

Cuba July 26 celebration demands: Take Cuba off terrorism list, end U.S. blockade

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Ambassador Yuri Gala López. SLL
photo: Lallan Schoenstein

Thousands in Cuba and abroad celebrated the historic achievements of its socialist revolution on the anniversary of July 26. On that day in 1953, a group of young rebels led by Fidel Castro stormed the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes garrisons. The attacks initiated the armed struggle and insurrection that triumphed over the brutal dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista on Jan. 1, 1959.

One of several July 26 celebrations in New York City was a reception hosting Cuba's U.N. Ambassador, Yuri Gala López, who spoke to a diverse assembly at the New Canaan Baptist Church in Brooklyn. Omowale Clay from the December 12 Movement and Erin Feely-Nahem of the Saving Lives Campaign, Pacemakers for Cuba, also spoke.

Clay began the Moncada celebration with a historic film he'd made about Cuba's role supporting the fight for liberation in southern Africa as well as the sanctuary Cuba provided African-American liberation fighters. The film included informal talks by Fidel Castro, Assatta Shakur, Kwame Ture, and Puerto Rican revolutionary William Morales. The film also featured African and Cuban cultural performances that honored the role of Cuba in ending apartheid.

Ambassador Gala López began by telling the gathering that Fidel Castro called for many Moncadas, such as their successful battle to win education and health care and the battle to eliminate racism and exploitation.

Gala López spoke of the heavy damage inflicted by the U.S. government's 60-year-long blockade of Cuba. During Trump's administration, the stranglehold of the blockade was tightened in many insidious ways by placing Cuba on a State Sponsors of Terrorism list. Despite campaign promises to the contrary, President Joe Biden has done nothing to change Trump's vicious policies.

Even under the U.S. military siege, Cuba has contributed to achievements in countries worldwide with its International Medical School (ELAN) and the scientific

developments of the Cuban BioMedical Institute. They have provided countries with their own trained doctors and set up the production and supply of new medicines, including vaccines.

Gala López spoke about Cuba's remarkable work treating eye diseases and restoring vision to millions in Latin America and Africa. For example, while serving as Cuba's ambassador to Jamaica, Gala López witnessed the daily restoration of sight for hundreds of people through cataract surgery and other eye diseases at a Cuban-built clinic in Kingston.

One aspect of the U.S. blockade is how gravely it impacts Cuba's ability to procure vital medical supplies. Erin Feely-Nahem ended the evening by raising funds for the [Saving Lives Campaign, Pacemakers for Cuba](#) campaign.

Cuba must be removed from the SSOT list. Gala López pointed out that in the U.N. General Assembly, 187 countries voted against the embargo on Cuba. Only the U.S. and Israel voted for it, with Ukraine abstaining.

