

My name is Emily Thomas, and I own a 8 family apartment house at 448 State St, in downtown Brooklyn. So I'm a New York landlord and pay a lot of property taxes. But that's not why I'm here.

I'm also part of the White Rose Ministry at First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn at 124 Henry Street in Brooklyn Heights. We took our name, White Rose, from the poem written by Jose Marti, a poem which every Cuban school child knows. Marti wrote that he gives a white rose to his friends, but to those who "tear out the heart by which I live, to them also I give a white rose".

I'm here today to support Bill 1092, which as New Yorkers, we ask our President to stop tearing out the heart of other countries, particularly Cuba.

Our church has been in partnership with a Presbyterian church and two ecumenical projects in Cuba for over 20 years. We have learned from them, and helped them, and grown together. I've got a lot of stories! One of our ongoing projects is to fund a feeding program our sister-church runs. With the \$3,750 we send them each year, they are able to give lunch five times a week (and a doggy bag) to 14 senior citizens in the neighborhood who live alone. This year, they ran out of money for food. Because of the new economic pressures which the Trump administration is applying on Cuba, the price of food has gone up. We are glad we could send more money down to make up the difference. So those 14 seniors would not go hungry. But what about the others?

The blockade hurts people. That's its purpose. Cuba has an excellent health system, and on the average, they live longer than we do. But I know people who have died because they could not get medicine, medicine readily available here. It is a mean, spiteful policy, designed to hurt the people of a country which has always given us a white rose.

As Presbyterians, we talk about being called. We are called by our religious teachings, by our moral judgments, to be better than this. Passing this bill is a step on a path toward rectifying a wrong, cleansing a sin. We urge you to not only pass this bill, but come with us to Cuba, to talk to people there, to see for yourself what their life is like under these sanctions. Bring white roses.

My name is Dr. Frances Osaigbovo

I was born in Bronx New York and now live in Councilman Ruben Diaz's district.

In 2009, I was accepted into the Inter-Religious Foundation for Community Organizations (IFCO) ELAM Medical School Scholarship program with a full medical school scholarship. I graduated as an MD in 2015. Without this opportunity as an economically disadvantaged woman of African descent, I would never have had the ability to carry out my dreams of becoming a doctor or had the opportunity to learn to speak to people in my community in their own language (Spanish).

The Cuban government and its people recognize that there are young people like me who deserve the opportunity to pursue a path that would contribute to healing our communities. It was an honor for me and my other fellow students to study medicine from the greatest doctors in the world. These Cubans are selfless and passionate people who opened their country and gave us resources which they often lacked themselves. These are the types of people that educated us.

As a result of the blockade imposed by the government of my country, often my professors had to walk miles to school every day because they did not have fuel for their cars.

The people of CUBA never turn their backs on anyone when they were in need. After Hurricane Mitch, Cuban doctors went to Honduras and other countries to make sure that the people there received adequate medical care. After the earthquake in Haiti, Cuban doctors immediately offered aid and assistance. When hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, Cuba offered to send support, but the United States rejected the support. And for what? Because of racist policies and practices.

The people of Cuban are strong and brave, and should not have to suffer because of antiquated, unfair, unjust laws that are based on the foundation of White Supremacy. These selfless people should be honored for what they have contributed to the world. There is no reason they should be punished and strangled financially. The embargo should be ended.

I thank councilmembers Inez Barron, Ydanis Rodriguez, and Jimmy Van Bramer for sponsoring Resolution 1092 and encourage every member of the NY City Council to vote in favor of this Resolution. Thank you.

Dr. Frances Osaigbovo

October 30, 2019

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To Whom It May Concern:

RE: **RES No. 1092** Calling upon the President to lift the Cuban embargo and end the travel ban.

The United Methodist Church has historically joined many in calling for the end of the Cuban embargo and in recent years, celebrated the dialogue, efforts and negotiation process between Cuba and the United States initiated by the Obama Administration. As Lead Pastor of First Spanish United Methodist Church, also known as *The People's Church*, and as an East Harlem community, we grieve deeply the reversal and undoing of that significant work. Furthermore, we grieve the ways the current administration continues to demean and further disintegrate democracy, diplomacy and the moral fabric of our country both domestically and abroad. From a Christian and a humanitarian perspective, inspired by a deep love for all humanity and a deep commitment to peace and justice, we stand behind and support any effort that encourages and petitions the President and Congress of the United States to lift its economic embargo against Cuba and other regulations, practices or measures enforcing the embargo law.

For more than Fifty years, the economic embargo has created unnecessary, inhumane suffering and

REV. DORLIMAR LEBRÓN
Lead Pastor

FSUMC *The People's Church*
!63 East 111th Street
New York, NY 10028

CONTACT

PHONE:
516-983-3895

EMAIL:
Dorlimar.lebron@nyac-umc.com

hardship on the people of Cuba while simultaneously preventing US Citizens from traveling freely to Cuba in the exercise of their constitutional rights and curtailing the ability of churches to provide missional support to our sisters and brothers on the island. The General Assembly of the United Nations has time and time again, almost unanimously, voted to condemn the US Economic Embargo of Cuba. The time to end the embargo is long overdue and we implore the passing of this resolution as it calls for the elimination of the economic embargo and moves us towards a more just world.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King said “The time to do what is right, is always right now”. New York has the opportunity to do “what is right” now. One of the most important assignments of our generation and for those of us living in this present moment is to do “what is right” **now**. It is to push ourselves to the highest ideal of what it means to be human. In these days that we see in front of us, **there is a call to be more human**. Void of any badge or title that we think we need to make us better, like the many who came before us, like Dr. King, like Mohammed, like Ghandi. These leaders modeled for us that the greatest achievement of any human, is that being human is title enough and being a human being who pushes other human beings to be the best they can be is work enough. Supporting this resolution and calling for the end of the embargo, moves New York closer, to not only reaching the highest ideals and

aspirations of our humanity but modeling it for the rest of the world. The choice is ours.

We will continue to stand with and advocate for our sisters and brothers in Cuba, the end of the embargo and the end of travel band until “Justice rolls down like the waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” Amos 5:24

In Faith,

Rev. Dorlimar Lebrón
Lead Pastor

FSUMC *The People's Church*

Testimony in Support of Res. No. 1092
Submitted by Leslie Cagan
Nov. 1, 2019

I was unable to attend yesterday's hearing on Res. No. 1092 convened by the Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Committee of the NY City Council, and so am pleased to submit this written testimony.

While these comments are directed to all members of this committee, I especially hope that my Council Member Francisco Moya will take note that a member of his constituency urges his and the full committee's support for this Resolution.

For decades, the United States government has waged what amounts to an economic war against the people of Cuba, a country that is one of our closest neighbors. The rationale for this policy has often been couched in the rhetoric that our government is imposing what amounts to some of the strongest economic sanctions imposed on any nation as a way to support the Cuban people. This could not be further from the truth.

Over the years there have been changes in U.S. policy, especially in the area of the right of U.S. citizens to freely travel to Cuba. Since Donald Trump came to office there has been a renewed tightening of the economic screws on Cuba. While these actions by the U.S. government make daily life harder for Cubans they do not undermine the positive changes that the socialist government of Cuba has put into place, changes that are overwhelmingly supported by the people of Cuba.

As a city that brings together people from every corner of the world, New York should be bold and outspoken on international issues. As representatives of the people in this city, our City Council should call for an end to the current U.S. policies toward Cuba. More specifically, now is the time to call for an end to the economic embargo of Cuba and for an end to the restrictions on our right to travel to Cuba.

Res. No. 1092 is an excellent step in the right direction, and I hope this committee will support and encourage its passage by the full New York City Council as quickly as possible. And then I hope this committee will explore other steps it might initiate to pressure the U.S. government to end its outdated and cruel policies toward Cuba. One idea for your consideration is to send a delegation of City Council Members to Cuba to see first hand the powerful advances made on the island and the devastating impact the U.S. economic blockade has on the lives of the Cuban people.

Thank you for your support of this resolution.