

60th anniversary of President Fidel Castro's historic New York visit

written by Gloria Verdieu
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Fidel Castro with Hotel Theresa workers.

Sixty years have passed since Fidel Castro's historic 1960 visit to the United Nations

General Assembly and electrifying welcome in Harlem. The 1990 commemoration of these events in Havana is captured in Rosemari Mealy's book "Fidel and Malcolm X." In the midst of the current COVID-19 pandemic, Mealy used virtual tools to once again organize a remembrance of this history, bringing new voices and material to events demonstrating the unbreakable bond between Black people and the Cuban Revolution. Look for video of this event at IFCO/Pastors for Peace Facebook and YouTube coming soon.

- Also: [On its 60th Anniversary: Reviewing 'Fidel and Malcolm X: Memories of a Meeting](#)

On Saturday, Sept. 19, 2020, a webinar commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of President Fidel Castro's historic New York visit, was hosted by Rosemari Mealy and Nancy Cabrera, from Casa de Las Americas.

Cabrera meticulously detailed previously little known history of the early ties of Cuba's July 26 Movement with the movement in New York City through the remembrances and documents of Arnaldo Barrón, a founding leader of the New York 26th of July Movement that became today's Casa de las Americas. Cabrera's words drew pictures of the working-class movement including the contributions of Barron's spouse and political partner Gloria Barrón.

The webinar featured two longtime activists who witnessed the crowds who welcomed the Cuban delegation to Harlem — Joe Kaye and Jim Campbell — plus a telephone interview with Raúl Roa Kouri in Havana, who at the time was a young diplomat that had the community contacts and literally orchestrated the move of the delegation to the Hotel Theresa in Harlem.

Joe Kaye, author and New York activist, was part of the thousands of onlookers who welcomed the Cuban delegation. Kaye read a recollection by his late spouse, novelist Sarah Wright, from the book "Fidel and Martin: Memories of a Meeting."

Jim Campbell, a 95-year-old civil rights activist, joined the commemorative virtual event from Charleston, S.C. Campbell is known throughout the country and abroad as a loved and respected movement teacher in Tanzania, having worked alongside Malcolm X. Throughout his life, Campbell has worked with organizations focused on socialism, Pan Africanism, freedom struggles and equality in education.

Campbell recalled the huge crowds of people and the chants that alternated between “Cuba Si! Yankee No!” and “Fidel and Che!”

“It was a tremendous mixture. I was observing and listening to the expression of an American constitutional right of freedom of speech and its responsibility and was amazed by the mixture of African Americans and Latinos, whom I assumed were Cubans.

“I imagined, in that mixture, there were a few hundred people around and every now and then someone from the top floor where the delegation was would come out and wave.” He recalled seeing Comandante Juan Almeida walking among the crowds. Almeida fought alongside Fidel in the guerrilla war against the U.S.-backed Batista regime.

Raúl Roa Kouri recalled being given the task of writing notes on cards that Fidel used when he addressed the U.N. General Assembly. Fidel’s four-hour speech, an indictment against imperialism, was incredible. The Hall was packed full of people from all over, all nations, delegates, and members of the secretariat, were present listening with intense, tremendous interest. After his speech, many came to greet and speak with him.

When asked what the significance of the 1960 meeting is today, Rao answered, “The significance of the meeting of Fidel with Malcolm X is that the struggle is not only on, but it is still pending. The resource, the achievement of a society free of racism, free of racial discrimination is something we must do, especially in the United

States.”

