

Join the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver!

From campuses to suburbs, and everywhere in between, we are committed to working with all organizations and individuals calling for the freedom of these 5 heroes. Our campaign includes forums, petition drives, vigils, and a monthly picket action in front of the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver initiated in 2005. Through this constant work, we have collected over 5000 signatures demanding their immediate release. We have also been joined in this effort by 56 Canadian parliamentarians who signed a letter to the U.S. government demanding freedom for the Cuban Five.

We work as part of over 300 solidarity groups in every continent worldwide. We are committed to continue organizing around their case, and will demand justice for the Cuban Five until they are all free!

Please join us in our bi-weekly meetings, educational events, and our monthly picket actions on the 5th of every month to coincide with activities which take place around the world known as "the 5th of the month for the Cuban 5".



Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver
 604.518.7361 freethe5vancouver@gmail.com
www.freethe5vancouver.ca Twitter: @Freethe5_Van

Have you seen our website dedicated to the 100th picket?
<http://vancouver100cuban5protests.com>

Join the British Columbia Delegation to the 3rd Annual "5 Days for the Cuban 5" in Washington, DC, June 4th - 11th, 2014

Voices from all over the United States are joining together to ask President Obama to change over fifty years of unjust U.S. policy towards Cuba. One of the pivotal points in this widening discussion is to find a solution to the case of the Cuban 5, prisoners held in the United States for more than 15 years. To be part of the dialogue that is taking place in the United States, the US-based International Committee for Freedom of the Cuban 5 is again organizing five days of activities in Washington, D.C., from June 4th to June 11th, 2014.

Activities will include:

- > Visits to Congress with Parliamentarians from other countries.
- > 2-Day Conference on U.S. Cuba Relations and the case of the Cuban 5.
- > Cultural events.
- > A Rally in front of the White House calling for the freedom of the Cuban 5 and the end of the unilateral U.S. blockade against Cuba.

If you are interested in joining the delegation contact: 604.719.6947 or freethe5vancouver@gmail.com

FREE ALL THE 5 CUBAN HEROES NOW!

THE CUBAN 5

Spring 2014
 4th Edition



Newsletter of the
Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver, Canada

WWW.FREETHE5VANCOUVER.CA



Celebrating the Release of Cuban 5 Hero Fernando Gonzalez and Marking the 100th Protest Action in Vancouver, Canada:

8 Events in 4 Days for the 5 Cuban Heroes – West Coast Tour Featuring the Cuban Ambassador to Canada and Author Stephen Kimber a Great Success!

8 More Solidarity Events Across Canada and Internationally Make 16 Events in Total!

INTRODUCTION

The first picket action for the 5 Cuban Heroes in front of the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver, Canada took place in December of 2005. On this day, organizers with the the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver and supporters of the Cuban 5 made the commitment to return to the steps of the U.S. Consulate every month until all of the Cuban 5 were free. Looking back at that day it would be hard to imagine returning for the 100th time, 8 years later, with 3 of the Cuban 5 still in U.S. jails.

The 100th picket of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver was marked on March 5, 2014, after over 15 years of cruel and unjust imprisonment of the Cuban 5 Heroes in U.S. jails. In order to honour this important occasion, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver organized a protest action, as well as a tour of events featuring prominent speakers on the case of the Cuban 5. This West Coast tour reached a wide variety of audiences through 8 events in 4 days spanning to both the province of British Columbia and Washington state with events in Vancouver, Nanaimo, Kamloops, Vic-



toria and Seattle, held in community centres, libraries and universities. Notably, the 100th picket and West Coast tour also received broad media coverage, reflected especially in the Cuban press. Throughout the campaign there were also numerous interviews on radio in British Columbia, including the popular Latino Soy program.

The Cuban Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Julio Garmendia Peña; Miraly González González, First Secretary and Political Attache of the



100th Picket Action at US Consulate in Vancouver

Cuban Embassy in Ottawa; Stephen Kimber, journalism professor at King's University College in Halifax, Nova Scotia and author of "What Lies Across the Water: the Real Story of the Cuban 5," and Don Foreman, Union Representative for the Central Region of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) and Co-Chair

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Award from Gerardo Hernandez & CubaCan-Ottawa presented to FC5C-Vancouver Presented by Julio Garmendia Pena, Cuban Ambassador to Canada & Don Foreman, Canadian Union of Postal Workers



Author Stephen Kimber

*** In Vancouver, Canada: OUR NEXT ACTION! ***



102nd Monthly Protest Action
MONDAY MAY 5th 2014
4-5pm
U.S. Consulate
 1075 W. Pender st.
 Downtown Vancouver, BC
 @FREETHE5_VAN
 Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver
 WWW.FREETHE5VANCOUVER.CA

of the Cuban Committee for Freedom of the Cuban 5 in Ottawa, Canada were among the featured speakers.

The 100th picket action was a loud and powerful show of support for the Cuban 5 Heroes by more than one hundred peace-loving people in Vancouver. It was made louder still with an echo of voices demanding freedom for ALL the 5 Cuban Heroes coming from those out on the streets internationally on March 5th in solidarity with the Cuban 5 and Vancouver's milestone 100th picket action. **At least 8 solidarity events were organized in Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal, Canada, Chicago, San Francisco, and Hartford, U.S., as well as Mexico City and Basel, Switzerland.**

Whether in a protest action, or on the West Coast tour in support of the Cuban 5, each event also celebrated the return of one of the 5 Cuban Heroes, Fernando González, to Cuba the week before. On February 28, Fernando became the second of the 5 Cuban Heroes to return to his homeland, only after serving every day of his unjust sentence, a total of 15 years and 5 months. He joined René González, who had been allowed to return to Cuba in April of 2013. Fernando's return to Cuba, taking his position alongside René in leading the struggle to free ALL of the Cuban 5, was a great step forward. The energy that it brought could be heard, felt and seen in the faces of the over 450 people that participated in the events marking Vancouver's 100th picket action.

Events celebrating the release of Fernando González and marking Vancouver's 100th picket action, were a great success and a step forward in the international campaign for freedom of the 5 Cuban Heroes. They were evidence that united and consistent action for our 5 Heroes is possible and necessary.

In the words of Cuban 5 Hero Antonio Guerrero, inscribed on a beautiful wooden carving presented to the Free

the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver in recognition of the 100th Monthly Picket Action on behalf of the Cuban 5, "To you, our eternal gratitude for you immense and constant support that makes us continue to be resistant and makes us taste our inevitable freedom each day."

Together, we will free ALL the Cuban 5!

A BIG Thank You to event endorsers and co-sponsors: Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), Vancouver Island Regional Public Library, Kamloops & District and Labour Council, Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association Human Rights Committee, Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC), Thompson Rivers University Socialist Club, Center for Global Justice - Seattle University, Latin American Studies Program - Seattle University, School of Law Latin America Program - Seattle University, Diversity, and Citizenship & Social Justice CORE Track Program - Seattle University, Seattle-Cuba Friendship Committee, Seattle A.N.S.W.E.R Coalition, U.S. Women and Cuba Collaboration, Wallingford Neighbors for Peace and Justice (Seattle), Communist Party of Canada Marxist-Leninist (CPC-ML) and Cuba solidarity activists in Nanaimo, Kamloops, Victoria, Vancouver and Seattle.



Irmita Gonzalez, daughter of Rene Gonzalez, speaking at the Barbican Concert for the Five - Voices for the Cuban 5 in London, England -

On Friday 7 March, Irma Gonzalez, eldest daughter of Rene Gonzalez spoke movingly to almost 2,000 people at the Voices for Cuba Concert in London's Barbican Centre. The concert featured stars of the Buena Vista Social Club Eliades Ochoa and Omara Portuondo, US author Alice Walker, British stars of stage and screen and Cuban violinist Omar Puente. Rene Gonzalez had been due to address the audience, but was unable to attend after being denied a visa by the British government at the last minute.

Irmita's words are reproduced below:

"Dear Friends

The first time I came to London was the year 2007, I was very young and I was already struggling very hard to raise awareness on this case. But I was a child when I lived through the night of my father's arrest, the harassment in Miami and the absurd sentence given to him by the court. Years have passed and many vital events happened in my family, good ones and bad ones, but a constant thought was always in mind, "the wish for my father's presence".

I graduated and I dedicated that moment to him, I got married and the most important picture of the festivity was that of me speaking with him on the phone, I had a beautiful baby and named him after his grandpa who could only meet him a few months after his birth. And then my uncle and my grandfather died and we had to suffer knowing that my dad was struggling alone with his pain and grief.

Today I'm 29 and again I am in this city fighting for the freedom of those known by you as the "Miami Five", the only difference is that time had passed, grey hair is appearing on their faces and heads and after accomplishing their full, extreme sentences, my father and Fernando have returned home. But they are not free, and us, their relatives are not relieved. Their three brothers or how I call them, my three uncles are still in prison.

Antonio's mom, who is here right now, Mirtha, goes to bed every bed every night wondering if she'll make it to 2017 to see her son out of the Marianna Federal Prison. Ramon's wife, Elizabeth, also here, has to wait for him to accomplish the same years my father accomplished in jail and Gerardo's wife, Adriana could never see that day.

My reality has been the reality of six other children, and we can't give up until their fathers are all home. Luckily we are not alone, I said before that I was here when I was very young and since then we have been receiving the support of many of you. This event is proof of how much effort and love you have invested on our behalf.

It is a real shame that my dad was denied a visa to come address you. It might seem braggish coming from me, but you'd be amazed to meet the honor, the courage, the strength and the kindness of a man that although he suffered unbearable actions against him and his family for so long, is capable of an easy smile and can care for any cause or anybody deserving it. That man hasn't started enjoying his freedom, he doesn't sleep enough, he doesn't take the time to savor the things and the people he loves and missed the most and we understand but we worry. He is still behind bars and he'll behave like that until his brothers are released. He won't stop working and thinking of ways to make that be. But I want to stop worrying about him, I want to stop this feeling of sadness that has been on my back since I was six years old and my father had to leave home to stop terrorism. I want our five families to finally have a moment without hoping for the presence of three of their most important members.

I want my families to be happy, it's been too much, today I was not suppose to be sad, today I thought I was not going to wish for my dad's presence, today he should have been here to witness the solidarity and warmth I felt since that year when I met many of you. But it seems that there are still some people that want to make him pay even further for the sole crime of saving lives.

My only comfort comes with the hope, that perhaps, very soon, because of the effort from the people and organizations that have made this concert and commission possible, and others sitting here that will join them after tonight. My father will be able to thank you as he asked me to do on his behalf, but personally and most importantly side by side with his four brothers, Ramon, Gerardo, Fernando and Tony.

Thank you very much"

Irmita Gonzalez Salanueva

Reprinted from: www.voicesforthe5.com

REPORT BACK: VANCOUVER ORGANIZERS PARTICIPATE IN 2 IMPORTANT EVENTS FOR THE CUBAN 5 IN LONDON, ENGLAND

From March 7th to 9th the fight to free the 5 Cuban Heroes took Janine Solanki and Sarah Alwell, two organizers with the Free the Cuban 5 Committee Vancouver, halfway around the world to London, England. In London we were able to participate in two important events, the International Commission of Inquiry into the case of the Cuban 5 on March 7th and 8th, followed by a rally to free the Cuban 5 Heroes in Trafalgar Square in the center of London on March 9th.

We left Vancouver on the heels of the 100th monthly protest action for the Cuban 5 held at the US consulate in Vancouver. After the Vancouver activities for the Cuban 5 not only the airplane but also the inspiration from this successful day of action for the Cuban 5 transported us on to London, England to continue fighting for the Cuban 5. At the Commission of Inquiry we found ourselves surrounded by both long time friends that we have coordinated our actions for the Cuban 5 with, as well as many new faces that over the course of 48 hours we would get to meet. Over 300 people from 27 countries participated in the commission, and we learned about many different activities happening around the world for the 5 Cuban Heroes!

This commission comes at an important time in the case - in the last year two of the Cuban 5 heroes, René González and Fernando González, finished their sentences and returned to Cuba. With three of the five still in US jails, what Cuban 5 hero, n Gerardo called a "jury of millions" is needed to make it impossible for the US government to keep the Cuban 5 unjustly locked in US jails.

The two day commission was presided over by three Commissioners: Zakeria Mohammed Yacoob, former Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, Philippe Texier, former Judge, French Court de Cassation and Yogesh Kumar Sabharwal, former Chief Justice of India. On the first day the commissioners, along with all of the participants, heard from legal representatives including Phillip Horowitz and Martin Garbus, two of the



Cuban Five attorneys, who gave details of the denial of the Five's rights to a fair trial by the US government. We also heard moving testimony from several victims of terrorist attacks on Cuba, including from Margarita Morales, whose father died in the 1976 terrorist bombing of Cubana flight 455, when 73 people were killed. This testimony, and the fact that the perpetrators of these terrorist actions still live freely in Miami, provided the grounds for the very reason the Cuban 5 went to Miami to investigate these terrorist groups. An important testimony was also given by Angela Wright, senior researcher at the Americas desk of the International Secretariat at Amnesty International, on the unfair trail and subsequent treatment of the Cuban 5 and their families. The families themselves were also present and gave testimony, sharing the injustice of having the Cuban 5, their husbands, fathers and sons, locked away in US prison. Family members Adriana Pérez, wife of Gerardo Hernández, Elizabeth Palmeiro, wife of Ramon Labañino, Irmita González, daughter of René González, Mirta Rodríguez, mother of Antonio Guerrero and Olga Salanueva, the wife of René González.

The first day of the commission concluded with a beautiful concert dedicated to the Cuban 5. Over 2000 people, many who were hearing about the Cuban 5 for the first time, learned about the case through art and music. Introductions to the evening were made by renowned US author Alice Walker and Irmita Gonzalez, daughter of René González, who spoke on behalf of her father. René, who finally was able to return to Cuba after 15 unjust years of prison in the US, was invited to London for the commission. However in a cruel act, the British government denied René entry to Britain. A highlight of the evening was a performance by five pairs of actors, who read letters written between



each of the Cuban 5 to their families - following this there was not a dry eye in the audience. The evening also included a incredible performance by stars of Cuba's Buena Vista Social Club, Eliades Ochoa and Omara Portuondo.

The second day of the commission included more witness testimony, and special panels which included former President of the Cuban National Assembly Ricardo Alarcón, former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark, and one of the Vice-Presidents of the European parliament Miguel Angel Martínez. The day also coincided with International Women's Day, and featured a panel with Alice Walker, Irmita González, Diana Holland, Assistant General Secretary of UNITE the union, Mirta Rodríguez, mother of Antonio, and Kenia Serrano, President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples. The most exciting moment of the commission was felt with much joy and anticipation, when René González himself spoke via video conference to the commission. René expressed his love and appreciation to those fighting for the freedom of the Cuban 5, and showed tremendous spirit and determination to free Gerardo, Antonio and Ramon, the remaining Cuban 5.

The commission concluded with the preliminary findings from the commissioners. After two days of compelling evidence, they spoke against the many injustices in the case. Their final words were, "Having heard two full days of compelling evidence, we would urge the President of the United States of America, President Barack Obama, to pardon completely all these five persons and to release immediately and unconditionally the three persons who continue to languish in prison in the United States."

A gala dinner hosted by the British Trades Union Congress gave us a final chance to cement new relationships with those fighting for the freedom of the Cuban 5 around the world, with a commitment to go home to our countries and increase our work together to end the unjust imprisonment of our heroes.

Rally in Trafalgar Square for 5 Cuban Heroes

On March 9th we participated in a rally for the Cuban 5, organized by London-based group Rock Around the Blockade. Alongside us were many people from different countries who had participated in the commission, representatives from Cuba and local organizers. The rally, held in the very busy Trafalgar Square, caught the attention of Londoners and tourists alike and made for a great opportunity to talk to new people about the case of the Cuban 5. Supporters of the Cuban 5 from countries including the Cuba, the US, and even Sweden and Scotland spoke to demand freedom for the Cuban 5. On behalf of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee Vancouver Janine Solanki was invited up to speak and she highlighted that we are fighting to free the Cuban 5 from Vancouver, Canada to London, England and all around the world, because the Cuban 5 are heroes not only for Cuba, but for humanity.

These three days, very full of struggle and inspiration in the fight to free the Cuban 5, translate into much more than three days. We all came from our cities and countries, and our local actions for the freedom of the Cuban 5. But by joining together in events like these, we can see the fight for the Cuban 5 as an international movement, and when we return home we are building together around the world with a strong and united voice to demand: Free ALL the Cuban 5 NOW!