

U.S. WOMEN AND CUBA COLLABORATION

CALL FOR ACTION ON REAL SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND PEACEFUL RELATIONS

The US Women and Cuba Collaboration, in concert with women around the world working for peaceful solutions to international conflicts, calls for action on issues of real security, justice, and peaceful relations among sovereign governments. We believe that our world's genuine security, even in light of the new century's glut of war and terrorist acts, depends on our strategic use of collaborative tools of diplomacy and negotiations, as well as international law and other pressure, to bring just and peaceful resolutions among the nations and peoples of the world. We lament US circumventions and disrespect for international law and UN protocols in its invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, situations that require all of us who are committed to global peace and justice to assert our leadership, drawing on our individual and collective experiences, values, and perspectives to develop policies that make transgressions against collaborative global interests unthinkable.

We also profoundly object to the US government blockade of Cuba, a blockade that has been in place since 1960. As members of a Collaboration working to end the blockade and to normalize relations between our two sovereign countries, we maintain that current US foreign policy on Cuba violates the rights of both US and Cuban citizens, and in particular the women and children of Cuba. Because of the blockade, countries that trade with Cuba pay appalling economic penalties in trade with the US, even for commerce with Cuba involving vitally needed food and medicine, and US constitutional rights are violated by the severe travel restrictions placed on the travel of US citizens to Cuba.

MEASURES THAT INSURE REAL SECURITY

Inspired and educated by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, ratified in September, 1995, the Collaboration works in concert with women nationally and globally to strategize and achieve enduring security and peace for our families, for our nations, and for our world. "Look at the world through women's eyes" was the rallying call at the NGO forum at Huairou, China, and because of the UN's Fourth World Conference for Women at Beijing and Huairou, we are networked to continue peace work in inclusive ways across national borders, races, cultures, and classes. This is a powerful foundation for our collaborative work as activists for women's rights, racial justice, and peace in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001. The Beijing Platform addresses issues of violence and armed conflict as two of its twelve strategic concerns, calling for the promotion of conflict resolution that is non-violent and for the elimination of human rights violations, in addition to equitable access to health, education, food, economic opportunities, and clean environment as foundations for the real security of sustainable human development.

IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE AND MILITARISM

Women and girls of every color, culture, religion, sexual orientation, and age are profoundly affected by daily acts of violence, terrorism, and torture. We know too well the blatant forms of global violence we endure: rape, domestic violence, sex trafficking, physical and sexual abuse, hate crimes, and sexual harassment, to name but a few. Women and children experience the dailliness of local and global violence. We are also deeply injured by the more subtle, sinister forms of violence that degrade us, lower our expectations, and diminish our self-esteem: in our homes, our communities, and our workplaces.

Our analysis leaves us with a clear understanding that men are not our enemy, even though they most often are the perpetrators of violence against girls and women. We know that the greed of transnational corporations in their quest for globalization and profits around the globe increases the legions of poverty-stricken people on our planet. Starvation, disease, and illiteracy, as well as the rape of the earth by environmental outrages, including war, lead to a desperate hopelessness for those in poverty that can only be alleviated by domestic, national, and global policies aimed at peace with justice, equity, and equality. Global development must be primarily concerned with ending poverty.

Militarism ultimately destroys true democratic principles and processes, especially the freedom to dissent. In the US, such manifestations as the FISA Amendments Act and the National Security Agency's domestic wiretapping program, the Patriot Act, and various activities of the US Department of Homeland Security make the lives of many citizens and immigrants far less secure in their enjoyment of civil and human rights. Militarism diverts much-needed human and financial resources to the heavy expenses of war, and the result is that the US has the largest defense budget in the world,

one currently being used in Iraq for offensive purposes. Hand-in-hand with patriarchy and racism, militarism causes those susceptible to its arguments to forsake compassion for fellow human beings around the world.

As women concerned with, and working to address, the many destructive and powerful forms of violence that affect our families, especially war and other forms of militarism, we have confidence in the transforming and healing powers of conflict resolution and peaceful alternatives to violence. We propose an action agenda focused on real security for all people, and:

WE THEREFORE CALL FOR:

1. **Education about and implementation of an international women's rights agenda** through the Beijing Platform for Action + 10 actions and International Women's Day celebrations each year on or around March 8th.
2. **The normalization of relations with the Cuban government**, including the end of the forty-six year-old economic blockade that disproportionately penalizes women and children by withholding necessary goods and medicine; the removal of Cuba from the US list of "terrorist" nations; the release of the five Cuban political prisoners held in the US for preventing terrorism against their government as well as the US; and an end to the use of Guantanamo, Cuba, as a US prison and as a US holding, including a return of Guantanamo to the sovereign nation of Cuba.
3. **The right of people from the United States to travel freely to Cuba supported by passage of congressional legislation**, including HR 654/ S 721: Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act of 2007, and HR 2819/S 1673: Promoting American Agricultural and Medical Exports to Cuba Act of 2007, and the right for Cubans to receive visas from the US State Department to visit the US to speak directly for themselves.
4. **A dramatic increase in the leadership and public policy roles of progressive anti-racist women** of all races and classes, public forums for their voices for peace and justice, and corresponding support for organizations which defend women's and human rights globally and domestically. To provide specific support, we call upon the US Administration to restore full funding and rescind the gag order for international family planning programs and support for HR 619/S 1744: Global Democracy Promotion Act, as integral to women's health services and reproductive rights.
5. **Adoption and full implementation of real security measures** that can set the basis for a peaceful and just world including the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action, 1949 UN Convention on Human Rights, 1980 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance Declaration, and endorsement of the Earth Charter (www.earthcharter.org).
6. **Rescission of the Patriot Act** which has not only taken away civil liberties in the US, but also poses a profound threat to the Bill of Rights and our Constitution; and the dismantling of the Office of Homeland Security in favor of genuine security campaigns waged to abolish domestic and global poverty.
7. **Support for independent media outlets and feminist, progressive points of view** such as Democracy Now! (www.democracynow.org), Reclaim the Media (www.reclaimthemediala.org), Free Speech TV (www.freespeechtv.org) Feminist Peace Network (www.feministpeacenet.org), and Women in Media and News (www.wimnonline.org) to increase reporting on women's rights and to increase our ability to participate in decisions that impact our lives.
8. **An end to war and terrorism**, and in particular an end to the Iraq War and Occupation, and a significant increase in the US budget for humanitarian foreign aid appropriations in general and for human needs in particular; full implementation of UN Security Resolution 1325, lead by WILPF's UN Office, which calls for gender sensitivity in all UN Missions including peacekeeping, for women to participate equally at all negotiating tables and for the protection of women and girls during armed conflict (www.peacewomen.org).

The U.S. Women and Cuba Collaboration organizes in solidarity with women throughout Cuba, primarily through the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), a grassroots NGO representing about 85% of Cuban women aged 14 years and older.