

*The following is an excerpt and translation from the Cuban Newspaper, Granma<sup>1</sup>.*

Furthermore, I would like to point out the profound respect the Cuban people and particularly the academic community have for the American people. The history and the culture of the country that gave birth to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln is in no way strange to men, women, politicians, intellectuals and students. The ideas and causes that their founding fathers stood for, along with the historic events of the last century, are as familiar to us as the works of their greatest writers and creators across diverse fields. The Cuban people also know that Jose Marti, one of our nation's heroes, who was raised with the independent and political ideology of Felix Varela, whose ashes are kept here in this Aula Magna, he, that is to say, Jose Marti spent his last fifteen years in the United States. These years were the most decisive and transcendent of his life as intellectual and revolutionary. It was during this time that his sharp political insight allowed him to weigh the dramatic situation arising in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was this vision, which he recorded on many imperishable pages, where he also left the legacy of respect and appreciation for that country; the same country Tc 0.06n ma/TT0 1 Tfh



alleviation of suffering. In my country and as I said in almost all other nations of this hemisphere and the world, governments commit themselves to human rights. I have been able to visit with President Castro and others in recent years...days. Tremendous demonstrations of some of the basic human rights guaranteed to Cuba and to its people. The right to universal health care, the right to education, and as was mentioned by the earlier student speakers, these achievements are notable. And your record equals that of any wealthy nation on earth which has been accomplished under very difficult circumstances. I realize this. What I try to spell out here though, are the other elements of democracy and freedom and we differ, President Castro and I, on the definition of democracy. I read from the Universal Declaration of a definition of Democracy from nations in this hemisphere. The right of every human being to elect freely their own leaders. The right of every human being to speak freely, and without interference or punishment from the government, if those voices express differences or criticism of the

**[President Carter]:** Maybe if I would have had another term in office, I would have been more successful, but the people in my country didn't want me to be President another 4 years.

**[INTERPRETER]:** ...and another President came. But I don't think there will be another President and I hope that future Presidents will find better methods of making these dreams a reality.

**[President Carter]:** ... And thank you for your question.

**Daniel Garcia, senior chemistry student:**

Good Afternoon.

Mr. President, I would like to pose two questions to you, both related to your speech and to the issues you have discussed here at our University.

First, I would like to thank both you and The Carter Center for your efforts to improve the relationship between your people and ours. It is within this context that I would like to ask you what you really think about your country imposing, as a condition for the normalization of our relationship, a change in our government towards democracy, such as that in other Latin American countries. A democracy which is given and taught to us as example, but which is a democracy that for the last 30 or 40 years has taken millions into poverty, has committed the crime of not healing the diseases affecting those people, has killed hundreds of millions of children and has committed fraud and decreased the economic well being of those countries. Those Latin American countries which were the same ones that voted against us or that were not supportive of us in facing the Human Rights Commission. They cannot teach us anything better than what we already have.

So, my question is, whether you consider it right that the condition for the normalization of the relationship between Cuba and the United States to be based upon us making a change in our country towards the democracy seen in Latin American.

And the second question is whether you consider that the United States government has normalized or has had the intention of normalizing their relationship with our country, given the well-known hostility and intensification of the embargo for the past 30 years.

Do you really think that an American administration will allow these ideas to be realized through your efforts?

have been encouraged by the Proyecto Varela, which is an opportunity. I understand, in part, is guaranteed to the people of Cuba from your own constitution. Which says in the two articles that I mentioned,



undermine the legal and constitutional government that the Cuban nation has erected in due exercise of their sovereignty.

Something that is inconceivable is to use the legal structure of a country to subvert its basic principles.

With all due respect, and asking that you forgive my previous comment, possibly for its length, and knowing your honesty, and your high ethical standards that you are known for and as well as your experience as a politician, I ask you:

Does the Constitution of the United States of America offer the possibility for a minority group of infamous citizens, fostered by alien influences, to change the founding principles of the American nation? Thank you (Applause).

**[President Carter]:** It was difficult for me to detect your question but I bet all of the public affairs and one of the rules that I establish for myself with American politics is not to debate the law as a peanut farmer with lawyers. [



**Hassan Perez, recently graduated in history and students' representative:**

President Carter, I have paid close attention to your words and although I initially had no intention of commenting, as I considered it unnecessary, your reflections have motivated me to share with you some thoughts, using my the virtually illegible notes I managed to take as a basis.

First, I would like to point out an issue that calls for deeper meditation. We tend to talk about the conquests of our revolution in social terms, and in many cases, I believe it is the result of ignorance to try to confine our achievements exclusively to the areas of health, education and sports.

What has been going on in Cuba since 1959 extends far beyond the Olympic champions, university graduates, and world-renowned health specialists. It is much more profound. It has to do with our roots, our identity and with ideas, which are sacred to Cubans. This is especially true for those of us that did not participate in the Sierra, as did our Commander in Chief, President Fidel Castro. For those of us who did not arrive in a boat to fight a tyranny that not too far from here massacred students. This unpunished tyranny flagrantly violated the most elemental rights of students.

I believe this is about a core idea, and that you as a statesman, as an International presence, will surely agree with me on this. The social improvements alone should not be associated with this process because, for all of us, our achievements extend from agricultural processes to the space science research.

I would like to share a story with you. The first Cuban astronaut was a shoe shiner before the Revolution, and from being a shoe shiner, a poor black man from the East Coast, he was able to reach space, thanks to a revolution that made it possible for him to study and graduate. The same applies for all other disciplines, but I will not take more time to elaborate on them. Instead, I refer to some issues you have formulated.

You were wondering if it is possible for our nations to live in peace. I think it is not only possible, but also necessary. All we need is an environment filled with the respect of international brotherhood. However, it is not possible to speak about peace, while maintaining an embargo on a country. It is not possible to have peace while financing terrorist groups – that are allowed to grow and propagate by groups and sectors in power – that are committed to threatening our lives, our children's rights, our young people, and our elders.

The blockade is considered an act of genocide. This is stated in the Geneva Convention and also in Vienna at the end of the 1940's, not just by the Cuban Parliament,

Even in times of war to deprive a country from obtaining food and medications constitutes a criminal act. To live in peace we should first have normal relations.

You stated, "The American government has to take the first step, because it is a powerful nation."

Mr. President, with all due respect, I have a different perspective. I do not believe that the United States has to take the first step because it is a powerful nation. It has to take the first step because Cuba has never blocked the American people, Cuba has never killed a student, nor has Cuba fostered and sponsored someone to place a bomb in Manhattan, or in Washington, or in Pennsylvania, nor elsewhere. Cuba has never launched bacteriological warfare over universities, nor has it planned any policy with those characteristics, but in turn Cuba has suffered from operations of organized crime – sponsored and linked to those circles of power – which have perpetrated terrorist acts, which constitute crimes against humanity.

Thus, I believe that first step should be linked to recognition of that reality.

Private properties that became appropriated by the government were duly paid for. I am not a law student, but since elementary school I have known that with the other governments this is a normal process. It was not the case with those who went to the United States, because they did not want it to happen like that. You also mentioned that in many ways governments have stagnated.

And with even more respect – I beg you to forgive me because I tend to speak quickly, although I know you speak Spanish perfectly – I would like to say to you that it is not that we have stagnated. I believe that from an academic perspective, that phrase should be more precise.

Many American administrations have stagnated a-mak To a-2 (th) p 0150] bhat with TD [TfC 0069] Carpet, it 8nsha

I do not want you to feel that we are trying to offend you. My ethical standards and those of my colleagues would not allow me to directly approach you on this issue, but I would like to make a general reflection.

How much does a person wanting to be President of the United States have to pay to become such? Or in any other nation? How much does a Senator have to pay to occupy his seat?

When I saw the young female American student, I wondered if she could make it to the American senate? Does she have 100 million dollars? Does she have 150? Does she have 200?

There have been recent examples on which, even multimillionaires – as you have said – could not reach the White House, and they have not been able to occupy that position of responsibility of that country.

When the Project Varela was mentioned, I felt deeply humiliated. I think it is an infamy and I speak with much respect, I do not intend to offend you, but I have to speak frankly as a young Cuban. I think our history has been manipulated. The ashes of our founder, Felix Varela, lie within the walls of this University of La Havana, and it is an infamy, a calumny, an offense.

For us, those 10,000 signatures – I do not know if there are 10,000 or 9,550, and I do not know who counted them – are the expressions of people swimming in a pool without water, without oxygen, tied to a mafia that wanted a Cuban boy to stay kidnapped illegally in the United States.

And that it is not just a theory, Mr. President. You should understand that even though we are in a university function, for us there are still 3,479 brothers that lost their lives as a result of these terrorists practices and 2,099 who today are a missing hand, a leg, or have some other disability as a result of these acts that were financed by unscrupulous people who are today identified by those projects.

Our elections are genuine free. Anyone who wants to propose something, can attend our district assembly, raise their hand, and speak before the community at large, in the neighborhood, where there are no political parties, as professor Toledo already said.

When you refer to Latin American governments, I think they have the moral right to speak about human rights. Argentina and other countries are palpable recent examples.

I would also say that freedom, quality of life is such that for the baseball game we are about to attend – and that for sure is not starting until you get there, as a mere courtesy – we pay four hundred times less than a major league baseball game to see. And that is within everyone's reach.

This is just an example I remembered, before I tell you that to us, freedom means that when this meeting has ended, there will not be an illegal off-the record execution, nor any death squadrons, because it has not occurred in 40 years. No student will be offered drugs when

he leaves this building. No child will be kidnapped to steal their orga

your country. To answer your specific question, which I think I understood, in my country there are three distinct systems of government. One is legislative branch, one is the executive branch that is the president, and one is the judicial branch. The ultimate decisions are made by the judicial branch.

have the presentation here and for it to be transmitted over radio