

New York City says NO! to the U.S. blockade of Cuba

written by Stephen Millies
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Permanent Representative Gerardo Penalver Portal and Ambassador Yuri Gala Lopez and Mission staff with New York City Council member Charles Barron, Chief of Staff Omowale Clay, and Cuba solidarity activists celebrate the unanimous New York City Council resolution opposing the blockade on Cuba. Photo: Roger Wareham, December 12th Movement

The New York City Council unanimously approved a resolution on June 22 calling for an end to the cruel U.S. economic blockade of Cuba. The next day a news conference

was held in front of City Hall to celebrate this victory.

Omowale Clay of the December 12th Movement and Chief of Staff to Council member Charles Barron chaired the briefing. He called it an “important victory” that the Council representing 8.5 million people came out against the blockade.

“This blockade must stop,” declared Council member Charles Barron, who was the resolution’s prime sponsor. Other elected officials who spoke included Council members Alexa Avilés and Julie Won.

Barron pointed out that resolution 0825-A also demanded that Cuba be taken off the bogus U.S. State Department list of “State Sponsors of Terrorism.” Barron said that the apartheid state of Israel should be on the terrorism list instead

It’s Cuba that’s been the victim of U.S. government-sponsored terror. Among the thousands of Cubans killed were the 73 Cubana de Aviación Flight 455 passengers, who were murdered by a bomb on Oct. 6, 1976.

The CIA director at the time was future President George H.W. Bush. The bombing was retaliation for Cuban soldiers helping to defend Angola against the neo-Nazi armies of then apartheid South Africa.

Barron told of meeting two of his constituents from the Brooklyn neighborhood of East New York who are being trained as doctors in Cuba for free.

Rosemari Mealy, Ph.D., JD, who worked tirelessly as a member of the New York / New Jersey Cuba Sí Committee to get the resolution passed, said that we were in “for the long haul.” She said the U.S. government “was intent on starving the people of Cuba.”

The more than 60-year-long blockade not only curbs U.S. trade with Cuba. It also penalizes other countries trading with Cuba, hindering imports of food and medical

supplies, including syringes used in vaccinations.

Coast-to-coast movement defending Cuba

Ninety-one cities have come out against Washington's cruel blockade of Cuba, including the city council of Washington, D.C.

Unions have also come out in defense of Cuba. The Professional Staff Congress, representing thousands of workers at the City University of New York, has demanded the blockade be lifted. A PSC representative spoke at the news conference.

Brother Shep McDaniel, an original Black Panther, described Cuba as a Pan-African nation. He saluted Cuba for giving refuge to fellow Panther Assata Shakur. The FBI has placed a two-million-dollar bounty on this freedom fighter who became a medical doctor in Cuba.

Attorney Joan Gibbs announced that Gail Walker, the executive director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), had been arrested in Senator Robert Menendez's office.

Walker and two other activists, who were also detained, were simply trying to meet with Menendez, who wants to strangle Cuba.

Roger Wareham of the December 12th Movement praised the role of Cuba in the international arena, always standing on the side of poor people. "Cuba exports solidarity," said Jacob Buckner of the Young Communist League.

A representative of the Democratic Socialists of America spoke. Two DSA members of the City Council supported the resolution.

Bill Dores of Struggle-La Lucha newspaper praised all those who worked to get the

resolution passed. He thanked Charles Barron “as the only elected official who had the courage to go to Gaza and break the Israeli blockade.”

Dores said President Biden “should stop following in the footsteps of Trump ... and in the footsteps of Thomas Jefferson who sanctioned Haiti when they overthrew slavery ...

“The sanctions on Cuba are sanctions on low rent housing, they are sanctions on free health care, they are sanctions on free college education. ... [Cuba] has no rent guideline board that raises the rent for corporate landlords in Cuba.”

Afterward, a delegation from the Cuban Mission to the United Nations, including Deputy Foreign Minister Gerardo Penalver Portal and Ambassador Yuri Gala Lopez, gathered with Council member Barron and solidarity activists in the City Council offices at 250 Broadway.

Hands off Cuba! End the blockade!

