

ENCASA/US-CUBA

TO: ENCASA members
RE: Status Report: Recent ENCASA activities in Washington, DC
Date: September 30, 2006

On September 18-21 members of the ENCASA steering committee met in Washington DC for a series of meetings, conferences, Congressional briefings, and lobbying efforts in both the House and the Senate to present our concerns for change in US-Cuba policy. We also met (for only the second time since our original "retreat" last February which led to the formation of ENCASA) to plan ahead for the future of our network, with an eye both to possible changes in the composition of Congress after the elections in November, and to the start of the presidential campaign soon thereafter. This brief report provides a summary of what we have accomplished as a result.

Activities, September 18-20, 2006:

Retreat from Reason: U.S.-Cuban Academic Relations and the Bush Administration

On September 18, a major report two years in the making, aptly entitled *Retreat from Reason: U.S.-Cuban Academic Relations and the Bush Administration*, was publicly presented at a well-attended conference at George Washington University, sponsored by the Latin America Working Group (LAWG) Education Fund, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), and the GWU Latin American and Hemispheric Studies Program. The report, a must-read available at <http://www.lawg.org/docs/retreatfromreason.pdf>, which analyzes the history of U.S.-Cuban academic engagement and the impact of Bush Administration policy, was written by a binational academic working group (three scholars from Cuba, three from the United States). [Two of the report's authors, Professors Sheryl Lutjens and Louis A. Pérez, Jr., are ENCASA members.]

As you'll see on pp. 7-9 of the report, their specific recommendations (for the U.S. government and Congress and the U.S. academic community, for the Cuban government and Cuban scholars and academic institutions, and for both countries) are directly in line with ENCASA's. From the report: "Academic and educational exchanges between Cuba and the U.S. should be guided by internationally recognized norms of freedom of thought and expression, and due respect for sovereignty, independence and self-determination. Academic relations should not be employed as a foreign relations instrument, nor regulated for political, ideological or foreign policy ends." But as the authors go on to document, "The Bush's administration's intended elimination of cultural, educational, academic, and now religious relations between the Cuban and United peoples--save those that serve its political purposes--has in fact had negative effects. Academic and educational travel to Cuba [since 2004] has declined dramatically, as much as 90 percent..."

Endorsing statements were read by representatives of AAUP (<http://www.aaup.org/aaup>), the Latin America Studies Association (<http://www.cubasection.org/htm/seccion.php>) [the new chair of LASA's Cuba Section, Félix Masud-Piloto, is on ENCASA's steering committee], and the Emergency Coalition to Defend Educational Travel [ECDDET - <http://www.ecdet.org/index.html> - whose chair and other members are also part of ENCASA], as well as by ENCASA. This was followed by a discussion of strategies for restoring U.S.-Cuban academic and educational

exchanges. In attendance was a member of the staff of the American Sociological Association; it is possible that several major scholarly associations may follow suit and endorse the report's recommendations. We will keep you posted.

Briefings on Capitol Hill

Members of the ENCASA steering committee also attended and spoke at two follow-up briefings on Capitol Hill which involved the presentation of "Retreat from Reason:" one for members of the House and staff on Sept. 19 (sponsored by Rep. Barbara Lee), and the other for members of the Senate and staff on Sept. 20 (sponsored by Senators Michael Enzi and Edward Kennedy).

ENCASA contacts with members of the Senate and the House

ENCASA members also met in separate meetings on the Hill to present our organization, our analysis of US-Cuba policy, and our recommendations for change with the Co-Chairs of the Cuba Working Group of the House of Representatives, William Delahunt (D-Massachusetts) and Jeff Flake (R-Arizona) and their staffs; and also with staff of Senator Mel Martínez (R-Florida). ("*La peor gestión es la que no se hace.*")

ENCASA contacts with the press

On September 19, we met with members of the press for 90 minutes, to discuss in some depth the formation of our network and the concerns which animate us to work for change in US-Cuba policy. A story based on that meeting was published by Reuters América Latina on September 20, via its wire services throughout Latin America, entitled "Intelectuales EEUU, descontentos con política hacia Cuba," written by DC-based reporter Adriana García, with additional reporting by Esteban Israel from Havana.

Conference at the Brookings Institution

On September 20, we participated in an intensive discussion with a broad array of organizations and individuals with expertise on US-Cuba policy, to examine how we can best respond to the new situation in Cuba and to the administration's policy toward Cuba which continues to be ill-conceived and counterproductive. What should we be doing in the Congress, in informing public opinion, in the courts, with U.S. business and agricultural groups, and with U.S. academic circles, to encourage a more constructive approach (or approaches) toward Cuba, especially in light of the new situation there? Discussion leaders included Wayne Smith of the Center for International Policy; Mavis Anderson of the Latin American Working Group; Silvia Wilhelm of Puentes Cubanos/Cuban Bridges; Alfredo Durán of the Cuban Committee for Democracy; Rubén Rumbaut of ENCASA; Kirby Jones of the U.S.-Cuba Trade Association; Bob Muse of Muse and Associates; and José Pertierra, Attorney at Law. The event, held at the Brookings Institution, was sponsored by the Center for International Policy, the Latin American Working Group, and the Washington Office on Latin America. While there, contacts were made with executive directors of foundations who may be able to support ENCASA's efforts in the near future, and to discuss future ENCASA activities.

ENCASA retreat (but not from reason!)

In addition, we covered a lot of ground at our “retreat” while in Washington. Among the issues discussed, several of which remain pending at the moment, were the following:

- the development of a website to enhance our regular communications with members and non-members (a lot of progress has already been made along those lines in the past week; you can expect the link soon), as well as a list-serve for interested ENCASA members;
- the incorporation of ENCASA as a non-profit organization;
- the establishment of bylaws, and of a rotating executive committee;
- the formation of committees/working groups in which all ENCASA members will be invited to participate, including these areas: webpage, list-serve; membership, recruitment, outreach; fundraising, finance; legal; communications, media relations, status reports; lobbying, advocacy; research, intellectual development;
- short-term strategies to expand our advocacy efforts with the help of the news media, Congressional and NGO contacts, including the preparation of “briefing books” to be presented to new members of the House and Senate after the 2006 November elections—possibly at a special ENCASA-sponsored event (now under consideration) in mid-January in Washington for new members of Congress; and
- longer-term goals, including: lobbying of 2008 presidential hopefuls; production of a “white paper” to send to those candidates; a “summit” for ENCASA members to discuss recommendations in the “white paper” (one possibility: a post-LASA day in Montreal on Sept. 9, 2007); publication of ENCASA papers in various venues; a virtual “think tank” for scholarly production on the Cuban American population and US-Cuba relations; documenting the history of ENCASA via oral histories, collection development.

Incorporation of ENCASA

Members of the ENCASA steering committee are currently considering whether the group should incorporate, or become a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. The benefits of incorporation would include an augmented capacity to raise money, including foundation funds, to support our efforts. But because of the record-keeping requirements and restrictions on lobbying faced by 501(c)(3)’s, we remain in the exploratory stages of the process. Before we actually go through the process, we’ll seek legal advice from experts who work on these issues directly, particularly re: restrictions on lobbying.

Membership report and new recruitment efforts

As of the end of August 2006, ENCASA counted 385 members in 35 states plus DC and Puerto Rico, mostly academics based in more than 150 universities in about 100 cities nationwide. Of these, 150 are Cuban Americans, and 235 are non-Cuban-American “allies.” For all intents and purposes, we have not sought to recruit new members since the intense Phase I effort of last March and April, prior to the publication of our full-page Open Letter in the Miami Herald on April 27. However, our activities in Washington this month, accompanied by flyers with information about how to join ENCASA, is expected to lead to a flurry of new members who want a more rational policy toward Cuba, and who are fed up with a 47-year-old record of policy failures that lead only to more draconian measures to prohibit travel to and exchange with Cuba.

As strategies for Phase II recruitment are specified, we'll keep you apprised. This will also be spelled out in the ENCASA webpage that is now being set up.

Amicus brief filed by ENCASA in federal court

As you know, at the end of July 2006, ENCASA filed an *amicus curiae* brief in federal court in Florida in the case of *Faculty Senate of FIU v. Winn*. The brief supports plaintiffs' challenge to the validity of Florida statute S.B. 2434, an Act Relating to Travel to Terrorist States, which prohibits the use of state funds, as well as the use of non-state funds made available to any public university in Florida, to support travel to "terrorist states"—a list that includes Cuba. On August 22, 2006, the court formally accepted the brief, making ENCASA's position on the statute a part of the official record. Relying on written declarations submitted by Cuba scholars from a wide variety of disciplines, the brief underscores that the Florida statute tramples on the academic freedoms the Supreme Court long has recognized as protected by the First Amendment. By effectively prohibiting faculty and students at Florida's public universities from traveling to Cuba, the law makes it virtually impossible for academics to conduct credible research and interferes with the University's autonomy over educational policy. The suit remains pending in the Southern District of Florida. Regardless of the ultimate outcome in the trial court, we can anticipate an appeal to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals, which will create further opportunity for ENCASA involvement in the case.

Conclusion

One thing that was clear in Washington was the extent to which ENCASA has become known among major policy players, both in and out of government, and perceived as a group with a unique potential to play a significant role in effecting US-Cuba policy change. We will continue to do everything we can to that end, and hope that you will join with us in what ways *you* can.

Members of the ENCASA Steering Committee:

Ruth Behar	Professor, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
Marta Caminero-Santangelo	Associate Professor, University of Kansas at Lawrence
Max Castro	Independent Scholar, Miami, FL
Elizabeth Cerejido	Curator, Florida International University, Miami, FL
Ana Chichester	Associate Professor, University of Mary Washington, VA
María Cristina García	Professor, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
Lillian Manzor	Associate Professor, University of Miami, Miami, FL
Félix Masud-Piloto	Professor, DePaul University, Chicago, IL
Eduardo Peñalver	Associate Professor, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
Lisandro Pérez	Professor, Florida International University, Miami, FL
Cristina Rodríguez	Assistant Professor, New York University, New York, NY
Luis Rumbaut	Attorney, writer, Washington, DC
Rubén G. Rumbaut	Professor, University of California at Irvine
Silvia Wilhelm	Executive Director, Puentes Cubanos, Miami, FL