

Contribution to the presentation of the Report of the Republic of Cuba at the 117th session of the CERD.

Name of the organization: The Venceremos Brigade

Description of the organization: The Venceremos Brigade, founded in 1969, is the oldest continuous U.S.- Cuba solidarity project. For over five decades, we have organized travel brigades and educational exchanges, bringing thousands of U.S.-based activists, students, and workers to Cuba to engage in solidarity labor, learn directly from the Cuban people, and witness the Cuban Revolution's social transformations firsthand. Our contribution is grounded in decades of people-to-people contact and direct observation of Cuba's efforts to build a just and equitable society.

Non-discrimination, elimination of racism

The Venceremos Brigade's political grounding understands the Cuban Revolution as a process deeply rooted in centuries of anti-colonial and anti-racist struggle. Our brigadista education emphasizes that the revolution was not born in 1959 alone. We learn about figures like Hatuey, the Indigenous leader, and Carlota Lucumí, the Yoruba woman who led an 1843 slave rebellion in Matanzas, a testament that resistance and the fight for dignity are foundational to Cuban national identity. This history is carried forward by leaders like Antonio Maceo, who in 1878 refused a peace with Spain that did not include independence and the abolition of slavery.

Our delegations witness the tangible results of the 1959 Revolution's commitment to legal equality, which immediately dismantled the structures of segregation that once barred Black Cubans from beaches, nightclubs, and public spaces. However, we also understand the revolution as a continuous process that acknowledges the deep, lingering effects of 500 years of colonialism and its proximity to a U.S. society that enforces racist structures. We have observed ongoing efforts to address these historical contradictions, including the work of grassroots groups like the *Red Barrial Afrodescendiente* (Afro-descendant Neighborhood Network) and *Afrodiverso*, which use popular education to combat racism, sexism, and homophobia at the community level. In addition to those, we also learned about the Color Cubano initiative whose purpose on a governmental level seeks to not only analyze the various factors that contribute to racial discrimination in Cuban society but also to establish a tangible strategy to counter those contributing factors through education, debate, art and various other means. These efforts, supported by state institutions, demonstrate a societal commitment to moving beyond legal equality toward true equity.

Cuba's anti-racist work is not isolated. Our brigades have seen firsthand the impact of Cuba's internationalist solidarity. The Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) is a powerful example, training thousands of young people from the Global South, including students from marginalized communities in the United States, particularly of African descent, Indigenous, and Latino backgrounds, as doctors who return to serve their communities. This is a direct contribution to global

health equity and serves to challenge the systemic racism embedded in access to medical education elsewhere.

Main challenges

Our visits over the reporting period have occurred against a backdrop of intensifying U.S. aggression, which directly impedes Cuba's ability to advance its social and racial justice goals.

From 2018 - 2023 we have directly observed the positive potential of normalized relations. Our brigades traveled with a sense of possibility, witnessing increased cultural and economic exchange. This trajectory was deliberately cut short by the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign, which was then cruelly escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The re-listing of Cuba on the arbitrary U.S. State Sponsors of Terrorism list on January 11, 2021, during a global health crisis, is a sanction designed to asphyxiate the Cuban economy. We have heard directly from Cuban partners how this designation, and the oil blockade initiated by the January 29, 2026 US executive order, causes international suppliers to cancel contracts for basic goods, including food and medicine, and chokes the economy, exacerbating scarcity and hardship for all Cubans. This economic warfare, condemned by the UN, deepens the very inequalities the revolution strives to overcome.

We see the contrast daily: while Cuba sends doctors and teachers abroad and develops community-based programs to support its most vulnerable citizens, as demonstrated by the mass evacuations and aid distribution after Hurricane Melissa in 2025, the U.S. government, under officials like Marco Rubio who openly romanticize colonial expansion, works to dismantle Cuba's sovereignty. The U.S. goal, as articulated in policy, is "regime change," which would infringe upon the rights of the Cuban people, dismantle the revolutionary project and its commitment to social justice, including the fight against racial discrimination. The Venceremos Brigade affirms that Cuba's internal progress on racial justice and its internationalist solidarity are inseparable from the fight to end the U.S. blockade and remove Cuba from the illegitimate State Sponsors of Terrorism list.