
Blacks should support normalizing relations with Cuba

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President Obama's historic announcement that the U.S. is restoring diplomatic relations with Cuba, after more than five decades of strategic political and military opposition, is today resonating positively throughout Black America.

It is in the economic, cultural and political interests of 42.7 million Black Americans across the United States to focus on the new emerging opportunities to strengthen relationships with the people and government of the Republic of Cuba.

President Obama stated, "In the most significant changes in our policy in more than 50 years, we will end an outdated approach that, for decades, has failed to advance our interests, and instead we will begin to normalize relations between our two countries. Through these changes, we intend to create more opportunities for the American and Cuban people, and begin a new chapter among the nations of the Americas."

Prospective business

A key question that needs to be asked is: How will the changes President Obama highlighted about Cuba afford Black Americans in particular more opportunities to establish joint ventures and other business relationships with the people of Cuba? Too often some of us limit ourselves to lengthy debates about our changing world, but miss out on a chance to participate in helping to actually shape and build new world realities.

Our worldview about has always included international perspectives. Our consciousness is informed not just by what might be popular domestically at any given moment in time, but also how we see the international struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

In Black American education, literature, music, sports, business, religion and other cultural realms we have witnessed the benefits of defining and securing the interests of African people throughout the world.

I vividly remember James Baldwin encouraging me to understand better what it meant by the slogan "Viva Cuba!"

Baldwin helped me to see the relationship between the Cuban Revolution and the African Liberation Movement against imperialism, colonization and the sufferings of neo-colonialism in the 1960s and 1970s.

Blacks should support Cubans

"Viva Cuba" became synonymous Viva Africa!" Angola and Namibia, as well the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, all benefited from the enormous sacrifice and support that Cuba rendered to southern Africa during the 1970s and 1980s.

Now that Cuba is once again the subject of solidarity for some and renewed ridicule from others, I believe it is important for Black Americans to actively support for our brothers and sisters in the island nation of Cuba. More than 11 million people live in Cuba. The 2002 Cuban census puts the Black population at 10 percent, mulatto 23.8 percent, Asian 1 percent and Whites at 65 percent. Most estimates place the people of color figure at 40 to 60 percent of the population.

I have been to Cuba many times and each time I am reminded how African culture and Latin culture have fused together extraordinarily well in Havana, the capital city, and in the other urban and rural areas of the nation.

Silence is not golden

I thank Harry Belafonte and others for helping to inspire the current generation of Cuban poets, writers, musicians and hip-hop artists in Havana who will certainly now have a stronger chance to spread their artistic genius throughout the world. We should remain vigilant because the forces of repression and ignorance are still active.

Predictably, some conservatives have already announced plans to have Congress block Obama's plan to designate a U.S. ambassador to Cuba. The economic blockade of Cuba is a matter that only the U.S. Congress can end through legislation. But the will of the people can force Congress to do the right thing regarding Cuba. Let's continue to stand up and speak about Cuba and the rest of the world. This not a time for Black America to be silent.
