



SAN ANTONIO ACTIVISTS MOBILIZE TO DELIVER MEDICAL AID TO CUBA AMID BLOCKADE

The effort was led by Dr. Uriel Ramírez, an L.A. resident who graduated from Cuba's *Latin American School of Medicine* partnering local groups such as *Operation Rainbow*, *Hands Off Cuba Committee-Global Health Partners* and *Not Just Tourists Orange County* among others.

Despite the risk of challenging the blockade, volunteers worked tirelessly for a month to gather medicines and medical supplies. They filled the truck with more than \$200,000 in medical supplies and half a million painkillers—a special request since there were none on the island due to the blockade. In addition, boxes of syringes, unique material for the *William Soler Pediatric Teaching Hospital* and materials for cardiology supplies would go with 500 pacemakers. Thirteen pallets left the port of Jacksonville, Florida and are now in Cuba.

The San Antonio meeting on January 31st brought more than 50 folks to the *Esperanza Center* with speakers including *Esperanza* Director Graciela Sánchez, Rachell Tucker, Cuban activist and leader of *About Face* (anti-war veterans group), as



well as Jovanni Reyes and Jake Tucker. All pledged support for the medical campaign and efforts to end the US blockade. By the end of the meeting, they decided to establish a *San Antonio Hands-Off Cuba Committee*, send delegates to *Cuba for May Day* with a "Labor & Youth Activists" delegation, and organize another meeting.

Mark Friedman, an organizer with the *L.A. chapter of the Hands-Off Cuba Committee* speaking at the January 31st meeting of more than 50 at the *Esperanza Center* emphasized that "The U.S. has had an illegal, genocidal embargo on the people of Cuba for over 60 years, so this is not just about delivering supplies, but also about bringing awareness to the people of the U.S. of what their government is doing in their name."

Organizers are already planning their next mission of delivering medicine and supplies to the island which needs to be a continuous effort to help the people of Cuba until the blockade is lifted. For now, their courage serves as a reminder of the power of solidarity in the face of oppression.

For information: (bit.ly/cuba-inform)

Los Desaparecidos

Comenzaron a desaparecer como los árboles de los bosques

Uno por Tijuana, otro por Tapachula.
Al principio la gente no se sorprendió
El fenómeno no era nuevo.
Pero cuando los desaparecidos pasaron
De 2 o 3 al año a 2 o 3 a la semana
La gente supo que algo había.
Los oficiales dijeron
No se preocupen,
Es una racha,
Pronto todo volverá a la normalidad
Estamos investigando.

Pero cada día hay más desaparecidos,
A veces en grupo.
Muy de cuando en cuando regresa alguno
Casi nunca alguna.

Las semanas se van como agua y los meses también.

Si algo cambia son números, de 2 o 3 a la semana
a 5 o 6 al día, a veces, 10, 12, 30 ausentes.

Cambian los presidentes, los generales,

Pero lo que no cambia son los cadáveres que encuentran.

De cuando en cuando

Se sabe que algunos de los desaparecidos

Fueron secuestrados o ejecutados por carteles,

Otros por policías y otros por militares.

Rara vez aparecen los desaparecedores

Y más raro es que los
castiguen.

—Carlos Ponce Meléndez

BIO: Carlos Ponce Meléndez es el autor de *Platicas de mi Barrio*, *El Gringo Latino*, cuentos para niños, y más de cincuenta poemas publicados tales como: *The Texas Observer*, *El Angel*, *Celebrate!* *Under the Sun*, *Attention*, entre otras.

