

Cuban President exchanges with U.S. revolutionaries on UNGA visit

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Miguel Díaz-Canel addresses crowd in New York Photo: Presidencia de la República de Cuba

On September 23, hundreds of people packed the auditorium of the New York Society for Ethical Culture to hear Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel speak, along with Venezuelan Foreign Affairs Minister Yván Gil Pinto, historian, and director of the Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research Vijay Prashad, and Cuban-trained physician and activist Dr. Samira Addrey. It was the last activity in Díaz-Canel's week-long visit to New York City for the United Nations 78th General Assembly.

At this event, titled "Voices of Dignity," the movement to lift all unilateral coercive measures against Cuba and Venezuela was elevated through cultural performances such as that of rapper and union organizer Linqua Franqa, Latin jazz musician Arturo O'Farrill, and Brooklyn-based DJ Cardamami.

In his address, Díaz-Canel outlined the specific ways in which the U.S. blockade against Cuba is putting a stranglehold on the Cuban people. "The U.S. government prevented suppliers of pulmonary ventilators from selling them to us at a time when we needed these ventilators to expand our hospitals to combat COVID," Díaz-Canel said, to resounding boos from the crowd.

"Pessimism is not the nature of revolutionaries. That is not an option for those of us who believe a better world is possible. It is not an option for those of us who have the belief that it is worth it to fight for that better world," Díaz-Canel told the gathered North Americans.

"The combined effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the intensification of the U.S. economic blockade are posing serious challenges to our economic growth and the satisfaction of many of our public. But even in these conditions we have continued and will continue to prioritize social justice. We shall continue to satisfy the basic needs of our populace. We shall continue to defend equity. And we shall continue to make our strongest efforts to defend our socialist system for which so many generations of Cubans have sacrificed themselves."

Venezuela is no stranger to U.S. hybrid war, and Gil Pinto spoke to the novel threats that his country faces. “The American empire is trying to impose a new military threat in our country, and the excuse that they are using is a border dispute that Venezuela has had for many many years...today, the U.S. is trying to mobilize military troops in Guyana, a conflict they are not involved in at all. If we want a settlement of this border dispute, of course this must be handled through diplomatic means.”

Dr. Addrey, who was trained at the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Havana, highlighted Cuba’s humanitarian work in training doctors from across the world and sending medical brigades of Cuban doctors to dozens of countries. “Cuba has sent medical internationalists to 165 countries in 60 years of this incredible humanitarian policy,” said Dr. Addrey, “ELAM is an extension of Cuba’s long history of medical internationalism,” she said. “Fidel taught us that we must be resolute that our bodies will no longer pay the price for imperialist crimes.”

Vijay Prashad described the motivations of those who drive sanctions and attacks against Cuba and Venezuela: “We love life. We love humanity. We love human beings... They love death. They love suffering. They want people to be hungry. They need people to go and die in their wars,” Prashad declared. “Those who love life love socialism.”

One day after the Voices of Dignity event, the Cuban embassy in D.C. suffered a [terrorist attack](#), whilst on Friday, September 22, the Senator who has been the chief bulwark of sanctions against Cuba and Venezuela, Bob Menendez of New Jersey, was indicted on charges of corruption. He thus far refuses to resign from his post. Menendez had several Cuba solidarity activists [arrested](#) in June when they came to his office for a peaceful discussion.

Prashad also mentioned the wave of African nations that are standing up against French neocolonialism, including [Chad](#), [Niger](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Mali](#), and [Guinea](#).

“There are big changes taking place in the world these days,” Prashad said. “In the entire Sahel region, one country after the other has said, ‘France, go home!’” This last statement was met with enormous applause from the crowd, and chants of “France, go home!”.

The Voices of Dignity event concluded with a resolute slogan: “¡Cuba sí, bloqueo no!” (Cuba yes, blockade no!)

Díaz-Canel pays surprise visit to solidarity activists

Upon arrival on September 18, Díaz-Canel [visited](#) the Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Sabazz Memorial and Educational Center in Harlem to pay tribute to the historic meeting between Fidel Castro and Malcolm X in 1960. The African-American revolutionary leader welcomed the Cuban delegation at a time when the United States establishment was [shunning, ridiculing, and isolating](#) the newly liberated country.



Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel paid homage to slain Black revolutionary Malcolm X on September 18.

On September 19, Díaz-Canel [addressed](#) the General Assembly. “Cuba will continue to strengthen its democracy and socialist model which, despite being under siege, has proved how much a developing country, with scarce natural resources, can do,” he declared.

On September 22, dozens of activists of all ages marched from Grand Central Station in midtown Manhattan to the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations, where they held a short rally. This action was organized by the International Peoples’ Assembly, the People’s Forum, the ANSWER Coalition, and others as part of an international call to take Cuba off of the United States’ [State](#)

[Sponsors of Terrorism](#) list.

During their rally outside the mission, Díaz-Canel paid the demonstrators a surprise visit. *Peoples Dispatch* spoke to several people in the crowd, who were alarmed at first at seeing an entourage of suited men walk up to their action, but quickly turned elated when they realized that the President of Cuba himself had decided to attend their event.

"[When] I realized it was the President...I was overcome with emotion," said Lillian House, an organizer with the Party for Socialism and Liberation who was a lead organizer in Denver during the 2020 uprising against police brutality. "To me, Diaz-Canel is a towering figure, the person entrusted by the Cuban people to take up the mantle of Fidel and Raul, someone who has lived his entire life in dedication to his people, and he came out to see us and thank us for our solidarity. Never do politicians in the United States come out to protests without teams of press and pre-prepared statements. Never is it in genuine relationship with the people and their struggles. It was a great honor to be there for that expression of mutual solidarity."

Díaz-Canel joined protesters in chants of "Cuba si, bloqueo no!" before addressing the gathered crowd. "Sisters and brothers, many thanks for your solidarity," he said. "Many thanks for your support. And many thanks for being here with us."

Source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)



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