

Date: February 27, 2004

To: Colin L. Powell  
U.S. Secretary of State and Chair, Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba

From: María de Lourdes (Luly) Duke  
Founder and President, Fundación Amistad

**Re: Approaching the Issue of Assistance to Cuba**

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Dear Mr. Secretary,

Per the February 9, 2004 announcement by the U.S. Department of State that its Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba is welcoming public input, we are very pleased as U.S. citizens and as the Board of Directors of Fundación Amistad (the Friendship Foundation), to have the opportunity to present some important thoughts for the Commission's consideration. We urge the adoption and application by the U.S. government of the following guiding principles in developing policies that govern relations between our two nations and their citizens:

- *The Cuban people should now and in the future be the central protagonists in any deliberations or debates about internal changes in Cuba.* With respect to policies of governance and socio-economic development in Cuba, Cuban citizens on the Island are the ones who presently confront the challenges of satisfying their most basic needs on a daily basis, and therefore, theirs is the community with the greatest stake in discussions centered on improving their future. On their shoulders, initiative, and creativity rests the responsibility for determining the future directions of Cuba's growth. U.S. policy should relate to the Cuban people on the Island in a way that emphasizes the centrality and sustainability of their role as decision-makers vis-à-vis civil society and government policies for development.
- *No credence or support should be given to any assistance approach that is based on the premise that individuals or organizations outside of Cuba have the primary status in being at the helm of change.* Internal change should continue to occur fundamentally via discussions between Cuban citizens and the Cuban government, even if the pace, content, and form of such exchanges are not always in concert with the particular democratic model espoused by the U.S. government. At the same time, Fundación Amistad does encourage, support, and facilitate participation of Cuban-Americans and other members of the Cuban Diaspora to constructively evaluate and collaborate with these internal dynamics of change.
- *Respectful, non-interventionist approaches that are free of inflammatory language must be employed to motivate and facilitate this dialogue and change.* Legitimate concerns voiced by the global community, including the Cuban Diaspora, should also respectfully acknowledge, relate to, and support this internal dynamic on the Island.

Since 1997 Fundación Amistad has successfully fostered a variety of meaningful exchanges between non-governmental Cuban institutions, U.S. organizations and international entities and organizations that foster cross-cultural understanding, build institutional capacity and address specific needs of the Cuban people. Following is a listing of some of our most successful partnerships:

<b>Project Area</b>	<b>Collaborating Cuban, U.S. and International Institutions</b>
<i>Health and the Environment</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sharing technical knowledge regarding conservation planning and marine ecosystems management in the Florida Straits</li> <li>- Organizing the donation and shipment of medical supplies and specialized equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cuban Neurosciences Center</li> <li>- United Nations Development Program</li> <li>- UCLA</li> <li>- Environmental Defense</li> <li>- The Nature Conservancy</li> </ul>
<i>Academic Study and Professional Development</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementing community-based, service-learning opportunities for students</li> <li>- Building capacity of non-governmental Cuban institutions to use internships in the U.S. and Cuba as mechanisms for professional exchange and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Casa de Las Americas</li> <li>- Robertson Scholars Program (Duke University and the University of North Carolina)</li> <li>- Antioch University</li> <li>- Brown University</li> </ul>
<i>Cultural Heritage</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthening the ability of non-governmental Cuban institutions to preserve archival material of historical and cultural importance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Museum of the City of Havana</li> <li>- Museums Association of the Caribbean</li> <li>- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</li> <li>- Northeast Document Center</li> <li>- University of North Carolina Library</li> </ul>
<i>The Visual and Performing Arts</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitating technical exchanges between Cuban and U.S artists and the presentation of film, music and dance repertoires to broader audiences in both countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC)</li> <li>- Contemporary Dance Company of Cuba</li> <li>- La Colmenita Children's Theater</li> </ul>

Mr. Secretary, Fundación Amistad offers its services to you for any efforts directed at improving bilateral government and people-to-people relations with Cuba. As you can see, Fundación Amistad's model of serious-minded, professional exchange and collaboration has an established record of success. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss possible areas of cooperation with you in the near future.

In a spirit of democratic cooperation with civil society,

Luly Duke  
 Jean M. Gath  
 Anthony Drexel Duke  
 Jonathan Showe  
 Robert Muse

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 James Early  
 Elena Lord  
 Silvia Fernandez Freyre  
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Michael Connors, Ph.D.  
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