



# CUBA Newsletter

November 2009

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ACFS December Meeting & Christmas Party – 3 December 2009

Come and join us for our last meeting of the year and enjoy the company and music of our special guests Cuban Band, J.J.Son  
ALL WELCOME - Bring a plate of food to share!  
6.30pm – 9.00pm  
NSW Teachers Federation, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 33 Mary Street, Surry Hills  
(Remember no January Meeting)

### Latin American House Update

#### A call out to artists to support a solidarity art exhibition

On the 9th of October 2009, at about 12:45am the Latin American House in Marrickville was destroyed by a severe fire. The Centre was completely consumed by the fire and unfortunately all of the contents were lost. The Centre was built and organised as a form of central contact with other Spanish speaking communities and charity work in which volunteers worked together for almost 20 years. The Executive Group of the Latin American House is now organising different activities that will rebuild the new Latin American House and hopefully with the support and participation of generous donations, we can restore what has been lost. We would like to invite all the artists in the community to donate their works for the upcoming auction held at Addison Road Gallery, Marrickville. We welcome painters, sculptors or ceramic works to exhibit on the first week of December 2009 (1-6 December 2009). We appreciate your collaboration with the Latin American House and in its reconstruction. We would also like to thank all of the artists who immediately responded to the devastation, to which they offered their works in support of the re-construction of the new centre. If you would like to support the event please contact: Anton Olea on 0424431412 or [antonolea@yahoo.com.au](mailto:antonolea@yahoo.com.au). For more info on the Latin American house contact: [casalatina2010@yahoo.com.au](mailto:casalatina2010@yahoo.com.au)

### Sydney Cuban Film Festival A Huge Success

This year we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cuban revolution. To honour this occasion ACFS, in collaboration with the organisers of the Sydney Latin American Film Festival (SLAFF) and the Cuban Film Institute, hosted a three-day Cuban film festival in July celebrating 50 years of Cuban cinema since the revolution. It also featured an exhibition of Cuban film poster art, from the Cuban Film Institute. The opening night featured the new Cuban film Broken Gods and a fiesta with musicians and Cuban dancers. There was also a little rum afterwards, courtesy of Havana Club. The festival presented a retrospective of internationally acclaimed Cuban films that captured the many faces of Cuba since the revolution in 1959. There was a large audience (overflowing on opening night) and the event was a fantastic success. It attracted a great many people interested to find out more about Cuba and keen to see the diverse range of films and posters and to support a great event. The ACFS proceeds from the event went towards our humanitarian project in Cuba (Dr Ernesto 'Che' Guevara Hospital in Las Tunas) and the SLAFF proceeds towards the Latin American Film Festival later in the year, a fundraiser for community development projects in Latin America. Poster sales proceeds went to the Cuban Film Institute to support the work of young Cuban film directors. Thanks to all who supported this fabulous event. A special thanks to Don Sutherland from the Cuban Children's Fund and the AMWU for assistance with the venue, Jacqui Andres (SLAFF) and Bob Treasure (ACFS) for their talks at the screenings and specially, specially to all the ACFS and SLAFF members who worked so hard to make it a success.

## In this issue

Announcements	1
Secretary's Report	2
Vale Juan Almeida	3
WHO Comments on Cuban Health System	3
Vale Carmen Nordelo Tejera	4
Renew Your Membership	4

## Contact us

The ACFS meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month at 6.30pm at **NSW Teachers Federation Building, Lvl 1, 33 Mary St, Surry Hills.**

All friends of Cuba and those who would like to find out more are welcome to attend meetings.

**Mail:** PO Box K364,  
Haymarket NSW 1240

**Web:** [www.sydney-acfs.org](http://www.sydney-acfs.org)

## Newsletter Contributions

We welcome contributions to the Cuba Newsletter. If you would like submit an article, please contact: [newsletter@sydney-acfs.org](mailto:newsletter@sydney-acfs.org)

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

A number of people have contacted us recently asking about ACFS and what we do. It caused me to think about what it is that characterises our organisation. I'm sure members will have various views about this but here's my two-bobs worth. There are three features of ACFS which to my mind stand out:

1. ACFS has a diverse membership encompassing a wide range of political views
2. As an organisation it is independent of direction from outside its membership
3. Political solidarity with Cuba is at the core of ACFS work, but we view solidarity as something that we can learn from and that has implications for us in this country – not as separate from what happens here.

ACFS membership is very diverse. Not all our members would see themselves as political activists although many are. Our membership includes those whose interests are less overtly political and focused more towards cultural or humanitarian activities. All our members play an important part in ACFS, working in the areas that they know about and feel able to contribute to. The political aspect is ever-present because it is almost impossible to engage with any aspect of Cuban life without coming face to face with 'the political', either in a negative way, eg. the effects of the US blockade, or a positive way eg. a social system that has democratic procedures at its heart (including industrial democracy) and that does not condone homelessness and extremes of wealth.

The ACFS aims to promote and encourage friendship, understanding, trade and other exchanges between the people of Australia and Cuba. An ACFS priority is to end the US blockade of Cuba, to uphold the right of the Cuban people to self-determination and justice and to see freedom for

the five Cuban political prisoners unjustly held in US prisons.

Within this basic framework, ACFS members decide what the organisation does and how we do it. Decisions are made by members at meetings with input also from members and others who have views about the subjects under discussion. Our email lists and newsletters play an important role in getting this input. We have no funding nor instruction from outside our membership and are proud that we are truly independent.

ACFS puts a high priority on understanding how the social system in Cuba has lessons for us in this country. Our solidarity activities clarify for many of us the differences between a capitalist class-based system and one in which a different system prevails.

Both here and in Cuba we see the results of these differences. We only need to look at the health statistics for indigenous people in this country, rich as it is and health statistics in Cuba, a relatively poor country, to see how these differences manifest in the population. The huge gap between the rich and the poor in developed western countries and the dire

consequences of this encourage us to ask the question 'why is it that a rich country like Australia or the US is not able or willing to look after its people's basic needs. Why is it that a country like Cuba has been able to provide health care, education, housing and employment not only to its own people but also provide assistance on an international scale? The annual Work/Study Brigade to Cuba that ACFS organises is a great way to explore these issues (and have a great time in the process!)

We recognise that Australia is a very different society to Cuba ...and that it would be naïve to see Cuba

(or any other country) as a paradise. It has problems even without the added cruelty of the blockade and the constant waves of terrorism launched from the US. But what we can learn from Cuba is that a social system that puts people before profit and has the support of the people, has the best chance of bringing about an end to the oppression built into an exploitative and profit driven society.

There is a Cuban band in this country at present. From Santiago de Cuba JJ Son y Idabelis has been playing in venues around Sydney including many work places. Sponsored by the CFMEU Construction and General Division, NSW branch, the band is playing great music while raising awareness about the Cuban Five political prisoners who have now been incarcerated in US prisons for over 10 years.

Everyone is invited to come along to our concert on November 20 where the band will be playing along with Café Sur. The concert has been organised by the Sydney Cuba solidarity groups and the CFMEU and we would love you to join us for a very special occasion. For more information see the flyer in this edition.

If you are interested in finding out more about Cuba and the ACFS, please come along to our meetings. They are open to all supporters and interested people. You would be most

welcome. We look forward to seeing you. Our last meeting for the year is on Thursday, December 3 at our usual venue the Teachers Federation building, Level 1 meeting room, 33 Mary St, Surry Hills at 6.30pm. Our meetings are on the first Thursday of the month except in January when we have no meeting.

Joan Silk, Secretary, Sydney Branch, Australia Cuba Friendship Society

*"The ACFS aims to promote and encourage friendship, understanding, trade and other exchanges between the people of Australia and Cuba."*

*"The political aspect (of our work) is ever-present because it is almost impossible to engage with any aspect of Cuban life without coming face to face with 'the political', either in a negative way...or a positive way"*

**REFLECTIONS OF FIDEL:  
ALMEIDA IS MORE ALIVE  
TODAY THAN EVER**

Taken from CubaDebate

I have spent hours listening by television to the entire country's tribute to Commander of the Revolution Juan Almeida Bosque. I think that confronting death was for him a duty like all of those that he fulfilled throughout his life; he did not know, nor did we, how much sadness the news of his physical absence would bring to us.



***Almeida has died!  
He is more alive today  
than ever!***

**ANC STATEMENT ON  
THE DEATH OF JUAN  
ALMEIDA BOSQUE**

Issued by: Ishmael Mnisi, ANC Spokesperson (17 Sept 2009)

I had the privilege of knowing him: a young black man, a worker, combative who, successively, was chief of his revolutionary cell, a Moncada combatant, a prison compañero, platoon captain in the Granma landing, Rebel Army officer — brought to a standstill during his advance by a shot to the chest in the violent Combat of Uvero — a Column commander, marching to create the Third Eastern Front, a compañero who shared the leadership of our forces in the last victorious battles to overthrow the dictatorship.

I was a privileged witness to his exemplary conduct for more than half a century of heroic and victorious resistance, in the struggle against bandits, the counter-blow of Girón, the October Crisis, the internationalist missions and the resistance to the imperialist blockade.

I listened with pleasure to some of his songs, and especially that one of impassioned emotion which, in response to the homeland's call for "victory or death," bade farewell to human dreams. I did not know that he had written more than 300 of them that joined his literary work, a source of enjoyable reading and of historic events. He defended principles of justice that will be defended at all times and during any period, as long as human beings breathe on Earth. Let us not say that

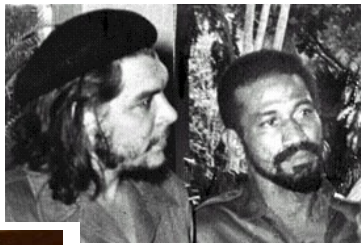
The African National Congress (ANC) is deeply saddened by the death of comrade Juan Almeida Bosque, Commander of the Revolution and Vice President of the Council of State of The Republic of Cuba.

Comrade Juan Almeida Bosque will be remembered for his gallant contribution in the liberation of Cuba from the clutches of the Batista regime. He built and consolidated democracy despite terrible odds presented by the imperialist forces. His passing is indeed a loss to all peace-loving people around the world. Our country is today consolidating the gains of freedom, thanks to the efforts of comrade such as Juan Almeida Bosque. May he rest in peace knowing that many are going to pick up his spear and continue to struggle until the imperialist economic blockade of Cuba is lifted.

The ANC passes its commiseration to his family, the Cuban government, the Communist Party and the grieving people of the Republic of Cuba. May his soul rest in peace.

*"I was a privileged witness to his exemplary conduct for more than half a century of heroic and victorious resistance"*

*Fidel Castro*



**WORLD HEALTH  
ORGANISATION: 'YOU HAVE  
DONE A TREMENDOUS JOB IN  
THE HEALTHCARE FIELD'**

By José A. de la Osa

Translated by Granma International  
26 October 2009 (abridged)

TOUCHING down in Cuba for the very first time, Margaret Chan – director general of the World Health Organization – said that it was a great pleasure for her to visit this country, small but of tremendous significance for the WHO, "so that we may observe and learn about the excellent efforts underway in the Cuban healthcare system."

"I want to see the work being carried out with respect to primary care and the communities, equality and universal access to medical care which are issues of great interest for our organization," she added, noting that she was hoping to have "great experiences" during her visits to medical care and research centers. Her presence here is also a great pleasure for us, stated Minister José Ramón Balaguer during the reception, adding that "we admire and respect her work and the ideas she has about worldwide public health."

During a recent speech in Denmark, Dr. Chan – a graduate in Medicine from the University of Western Ontario (Canada) – highlighted, as Cuba has also been able to demonstrate, that market forces alone will not be able to resolve social problems. A value system is fundamental for the world to continue. On the contrary, a situation that is already in danger in terms of vast unbalances, in terms of income, opportunities and health, can only get worse.

Referring to the "busy working agenda" prepared for her visit, she cheerfully commented that "I would be unsatisfied if they had not prepared such an intense agenda, because I know that Cuba has done a tremendous job in the field of healthcare." Dr. Chan was appointed director general of the WHO in November 2006.

**VALE CARMEN NORDELO  
TEJERA**

Granma International  
3 November 2009



Around midday on Monday November 2 in this capital, Carmen Nordelo Tejera – mother of Hero of the Republic of Cuba, Gerardo Hernández Nordelo - died aged 76 years following a long illness.

Carmen Nordelo was born on February 15, 1933 in the Canary Islands and emigrated to Havana at the age of 17 years for economic reasons on the part of her family. As a housewife, she supported the revolutionary activities of her husband and took care of the intellectual and social development of her three children.

She had an outstanding participation in the Battle of Ideas that our people are waging for truth and justice for our five compatriots unjustly imprisoned in the empire's jails until, due to poor health, she was unable to continue.

Our deepest condolences to Gerardo and her other relatives on behalf of the Cuban people.

**GERARDO GRATEFUL FOR  
SOLIDARITY**

Granma International

GERARDO Hernández Nordelo, unjustly given a double life sentence plus 15 years in prison, sent a message of thanks from him and his family to the Cuban people and friends around the world for "all the expressions of support that he has received in such difficult moments."

Gerardo, one of the five Cuban anti-terrorist fighters incarcerated in maximum security prisons in the United States, stated that "the best tribute to my mother would be for all of us to continue our fight for justice and, one day, as she so desired, for the Five to return to the homeland," according to a message sent by activist Alicia Jrapko from California.

Carmen Nordelo Tejera died on Monday afternoon after a long illness. She continued to fight for the release of the Five until her deteriorated health prevented her from doing so.



Gerardo with his mother

Nearly ten years ago, Gerardo composed this poem for his mother on her birthday:

**Longing**

*I'll write you a poem that will touch  
the universe,  
and still I worry that it will be too  
little praise for your love,  
it'll carry a thousand words of  
appreciation for your kisses,  
those that healed my painful  
wounds.*

*I will try to tell you how much love I  
have for you,  
love that shines within me and  
protects the truth,  
and how I always ride through the  
world unscathed,  
since part of my life is in your  
heart.*

*I'll tell you how much your wakeful  
years mean to me,  
your infinite silence and your  
immense courage,  
and you'll know how I long to  
return to you,  
to be reborn in your arms and feel  
your warmth.*

*These words will have to come  
with tears of passion and joy  
because I will keep the return  
hidden in my chest  
and until that day arrives, how I  
want for you, mother, to read these  
verses.*

**HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR ACFS MEMBERSHIP LATELY?**

***Your membership fee and donations directly support our solidarity work and community projects in Cuba. Every cent towards our work counts!***

**Enclosed is a \$20/\$10 (concession) for 1 year membership.**

**Enclosed is a donation of \_\_\_\_\_ towards the work of the Society.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to ACFS, PO Box K364, HAYMARKET NSW 1240**