean states would have been diminished, neutered and rendered ineffectual and meaningless had there not been a Cuban revolution which created new spaces and widened the possibilities for self-actualization and for self-determined Caribbean action. The Caribbean states today would have existed largely as underdeveloped peripheral satellites to US imperial power had it not been for the psychological, geopolitical, economic and political impact of the Cuban revolution, reshaping the framework within which the small, black-majority states of the Eastern Caribbean were able to exist and develop as sovereign entities in a hostile world.

Cuba's contribution to the sovereignty of Caribbean states can be highlighted in three broad ways: (a) as a concrete example of anti-colonial, anti-neo-colonial and socialist development, (b) as an example of uncompromised sovereign practice and sovereign existence, and (c) as a provider of material support to Caribbean development.

(a) Cuba as an Example of Socialist, Anti-Colonial, Anti-Neo-colonial Development

First, Cuba's example as a socialist state, 90 miles from Florida, and under a crushing US economic embargo since the early 1950s, provided a tangible demonstration that a concrete alternative to the dictates of global capitalism was possible by small states, even when under direct threat from the world's most dominant power. Not only is Cuba a small socialist state, but it has pursued a framework of internal consolidation and development which has allowed it to exist as a key actor on the global stage. It has a highly developed military. It has an extensive and sophisticated diplomatic service. It has a sophisticated intelligence network. Cuba also developed a strong civil society network of popular civic organizations and offered a model of internal democratic development which deviated from the formal Westminster-type limited democracy which was inherited in the English-Caribbean. These popular civic organizations have not only been critical for the defence of the revolution, but have also contributed to Cuba's ability to withstand several decades of sabotage from the world's most powerful country.

In a context where most Caribbean states were coming to independence as weak, neo-colonial states in the 1960s and 1970s, with little experience of navigating global politics as sovereign states, the presence of Cuba as a fully consolidated socialist state with a highly developed social system and which had resolved many of the economic and social problems which had continued to plague the Caribbean, was a profound example of what was

possible. Cuba's socialism, anti-imperialism and principled non-alignment had a profound impact on how the states of the English-speaking Caribbean defined their own sovereignty. Indeed, many of the small left-wing, and left-of-centre parties in the Caribbean began to fashion their manifestos against the background of what had been achieved in Cuba.

(b) Cuba as an Example of Uncompromised Sovereign Practice and Existence

The second intangible and immeasurable contribution which Cuba has made to Caribbean independence was through the example of how Cuba has used its sovereignty.

The independence movement in the Caribbean took place under a cloud of debate about "size", "viability" and the minimal requirements of sovereignty (Lewis 1975). Many of these countries, like Grenada, St. Lucia, Antigua, St. Vincent and others were coming to impendence as "Associated States" of Britain, and with no previous jurisdiction over or experience with "foreign policy". They had no practical experience of how the newly won instrumentality of independent statehood could be used to develop relations with countries outside the orbit of North America and Western Europe. As the first Prime Minister of Jamaica Alexander Bustamante put it "we are with the West", or according to the first Prime Minister of St. Lucia, his country could fly "neither in the face of history or of geography". As a result of such a limited world-view the leaders of these countries, without the example of Cuba, would have been unable to fashion a robust and confident post-colonial world-view for themselves, beyond the "politics of inadequacy" (Thorndyke 1979) which had been pre-determined for them by their colonial histories beginning in 1500.

(c) Cuba as a Provider of Material Support to Caribbean development

The final and most obvious way in which revolutionary Cuba has contributed to shaping and sustaining the sovereignty of Caribbean people has been through its tangible material support to Caribbean governments since formal diplomatic relations were established between Cuba and the four independent states of Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados in 1972. Cuba's support in the areas of health, education, sports, agriculture, engineering, culture and the arts to the Caribbean is one of the most storied examples of principled international solidarity.

There are thousands of professionals in all fields, hundreds of professional athletes including Olympic gold medalists, thousands of Spanish-speaking bi-lingual Caribbean citizens, and millions of persons who have been healed from various ailments, whose lives have been transformed for the better because of the Cuban revolution. Indeed, it was reported in 2006 that over a quarter million Caribbean and Latin American citizens had their sights restored by Operation Milagro, the eye-care program organized between Hugo Chavez and the Cuban government (Cuba Solidarity Campaign 2026).

Given the failure of Western capitalist countries to offer sustained levels of assistance and to make genuinely reparatory payments at the moment of independence (Beckles 2021), the role of Cuba in offering such a wide range of economic and social development assistance has been absolutely indispensable to the kinds of post-colonial development that the Caribbean states were able to achieve.

Conclusion: The Caribbean and Black Africa Cannot Abandon Cuba

It is clear therefore that the sum of what we have called "the independence and sovereignty of the Caribbean" would have been significantly diminished and inconsequential had it not been supported by the presence of the Cuban revolution. The Caribbean

owes an unpayable debt to Cuba. It would therefore be a profound moral failure on the part of Caribbean governments and people were Cuba to be abandoned at this critical juncture in the history of its revolution and in the history of global imperialism.

While many Caribbean governments appear to be hamstrung in the face of an aggressive US power, it is even more necessary now that the voices of Caribbean leaders be heard in defence of the survival of Cuba and in condemnation of the calculated humanitarian crisis, which the US is orchestrating against Cuba. Relatedly, given the apparent weaknesses of Caribbean leaders in the face of US power, it is necessary for the Caribbean people, academia, civil society organizations to put pressure on their governments to resist the isolation of Cuba, or to themselves directly amplify their voices and their actions in direct support of Cuba and its people. The Caribbean simply cannot allow Cuba to fall. If Cuba fails, Caribbean sovereignty will come to an end. As one writer has noted, "Trump's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine aims at taking over the entire region, which he is effectively achieving with the complicit silence of the region's governments, social organizations, and academic institutions" (Caro 2026).

Tennyson S.D. Joseph is a Caribbean national and a member of the Global Pan-African Movement (GPAM – North America). He is a former Senator in the Parliament of St. Lucia and is currently an Associate Professor of Political Science at North Carolina Central University.

References

Beckles, Hilary. 2021. *How Britain Underdeveloped the Caribbean: A Reparation Response to Europe's Legacy of Plunder and Poverty*, Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press.

Caro, Ariela Ruiz. 2026. "Cuba: Once Again the Target of the US Government", in Counterpunch (Online) Feb. 19, 2026 (Downloaded February 19).

https://www.counterpunch.org/2026/02/19/cuba-once-again-the-target-of-the-us-government/

Cuba Solidarity Campaign. 2026. "Cuba Restores Sight to Nearly a Quarter Million Latin Americans", in Cuba Solidarity Campaign (Online) June 7, 2006. (Downloaded February 17, 2026). https://cuba-solidarity.org.uk/news/article/763/cuba-restores-sight-to-nearly-a-quarter-million-latin-americans

Lewis, Vaughan. 1975. *Size, Self-Determination and International Relations: The Caribbean*, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, UWI.

MSN Online News. 2026. "Trump Openly Cheers Starvation as a Deal Making Tactic", in *MSN Online News*, February 17. (Downloaded February 17, 2026). https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/trump-openly-cheers-starvation-as-deal-making-tactic/ar-AA1WvXPx?ocid=hpmsn&cvid=4dd882d7c190438a9f41d26c6014918c&ei=142

NBC News Online. 2026. "Marco Rubio Says he Believes Cuba is in a lot of Trouble", NBC Online. January 4, 2026. (Downloaded February, 19, 2026).

Thorndyke, Anthony. 1979. "The Politics of Inadequacy: A Study of the Associated Statehood negotiations and constitutional arrangements for the Eastern Caribbean, 1965-67", in *Social and Economic Studies*, Volume 28 No. 3, September. Pgs. 567-617.

Trumpet News. 2026. "US Military Strike in Caribbean kills 3, Saint Lucian Fishermen Feared Among Victims", in Trumpet News (Online) February 17, 2026. (Downloaded February 19, 2026). https://antiguantrumpet.com/2026/02/us-military-strike-in-caribbean-kills-3-saint-lucian-fishermen-feared-among-victims/

White House Presidential Proclamations. 2025. “Restricting and Limiting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the Security of the United States” in *White House Presidential Proclamations* (Online), December 16, 2025. (Downloaded February 17, 2026). https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/12/restricting-and-limiting-the-entry-of-foreign-nationals-to-protect-the-security-of-the-united-states/

White House Fact Sheet 2026. “President Donald J. Trump Addresses Threats to the United States by the Government of Cuba”, *White House Fact Sheet* (Online). The White House, January 29. (Downloaded February 17, 2026). https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2026/01/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-addresses-threats-to-the-united-states-by-the-government-of-cuba/

Wilkinson, Bert. 2026a. “US Pressures St. Lucia to Ban Students Studying in Cuba”, in Amsterdam News (Online) February 5, 2026. (Downloaded February 19, 2026). https://amsterdamnews.com/news/2026/02/05/us-pressures-st-lucia-to-ban-students-studying-in-cuba/

Wilkinson, Bert. 2026b. “Diplomatic Denial: “U.S. says it never told St. Lucia to drop Cuban Medical Program”, in Caribbean Life (Online) February 5, 2026. (Downloaded February 19, 2026). https://www.caribbeanlife.com/diplomatic-denial-u-s-says-it-never-told-…

TRUMP'S FACT SHEET ON CUBA: LIES, BLOCKADES, AND THE LONG WAR AGAINST CUBAN SOVEREIGNTY — ROSEMARI MEALY

Since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in January 1959, the United States government has sought, through a wide range of covert and overt means, to overthrow the Cuban government. These efforts have included thousands of acts of sabotage and terrorism organized and financed by the CIA and other anti-Cuban operatives.

The most infamous of these covert operations was the disastrous Bay of Pigs (*Playa Girón*) invasion of 1961. The United States has never reconciled itself to that colossal military defeat, when its anti-Cuban mercenaries sustained many casualties, were captured, or fled in disarray through the swamps of *Playa Girón*. For Cuba, still in the earliest stages of its revolution, *Playa Girón* represented a decisive victory against the U.S. empire—achieved despite the United States's superior weaponry, artillery, and air support.

Other covert operations included more than six hundred documented attempts to assassinate Cuba's most beloved leader, the late President Fidel Castro—one of the most respected political figures of the twentieth century.

Most infamously and unlawfully, for more than sixty years, the United States has attempted to isolate Cuba and starve its people into rebellion through an economic blockade. This policy reflects a fundamental tenet of the empire: a profound disregard for the right to life and self-determination of entire populations.

On January 29, 2026, Donald Trump reaffirmed this legacy in yet another executive order, released under the title *Fact Sheet:*

Threats to the United States by the Government of Cuba. In this latest assault on Cuban sovereignty, Trump announced his intention to "put America first" by declaring a national emergency and imposing punitive tariffs on countries that sell or otherwise provide oil to Cuba. The order authorizes additional tariffs on imports from any country that directly or indirectly supplies oil to Cuba—an act of collective punishment dressed up as national security policy.

With the stroke of a pen, Trump once again demonstrated a callous disregard for human life—both abroad and at home. In the United States, civil liberties are increasingly under assault. Armed National Guard units patrol city streets, arrests are carried out with impunity, and communities live under a de facto state of emergency. Under the pretext of "immigration enforcement," federal agents conduct warrantless home entries, terrorizing families and neighborhoods. In Minnesota, amid a heavily militarized environment involving National Guard and ICE operations, U.S. citizens have been killed during enforcement actions in recent weeks.

Across the country, people are taking to the streets in mass protests against the racist, nativist, right-wing project that Trump founded, "Make America Great Again" (MAGA). This ideology is evident in both domestic repression and foreign policy aggression, and is built on fear, coercion, and deliberate falsehoods.
Trump's so-called fact sheet accuses Cuba of aligning with hostile nations, hosting foreign intelligence operations, and providing safe haven to terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas. These allegations are presented without evidence and echo decades-old propaganda used to justify the continued blockade and political isolation of Cuba.

This document must be condemned and exposed for what it truly is: another declaration of economic warfare and an extension of a long-standing policy aimed at the economic genocide of the Cuban

people. The intent behind this policy was made explicit as early as April 6, 1960, in the infamous Mallory Memorandum, which called for denying Cuba money and supplies in order to "bring about hunger, desperation, and overthrow of government."

Trump's current threats against Cuba—like those of many of his predecessors—have nothing to do with democracy, human rights, or security. They are about punishment, coercion, and imperial control. We categorically denounce this inhumane policy, reject the lies used to justify it, and call for an immediate end to the blockade and for Cuba's removal from the State Sponsors of Terrorism List.

Sixty-five years ago, at *Playa Girón*, the United States failed in its attempt to return Cuba to the grip of imperial domination and neo-colonial rule. Today, sixty-five years later, a declining U.S. capitalist system—now led by an authoritarian figure with deeply negative approval ratings—again claims the imperial right to trample the sovereignty of a small nation.

Cuba's own record tells a different story. Despite more than six decades of economic warfare, the country has made significant advances in science and technology, saved lives through international medical missions, eradicated illiteracy, built a highly educated society, promoted gender equality, and implemented state-supported, anti-racism initiatives. Cuba stands as a notable example of social progress in a hostile global context.
For people in the United States and around the world, this latest Trump executive order must be met with organized resistance and unequivocal condemnation. Trump's fact sheet is, in reality, a lie sheet—one that must be countered with the true history of the Cuban Revolution, its internationalism, and its enduring commitment to human dignity and collective survival.

Rosemari Mealy JD, PhD is a US Cuba Solidarity Activist. She is the Author of *Fidel and Malcolm X: Memories of a Meeting*. Black Classic Press, 2013.

WE OWE A DUTY TO CUBA – DAVID COMMISSIONG

Over the past 48 hours, the truly heartrending message of an ordinary Cuban woman has gone viral all over social media.

It is a message that was issued against the background of the President of the USA radically intensifying the USA's 64 year old illegal blockade of Cuba by signing an executive order that imposes punitive US tariffs on any country that dares to supply Cuba with oil.

In that piteous yet dignified message, our Cuban sister speaks to us about the elderly Cubans who are "*dying prematurely because the blockade prevents the arrival of medications for heart conditions, high blood pressure and diabetes*"; the new born babies that are fighting for their lives because "*incubators in Cuba have had to be shut down due to a lack of fuel*"; and the "*terrorism through hunger*" that is currently being inflicted on the Cuban people through a deliberate US policy to deprive Cuba of food and energy supplies.

Without a doubt, the current situation in our sister Caribbean nation of Cuba constitutes a severe humanitarian crisis that demands a significant and meaningful response from all people and governments of conscience.

And, in light of the "special relationship" that has existed between Cuba and the **Caribbean Community** (CARICOM) over the past 53 years it most definitely demands a response from the citizens and governments of CARICOM!

Let us recall that it was four of our most revered political leaders – Prime Ministers Eric Williams, Michael Manley, Forbes Burnham and Errol Barrow – who, in the month of October 1972, took the courageous step of defying the mighty USA and the **Organization of American States** (OAS) and broke the almost ironclad policy of isolation that these two entities had imposed on revolutionary Cuba.

The electrifying message that our four Prime Ministers delivered to the world back then was as follows:

"*The independent English-speaking Caribbean states, exercising their sovereign right to enter into relations with any other sovereign state and pursuing their determination to seek regional solidarity and to achieve meaningful and comprehensive cooperation among all Caribbean countries will seek the early establishment of relations with Cuba…To this end, the independent English-speaking Caribbean states will act together on the basis of agreed principles*".

This, then, became the foundation for the establishment of a "special relationship" between Cuba and CARICOM, as evidenced by the establishment of embassies and the exchange of Ambassadors between Cuba and every single independent CARICOM country, and by Cuba's extending of a range of invaluable services to the people and nations of CARICOM in the fields of medicine, education, sports, the Arts, agriculture, disaster response, and the list goes on.

And so, the time has come for us – the people and governments of CARICOM – to do our duty and help our Cuban sisters and brothers to make it through this severe existential crisis.

Cuba is desperately in need of food, medical supplies and a range of other essential items, inclusive of solar energy heaters and other appliances to help mitigate the energy crisis. Let us- governments and people together – make the effort to contribute significantly to Cuba in this time of extreme need!

But what about the rest of the international community?

Well, for some 33 years now, all of the major nations of the world – with the exception of the USA and Israel – have been voting at the **United Nations General Assembly** in favour of an annual Resolution entitled "**Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".**

In the year 2024, exactly 187 nations voted in favour of the Resolution, and only two voted against it – the duo of USA and Israel. In the following year of 2025 the USA was able to add Ukraine and four other dependent states to the opposition camp, but, once again, the vast majority of nations voted to denounce and call for an end to the illegal embargo.

And, very significantly, the nations that are permanent members of the **United Nations Security Council** (UNSC) - France, China, the United Kingdom and Russia – have all consistently voted in favour of the anti-embargo Resolution.

The time has therefore now come for these major countries to – as they say – "put their money where their mouths are"!

Cuba desperately needs to be supplied with oil and petroleum, and this will require a number of major countries to step up and not be intimidated by the Trump threat of tariffs.

Surely, nations that have been given the special privilege of being "permanent members" of the UNSC and that therefore have a special responsibility to uphold the tenets of international law and the will of the international community, must be called upon to do the right thing and ensure that this new unconscionable effort to intensify the illegal embargo against Cuba does not succeed!

Cuba is now the immediate target, but beyond Cuba is the entire edifice of multilateralism and international law as represented by the **United Nations** organization that produced some 33 successive Resolutions condemning the US embargo as illegal and demanding its termination.

We all owe a duty to Cuba. Let us ensure that we live up to that duty. And by doing so, we might just find that we would have taken a critical step to preserve the order and safety of the entire human family.

David Comissiong is a Citizen of the Caribbean Community.

STATEMENT BY TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

We, the below signed civil society organisations, have consistently expressed our solidarity with our Caribbean sisters and brothers in Cuba and with the Government of Cuba and have denounced the illegal, illegitimate and criminal economic, financial and commercial blockade of Cuba by the United States. We have also demanded that the US remove Cuba from the so-called list of countries that are engaged in the state sponsoring of terrorism as there is absolutely no evidence to support this designation. The US cites the fact that Cuba engaged with representatives of organisations that participated in armed struggle against the Colombian government when, in fact, all Cuba was doing was to facilitate negotiations of peace agreements between these organisations and the government of Colombia! So, for pursuing peace in Colombia, the Cuban people are being punished on the basis of a lie!

In this regard, we do not stand alone, as every CARICOM government has adopted this very position. Indeed, in December 1972, the four then newly independent nations of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago established diplomatic relations with Cuba in the face of US aggression against Cuba. Almost every member state of the United Nations has called for the end of the blockade, as evidenced by the vote at the United Nations General Assembly on the Resolution brought by Cuba demanding that the US end its blockade. Of the more than 190 member states, for the past ten or more years, only the US and Israel routinely support the blockade.

The blockade, first imposed in 1962, was strengthened and the impacts on the Cuban people intensified over the years with successive legislative measures: the Toricelli Act in 1992, the Helms-Burton Act in 1996 and the various Executive Orders, especially under the Trump presidency – during both its first and now its second term. These unilateral coercive measures, including the false designation of Cuba as a country engaged in state sponsorship of terrorism, have one specific objective and one only. This is explicitly articulated in the 1960 Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Lester Mallory "The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support (from the government) is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship (…) every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life (…) denying money and supplies to Cuba to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government".

Today, under Trump and Rubio, US imperialism is attempting to completely strangle Cuba in order to achieve this objective – the overthrow of the government. This strategy of regime change is a total violation of international law, the United Nations Charter and the annual decisions of the General Assembly and an unabashed attack on the human rights of the Cuban people. The US is causing – and has caused for years – the Cuban people to suffer from the shortage of food, medicines and other essential requirements for their daily life. As a result, tens of thousands of Cubans have died as they did not have access to vitally needed medicines. So inhumane is US imperialism that during the Covid pandemic it refused to allow syringes to be sent to Cuba which were urgently needed to vaccinate its citizens against the virus!

This illegal, illegitimate and criminal blockade and the other coercive measures amount to collective punishment of the Cuban people. This is a total violation of international law. We cite the

Report on the website of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights: "the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, Prof. Alena Douhan, visited Cuba from 11 to 21 November 2025. The purpose of the visit was to assess the impact of the U.S unilateral sanctions on the enjoyment of human rights by people living in Cuba and any other affected people" (view the entire report here). In her very detailed Report, the Special Rapporteur stated inter alia:

"The above measures have prevented Cuba from having resources to develop and maintain essential infrastructure including hospitals, schools, housing, transportation, electricity and water supply, civil aviation and many others, and to maintain the necessary level of readiness to respond to natural disasters. It resulted in the reduction of social support programs and prevented implementation of academic, cultural, sport and development projects, **affecting thus the right to food, freedom from poverty, right to a decent life, right to health, economic, social and cultural rights, right to development, as well as the achievement of relevant Sustainable Development Goals."** (our emphasis)

"I urge the United States to stop using the rhetoric of sanctions, maximum pressure campaigns, designation of SSOT or claims on the use of forced labour as a political instrument and a means to get economic advantages, to cut Cuba off the international cooperation, international financial system or economic resources, and to engage in a dialogue to settle disputes in accordance with principles and norms of international law, bilaterally or via the UN, WTO or other relevant international institutions…I call on the United States to lift or suspend all unilateral coercive measures applied to Cuba and Cuban companies…I urge the United States to cease the

state of national emergency as being not in accordance with art. 4 of the ICCPR, and to align national legislation with international law, including human rights law and the law of international responsibility."

This Report was issued on November 21st, 2025. In complete defiance of the findings of the UN Special Rapporteur and in violation of international law, US imperialism has now instituted a blockade on oil going to Cuba. This began with the seizure of oil tankers from Venezuela going to Cuba, and now by the threat of the unilateral (and thus illegal) imposition of large tariffs against any country that exports oil and petroleum products to Cuba. The US is attempting to completely shut down the Cuban economy by cutting off its energy and create an immense humanitarian crisis in Cuba. This will impact most severely on the vulnerable – women, children, the elderly and those in urgent need of health care. This is a crime against humanity! The US also stands guilty of complicity in the crimes against humanity and genocide of the Palestinian people. But US imperialism and Israel - its ally in crimes against humanity – do not care about the lives of people. They have no regard for humanity. It is all about the sustaining of global hegemony by the most cruel, violent means possible.

We counter this with our solidarity; with our affirmation of humanity; with our recognition of what the Cuban people and the Cuban Revolution have done through their humanity for us in Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean and throughout the world – especially the global south. In spite of decades of a cruel blockade which caused massive economic and financial losses to Cuba; the Cuban people and Government:

- Provided tens of thousands of scholarships to young people, including many from Trinidad and Tobago, enabling them to attain tertiary level education and pursue

fulfilling professional lives and contributing to their country's economic and social development;

- Provided thousands of health care professionals to work in other countries – often performing heroic care for people whom nobody else wished to assist – Ebola in Africa; Haiti especially after the devastating earthquake and the outbreak of cholera brought into Haiti by the deployment of UN troops of MINUSTAH; and very many countries impacted by Covid 19;
- Conducted surgery, free of cost, for tens of thousands of people – mostly the elderly – who suffered from cataract and other eye problems through Operation Milagro with the support of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela which provided free air travel for the patients;
- Offered professional sporting support – coaches, training – for the athletes of other countries enabling them to excel: our own Keshorn Walcott being a prime example as he won his Olympic Gold Medal and T&T's second Gold Medal – with a Cuban coach.
- Provided technical advice in diverse areas - insect vector control, mitigation of natural disasters, agriculture and much more;
- Extended solidarity to the people of Grenada through the construction of its international airport and then with the loss of Cuban lives, killed by the invading US military;
- And most importantly, contributed immensely to the end of the vicious racist system of apartheid and also ensured the liberation from racist, colonial occupation and the winning of independence of southern African States – Angola; Namibia; Zimbabwe; Mozambique – by sending Cuban combatants to fight Portuguese and apartheid Southern African military, who the heroic Cubans defeated at the cost of many lives. This sacrifice of Cuban lives in solidarity with other peoples is of a value that cannot be calculated.

The Cuban people have the inalienable right to self-determination. Cuba's sovereignty must be respected. The US must cease to violate international law and the UNC Charter. The US must be held accountable for its crimes against humanity.

We, therefore, Demand that:

1. The US end its naval blockade of Cuba and allow Cuba to receive oil and its energy requirements without any fetter;
2. The US not threaten or impose any unilateral punitive tariff or other coercive measure on any country that provides oil and other energy products to Cuba;
3. The US President terminate ALL the unilateral Executive Orders that are coercive measures against Cuba as these are in violation of international law and the UN Charter, including the false listing of Cuba on the so-called list of countries that are engaged in the state sponsorship of terrorism;
4. The US Congress revoke all the legislation that have created the illegal, illegitimate commercial, financial and economic blockade of Cuba as called for by the Member States of the United Nations through the annual vote at the United Nations General Assembly and demanded by the overwhelming solidarity with Cuba expressed by the peoples of the world;
5. The US cease to threaten and or impose punitive measures against third countries, and especially those Members of CARICOM, that have bilateral or multilateral agreements with Cuba whereby Cuba provides scholarships, medical services through their Medical Brigades of health care professionals, engages in trade and other arrangements that are mutually beneficial to Cuba and to our peoples as these actions by the US constitute a gross violation of our right to self-determination and our sovereignty.

We further Call on:

- The United Nations Security Council to take positive action to have the US end the criminal blockade against Cuba and to take all such other steps as may be necessary to avert the humanitarian crisis in Cuba that the US has created by its actions that are contrary to international law and the UN Charter as identified in the Report of the UNCHR Special Rapporteur;
- The nations and people of the Global South to extend to Cuba the solidarity that Cuba has so generously provided to us, through concrete material support and to stand firm against any and all threats and acts of intimidation by the bully US regime that seeks to prevent trade, economic and other relations between Cuba and other states.

We are the Undersigned Organisations:

- All Mansions of Rastafari
- Assembly of Caribbean People (Trinidad and Tobago Chapter)
- Black Agenda Project
- Caribbean Freedom Project
- Caribbean Pan Afrikan and Indigenous Movement
- Concerned Muslims of Trinidad and Tobago
- Emancipation Support Committee
- Joint Trade Union Movement
- Movement for Social Justice
- Network of NGO's for the Advancement of Women
- New National Vision
- Trinbago for Palestine
- Trinidad and Tobago Friends of Cuba
- Warao Community of San Fernando

The above organizations constitute the Coalition of CSOs and Movements in Trinidad and Tobago

MICHAEL PARENTI, LEADING ANTI-IMPERIALIST SCHOLAR, DIES AT 92 – ESSAM ELKORGHLI & BARRY LITUCHY

The Death of Michael Parenti

In 1999, within two months of NATO's criminal bombing campaign of Yugoslavia, a group of about twenty anti-imperialist peace activists led by Michael Parenti and Barry Lituchy, and funded by the Jasenovac Research Institute (JRI), travelled to Yugoslavia on a human rights and fact-finding mission.[1] While most members self-financed their trip, JRI paid entirely for several participants including Michael. Michael was our fearless comrade then, and he will always remain so in our hearts.

The question then is, how is it that such a scintillating thinker, author, speaker, analyst and professor in the US needs financial help to travel? This is not about charity, this is about a man who spoke and taught against the system that banished him from its intellectual industry because he stood out as a pariah due to his unabashed analysis and criticism of imperialism and US policies, domestic and otherwise.

On the 24th of January, the renowned political analyst, public intellectual, influential historian, and political scientist, Michael Parenti, passed away. Those who knew Parenti personally, spoke about his kindness, wit, humor and an unabashed hatred for oppression and injustice caused by imperialism. His death leaves behind a body of literature and a public record that shaped and continues to shape students, scholars, organizers, political activists and historians of the anti-imperialist tendency.

As a friend, a travel partner, and a teacher, Michael Parenti's death is not only our loss. It is the global left's too.

Who was Michael Parenti?

Michael Parenti was born in New York City in 1933, to an Italian-American family. Growing up in a world of Cold War politics and visible inequality exacerbated by Jim Crow laws of racial segregation, Parenti's intellectual journey emanated from that experience of societal injustice, locally and globally, as detailed in his memoir *Waiting for Yesterday: Pages from a Street Kid's Life* (2013). He obtained his BA at City College of New York, followed by an MA from Brown University, and a PhD in Political Science from Yale (1962).

But Michael Parenti was not just an armchair leftist who simply wrote and thought that the power of discursivity will translate to revolutionary progress. He was materialist in words and actions. After receiving his PhD, he had numerous stints teaching at various universities, while being proactive against US involvement in Vietnam. In fact, in one of the anti-war demonstrations, he was battered not only by the police but by stooges who found joy in siding with the police state that the US is presently notorious for and batter protests. Because of that altercation, he served two days in jail and had 12 stitches on his head. Simply, Parenti's anti-war and anti-imperialism was more than just orations in lecture halls but was grounded in praxis.

He famously wrote, "you will have no sensation of a leash around your neck if you sit by the peg. It is only when you stray that you feel the restraining tug." Parenti experienced academia's restraining tug. His initial intellectual production focused on the politics of cultural integration of his Italian and working-class background. But then it developed, as racial antagonisms exacerbated by racist Jim Crow laws and segregation saw his

growth from integration-centric analysis toward a solid class analysis of American society and culture. He then grew his oeuvre by writing ground-breaking analysis of the dominant US ideology: Anti-Communism. His book, *The Anti-Communist Impulse,* published in 1968, was the first of the many books that he wrote to analyse "the irrational rationality" of anti-communist ideology in the US and Western Europe. This book preceded more than 15 others he published in his career. But it was the first to get him the attention of staunch Marxists.

In the following years, the combination of his politics and intellectual production on how the corporate media, politics, and US foreign policy operated did not win him prestigious awards or glamorous department chair positions. Sadly, the opposite happened. It is the restraining tug of the political economy of knowledge production, in which stirring the pot overwhelmingly leads to a more fierce restraining and containment of intellectual resistance to the status quo.

Having not secured an academic job, Parenti found the time to write what was his most important book on the US political system, *Democracy for the Few.* Published in 1974, this book's fame made it a foundational textbook in many college political science courses. As Michael's son, Christian Parenti, has pointed out, this book's royalties provided a lifeline for the family, and this book helped put a roof on his son's head.[2] Ultimately, Michael Parenti relied on non-tenure track positions and giving public lectures - as feisty as they were - that gave him an income to sustain himself.

Below are some of his most famous works, reflecting his intellect and timeless analysis of power, propaganda, and imperialism.

Some Notable Publications:

A Critique of Liberal Democracy

In 1974, Parenti published what became a textbook for understanding how American politics works, *Democracy for the Few.* For any follower of American politics, one would ask, whose democracy is this really if the same interests keep winning? This book, through its nine editions, gave students their first real tool for dissent. *Democracy for the Few* is a perennial antidote to the pablum of standard civics. It is a must for anyone who is interested in power, politics and democracy (beyond the electoral ballot box).

A Precocious Intellectual

It is well-known and widely celebrated to hear people speak about and cite Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's *Manufacturing Consent.* However, the precocious intellect of Michael Parenti produced *Inventing Reality* two years prior to Chomsky and Hermann. Published in 1986, this book is a go-to to understanding mass media and how it operates, financially, cognitively and politically. It gifts the readers the tools to see through the veneer of the so-called "free press", and how the creation of real censorship as a disguised tool and not dramatic; it is the quiet, structural filtering of reality that protects the powerful while journalists can maintain the alleged guide of neutrality. This book shows how the media clandestinely sides with the powerful (corporate-government interests) against the powerless (workers and disenfranchised peoples).

His precocious analysis of the US empire also preceded how everyone began calling the US an empire after 2001. In 1995, he published *Against Empire*, in which he explained what empire is and what is imperialism, how there is only one empire today that is the US.

Similarly, everyone in political science and international relations knows the term *Soft Power*, which is the various cultural and economic tools the US employs to win hearts and minds without firing a bullet. But the publishing world, especially with its connection to the CIA's "theory industrial complex" (as named by Gabriel Rockhill's most recent book, *Who Paid the Pipers of Western Marxism?*), critics of the system who stray from the imperialist talking points will not be rewarded by the system. In other words, knowledge production about the term 'soft power' has been wrongfully disregarding Marxist thinkers on the matter. Parenti wrote *The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and the Arms Race* in 1988 to show how the US uses its military power to exert influence and expand its capitalist accumulation (the Sword), but in other suitable contexts it relies on the hegemony of the US dollar to bankroll various cultural projects (the Dollar). He notes the smart power of the US, devising which power to use and when is predicated on intelligence's conjunctural analysis.

Yet, Parenti's work has been disregarded in the field of international relations and political science, arguably due to its Marxist tendencies, only decades later for people to be amazed by Nye's 'soft power' and later on 'smart power' which relies on hard and soft power, ergo sword and dollar. It is truly a testament how the intellectuals of empire, like Nye, the so-called coiner of "soft power" and "smart power" terms, have been celebrated by the establishment, by getting tenures at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University.

A Defender of Existing Socialism

If we communists, if we leftists, if we Marxists, if we revolutionaries, if we progressives, if all we want is to hunger for power, then why do we side with the powerless? — Michael Parenti

Contemporary Right-Wing fascists, with their online universities portray socialism as "totalitarian," suggesting that because Hitler was a national *socialist*, and having socialist in the name makes him one (see lectures by Prager U).[3] But one does not have to be a right-winger to equate existing socialism with Hitler's fascism — again, as the recent work of Rockhill shows, where ideas of totalitarianism merged together as an umbrella term for communism and Nazism.[4] So, what is the relationship between totalitarianism and the mode of production?

In his book, *Blackshirts & Red: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism* (1997), Michael Parenti explains how the relationship between the capitalist class and fascism was actually consolidated under fascism, such that the owners of corporations and mega businesses amalgamated their efforts to suppress the working class, remove the organizing power of unions, and stifle dissent. Something the communists negated, which led to worker-owned production. This book came at a time when decades of self-proclaimed leftist writers joined forces to fight any socialist society, by redbaiting and defaming those who defend existing socialism as apologists for so-called authoritarianism.

In fact, it is arguably suitable to not only cite Parenti himself, but to watch a segment of his lecture defending socialism and bashing liberals for siding with imperialism.

> Do you know what it means to be able to read? Do you know what it means to be able not to read? I remember when I gave my book to my father. I dedicated a book of mine, "*Power and the Powerless*" to my father. I said "To my father, with my love" [as] gave him a copy of the book. He opened it up, looked at it; he'd only gone to the seventh grade. He was a son of an immigrant, a working-class Italian, and he opens the

book and he starts looking through it and he gets misty-eyed. Very misty-eyed, and I thought because he was so touched that his son had dedicated a book to him. That wasn't the reason. He looks up to me and says, "Can't read this, kid." I said, "That's okay, Dad. Neither can the students." I mean, don't worry about that. I wrote it for you. I mean, it's your book and you don't have to read it. You know, it's a very complicated book, an academic book. He says, "I can't read this book", and the defeat he felt, that's what illiteracy is about. That's what the joy of literacy programs is [about]. That's why, in Nicaragua, you got people walking proud now for the first time. They were animals before; they weren't allowed to read. They weren't taught to read. So you compare a country to what it came from, with all its imperfections, and those who demand instant perfection, the day after the revolution, they get up and say, "Are there civil liberties for the fascists? Are they going to be allowed to have their newspapers and their radio program? Are they going to be able to keep all their farms?". The passion that some of our liberals feel, the day after the revolution, the passion and concern they feel for the fascists, the civil rights and civil liberties of those fascists who were dumping and destroying and murdering people before. Now, the revolution has got to be perfect. It's got to be flawless. Well, that isn't my criteria. My criteria is what happens to those people who couldn't read, what happens to those babies that couldn't eat, that died of hunger. And there, that's why I support revolution. The revolution that feeds the children gets my support. And the Reaganite government that tries to stop that kind of process that tries to keep those people in poverty in the literacy and hunger that gets my undiluted animosity and opposition. [5]

Last seeing beyond the fog of humanitarian intervention's propaganda

In 1999, NATO, without United Nations Security Council authorization, undertook a vicious bombing campaign against Yugoslavia. Amid the bombing, he gave a lecture at the University of Washington (Seattle) that cuts through the propaganda and the role of the media in destroying the last remaining communist country in Europe.[6] In the lecture, Parenti asked:

> Why is the US National Security State involved in acts of destabilization, sabotage, propaganda, terror, drug trafficking, torture, and death squads in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe?
> Is it now suddenly so impelled by humanitarian concerns for the Albanians in Kosovo? Is that why we're in Yugoslavia? Is it humanitarian compassion that compels US forces to be bombing, to have bombed four countries in the last six months? Is it a humanitarian concern that the US is involved in proxy wars in Angola, Colombia, and various other countries? If it's suppressed minorities US leaders are worried about, why doesn't Clinton bomb the Turkish people for what their leaders have been doing to the Kurds? I mean, it would be crazy and irrational to bomb people in Turkey, to bomb the ordinary people because of what they're doing. But that's what we're doing. That's what is going to happen in Yugoslavia. Why don't we bomb the Indonesians because their generals killed over 200,000 East Timorese? What about bombing Israel for what it has done to the Palestinians? What about bombing the Czech Republic for the way it has mistreated the Romani, or called Gypsies here in our country? What about bombing the Guatemalan people, bomb, let's go bomb Guatemala

> City, for the systematic slaughter of tens of thousands of Mayan villages all over Guatemala.
>
> In fact, the US wouldn't ever think of bombing them; the US, in most of those cases—Turkey, Indonesia, Guatemala—gave them aid, gave them guns, gave them training; it's totally complicit with those horrible atrocities.
>
> Why doesn't he bomb Great Britain for oppressing the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland? Go bomb his girlfriend, Tony Blair.
>
> … Why doesn't he bomb the Hutu for the mass murder of half a million Tutsis in Rwanda and bomb the French imperialist force that went in and was totally complicit in that massacre? In fact, Bill Clinton didn't even want to discuss it; he didn't even want to apply the name genocide to that. … While Clinton is at it, why doesn't he bomb himself for the treatment of Native American Indians, African-Americans, and working people in general? [7]

Throughout the bombing campaign, in which social democrats (like Bernie Sanders) and anarchists supported the imperialist bombing of Yugoslavia, and regurgitated mainstream media's goals of dismantling the country, Parenti upheld the position of multinational unity under socialism in the country and against its division, which sadly today is divided into smaller, weaker nation states. The people's power has been weakened, through division and decreasing population and deindustrialization. However, following the trip Michael undertook to Yugoslavia in August 1999 (just weeks after the 78-day bombing campaign ended), he wrote the book that received the most backlash from mainstream academia and politics: *To Kill a Nation: The Attack on Yugoslavia* (2001). This book, arguably the most critical of western propaganda, can be used as a blueprint to understand how a "reality" gets "invented" to legitimize western, imperialist intervention. This is not hyperbolic; the same recipe was used in Libya and might as well be used in Iran today. The

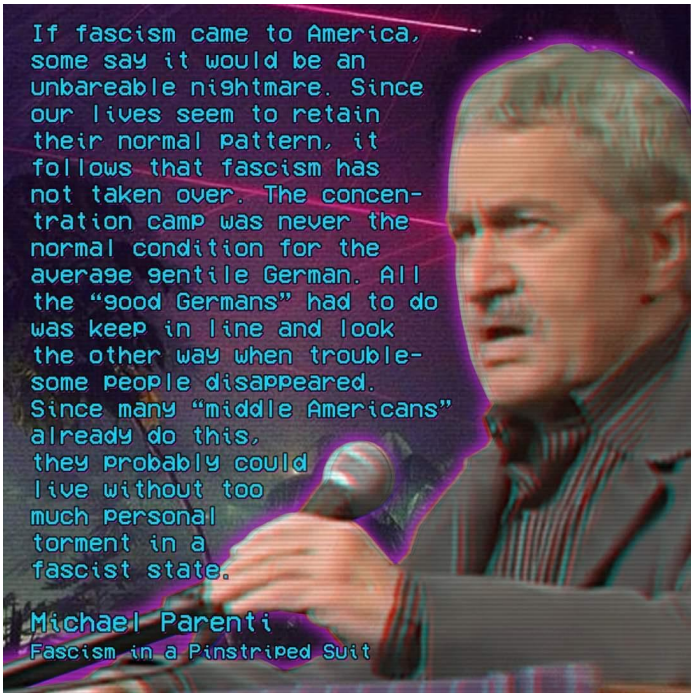
book is not about who killed whom, but about how imperialism intervenes through media lies, financial coercions, and military intervention to *Third Worldize* countries in order to make them consumer hubs and reserve army of labor.

Between the end of a journey and the permanence of its legacy

One of the greatest gifts one can leave behind is knowledge that enriches generations to come — Islamic proverb[8]

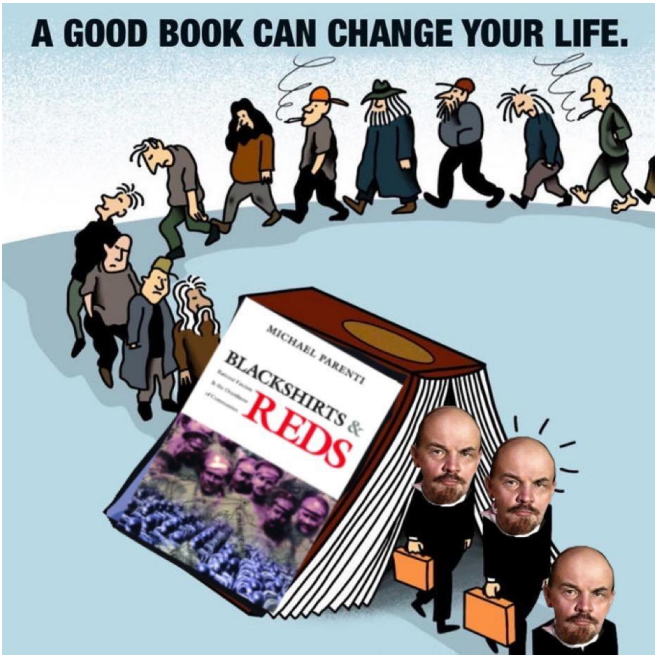
As Michael Parenti passes on to the great lecture hall in the sky, we are left behind not only with books. We are left behind with a culture of followers of Michael Parenti. Folks who loved his passionate defense of the defenseless, his bashing of the powerful, and his wit in delivering his ferocious critiques, have been re-editing his lectures and sharing them on social media long before his death. Parenti's work, written and orated, is timeless and a living artifact of history. While we mourn his passing, we also hope that one will continue to engage with his opus, be it the books and articles he left behind, the lectures across major video streaming outlets, or the memes that we leave our audience with below.

To our friend, to our comrade-teacher, to our travel partner, to Michael Parenti (1933-2026).



When you broke into a house to rob but the owners are watching **yellow Parenti**





Acknowledgement:

We are extremely indebted to Gregory Elich for his comments and feedback

Essam Abdelrasul Bubaker Elkorghli is a Libyan doctoral researcher at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, researching imperialism, ideology and education with a primary focus on Libya. He serves on the International Advisory Board of Pambazuka News, as assistant editor to the Middle East Critique Journal, and member of the Global Pan-African Movement. He writes frequently for the Black Agenda Report.

Barry Lituchy: Born in New York City, Lituchy has taught history and political science at the City University of New York for forty years, and is currently teaching at Medgar Evers College and Brooklyn College. Over the past thirty plus years Lituchy has written on the politics and history of the Balkans, the Ukraine,

human rights, war crimes, and the Holocaust. He is the editor and co-author of the book Jasenovac and the Holocaust in Yugoslavia: Analyses and Survivor Testimonies (2006). He is the founder and CEO of the Jasenovac Research Institute and for many years has been Co-President of the Holocaust Memorial Committee of Brooklyn, NY. In July 1999 he co-led a human rights delegation with Michael Parenti to Yugoslavia following the NATO bombing which collected data on war crimes. In 2005, Lituchy was asked to testify for the defense of President Milosevic at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia at The Hague on the persecution of Romas and Albanians by Albanian terrorists. He was the only American called to testify by the defense. In 2013 Lituchy was primarily responsible for the suspension by FIFA of the Croatian soccer player Josip Simunic for his use of Neo-Nazi and racist hate speech during league play.

Endnotes

[1] For Michael Parenti's notes on the delegation, see: https://www.michael-parenti.org/article-yugoslav-sojourn

[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynp4_Y7JetU&list=WL&index=1&t=1431s

[3] https://www.prageru.com/videos/whats-the-difference-between-socialism-f…

[4] Gabriel Rockhill, *Who Paid the Pipers of Western Marxism?* (2025). Monthly Review. https://monthlyreview.org/9781685901349/

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5oPFAfdrkU

[6] Lecture can be watched here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCDriBM72J8

[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCDriBM72J8

[8] The actual language is: The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "When a person dies, all their deeds cease except for three: ongoing charity, *knowledge that benefits others*, or a righteous child who prays for them."

DON FITZ (2020) CUBAN HEALTH CARE: THE ONGOING REVOLUTION. NEW YORK: MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS. – PATRICIA DALEY

The Holistic Revolution: A Review of the Cuban Healthcare Model

In *Cuban Health Care: The Ongoing Revolution*, Don Fitz provides a compelling analysis of a medical system predicated on the belief that human illness cannot be addressed in isolation from the societal structures that produce it. Fitz argues that the Cuban model is not merely a collection of clinics, but a fundamental "revolution of structure" designed to dismantle the historical disparities of wealth, geography, and race. This review explores how Cuba's integration of social determinants, grassroots primary care, and de-commodified biotechnology offers a radical alternative to the global healthcare status quo. This has been achieved without the input of a capitalist system organized around profitable health care.

The book is divided into 12 accessible chapters and a postscript. Four key points can be drawn from the book: the importance of a people-centred model of preventative care, the debt that Africa owes Cuba; the possibility of developing biotechnology without it being capital-centred and Cuban's health achievements despite the US embargo against the Cuban people.

The Architecture of Preventative Care

Fitz introduces the philosophy behind Cuba's health success despite sanctions from the USA. He shows that at the core of the Cuban success is Medicina General Integral (MGI), a holistic approach that treats the patient as a biological, psychological, and

spiritual being. This philosophy is operationalized through the *consultorio*—neighborhood clinics that foster intimate doctor-patient bonds—and the *policlinico*, which ensures 24-hour localized care. These institutions are supported by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs), which mobilize the citizenry for public health campaigns. This synergy proves that improving medical outcomes requires parallel advancements in literacy, housing, and community engagement.

Medical Internationalism and the African Debt

Fitz's book shows how Cuba's commitment to health extends far beyond its borders through "medical internationalism." The Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina (ELAM) stands as a revolutionary project, providing free medical education to students from underserved global communities. ELAm is based on three core principles:

- **Commitment to Africa**: Cuba has maintained a profound commitment to the health and wellbeing of African nations, often being the first to respond to crises that Western powers ignore.

- **A Shared History**: This support serves to remind the peoples of Africa and the Caribbean of Cuba's blood-ties and solidarity. Cuba has suffered significantly in these commitments—sacrificing domestic resources and personnel—to uphold the principle that health is a global right.

- **Regional Integration**: Organizations like the Organization of African Doctors (OAD) and the Brigadas Estudiantiles por la salud (BES) highlight a model of "connected support" that seeks to bolster CARICOM and regional integration, resisting the brain drain of doctors to the West.

shows how institutions, such as the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIG**)** have achieved world-firsts, including vaccines for Type B Meningitis and advanced lung cancer. Because these developments are not driven by "monopoly prices," Cuba can export life-saving treatments to low-income nations at cost. This "high-qualified human capital" is motivated by social justice rather than immediate profit, proving that innovation can thrive outside of a capitalist framework.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Fitz's account is Cuba's advancement in biotechnology. By breaking the barriers between research, production, and marketing, institutions like the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB) have achieved world-firsts, including vaccines for Type B Meningitis and advanced lung cancer. Because these developments are not driven by the "monopoly prices" seen in agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Cuba can export life-saving treatments to low-income nations at cost. This "high-qualified human capital" is motivated by social justice rather than immediate profit, proving that innovation can thrive outside of a capitalist framework.

The Geopolitics of Manufactured Suffering

The success of the Cuban model has been achieved despite a concerted effort by the US to see it fail. These include:

- **The Punitive Nature of Sanctions:** The U.S. Embargo, which started in 1960 and has progressively intensified, is a tool of manufactured suffering**.** These sanctions are not merely political disagreements; they are punitive measures that affect ordinary people by obstructing medical technology, internet connectivity, and the exportation of life-saving vaccines.

- **Undermining Sovereignty:** Hardliners in the US frequently attempt to undermine CARICOM and regional unity to isolate Cuba, fearing that its success provides a "dangerous example" of a non-capitalist, Afro-descendant-led success story.

Contradictions and Evolution

Fitz does not ignore internal pressures, such as the historical shadow of homophobia and machismo. He notes that a revolution is incomplete if it excludes people based on sexual orientation. The work of Mariela Castro and CENESEX in pushing for LGBTQ+ rights represents a necessary internal evolution to match the external revolutionary goals of the state.

Externally, the U.S. Embargo remains the primary obstacle. By restricting the export of technology, interfering with digital connectivity for researchers, and blocking the global spread of Cuban innovations, the blockade functions as a direct assault on global health.

Finally, Fitz's exploration, coupled with the socio-political critique of the "hardliner" stance, reveals that the Cuban healthcare system is an embattled miracle. By treating healthcare as a human right, Cuba has demonstrated that a small nation can outpace the developed world in innovation and empathy. However, the ongoing "manufactured suffering" via sanctions serves as a reminder that the struggle for a healthy society is inextricably linked to the struggle against global structures of racism and imperialism.

Patricia Daley is a Professor of Human Geography of Africa in the School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford.

PAMBAZUKA NEWS

FOLLOW PAMBAZUKA NEWS

Subscribe to the Newsletter: https://pambazuka.gn.apc.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/pambazuka-news

Follow us on:

Twitter/X: https://x.com/FahamuAfrica and https://x.com/Pambazuka_News
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Pambazuka
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/Pambazuka_news/
Bluesky: https://bsky.app/profile/pambazukanews.bsky.social
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@PambazukaNews

For submissions, write: submissions@pambazuka.org

About Pambazuka News

Pambazuka News is the authoritative Pan-African website and newsletter for social justice in Africa and the global South providing cutting edge commentary and in-depth analysis on the struggle for freedom and justice. It is produced by a community of 2,800 citizens and organisations – academics, policy makers, social activists, women's organisations, civil society organisations, writers, artists, poets, bloggers, and commentators – who together produce insightful, sharp and thoughtful analyses. With 660,000 readers it is one of the largest, most innovative and influential web forums for social justice in Africa. It is available by email as well as on the internet in English, French and Portuguese.

PAMBAZUKA NEWS

pambazuka.org