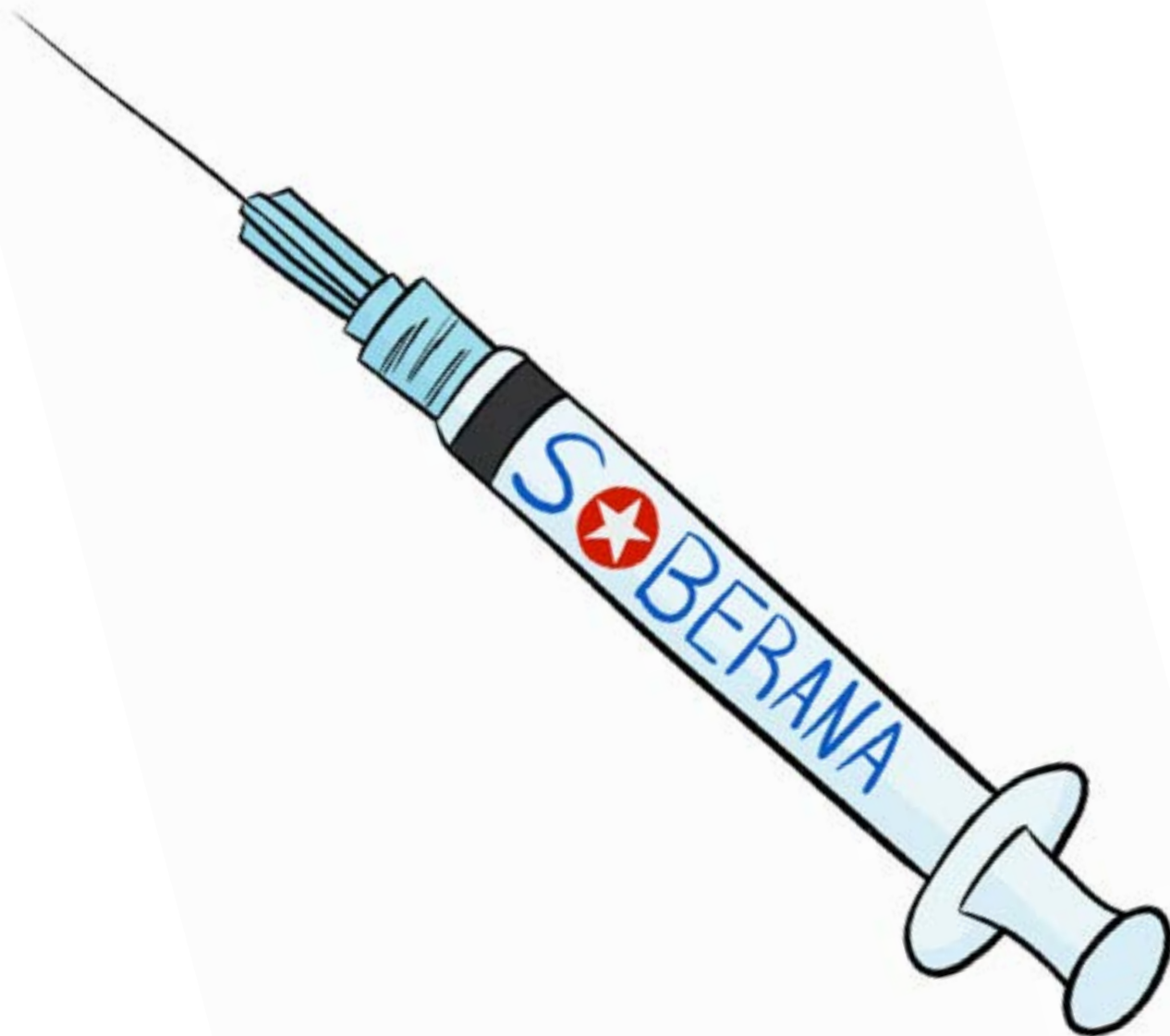


MAY 2023

#BREAKTHEBLOCKADE

SCIENCE AGAINST EMPIRE: CUBA, 2023

interviews & reflections
on science, medicine, society,
& the effects of the US blockade



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DEDICATION

This zine is dedicated to comrade Humberto Viel, a navy marine who we met serendipitously at the beach— he was scuba diving and we were looking at sea snails. When he showed us how to pick up the snails, we started talking. We asked him what he thought of the revolution and the current government. He proceeded to deliver a series of passionate monologues about Cuban history and the troubled state of the country today, which he asked us to record on our phones and post to the internet, as he does not own a phone. We became fast friends.

He shared with us his life story over three evenings. A devoted Marxist-Leninist and communist revolutionary, his father was once a bodyguard for Fidel Castro. He is himself highly trained in martial arts and a big fan of Chinese martial arts films. While critical of many of the policies of the current government, he is a strong believer in the original ideals of the Cuban revolution and the *Movimiento 26 de Julio*.

He worries that younger generations around the world have begun to think of communism as “irrelevant” — so he was overjoyed to have met a group of young revolutionaries from the US. Surrounded by delegation members the second night we met, he said, despite the

language barriers, that he felt “right at home” in our community of young communists. In spite of our protests, he gave us over a dozen of his own classic revolutionary texts, political magazines, and posters about Cuban culture and society, to take back home to North America. He shared with us DVDs and a big tub of home-picked guava. We were overwhelmed by his kindness and generosity, and inspired by his revolutionary spirit. Among his many parting gifts to us was an original 26 de Julio flag, black and red, that he hopes will hang in the office of a true revolutionary party in the US one day. The pressure is on— we will not let him down!



Left: Comrade Humberto at the beach in his marine uniform
Above: A poster from the Workers Central Union

INTRODUCTION

This zine-journal is a compilation of art, photos, interviews, essays, and reflections, produced by a handful of youth organizers from across the US and Canada who participated in a 2023 May Day solidarity brigade to Havana.

The views and opinions expressed here are personal reflections. They do not represent those of any particular organization.

In 1959, the Cuban people organized through the July 26th Movement to remove a US-backed dictator and put an end, once and for all, to centuries of colonialism on the island. As Cuba gained its sovereignty, the US wasted no time in enacting a comprehensive set of genocidal economic sanctions that have persisted to this day. For more than 60 years, US imperialism has deprived Cuba of an annual trade revenue of more than two billion US dollars. The persistent food and medical shortages brought about by the blockade have claimed countless lives. Against all odds—amidst continued US aggression and some of the harshest economic conditions the island has ever seen—the Cuban people have persisted in pursuing their vision of socialism and national liberation.

We were among 150 organizers from across the United States and Canada who traveled to Cuba between April 24 and May 3, 2023. We crossed the Florida Straits to learn from the Cuban people about the history, politics, economy, philosophy, and culture of their country. And, as scientists and workers in the imperial core, we took a

particular interest in Cuba's impressive programs of medical internationalism and scientific research. How is it that a small island nation of 11 million people was able to develop and distribute its own domestically produced vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic—a feat that not even most of the richest capitalist nations had managed to accomplish?

Our experience of the island was nonetheless characterized by contradiction and ambiguity. The personal reflections in this zine speak to only a small sampling of the diversity of perspectives represented both in our delegation and within the Cuban population more broadly. We bore witness to poverty and various degrees of repression. We saw resurgent class inequality, brought about at least in part by concessions to global capitalist and market forces, under the inhumane pressures of the US blockade. In spite of all of this, most of us were left with a deepened appreciation and admiration for the ideals of the Cuban project.



Mariposa (white ginger): the national flower of Cuba, originally native to India



“Our main task is to listen to our Cuban comrades and to loosen the stranglehold that our own governments have placed around the necks of the Cuban people.”



The “Tocoro” (Cuban trogon) is Cuba's national bird.

Our primary task as subjects of the imperialist core is not to romanticize or oversimplify Cuba's heterogeneous and complex project of national liberation and socialist construction. Our main task is to listen to our Cuban comrades and to loosen the stranglehold that our own governments have placed around the necks of the Cuban people. Only when the blockade is lifted, and Cuba is removed from “state sponsors of terrorism” list, will the Cuban people have the chance to resolve the contradictions internal to their society through their own, sovereign determination. And only after these genocidal sanctions are lifted will Cuba have a chance to thrive as a nation whose people have yet so much to offer to the world.

In our minds, the most pressing question has become: how can we support the Cuban people

in their revolutionary process? How do we end the blockade so that ordinary people on both sides of the border suffering from the same imperialist system can thrive together at last?

In this zine, you'll find field notes and interviews as well as reflections from our trip. We hope you find inspiration from the tenacity and spirit of the Cuban people as well as the concrete contributions they have made to the dormant world revolution. Please join and support us in our global campaign to **end the blockade.**

MEDICAL SOLIDARITY: A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MED STUDENT IN CUBA

The Latin American School of Medicine (Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina, or ELAM) in Havana, Cuba, is among the largest medical schools in the world and provides rigorous medical training free of charge to students from all over the world. It recruits students based on merit and financial need, training them with the express intention of returning them home to provide primary healthcare in the most underprivileged communities of their home countries. With students from over 110 different countries, primarily in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa, the school is a vibrant mosaic of diverse cultures, languages, and ideas. But the blockade has taken an enormous toll on students and teachers alike, compromising their ability to provide medicines and services and to complete classes and hospital rotations. Here, in their own words, a few of these resilient doctors-in-training describe their daily life at ELAM as well as their lived experience of the blockade.

MY NAME IS MAAME KORLEY BAAH-ARRHIN.

I AM A PRE-MED STUDENT FROM THE US,
ALSO AFFILIATED WITH THE ALL-AFRICAN
PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (AAPRP).

Describe a typical day of training at ELAM

As a first semester pre-med student, training at ELAM revolves around learning Spanish. I have a simple routine here. I begin my typical day at ELAM with a walk to the *cancha* where I do a yoga flow. I return to my residence hall to shower, put on my *bata*, and go to the *comedor* for breakfast. Breakfast is usually a piece of bread and juice. I arrive at the Spanish class before 9:30 a.m., where I usually have a group presentation around a particular topic—our home country, hospital visits, restaurants, health-related issues like alcoholism, etc. Class ends at 12:30 p.m. I go back to the *comedor* for lunch—rice,

Medical
students
at ELAM,
from Chile,
Palestine, and
Uganda.



beans, meat, and veggies if we're lucky. I return to my room to rest, chat with my *compañeros*, and do my homework. During the evenings I read, shower, and wash clothes before the water shuts off, and get ready for the next day.

In what ways has life in Cuba differed from your prior expectations?

I was aware of the blockade for several years prior to living here. But I still did not grasp how challenging the conditions are and how demoralizing this can be for a people. There are situations where people do their utmost best and it is still not enough to get the quality, or even the quantity, of items they require. Facing that struggle day in and day out can build incredible resilience and patience, which it has. But it can also break people, which it has done just as much.

What are the key messages you'd like to impress upon activists and scientists abroad?

I would like scientists in the US to reflect on the fact that all aspects of scientific development are political. Science only becomes meaningful when it is accessible and improves the conditions of communities. Resource distribution is a matter of

I AM A HAITIAN-CANADIAN STUDENT

What motivated me to study here is the fact that the Cuban healthcare system is first and foremost based on prevention, as much as the importance of the family doctor (*"medico de la familia"*) and their strong ties to the community they serve. It's a holistic way to practice medicine—including natural and traditional medicine—that is centered on the well-being of the population.

When it comes to treatment plans, the availability of medication is often the limiting factor. We make do with what we have and it affects the quality of treatment. The doctors here are forced to get creative dealing with certain illnesses and rely on second or third lines of treatment.

Ending the blockade would allow all types of medication needed to reach the local hospitals and

politics. I think every scientist has a duty toward humanity, as well as the integrity of their work, to engage in critical political education that can lead to partnering with community, grassroots organizations to use their work for actual service.

clinics, and allow patients to get the best treatment possible. Fundamental basic medical instruments such as gloves, needles, syringes, catheters (and so much more) would be available at all times, which is not the case today. The hospitals and faculties would be better furnished with medical equipment such as ECG machines, etc. We the students would have better books and resources for research, better technological support for classes.

*"... all aspects of scientific
development are political. Science
only becomes meaningful when
it is accessible and improves
the conditions of communities.
Resource distribution is a matter
of politics."*

MY NAME IS ARIANNE.

I AM A 29 YEAR-OLD FILIPINX-AMERICAN ANARCHIST MEDICAL STUDENT IN CUBA.

What is ELAM's mission, and what motivated you to apply to study there?

It was very much an intentional decision to study here as someone from an organizing background and knowing that the Cuban medical education is integrated with values of social justice and public health. The way they think about health informs their practice and it really is human and community-based.

Describe a typical day of training at ELAM

It has changed a lot over the years but we normally have lectures in the morning followed by practicals with activities or exams in the afternoon. In the hospital part of the training, we have rounds in

the morning (helping with patient evaluations and practicing clinical skills), followed by lectures, then more lectures or exams in the afternoon. The hospital side of the training consists of much independent study.

What are some examples of how the blockade is affecting your ability to study and provide medical treatment?

There simply isn't enough medication in the pharmacy for patients, so we think of other options for their care or alternative ways to find medication, like looking for medication on the black market. This takes the form of specific group chats on Telegram or WhatsApp where you can get imported medication

from Colombia or Mexico. In terms of practicing nursing skills, not everyone gets to do it because there aren't many disposable resources. Regarding the effect on my ability to study— sometimes I wonder, if Cuba had better fiber optics and I could have in-home WiFi, would I study better? Or, what if there were more late night food options? I think the “simple” life here (intentional or not) is generally conducive to studying, but as someone with really bad ADHD, it can be hard to manage, sometimes.

In what ways has life in Cuba differed from your prior expectations?

So many. I came to this country a bit naive, viewing Cuba as a country that had “figured out a way to live against or outside of capitalism.” There's some truth to this but the reality is much more complicated. The manifestations of the very real fight against capitalism and imperialism here have been what continue to educate my politics—so much more than Instagram infographics or outside-Cuba commentaries. Sometimes the Cuban government does not do what I believe to be the best for its people. I worry about the longevity of the Cuban

Revolution or social justice globally as I witness capitalist, individualist principles ooze into the minds and hearts of many legitimately struggling Cubans. Though at the end of the day, the Cuban people have made amazing achievements and it's undeniable that the revolution is still ongoing as there are people who won't ever give up. Like some idealistic leftists, I used to think of the Cuban Revolution as having fully “won,” forgetting that we have to be as vigilant as capitalism is vicious; revolution is a verb and will forever be a verb.

What are the key messages you'd like to impress upon activists and scientists abroad?

Always be critical of power. Always ask many questions. Revolution isn't a destination. Think that once we have free education, the fight is over? No! Not at all. It's a mindset, lifestyle, practice and even a spiritual journey for some. Also: always remember nature and Earth. Is Earth's life also valued in these discussions, work, or spaces?



ELAM medical students from Korea/
US and Guyana

barely any resources here, barely any medications. I have been in class/rounds with such bright doctors who are yet so limited by material constraints. School supplies are also difficult to find. Basic needs would be overpriced because vendors had them imported from their own families abroad. There is so much more to say about how the blockade has affected my studies. I'd say that I'm lucky to be able to leave the country occasionally and shop for myself from time to time. My heart does go out to the students who are stranded by the lack of access.

I AM A THIRD-YEAR STUDENT FROM MICRONESIA.

A typical day in ELAM is not something I ever expected to go through: waking up next to 11 other girls from all over the world, everyone speaking their own language, communicating through a language I had just learned in Cuba, going to school, having professors who don't earn as much and who sacrifice their time to teach, having practicals with real organs/bodies like a very hands-on experience.

Life has been difficult when there is no water, when pipes bursted, food wasn't enough, classes went virtual because there was no fuel in the country, and on top of all that, the pandemic hit. Yet, I am still grateful for the experience of having a taste of almost every country in the world (through my classmates) and a free medical education!

The blockade has its effects of course. There are

*“Always be critical of power.
Always ask many questions.
Revolution isn't a destination.”*

MY NAME IS ALEXANDER RUIZ.

I AM CURRENTLY THE FIRST CUBAN-BORN CUBAN-AMERICAN RECIPIENT OF THE ELAM SCHOLARSHIP, AND WILL BE STARTING RESIDENCY IN JULY 2023.

I'm a graduate of the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) from the class of 2021. I was born in Havana, before immigrating to the US as a child. I returned to Cuba to be a part of the ELAM project.

What is ELAM's mission, and what motivated you to apply to study there?

ELAM's mission is to train doctors of “science and consciousness” (ciencia y conciencia), and more than that, it's a school that offers the gift of medical training to students from all over the world. Rather than selling medical training to these different countries, ELAM has given the opportunity for nations to empower themselves, and have a wider access to health care for their people, regardless of income— and through it, to be able to grow and prosper in solidarity with all the countries represented in the program.

I was motivated to study in Cuba, both because of the barriers to medical training in the US and because I know of the superior care that Cuban doctors provide. I wanted to be a Cuban-trained Cuban doctor to provide the best care to my patients, in active rejection of the capitalist-driven system in the US that dehumanizes

people. I wanted to be a part of a healthcare model that has its basis in the community.

Describe a typical day of training at ELAM

ELAM's training in the first three years is on campus, where we learn basic sciences in a typical conference room and classroom setting. Students wake up, go to the cafeteria for breakfast, and go to their classes. In the afternoon they can study, go to a nearby town for food, laundry, shopping, or participate in dance classes, or events celebrating the cultures represented at the school. These events are generally student-led.

Once students enter their third year, they transition to one of the hospitals in Havana where they begin their clinical training. These days consist of going to the hospital, examining and engaging with patients directly, participating in lectures or rounds with their preceptor in the rotation they are in. During this period of training, students learn diagnostic skills and procedures, depending on the rotation and the service they are training in. This all changes in the sixth year where students become “interns” and start to function as full-fledged doctors for their last year of medical training. Interns are able to examine patients,

diagnose and treat patients under the supervision of their preceptor. Interns are expected to be on-call overnight in the hospital at least once a week, all the while continuing to study for their rotations, for routine evaluations, and for their final state exam at the end of the year.

What are some examples of how the blockade is affecting your ability to study and provide medical treatment?

As a student, the blockade directly impacts our quality of life. School equipment that is broken cannot be replaced easily; it becomes expensive to purchase food, or other necessary supplies, and we don't have access to the study tools that US students have to prepare for the USMLE [medical board] exams, due to many of the websites blocking access from Cuba.

We are also unable to utilize many of the same learning aides or medical supplies due to the scarcity of these items, which hinders our ability to develop practical skills. Even basic supplies such as gloves and hand sanitizer are in short supply, and we often have to make the decision of where best to use the supplies we are able to bring.

As an intern we often encounter

the scenario in which there is not enough medication to provide adequate care for patients. Whether it be antibiotics, basic pain medication, or in some cases even insulin, Cuba is unable to meet the demand for these medications due to the blockade, and an infection that would be relatively simple to manage in the US becomes difficult to treat, or that the treatment is insufficient to be able to properly manage. Even life-saving equipment, such as respirators, have been an issue since the majority of equipment needs to be purchased from companies abroad, and should these break, acquiring the parts necessary to replace it or the equipment itself becomes impossible. While Cuba has manufactured its own respirators, and its laboratories can produce most of the medicines the country needs, the blockade still affects its ability to acquire raw materials to produce de novo, resulting in failing to meet the demand of the people.

In what ways has life in Cuba differed from your prior expectations?

When first going to Cuba, I was expecting a country unchanged since I left as a child. I was expecting hardship, and a people that were cynical about the path that Cuba had taken, disillusioned with the

vision of socialism. I was surprised to encounter the resilience, both in the people and in myself. I could adapt to hardship, and even thrive in it; the same could be said of the people there. While the unduly US influence on the Cuban people due to constant aggression and de-stabilization is undeniable, the Cuban people continue to have hope for a day when the blockade ends; they continue to share their knowledge and resources with the whole world, and they continue to strive for a more just and equal society.

What are the key messages you'd like to impress upon activists and scientists abroad?

Even with the ongoing challenges that the blockade exerts on Cuba, the Cuban people and their vision still stand strong. To stand in true solidarity with Cuba, we must vehemently oppose the economic and cultural war that the US wages on Cuba, and find ways to counteract it. We must also cooperate and engage with one another to counter the systems of oppression that the US continues to propagate in order to control its people and control the world.



THE STRUGGLE AND TRIUMPH OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

Eric Washington was a member of the 2023 May Day Brigade. He is an organizer with Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100) based in the US.

Cuba, a mere 90 miles from the shores of the United States, stands as a symbol of resistance and resilience in the face of adversity. The island nation's vibrant history and culture offer a story of determination and defiance that echoes through time. The Cuban Revolution, which reached its zenith in 1959, was not merely a revolt against the authoritarian regime of Fulgencio Batista. It was a comprehensive rejection of centuries of subjugation and exploitation, a call for a new society where people's needs would come before profit and human dignity would outweigh personal wealth.

From the days of Spanish colonialism to the oppressive reign of dictators and corporations, the people of Cuba had been victims of a system that viewed them as resources to be plundered rather than as human beings to be respected. They had been subjected to economic and political imperialism that was not unique to Cuba but symptomatic of a global system prioritizing capital over life. The Cuban Revolution was, in essence, a revolt against this system. It was a struggle for dignity, freedom, and the right to determine their destiny. This struggle

was not against the United States as an entity but against the capitalist ideology that the United States represented. Despite constant attempts to undermine their efforts, the Cuban people have built a society that, in many ways, exemplifies an alternative to the capitalist model.

Healthcare: A Model of Equity and Excellence

One of the most significant achievements of the Cuban Revolution is establishing an effective and equitable healthcare system. Unlike many countries where healthcare is a commodity to be bought and sold, in Cuba, it is a right guaranteed to all citizens. The Cuban healthcare model is characterized by its emphasis on prevention, accessibility, and the belief that profit should never come before people's health. Moreover, physicians in Cuba often live in the communities they serve, fostering a deep sense of trust and connection with their patients.

The number of doctors per capita in Cuba is the highest globally. This is not by accident but by design. The Cuban government has invested heavily in medical education, resulting in a healthcare system that is not only affordable and accessible but also of high quality. Cuba's medical school, Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina (ELAM), offers free education, further fostering a culture of healthcare excellence and accessibility. Students from all over the world—even the USA—attend medical school for

“The life expectancy in Cuba is higher than that in the United States, and the infant mortality rate is one of the lowest in the world.”

free or with assisted tuition from their sponsoring countries. After five to seven years of study, many graduates return to their home countries to practice the lessons they learned in Cuba. If they choose to reside in Cuba as medical professionals, they are tasked with living and working in the communities they serve, often spending their days going door-to-door to check on their patients. In the past 20 years, ELAM has trained over 30,000 medical professionals from 115 countries.

Despite being subjected to an economic blockade by the United States, Cuba has achieved health outcomes

comparable to, and in some cases better than, those in developed countries. The life expectancy in Cuba is higher than that in the United States, and the infant mortality rate is one of the lowest in the world. This is partly due to the groundbreaking treatments developed in Cuba for lung cancer and diabetes. This is a testament to the effectiveness of the Cuban healthcare model, which prioritizes people's health over profit.

A Beacon of International Solidarity

Cuba's commitment to international solidarity is deeply ingrained in its national ethos. This commitment is most evident in the healthcare sector, where Cuba has consistently demonstrated a willingness to lend a helping hand to those in need. In addition to the students of 115 countries being educated at ELAM, The Henry Reeve Brigade, established in 2005 by Fidel Castro, is a shining example of this commitment. Named after an American who fought for Cuban independence in the 19th century, the brigade comprises Cuban medical professionals who travel to countries affected by natural disasters and epidemics to provide much-needed medical assistance. Despite Cuba's economic challenges, the brigade has sent thousands of medical professionals to dozens of countries, providing life-saving care to those who need it most.

To date, the brigade has sent 8,000 medical professionals to 22 countries. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Cuba not only managed to develop its vaccines but also achieved one of the highest vaccination rates in the world—a vaccination rate of over 90%. Furthermore, it offered its vaccines to other countries, particularly those in the Global South, that wealthier nations had largely ignored. This is a testament to Cuba's unwavering commitment to international solidarity.

Democracy: An Exercise in People's Power

Cuba's approach to democracy is distinctively shaped by the principles of collective decision-making and people's power. Unlike the familiar Western model of democracy, which is often plagued by the influence of money and powerful interests, Cuba's democratic process is built on equality and active citizen participation. In Cuba, candidates do not engage in expensive election campaigns. Instead, biographical sketches—similar resumes seen here in the United States—are posted in public spaces to highlight

their qualifications and community service. These highlights include educational attainment, professional experience, and, most importantly, community accomplishments. There are no political advertisements or campaign contributions, removing the influence of wealth from the equation.

The elected representatives are elected in portion by being quality neighbors. The voters know who they are voting for because the candidates live next door. This focus on personal capabilities and service to the community encourages a form of democracy deeply rooted in the principle of people's power. In addition, the Cuban model of democracy strongly emphasizes participation. Cubans aged 16 and older are automatically registered to vote, and voter turnout often exceeds 90%. Elected representatives are not career politicians but ordinary citizens who continue to work their regular jobs while serving their terms. They do not receive extra pay for their service, which helps ensure they remain connected to the communities they represent and that their motivation is the common good rather than personal gain.

Ecological Stewardship: A Matter of Survival

As an island nation, Cuba is acutely aware of the threats posed by climate change. Rising sea levels, increased hurricane activity, and other environmental changes pose significant risks to the country's biodiversity, economy, and way of life. In response to these challenges, Cuba has developed a proactive approach to environmental stewardship that is deeply intertwined with its economic system and societal values.

The Ministries of Science and Environment have collaborated to develop a series of "life tasks" designed to mitigate the effects of climate change. These include strict building regulations in areas at risk of damage during the hurricane season, comprehensive reforestation efforts, and programs to protect the country's unique biodiversity. Unlike the capitalist model, which often prioritizes short-term profit over long-term sustainability, Cuba's socialist system sees environmental protection not as a burden but as a necessary precondition for sustainable development.

Food Sovereignty: A Pillar of Independence

Food sovereignty is another critical aspect of Cuba's independence and resilience. Despite the challenges posed by the U.S. blockade, which severely restricts its ability to import goods and resources, Cuba has managed to maintain a degree of self-sufficiency in food production. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Cuba faced a severe food crisis. The country was forced to develop alternative farming methods with imports cut off. This led to a shift toward organic and sustainable agriculture, which improved food quality and reduced the country's dependence on imports.

Today, urban farming is common in Cuban cities, with small gardens and community farms producing a significant portion of the country's food supply. The government supports and trains farmers and encourages cooperative farming practices that promote social equality and community engagement. This emphasis on food sovereignty is not only a practical response to the challenges posed by the blockade but also a manifestation



Student members of the Young Communist League

of Cuba's commitment to independence and self-determination.

Education: The Key to Empowerment

Education is another area where Cuba has made significant strides. The country's literacy rate is one of the highest in the world, and education is accessible at all levels. The government invests heavily in education, recognizing it as a key to empowerment and societal development. Cuba's education system emphasizes critical thinking and creativity and strongly emphasizes social responsibility and civic participation. Students are encouraged to contribute to their communities, and education is seen as a means of developing individual talents and skills and a collective sense of responsibility and purpose.

While Cuba faces significant challenges, particularly in economic development and access to resources, its commitment to providing accessible, high-quality education for all its citizens is a testament to its values. From childhood through university and beyond, the Cuban education system is designed to foster a sense of civic responsibility, social awareness, and intellectual curiosity. The curriculum is not solely focused on academic achievement but also developing values such as solidarity, community service, and respect for cultural diversity. The emphasis on critical thinking and creativity in the Cuban education system also extends to higher education. The country's universities are centers of innovation and research, contributing to biotechnology, medicine, and environmental science advancements. Despite the limitations imposed by the U.S. blockade, Cuban scientists and researchers have developed groundbreaking treatments for diseases and have made significant contributions to the global scientific community.

Cultural Identity: A Source of Strength and Unity

Cuba's rich cultural heritage is another source of strength and unity for its people. From Afro-Cuban rhythms to the revolutionary poetry of José Martí, Cuban culture reflects the country's diverse history and its people's resilience in the face of adversity. Cuba's cultural policy is rooted in the belief that culture is a right, not a privilege. The government invests heavily in the arts, providing free or low-cost access to cultural events and supporting artists through grants and subsidies. This investment in the culture enriches Cubans' lives and strengthens

the country's sense of national identity and unity.

This commitment to culture is highlighted in Havana's El Mejunje--a local community center that, throughout history, has been a haven for the LGBTQ+ community in Cuba. The director of the center, Ramon Silverio, told us, "Art is the best way to communicate with people . . . Everything that I have done in life, I have done with revolutionary art." It's a reminder of the critical role that culture and the arts play in fostering an inclusive and equitable society. Cuban cinema, literature, music, and visual arts are renowned worldwide for their creativity and social consciousness. Cuban artists often address social justice, identity, and resistance, reflecting the country's revolutionary spirit and people's ongoing struggle for dignity and freedom.

Conclusion: A Legacy of Resistance and Resilience

From its revolution to its steadfastness in the face of the U.S. blockade, Cuba's story is one of resistance and resilience. It is a story that challenges the dominant narratives about development, democracy, and human rights. Despite its many challenges, Cuba has built a society that values human dignity over profit, community over individualism, and solidarity over competition. Cuba's healthcare system, its commitment to education and cultural development, its efforts to protect the environment and achieve food sovereignty, and its model of participatory democracy are all reflections of these values. They are the result of a collective struggle for a better world, a struggle that has not been without its difficulties and contradictions but one that continues to inspire and challenge us.

As we look toward the future, Cuba's experience offers valuable lessons and insights. It reminds us that another world is possible, a world where the needs of the many outweigh the greed of the few, where human dignity is valued over profit, and where solidarity and cooperation replace competition and exploitation. It is a reminder that it is possible to resist and build a society that reflects our highest ideals and aspirations in the face of adversity. This is the legacy of the Cuban Revolution, which continues to resonate in the hearts and minds of the Cuban people and in the collective consciousness of those who believe in a just and equitable world. As we move forward, let us draw inspiration from this legacy and strive to create a world where dignity, justice, and freedom are lofty ideals and realities for all.

FREE CUBA TO FREE OURSELVES

Calvin Wu was a member of the 2023 May Day Brigade. He is the secretary of the organization Science for the People and a research scientist based in Cambridge, MA.

We left Havana on May 3. Tired after days of seminars, meetings with locals, and cultural activities, I was able to begin unpacking and relax, unlike many others returning home to the United States who ended up being detained at the airports of Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, and Newark. They were granted visas to visit Cuba amidst a US blockade that has been in place for more than sixty years (excepting a short reprieve from 2014–2017). Yet, despite legal documents and US citizenship, the border agents harassed, threatened, and abused them like criminals. Freedom of movement does not apply to people in the land of the free.

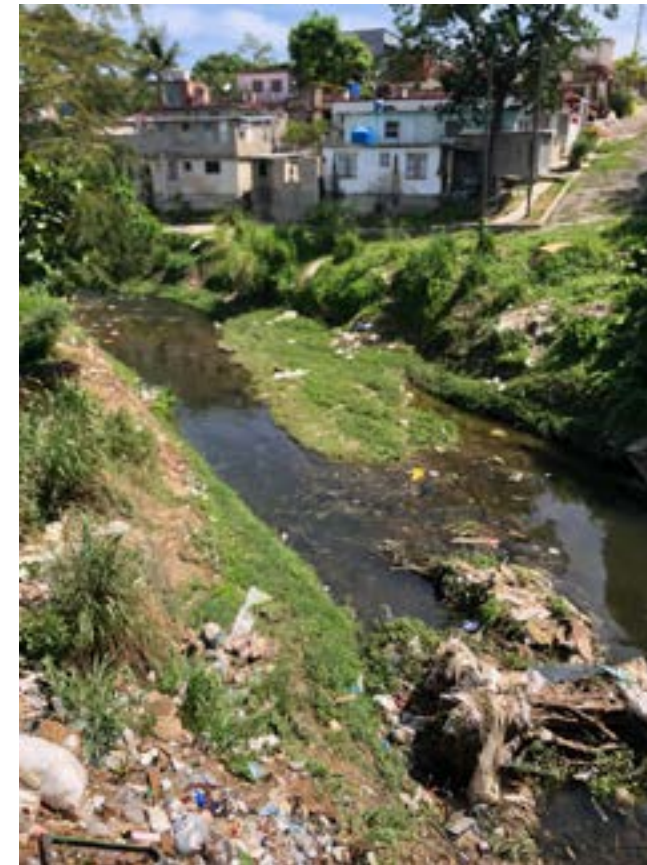
With the recent addition of Cuba to the “State Sponsors of Terrorism” list under the Trump administration, the economic barrier erected by the most comprehensive blockade in history serves more than to asphyxiate Cuba into submission; its primary goal is to prevent the world from seeing and believing in an alternative to capitalism. Fredric Jameson once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. He must have not visited Cuba.

Don’t get me wrong. Cuba is not a utopia. It is visibly struggling; infrastructure is crumbling; economic inequality exists; Cuban people are far from happy or content and some aspire to find new lives abroad. Nevertheless, what we learned in our ten-day trip in Cuba is that the left in the global North cannot address the various issues facing us today without learning from the Cuban experience. To do this, and to concurrently strengthen anticapitalist struggles across the world, we must first and foremost break the US blockade on Cuba.

Phenomena do not exist in isolation. As we mark the 200th anniversary of the Monroe Doctrine, the US blockade must be recognized as a manifestation of the same colonial project that existed long before the Cuban revolution of 1959 and the Cuban independence movement of 1902. One misconception about Cuba is the association with a singular figure of Fidel Castro. While many ordinary Cubans profess their love for their Comandante el Jefe, Fidel’s name or image is hardly seen in Havana—it was Castro’s own wish that public commemoration be discouraged. If there were to be a personification of Cuba’s national psyche, it is poet and anticolonial fighter José Martí. More than anything, Cubans pride themselves on the progress they have made through anticolonial, anti-imperialist struggle since Martí. Seen from the outside, the Cuban people today objectively retain degrees of sovereignty above neighboring states like Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico (which remains a US colony). In real terms, while Hurricane Maria left nearly three thousand people dead in Puerto Rico and devastated the island for years, Cuba suffered few casualties and quickly rebuilt—a fact undeniable even by the Washington Post. Thus, the question of whether Cuba is a socialist country matters less than whether Cuba is able to overcome centuries of colonialism. At the same time, the former is directly related to the latter: its socialist principles are in lockstep with its national liberation project.

If you are an astute observer, you may pick out these principles traveling through Cuba. We did not need government officials, union representatives, or prominent intellectuals to tell us what they are. The lack of advertisement even at the busiest

tourist corner of Havana reflects the social constraints exerted on market forces. Compared to my experiences in the US, I noticed a lack of police presence (even at 2 a.m. in an area with vibrant nightlife) as well as an absence of homelessness and panhandling, which speaks volumes about welfare and security on the streets of Havana. Even when the buildings and sidewalks are in disrepair, music, art, and people in the community filled the public spaces. And of course, the hospitals—the successes of the Cuban healthcare system in taking care of its own people need no further elaboration. Lesser known is Cuba’s leading role in global health. We visited Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina (ELAM) and met students from Congo, Chile, Palestine, and the United States (who came from underserved communities) on full scholarships; these students are trained with the socialist philosophy that sees health not as a mere biological problem but also a social issue, which prepares them to be able to



Houses by a river in Havana

serve their own community upon completion of training by gaining an understanding of their own geographical, political, and cultural contexts. This act of internationalism is but a small part of the renowned Cuban medical brigade that provides humanitarian aid to all corners of the world—to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, Africa during the Ebola outbreak, Syria after the recent earthquake—

to name only a few.

Claudia, a young woman we met during the visit to Centro de Inmunología Molecular (CIM), was among the medical volunteers at the peak of COVID-19 infection. She was not a physician but a scientist working on the now-approved SOBERANA vaccine. As the US blockade deprived Cuba access to the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, the Cuban people had to develop their own. After devoting hundreds of hours in the labs producing the basic research before vaccines can be mass manufactured, Claudia spent months in Venezuela educating local communities on public health measures and helped distribute the million doses of SOBERANA donated from Cuba. We were deeply moved by such an embodiment of science in the service of humanity. It’s important to acknowledge that not every Cuban medical or science student is like Claudia—she told me as much; many trainees have left the country in pursuit of higher pays as physicians and scientists, and many are quitting their education to earn hard currency from the nascent tourist industry. Meanwhile, Cuba’s pharmaceutical development is not entirely humanitarian, as international patent rights allow for the sale and distribution of SOBERANA to the markets of other countries, to boost Cuba’s export revenues. The market still dictates many facets of Cuban life.

I am reminded of Huey Newton’s famous phrase: revolution is a process. If we simply take Cuba’s achievements in medical internationalism, scientific achievement, as well as the new 2022 Family Code that granted unprecedented rights to women, elderly, and LGBTQ+ communities—a demonstration of popular democracy through which millions of votes were casted and thousands of debates, consultations, and public events were held—as discrete victories of progress, we may find exemplary counterparts in Western Europe. But seeing the Cuban society as an agent in world history, we can draw a few unique lessons for our own struggle to overcome capitalism.

First, we must study and understand how Cuba survived adversity, not just building a national and cultural identity on a resource-deprived island ninety miles off the coast of a settler-colonial empire, but actively resisting continued imperial aggression after centuries of slavery and extraction from the United States. In prioritizing human development as official policy, Cuba stands out among countries in the world for its education, medicine, science, sport,

and arts. We may disagree on its course of politics, but none can deny the contribution to humanity that the Cuban people have made since 1959 in healing and defending the world against colonists in Algeria, Angola, and Vietnam, etc.

Second, in studying the contradictions, problems, and challenges of Cuban society, the effect of the US blockade cannot be underplayed. Any commodities that comprise 10 percent or more manufacturing in the United States are restricted to enter Cuba; third party countries or private firms that attempt to establish trade with Cuba will need to constantly tiptoe around sanctions and fines from unilateral US law, the content of which changes regularly to discourage capital influx to Cuba. As a result of economic suffocation, Cuba's energy and food supply are in tight balance, always in conflict with social expenditure. We experienced several blackouts during our stay, and by the end of the trip became accustomed to sudden changes of itinerary due to logistical issues. While it is all the more impressive of what Cuba was able to achieve under the blockade, it should lead us to contemplate what more would Cuba have provided to the world if it is freed from the US stranglehold?

Third, capitalism and imperialism are coevolutionary processes. We cannot win class struggle in the advanced capitalist countries at home without solidarity from the Global South—the majority of the world. This is where Cuba stands tall as a beacon of anti-imperialism since the beginning of the revolution, serving as the vanguard of the Organización de Solidaridad de los Pueblos de Asia,

África y América Latina (OSPAAAL) and the Non-aligned Movement. As the blockade not only hinders social/socialist development of Cuba and the rest of the Third World, it is a detriment to our struggles within the belly of the beast. On a superficial level, we ask how many lives would be saved if the Cuban Heberprot-P treatment for diabetic foot ulcer or CIMAvax-EGF for lung cancer were allowed for the hundred million poor people in the United States? On a deeper level, if the US rulers can continue to disregard the will of the world's people and commit to carry out this crime against humanity, what will it do to nascent revolutionary struggles in other parts of the world (e.g., Venezuela, Palestine), or within its own borders (e.g., Black and Indigenous liberation)? The Cuban sovereign project, socialist or not, is at the forefront of a totality of world struggle against capitalism and empire.

By the time I finished this write-up, our comrades detained at the US border had been released. They told us that their phones were seized and broken into, and that they were denied legal consultation. We went on a trip to learn about Cuban society. Perhaps we learned just as much if not more about our own society. In order to free ourselves from repression in our own country, we must stand in solidarity with the Cuban people suffering from the same repression manifested abroad. The blockade against Cuba is a blockade against our own future, a shared vision by the people of the world fighting for peace, justice, and all that is good of humanity.



SCIENCE AS DIPLOMACY: REFLECTIONS ON THE CUBAN EXPERIMENT

The author was a member of the 2023 May Day Brigade. They are an organizer with Science for the People.

In Ursula K. Le Guin's sci-fi classic, *The Dispossessed*, it is the scientists of the twin humanoid planets of Anarres and Urras that first break the centuries-long estrangement of their two societies, transcending their vast ideological differences as anarchosyndicalists and capitalists in order to make a critical scientific advancement that would benefit all living beings. A mere 90 miles from the Florida coast, Cuba, like Anarres, is far from a post-capitalist utopia—it is harsh, impoverished, and teeming with internal class and race contradictions of its own. But, now more than ever, the people of Cuba are similarly in need of the support, solidarity, and community of scientists and allies from all around the world; they are in need of the type of solidarity that transcends ideological differences in the shared interest of human flourishing.

The aptly named SOBERANA 02 vaccine, meaning “sovereign,” should be understood as nothing less than a massive triumph over the inhumane politics of the CIA and US State Department, whose genocidal blockade has deliberately plunged millions of Cubans into abject poverty by preventing the importation of basic necessities like food, oil, syringes, reagents, and foreign-produced vaccines. Despite the worsening economic conditions brought about by Trump-era additions to the US blockade, even mainstream media from the imperial core cannot help but marvel at the absurdly disproportionate achievements that have marked Cuba's health, biotech, and pharmaceutical sectors in recent years. “Cuba's vaccine success story

sails past mark set by rich world's Covid efforts,” proclaims a *Guardian* headline from January 2022. “The island nation struggles to keep the lights on but has inoculated 90% of population with home-developed vaccines.”

Among the most inspiring and frustrating scientific stories we learned of was that of Heberprot-P—an extremely effective epidermal growth factor that is injected into the skin to accelerate the healing of complex ulcers, and that can be used to reverse the life-threatening foot ulcers that result from severe diabetes. It's estimated that someone with diabetes undergoes a lower limb amputation every 20 seconds, somewhere in the world. While Heberprot-P is currently available or under testing in a number of countries, the US embargo on Cuba leaves 37 million diabetic Americans as of yet unable to access this potentially life-saving medication.

We were also fascinated to learn of the successes of CIMAvax—a Cuban-made lung cancer vaccine that has proven extremely promising as a therapy against non-small-cell lung cancer. This life-extending treatment is unable to reach international patients as a result of the regulatory hurdles and financial barriers erected by the blockade. Nevertheless, the evidence has been so promising that, in recent years, it has managed to be taken up in ground-breaking clinical trials by US researchers at the Roswell Park Cancer Center in New York. CIMAvax is a rare and inspiring exception to the many restrictions

imposed on medical collaboration between Cuban and US scientists. It is a hopeful case study that demonstrates that there are indeed scientists on both sides of the blockade working tirelessly to find ways to circumvent it, and to ensure that every sick person may one day get access to the medicine they need, regardless of where they are born.

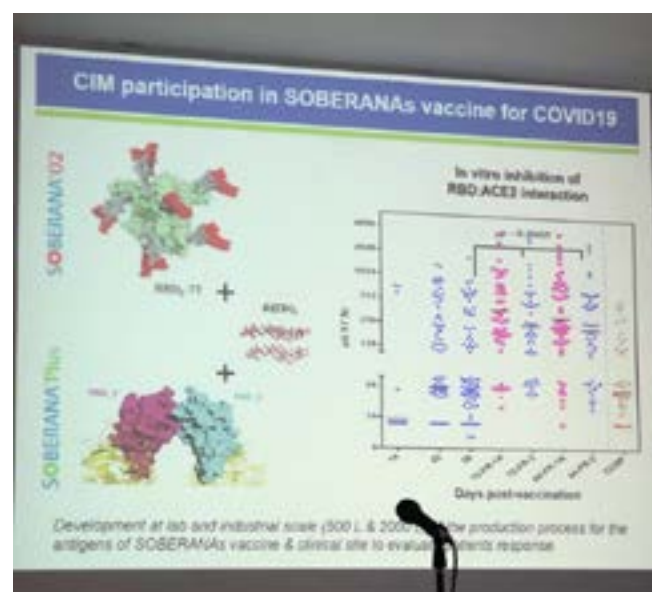
Our Visit to Centro de Inmunología Molecular (CIM)

A few days before May Day, we had the special opportunity to visit the Center of Molecular Immunology (Centro de Inmunología Molecular, or CIM)—a research center of about one thousand workers (57 percent of whom are women), which, like many of the scientific institutions on the tiny island, punches well above its weight in terms of research output and pharmaceutical innovation. With 609 patents and 698 published papers, it boasts joint ventures with China, Thailand, Brazil, and India, and market authorization for its medical products in over a hundred different countries. As one of many institutions under the umbrella state-owned enterprise known as BioCubaFarma, the CIM works in close collaboration with other state-operated entities like the CIGB (Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center). Together, they comprise Cuba's leading institutions for immunology and cancer technologies, whose products and research output are widely recognized and independently validated on the global stage.

Decades of institutional know-how allowed scientists to efficiently pivot research and production resources to the battle against COVID-19, achieving impressive vaccination outcomes that blew past the attempts of many of the most advanced capitalist countries. The institute has over 25 years' experience producing monoclonal antibodies—lab-made proteins that act like the antibodies produced by our white blood cells, helping our immune system identify foreign materials and destroy them. Cuba's pharmaceutical industry was responsible for the world's first effective vaccine against serogroup B meningococcal disease as early as 1989. It also produces its own pentavalent vaccine, a medical resource critical to low-income countries, that protects children against five life-threatening diseases in a single shot.

As we listened to scientists speak about their research, the ordinariness of attending a scientific talk like any other, surrounded by familiarly exhausted scientists in a familiarly white-walled

research institute, only heightened the inhumanity of the very disparate context of economic crisis in which we were gathered. We felt a sense of kinship with our scientific counterparts—they too have obviously spent long hours and frustrating nights at the lab bench, poring over statistical software and losing sleep over spoiled data. Over lunch, we commiserated with med students who complained about the med school's unforgiving grading schemes. Some experiences in the sciences truly are universal!



Slides from a presentation at the CIM

But while we have all worked tirelessly to navigate the same frustrations and obstacles thrown at us by our experiments, our equipment, our institutions, and our political milieus, we can never forget that our Cuban counterparts have the additional handicap of a genocidal blockade to contend with—a difference that dwarfs all other commonalities.

While it might take the average US scientist two days to receive a critical sample or reagent to proceed with an experiment, the same order might leave a researcher at the CIM waiting for well over a year. The blockade prevents Cubans from importing many international products whose contents have US origins—medicines or technologies that source as few as 10 percent of their components from the US require a license from the US to be exported to Cuba. In many cases, Cuban scientists are prevented from working with client enterprises whose shares are even partly owned by US companies. Petroleum and medicine producers in countries like India regularly refuse to export to Cuba as a result of US

sanctions, on pain of complex licensing deterrents and financial persecution. Sanctions, and the fragile fuel supply chains they produce, have culminated in an energy crisis so severe that rolling power outages are a regular occurrence in many neighbourhoods, and even the medical school now regularly delivers its classroom lectures over Zoom, for lack of transportation to and from campus.

A Complex and Evolving Picture



Farmacuba, a distributor of pharmaceutical products that imports medicines, reagents, diagnostic tests, and equipment for the national pharmaceutical industry, exporting medicine to Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East

Despite all of the inspiring successes that our hosts at the CIM proudly presented to us, we risk doing our Cuban comrades a disservice by idealizing their political and healthcare systems and by minimizing the extent to which six decades of economic blockade has thrown both science and democracy into a severe state of disarray.

For instance, there is a sense in which doctors in Cuba are commodified in a manner that is sometimes severe. Living conditions are spare and often discouraging—while medical doctors receive free meals and board, most subsist on about 40-50 USD per month. Once trained as a medical professional, Cuban doctors sometimes find it even harder than the average citizen to obtain travel documents to be able to permanently emigrate, because the state relies on the income they bring back into the country when they are sent abroad to work. The Cuban government's historically heavy-handed approach to human mobility (still arguably a light touch compared to the US's own border policies) reflects

the realities of this deepening economic crisis. What we should never lose sight of, however, is the fact that it is the US blockade that overwhelmingly forces their hand.

It is also an unfortunate reality that chronic shortages coupled with increasing prices on the black market (as well as some segments of the state-regulated market) are causing many highly educated students to pursue more lucrative jobs as taxi drivers and waitstaff; or even to take illegal telework jobs based in other countries. Highly educated and disillusioned graduates are opting for jobs in the tourist industry that will bring them into contact with US dollars—which they can then trade on the black market for basics in short supply, including food and medication.

And, it is a further reality that Cuban scientific research prioritizes patentable goods and medical products that can be exported to foreign countries to capture much-needed revenue, sometimes at the cost of intangible domestic research on topics like local pollution or ecological health. This is not so unlike the free-market logic we had hoped to escape completely by crossing the Florida straits.

Ultimately, the picture of Cuba we were left with by the end of our ten-day visit was far from complete, and, for many of us, largely ambiguous. We bore witness to much poverty and various degrees of political repression. We saw undeniable evidence of resurgent class inequality, no doubt brought about at least in part by concessions to capitalist and market forces under the inhumane pressures of the US blockade. I am also not naive to the fact that we were receiving different iterations of an official “party line” throughout the week from representatives of various institutions.

But even in reading highly critically between the lines—and at times, straying far from them in order to conduct our own independent investigations—most of us were left with a deepened appreciation and admiration for the ideals of the Cuban project, regardless of where and whether its shortfalls are the simple result of the blockade, as compared to a cocktail of more complex internal factors. Cutting above the ambiguity, we were left with a shared sense of outrage towards the genocidal web of US sanctions that have sought to undermine the hard-earned accomplishments of the Cuban people at every turn.

Solidarity Amidst Ambiguity and Crisis

Cuba is the favorite subject of much mainstream disinformation as well as leftist infighting. Is Cuba a state-capitalist society? A “deformed workers’ state,” as the Trotskyists suggest? A doomed example of “socialism from above”? Has the government strayed too far from the masses and begun to coalesce around a rigid bureaucracy—communist in name but now largely unresponsive to the people? Has the communist party gone “soft” in reintroducing a slew of free market reforms in recent years? Or, is Cuba a genuine socialist state in a continual process of revolution—an instance of “actually-existing socialism” that must be defended from attacks by the US empire before the internal contradictions of the revolution can be criticized from within? Personally, I remain uncomfortably agnostic on all these questions, and perhaps even more uncertain than I was before the trip; it seems to me that Cuba has been undergoing a fascinating, decades-long process of social and economic transformation amidst a never-ending project of imperial sabotage that makes it, in many ways, *sui generis*.



Preparations for May Day. Celebrations were cancelled for economic reasons (owing to the severe fuel shortage crisis) for the first time since the revolution in 1959.



Abandoned building by the sea

Every Cuban citizen on the street with whom we chatted had a completely different opinion of their government. Some were fed up and disillusioned with the communists, while others pointed to the free market concessions that the government has implemented in recent years as a major source of recent problems. Some described themselves as apolitical, if not anti-communist. Many— especially those in their 60s or 70s, but also teens and young adults— were self-described revolutionaries to the core. Some of the young people we talked to expressed a strong desperation to emigrate, expecting the economic situation to worsen in coming years. But nearly all agreed that the US blockade was at least partly if not entirely to blame for the economic crisis currently unfolding.

Of course, ambivalence is a tough disposition to maintain in the midst of a crisis. A crisis, like a revolution, is something that cleaves the world into two: life versus death, past versus future. It demands immediate action. In this sense, at the very least, the crisis brought about by the blockade means that the US is unwittingly causing a sort of revolutionary logic to embed itself even more deeply into the discourse and ethos of the Cuban government, its people, and its supporters from abroad. Cuba’s diplomatic strategy towards the US is largely one of grassroots internationalism, which means that, even as an

international guest, whether you see yourself as a political brigadeiro or an apolitical tourist, you are implicated in the logic of the Cuban revolution from the moment you set foot on Cuban soil. You willingly or unwittingly become something of a spokesperson for the Cuban project upon your return, no matter how ambiguous your personal experience. In the binary logic of revolution and crisis, every word you bring back from Cuba becomes another bullet in the arsenal of either the revolutionary government or the reactionary American imperialists intent on overthrowing it. Neither neutral spectatorship nor passive allyship are tenable modes of relating to a government that consciously and deliberately depends on international delegations like ours to promote solidarity with the Cuban people from within the imperial core. To them, the question is not an academic matter, nor is it a matter leftist infighting on the Internet. What is at stake for the average Cuban citizen is nothing less than their own immediate and long-term survival.

I hope to continue learning more about, discussing, and debating the complexities of Cuban society and democracy for decades to come. But the exercise of assigning a label to what Cuba is or isn’t, what it has been or could become, has come to feel bizarrely academic and detached amidst a deepening fuel, food, and medical supply crisis that threatens to undermine the entirety of the Cuban project in a matter of years. As Cuba enters a sort of “second special period”— the result of Biden’s continuation of the fortified blockade policies put in place during the Trump era— people in the poorest neighborhoods of Havana now regularly go up to three days without food, and even medical students themselves have no choice but to buy their own antibiotics on the black market. However you wish to characterize the Cuban project, the undeniable victories and improbable feats of sovereignty that the Cuban people have accomplished hang in jeopardy as never before.

One thing cuts above the ambiguity and remains abundantly clear: our primary task as subjects of the imperialist core is not to glorify or criticize Cuba’s project of national liberation and socialist construction, but to listen to our Cuban comrades and do everything in our power to loosen the stranglehold that our own governments have placed around the necks of the Cuban people. Only when the blockade is lifted, and Cuba is removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, will the Cuban people have the chance to resolve the contradictions internal to their society through their own, sovereign

determination. And only after these genocidal sanctions are lifted will Cuba have a chance to thrive as a nation whose people have yet so much to offer to the world.

Conclusion

In Cuba, the lung cancer vaccine CIMAvax is administered to patients at the primary care level— not just in oncology wards or tertiary institutions. A researcher at the institute we visited expressed the conviction that most cancers will one day be thought of and treated as a commonplace, chronic illness— a manageable condition that is proactively treated throughout the lifecourse, like diabetes or hypertension, as opposed to a terminal illness for which death can only at best be temporarily forestalled. I sincerely believe that open collaboration, mobility, access to information, and the cross-pollination of ideas between scientists from Cuba, the US, and elsewhere in the world could very well hold the key to making ambitious dreams like these a reality within our lifetimes. These dreams are as big as they are urgent. Cuban scientists have so much to teach us about the ways that scientific knowledge and social transformation could work together to mitigate or even reverse some of the worst effects of the climate crisis.

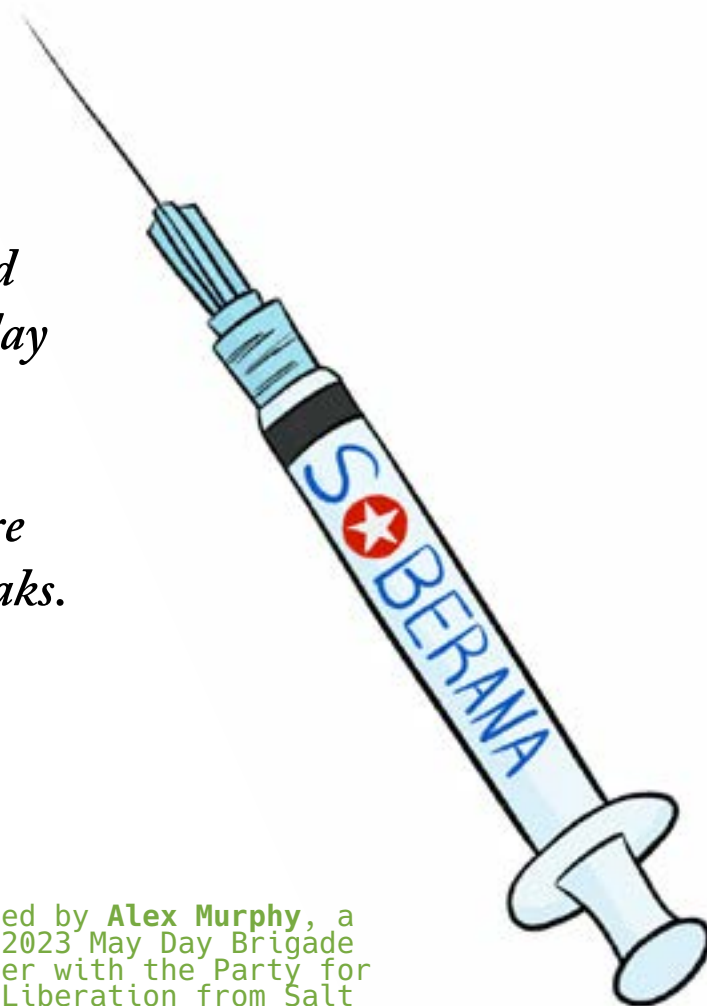
Science represents, in Le Guin’s *Anarres* just as here on Earth, the promise of a powerful lingua franca: a common, progressive language with which the people of all countries may work together across irrational division and petty sectarianism to better the material conditions of all of humanity. As John Bellamy Foster so aptly points out, “a fully rational science is incompatible with the logic of capital, which also means that science—although often corrupted and formally subsumed under capitalism— can never be absolutely subsumed by capital. It thus frequently reemerges as an anticapitalist force.” This is precisely why Cuban science— the output of a tiny island nation of 11 million people with no offensive military capabilities to speak of— has been so deliberately sequestered from the view of the American public for the past 65 years. Through its commitments to universal healthcare, medical solidarity, and scientific internationalism, Cuba’s vision of science represents perhaps the greatest threat of all to the logic of a crumbling US empire. Socialist or otherwise, it represents the persistent and irrepressible threat of a powerfully unifying and deeply humanitarian ideal.

*Today it rained in Cuba.
Everyday before was bright and
hot, and I thought every other day
would be the same.*

*Even if we can't see it, things are
always moving. Something breaks.*

*In the hottest parts of America,
there is something moving too.*

Poem contributed by **Alex Murphy**, a
member of the 2023 May Day Brigade
and an organizer with the Party for
Socialism and Liberation from Salt
Lake City, Utah.



MUCH GRATITUDE...

... to **Lee**, for all the beautiful
hand-drawn illustrations in this
zine, including the front cover. Lee
was a participant in the 2023 May Day
Brigade and is an autonomous tenant
union organizer from the Tenant and
Neighborhood Councils (TANC) in the
San Francisco Bay Area.

... to **Arianne**, for being our eyes
and ears on the ground and for
helping coordinate asynchronous
interviews with the ELAM med students
from a thousand miles away. Thank you
for sharing your unique insights,
and for extending your support and
solidarity in this project!

... to the contributing authors and
fact-checkers of texts in this zine.

... to the countless organizers and
brigade participants whose photos
from the trip have filled the pages
of this zine.

... to the organizers at the
International People's Assembly and
the People's Forum, who organized
this brigade.

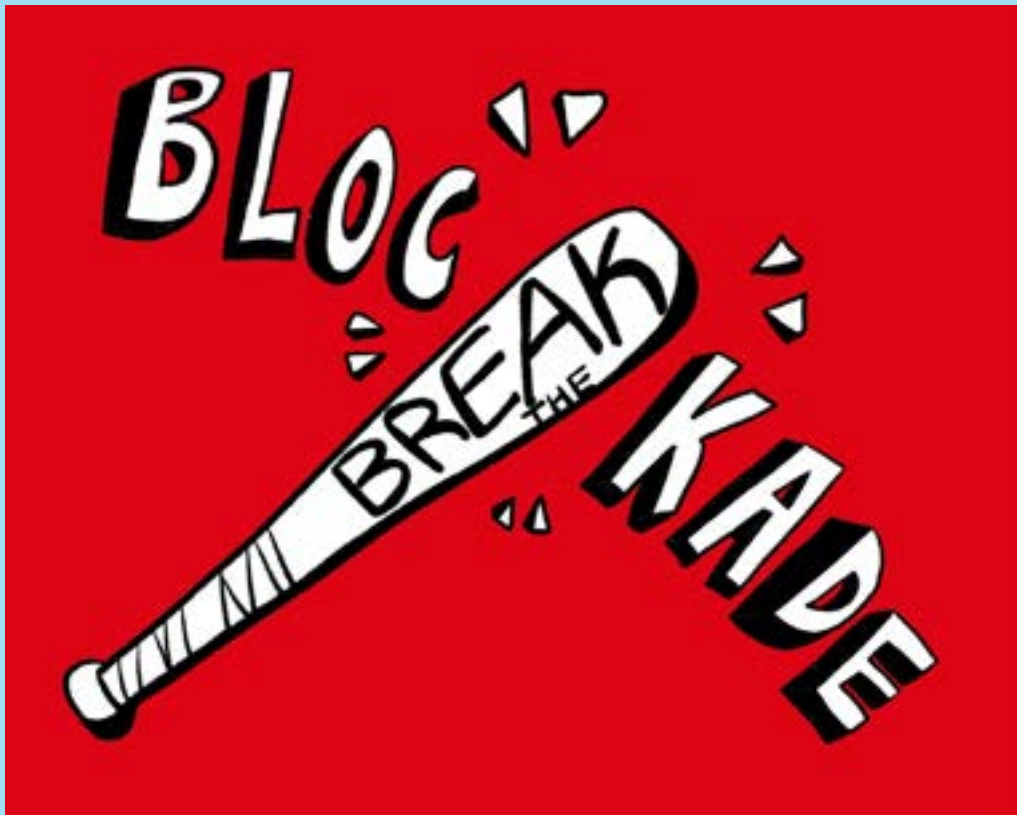
... and lastly, to the many Cuban
friends, comrades, and acquaintances,
who took the time to share their
stories with us on the streets, and
at the restaurants, bus stops, sports
centers, cultural halls, parks, and
beaches of Havana-- communist and
non-communist alike. The blockade
must end. We will not let you down!



Roystonea regia (Cuban
royal palm)



Music in Santa Clara



*“To stand in true solidarity with Cuba,
we must vehemently oppose the economic
and cultural war that the US wages on
Cuba, and find ways to counteract it.”*

*-Alexander Ruiz, medical school graduate and the
first Cuban-born Cuban-American recipient of the
ELAM scholarship*