

Indigenous Peoples and Nations Coalition

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Cuba has a turbulent history of colonization and still struggles to maintain itself as an independent nation. This struggle bore its own legacy on the front porch of a superpower. As it enters the 2nd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, Cuba must continue to weigh the balance between maintaining its independence and promoting and protecting human rights in a hostile environment of assault on its national sovereignty, national character, right to development and right to self-determination by the neighboring superpower United States of America. States must consider and balance what started as a struggle to rid itself of economic and political aggression where its economy was riddled with corruption from business enterprises from the mainland United States.

The United States of America continues to suppress the Cuban economy and attempts to undermine its territorial sovereignty by recruiting Cuban nationals to undermine its national pride and sovereign existence in the name of democracy and freedom so Cuba can be easily opened up to foreign development and exploitation. IPNC continues to view the same rationalization and framework of democracy and freedom that has led to the subjugation, domination and exploitation of other Territories such as Alaska and Hawaii and even Puerto Rico. Alaska and Hawaii are now controlled by the majority of outside influence and interest in the name of national security and territorial aggrandizement by the occupying State. That is why the Cuban peoples are seen as the true free voice against aggression; Cuba will tell the truth with its unrelenting courage to deny to the United States of America and their complicit collaborators the right to subjugate, dominate and exploit it as an independent country. As any other peoples, the Cuban peoples have the right to its self-determination as enunciated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and common Article I of the international Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Cuba has heroically mounted a historical defense and ideological offense in response to the so-called "Breckenridge Memorandum" dispatched by the U.S. Undersecretary of War from the United States Department of War on the 24 December 1897. In this memorandum the United States had its provocative eye on Cuba and Puerto Rico and the Hawaiian Islands. For Hawaii Breckenridge stated that it was, "**more complex and dangerous, given the diversity of races and...the Japanese interests there are on the same footing as ours**". Breckenridge stated that Puerto Rico will be easy to take over stating outright that, "**Conquest will only require relatively mild measures. Our occupation of the territory must be carried out with extreme care and respect for all the laws between civilized and Christian nations, only resorting in extreme cases to bombing certain of their strongholds.**" As for Cuba, the Undersecretary was very direct: "**[We] must clean up the country, even if this means using the methods Divine Providence used on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. *** We must impose a harsh blockade so that hunger and its constant companion, disease, undermine the peaceful population and decimate the Cuban army. *** [W]e must create conflicts for the independent government. *** To sum up, our policy must always be to support the weaker against the**

stronger, until we have obtained the extermination of them both [Cuba and Puerto Rico], in order to annex the Pearl of the Antilles.” The elements of the Breckenridge Memorandum have become a prophetic summary for what Cuba is faced with and has endured despite the superpowers efforts to overthrow its Government and independence. As any other State, Cuba desires a better standard of living through its ability to free economic development that would lead to economic and political security, yet it must brace itself for a continuing struggle to defend its sovereignty.

Until Cuba is freed from economic and political aggression, it will continue to struggle to put together a comprehensive human rights framework to address the needs of its peoples. It must be allowed relief from its defensive mode of existence with a balance between development opportunities that respects its national sovereignty and right to self-determination. It is still under pressure to defend itself by the diaspora in the United States who are more willing to yield to desires of a superpower who looks more for ways of exploiting it than for the nations to develop in its own right to development without applying other elements of colonialism. Other nations and peoples such as Alaska and Hawaii have fallen prey to such United States aggression. Again we ask, what mechanism can we put into place to relieve any State from its burdens so it can more effectively serve its own peoples?

If there are legitimate human rights violations then how do you inspect and gage the response by the Cuban Government and to the collaborators of the superpower when the actions taken are measures of self-defense against the persistent attacks on the political life of the peoples and by the subversive infiltration by another State and its multi-national corporations who are promoting their own interests?

Cuba has successfully denied hegemony and imperialism for a protracted time like no one else has as a result of its revolution and against all odds of being on the front porch of the superpower aggressor. That is why the NGO's rose to their feet when Castro walked into the room to deliver his speech and participation in the high level roundtable event at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

When the United States of America suffered that attacks of 9/11, the repressive laws and policies were instituted in the name of national security; its own citizens were denied travel at times and unrecognized retired judges and law enforcement officials working off duty experienced and complained of oppression and suppression by their own law enforcement officials. The events of 9/11 changed the laws and policies so that those who rendered justice had to take repressive measures in the name of national security.

Cuba has had to sacrifice to maintain its sovereignty; the Americans did the same in the heat of the battle of World War II. That war ended. The political and economic war of attrition did not end for Cuba since the beginning of its revolution or since the Breckenridge Memorandum. Remember the measures that were taken by the United States of America after 9/11; are they not reminiscent of what Cuba is sometimes accused to sometimes simply maintain its independent dignity? What compound today's struggle is the world economic crisis.

As we move into the 21st century, we must hopefully explore another way of approaching the situation to move from paralyzing a small island nation that is denied its right to development. The Indigenous Peoples and Nations Coalition recommend that States explore ways to remove the economic blockade against Cuba so it can work to construct a human rights framework that serves its nation and peoples. This move would relieve Cuba from having to defend itself against various forms of aggression toward defending the rights of its peoples.