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How socialist Cuba survives the U.S. blockade

written by Stephen Millies

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Cuban economist Dr. Jourdy James Heredia. SLL photo: Stephen Millies

Activists in New York City were able to hear a firsthand account about how socialist Cuba is surviving the U.S. blockade from Dr. Jourdy James Heredia on Oct. 17. The Cuban economist spoke at the People's Forum in midtown Manhattan on "Socialism under economic warfare: Cuban strategies for a socialist future."

The Cuban people have lost \$138 billion to this cruel blockade, according to Dr. Heredia. Just from April 2018 to March 2019, these economic sanctions cost the Caribbean country \$4 billion.

Cuba is forced to go all over the world for many of its imports, especially food and fuel, instead of trading with the nearby United States. The U.S. Treasury Department fines foreign banks for financing trade with Cuba, forcing Cuba to pay with cash.

The 1992 Torricelli Act (the so-called “Cuban Democracy Act”) prohibits ships visiting Cuban ports from entering U.S. ports for 180 days. It’s reminiscent of laws passed by Southern states and Oregon before the Civil War [penalizing ships with Black seamen.](#)

The Torricelli Act drastically increased shipping costs for Cuba by forcing the country to search far and wide to find ships to carry its trade. Large shipping outfits are charging \$12 million for each tanker carrying oil between Venezuela and Cuba, reported Dr. Heredia. Thirty-four Venezuelan ships have been sanctioned by the U.S. for trading with Cuba.

The special period

Dr. Heredia talked about the crisis that Cuba faced in 1991, when the Soviet Union and the socialist governments in Eastern Europe were overthrown. Cuba lost almost all its trading partners, and its economy had shrunk by 35 percent by 1993.

Fidel Castro spoke honestly to the Cuban people, telling them of the necessary measures needed to cope with this “special period in time of peace.” Despite economic problems, not a single Cuban hospital or school was closed. Cuban children continued to receive free milk.

By 1994, the Cuban economy was growing again. The U.S. Congress responded by

passing the Helms-Burton Act in 1996 with even more sanctions against Cuba.

Dr. Heredia reassured the audience that socialism in Cuba is very much alive. Laws have been passed to allow small businesses, particularly in agriculture. Yet of 4.5 million people in the workforce, only 600,000 are employed there. The overwhelming number of workers are still in the socialist state sector. Human need, not private profit, is still in command.

She also responded to the latest White House lies about thousands of Cuban soldiers allegedly “occupying” Venezuela. Dr. Heredia said that Cuba has sent “an army of doctors” to its sister Latin American country.

The economist was particularly eloquent about her own experiences as a Black woman with the advances in Cuban society. Dr. Heredia has Ph.D.s from universities in Cuba and Spain, and has lectured in Spain, Jamaica, Canada, Germany, China and Kenya.

She is the subdirector and lead researcher of the Global Economy Research Center in Havana and associate professor at the University of Havana. She is a member of the editorial group of Cuba’s World Economic Issues journal.

Dr. Heredia is currently on a 24-day tour in seven states talking about the “Cuban economy under siege.” She will spend a month talking to audiences in California. Try to go hear her and learn the truth about Cuba’s socialist economy today.



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