



Jaqueline H. Arroyo
CEO and Founder
Afro-Cuban Alliance, Inc

Another calendar year is drawing to a close and Afro-Cubans are steadily making progress in their struggle for civil rights. At this junction, the fight looms large and the road ahead seems long; but each step forward brings them closer to a world in which each person can control his or her own destiny.

During the course of this year, we have been pleased to hear that there are many groups dedicated to the fight against racism, discrimination, and injustice in Cuba, and that these groups are coming together and working together towards this end. The *Citizens' Committee for Racial Integration's* 2011 year-end report (on page 71) briefs us on how it is working with such groups as the Black Brotherhood [*Cofradía de la Negritud*]; *Progressive Arc Party*; *Observatory for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgenders* (LGBT); and *Independent Afro-Cuban Foundation*, just to name a few. These organizations participated in joint debates, discussions, conferences and workshops. Moreover, the CIR was contacted by the United Nation's Committee Against Racial Discrimination (CERD) and invited to participate in the First World Congress for African Descendants in Honduras, although they were not able to attend.

Here in the U.S., we learned of the importance of similar groups coming together for a fight. During our Civil Rights movement, in January, 1957, Martin Luther King, Jr., Charles Steele and Fred Shuttlesworth established the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), of which King was made its first President. Before the SCLC, each of these men led their own organization, but realized the strength in joining together. The SCLC became a major force in organizing the Civil Rights movement and based its principles on nonviolence and civil disobedience. According to King, it is essential that the Civil Rights movement not sink to the level of the racists and hatemongers who oppose them: "We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline," he urged. No truer words have ever been spoken.

In our last issue, *ISLAS* 18, the Publisher's Note was entitled "United We Stand, Divided We Fall." The meaning behind that note is applicable to this note, as well. It is critical that groups in Cuba fighting against injustice forge an alliance and work together for the betterment of the cause. I think it was Benjamin Franklin¹ who said it even better, when he said:

"We must indeed all hang together,
or, most assuredly,
we shall all hang separately."

1-Benjamin Franklin (January 17, 1706 [O.S. January 6, 1705] – April 17, 1790) was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. A noted polymath, Franklin was a leading author, printer, political theorist, politician, postmaster, scientist, musician, inventor, satirist, civic activist, statesman, and diplomat in the United States.