

Fidel honored in Washington

---

23/11/2017



The willingness of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, to improve relations with the United States while preserving the island's sovereignty, was highlighted during a panel discussion in honor of the first anniversary of the revolutionary leader's death, November 25, 2016.

The panel was moderated by Cuban Ambassador to the United States José Ramón Cabañas, and featured U.S. experts who discussed Fidel's continual efforts to improve relations with the northern neighbor and strengthen ties with U.S. citizens.

Before diplomats from various countries and friends of Cuba, executive director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization/Pastors for Peace, Gail Walker, highlighted the altruistic essence of the Cuban Revolution and the support offered by the island to many countries around the world.

The activist noted that Cuba has also extended its solidarity to the United States following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when Fidel offered to send over 1,500 doctors to treat victims of the disaster, a proposal that was rejected by then President George W. Bush.



Panel discussion dedicated to Fidel at the Cuban Embassy in Washington. **Photo:** Prensa Latina

Walker also mentioned the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana, where 170 U.S. citizens from underserved communities have been trained to date, as part of an initiative set up by the Comandante en Jefe.

Meanwhile, Latin American studies expert Julia Sweig, recalled seeing Fidel debate issues related to Cuba with some of his strongest critics.

According to the former member of the influential Council on Foreign Relations, the Caribbean leader held open discussions with U.S. economic, cultural, and political figures, in which he encouraged the strengthening of ties between the two countries.

Speaking to **Prensa Latina**, Sweig noted that although the U.S. public is very diverse, the vast majority support the normalization of relations with Cuba, before highlighting Fidel's contribution to achieving this goal.

Peter Kornbluh, director of the Cuba Documentation Project with the George Washington University's National Security Archive, explained that the Comandante en Jefe was well aware of the difference between the U.S. government and the people.

The historian, who recently traveled to Cuba to visit the place where Fidel Castro's remains are interred at the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, in Santiago de Cuba, spoke about the various occasions on which the revolutionary reached out to the U.S. government.

Kornbluh, co-author of **Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana**, stated that Fidel was always willing to engage in dialogue, only asking that the island's sovereignty be respected.

This idea was reaffirmed by Cuban-American attorney José Pertierra, who noted

that the only thing Fidel was unwilling to accept was the imposition of conditions.

Unlike the U.S. government, Fidel was willing to maintain good relations from the start. It was the United States that represented the problem, not Cuba, Periera insisted.

---