

ACTING ON OUR CONSCIENCE

A DECLARATION OF AFRICAN- AMERICAN SUPPORT

FOR THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE IN CUBA

We, the undersigned, join the growing international outcry against the unjust imprisonment by Cuban authorities of Dr. DARSÍ FERRER, an internationally known Afro-Cuban civil rights leader and courageous man who for 17 days has endured a hunger strike and placed his life at risk to draw attention to the conditions of racism and racial discrimination in Cuba that has hitherto been ignored.

We support the position of the Honorable **Professor ABDIAS NASCIMENTO**, historical leader of the Black Movement of Brazil, and others from around the world, who are demanding Dr. Ferrer's **immediate release** from imprisonment. Moreover, we also support the demand that Cuba recognizes Dr. Ferrer as a **political** prisoner, rather

than a "common criminal", as is now the case. (See Professor Nascimento's Open Letter -attached).

Dr. **NASCIMENTO's** joint letter to the Heads of State of Cuba and Brazil, respectively General RAÚL CASTRO RUZ and President LUIZ INÁCIO LULA DA SILVA, is unequivocal. He requests of Cuba's President that he intervene to stop the unwarranted and brutal harassment of black citizens in Cuba who are defending their civil rights. Similarly, he requests that Brazil's President immediately prevail on the Cuban government to safeguard the rights of Cuba's most oppressed citizens who, in this case, happen to be more than 62% of the total population.

Professor **NASCIMENTO** has been a long standing supporter of the Cuban Revolution and government, but he, like we, cannot be silent in the face of increased violations of civil and human rights for those black activists in Cuba who dare raise their voices against the island's racial system. As of late, these isolated, courageous civil rights advocates have been subject to unprovoked violence, State intimidation and imprisonment.

As African Americans, we know first-hand the experiences and

consequences of denying civil freedoms on the basis of race, and we certainly understand what racial discrimination is and does to people. We have not tolerated it for ourselves, and will certainly not acquiesce in its perpetration against any other people. For that reason, we are even more obligated to voice our opinion on what is happening to our Cuban brethren a few miles away.

We support Cuba's right to enjoy national sovereignty, and unhesitatingly repudiate any attempt at curtailing such a right. However, at this historic juncture, we also do believe that we cannot sit idly by and allow for decent, peaceful and dedicated civil rights activists in Cuba, and the black population as a whole, to be treated with callous disregard for their rights as citizens and as the most marginalized people on the island.

Racism in Cuba, and anywhere else in the world, is unacceptable and must be confronted!

We call on the authorities and Government of Cuba to **immediately and unconditionally** free our brother, Dr. Darsi Ferrer.

Signatories

Richard Adams, Jr.
Co-Convenor Western Pennsylvania Black
Political Assembly (WPBPA)

J.B. Afoh-Manin, Esq.

Roslyn Alic-Batson
Publicist

Marva Allen
Manager, HUE-MAN Bookstore & Cafe (New
York)

Dr. Molefi Kete Asante
Historian, Author

Peter Bailey
Bethune-Davis Institute

Dr. Gloria Batiste-Roberts
President, National Association of Black Social
Workers

Lili Bernard
Fine Artist

Marie Brown
Literary Agent

Khepra Burns
Author

Dr. Iva E. Carruthers
Professor Emeritus, Northeastern Illinois
University

Dr. Kathleen Neal Cleaver, Esq.
Professor, Emory University

Clarence Cooper
Manager, Sylvia's Restaurant (NY)

Dr. David Covin
Professor Emeritus, University of California at
Sacramento
Past President, National Conference of Black
Political Scientists

Evelyn Crawford
Audiovisual artist

Dr. Earl Davis
Former Director, Institute of African Studies,
New York University

Ruby Dee Davis
Actress. 2007 Academy Award Nominee

Bill Day
Artist Photographer

Rev. Dr. Yvonne V. Delk (Ret)
United Church of Christ

Leonard G. Dunston
President Emeritus, National Association of
Black Social Workers

Honorable Commissioner Betty T. Ferguson
(Ret)
Former Miami-Dade County Commissioner

The Honorable Ambassador Ulric Haynes (Ret)
Former Executive Dean, Hofstra University
(New York), member of the US Council on
Foreign Relations

Nzinga Heru
President, Association for the Study of Classical
African Civilizations

Marlon Hill, Esq.
Past President of the Caribbean Bar Association

Eugene Jackson,
Chairman and CEO of the World African
Network

Dr. Winston James
Professor, University of California at Irvine

Guy Johnson
Author

Leroi C. Johnson, Esq.

Dr. Ollie Johnson
Professor, Wayne State University

Dr. Joyce E. King
President Academy for Diaspora Literacy, Inc.

Dr. Arthur Lewin
Professor, Bernard M. Baruch College of the
City University of New York

Dr. Shelby Lewis (Ret)
Former Project Manager, Special Programs,
United Negro College Fund

Dr. Ruth Love
Educator

Dr. Acklyn Lynch
Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland,
Baltimore County

Dr. Julianne Malveaux
President, Bennett College for Women

Honorable Congresswoman Carrie Meek (Ret)
House of Representatives of the United States of
America

Dr. Claudia Mitchell-Kernan
Dean and Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies
University of California at Los Angeles

Dr. Michael Mitchell
Professor of Political Science, Arizona State
University
Editor of the National Political Science Review

Dr. K. C. Morrisson
Professor, Mississippi State University
Past President, National Conference of Black
Political Scientists

Melvin Van Peebles
Film director, playwright, and author

Lori Robinson
Editor, Vida AfroLatina.com

Dr. Mark Sawyer
Professor University of California at Los
Angeles

Bernestine Singley, Esq.
Author

Dr. Ann Smith
President, The Gamaliel Foundation

Dr. Donald H. Smith.
Past President, the National Alliance of Black
School Educators

Rev. Dr. J. Alfred Smith Sr.
Pastor Emeritus, Allen Temple Baptist Church

Edward S. Spriggs
Former Executive Director of Hammonds House
Galleries and Resource Center

Susan Taylor
President, National CARES Mentoring
Movement,
Editor Emerita of ESSENCE magazine

Dr. James E. Turner
Professor, Africana Studies and Research Center,
Cornell University

Makani Themba-Nixon
The Praxis Project

Patricia Valdés
Marketing Specialist

Dr Marta Moreno Vega
President, The Caribbean Cultural Center
African Diaspora Institute

Dr. Ron Walters
Professor Emeritus of Government and Politics
University of Maryland College Park

Dr. Cornel West
Professor, Princeton University

Randy Weston
Musician/Composer

Al Whack
Executive, National Cable Communications
(NCC)

Rita Coburn Whack
Broadcasting Producer

Antonia Williams-Gary
Miami Consultant

Dr. Conrad Worrill
President, National Black United Front

Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr.
Pastor Emeritus, Trinity United Church of Christ