

Declaration of Principles and Objectives

Citizens Committee for Racial Integration
Havana, Cuba

The Citizens Committee for Racial Integration (CIR) is a non-profit, non-partisan, and apolitical civic institution that brings together Cuban citizens, Cubans living abroad, and foreigners living in Cuba. Of their own free will, without distinction, and in equality, they unite to promote through peaceful and legal means the fullest integration of all of Cuba's citizens to all social, economic, cultural and institutional spaces, as a reflection of the social composition and cultural bases of the Cuban nation—regardless their race or skin color.

The CIR's principal objective is to drive and promote the broadest, open, and most objective debate possible—a profound and historical analysis of the present and future of interracial relations in Cuba, and of any particularities related to the lives, concerns, and development of African descendants in our country—amongst Cuba's social, cultural, academic and institutional circles. Similarly, with the active support of all Cubans who are conscious of the problem, the CIR wants to promote and sustain all actions, measures, initiatives, and programs whose purpose it is to guarantee a voice and spaces for Cuba's African descendants. It is also our intention to push for progress towards true integration, something about which many of us have dreamt for several generations.

The CIR is offering the Premio Tolerance Plus [Tolerance Plus Prize] in the struggle

against racism (and for racial integration), to recognize people and institutions that stand out in their efforts against this scourge. It also proposes to establish relationships, and formal and brotherly ties, to any institution or organization that is interested, sensitive to, and involved in working for the rights and needs of minorities or ethnic groups, and that endeavors to establish equality and respect as the foundation for social and interethnic relations, anywhere in the world. The relationships and ties we create with other entities will never compromise, in any way, the CIR's independent agenda or its objectives.

In the interest of fulfilling its purpose and objectives, the CIR will develop and promote as many civic, social, intellectual, academic or cultural projects as legitimately possible.

Havana, September 2, 2008
The Leadership of the CIR

Plan of Action

When in 1986, the Cuban government decided to insert blacks into the Political Bureau and the Central Committee of the only legally recognized party in Cuba, and it promoted, in a top-down approach, the participation of youth, women, and blacks in official (political and cultural) events, it was a tacit acknowledgment of the failure of all it had

done, according to authorities, in favor of the equitable integration and participation of these important social groups at all levels and in every dimension of national life.

Today, nearly fifty years after it was announced that the problem of racial exclusion was solved, after independent social spaces in which blacks could express themselves were suppressed, and debate on a topic so important to the future of our country was eliminated, there is growing unrest because of the obvious fissures and shortcomings of the present state of integration that plagues Cuban society today.

Despite the fact there is no legalized racial discrimination in Cuba, or overt expressions of racism as hate or confrontations between groups, and despite the fact we have gone through a natural and sustained process of ethnic and cultural miscegenation over recent years, we must face our future still being tremendously behind with regards to institutional, governmental, symbolic, and media representation of Cuba's African descendants, and in their ability to participate in economic and corporate spaces. A dollarized economy over the past few years, and growing dependency on remittances for material wellbeing, have once again placed blacks and mestizos in an extremely disadvantaged situation.

The elite's minimal sensitivity to this, seen in its refusal to address the problem's causes, to assume responsibility and promote a necessary debate on the topic, makes difficult in a still closed society any progress regarding perceptions or positive views towards the requisite integration of a demographically and culturally significant segment of Cuban society, and regarding its need to have access. The same could be said about the historically and culturally conditioned shortcomings that still plague Cuban society, independent of the very limited contributions made by certain official projects



Members of the Citizens Committee for Racial Integration

that have aired this topic, which hegemonize references and plans concerning the race problem in Cuba.

The Citizens Committee for Racial Integration is aware of Cuban society's needs, potential, and challenges regarding integration and the equitable coexistence of the different elements composing it. To this end, the CIR proposes the following Plan of Action:

Systematizing the holding of academic debates and forums on the race issue and integration's challenges. We are establishing an endowed chair, the Gustavo E. Urrutia Chair, and a corresponding library, for just this purpose.

Promoting projects designed by the Gustavo E. Urrutia Chair.

Inaugurating a virtual debate forum as a communication tool designed to increase the exchange of ideas and consensus building on subjects related to national and global international interracial relations.

Promoting the Aproximaciones. El Libro Abierto del CIR [Approximations. The CIR's Open Book] project, a space that will collect

brief accounts of Cuban citizens' experiences, views, and perceptions of the subject of race in Cuba. This is one way to address the CIR's basic desire to strengthen the voices of citizens, themselves.

Promoting the creation of regional and local affiliates to fortify the Committee's national character.

Promoting the presentation and dissemination of graphic and audiovisual support materials.

Developing community work in complex or vulnerable zones where education is absolutely indispensable for the recovery of a social and integrative balance.

Developing educational campaigns that contribute to knowledge about and the practical enjoyment of citizens' rights, and about the much-needed balance of their participation and representation in institutional, cultural and media spaces.

Developing mechanisms for cooperation with foreign institutions and entities that have experience in fighting for minority rights and social integration.

Encouraging community audiovisual screenings coordinated by the CIR and the Grupo Mediático Consenso [the Consensus Media Group] that will allow a closer look at new subjects and voices that have been omitted by official social and cultural rhetoric. What we propose initially is three audiovisual cycles:

- First Cycle: Afro-America: barriers to integration and Affirmative Action
- Second Cycle: Closeup on Cuba
- Third Cycle: Portable Cuba. A look at Cuban culture in the Diáspora.

Publicly denouncing any form of discrimination through campaigns whose purpose it is to bestow human beings with dignity.

Promoting an analysis of contemporary global thinking on the matter of racism and

integration, keeping in mind a need to disseminate this information, via Community Workshops.

Developing informational resources in the form of dossiers, to serve as bibliographic sources on the following subjects:

- Racial Being, Identity, and Integration
- Emotional Intelligence and Pluralistic Coexistence
- Civil Society
- Cuban Culture in the Diaspora
- Outmigration and Immigration
- Demographics of Diasporic Cuban Communities

Encouraging the acknowledgement and values of African cultures in the Americas, their identity, diversity, and history, through the cultural proposal *Salón Abierto* [Open Salon].

In the interest of bringing people together, promoting the development of video-conferences between Cuban specialists and foreigners who through the social sciences, history, and culture have studied topics like racial being, marginality, nationalism, and the presence of African descendants in Diasporic culture.

This Plan of Action is open to other ideas and projects that emerge from citizens' debate: however, they must get approval from the CIR's leadership. Our goal is to construct a Consensus Nation with citizens in favor of racial integration.

CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR RACIAL
INTEGRATION

September 27, 2008