

# Che Guevara Brigade 14 - Cuba's 50th Anniversary

**“WE must be the change we wish to see in the world!” - Gandhi**

**Thms** my precious son - “I hurt myself today to see if I still bleed... everyone I know goes away in the end... and you could have it all, my empire of dirt... but I will [never] let you down, I will [never] make you hurt.

**Stu**, my stalwart lad, we have had many experiences together, (the rugby was a blast... missing Sean together big guy) I hope someday we might have a few more experiences. Substance abuse is a terrible thing.

**Tee** - I am so proud of you... keep up the good fight gal... and don't forget to smile more often Lil' Miss serious.

Tee, Stu, Thms thank you three ever so much for letting me spend the first two decades of your life closer by you. I believe you will flourish just fine without me interfering with this next most important stage of your lives. I believe you three may see and understand the revolution must come to Canada. I personally hope I have the strength to abandon the easy life, I never really understood or fit into the average consumer driven Canadian way of life and in the end it drove me away. Find the way that makes you happiest.

**“What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are small matters to what lies within us” Ralph Waldo Emerson**

## The Journey Begins

The three and a half day bus trip to Montreal went smoothly other than that in the Rockies we had to stop twice on the hwy to transfer people from overheating buses. Arrived app. 1400h, found a hotel next to the station and had a shower. Took in Pirates of the Caribbean then met up with Jordie Dent an ex student who attends SFU and is in Montreal for the Out Games. We went to a pre-event pub party with a few of the organizers but then I retired at 11:30.

Met up with five other Canadians at PETrudeau Airport. As the ladies had slept over night at the airport four of them slept while Tamera, who heads Free the Five in Vancouver, and I chatted. What a remarkable young lady for age 22. She brought me up to speed on who exactly the Five are and what her organization has been doing. (Google “Free the Five”). The four hour Cubana air flight went smoothly as well. We met up with our contact Fernando in Havana and boarded a small well kept VW Brazilian built bus. Twenty other brigadistas were already at CIJAM (international friendship centre) when we arrived. Some from Toronto and some from Winnipeg. Our brigade leader Bob Henry (Winnipeg cab driver, solidarity activist.)

Be ya'll not too critical of this Quick and Dirty DTP letter home.



was with them. Bob has fairly good Spanish and will turn out to be a good leader and spokesperson.

We had dinner in the dinning hall and then watched a subtitled docu-drama of the raid on Batista's armoury in the 1950's to procure weapons for the invasion. Many of the participants had been jailed for activism. They lead a hunger strike while in jail. Very moving. It was based on the diary of one of a women who survived the July 26 massacre but lost her fiancé. Chatted with other member and we all retired to the dorms. CIJAM is a centre usually used for teaching South American activists about Cuba. We were to transfer to the Medical dorms so the camp can accommodate a brigade of 360 from Venezuela, Bolivia and Argentina, however, repairs to the plumbing system are not finished so we were put up in a hotel for Cuban holidayers. I was looking forward to the dorms. Two 24 seat buses took us to Holguin where we met up at the hotel with a contingency of Social Work students from George Brown University, Toronto.



*Some of the writings included later herein are based on articles some of you are aware of that have been previously published in Cuba... (translated by ex-student Daniel Gimenez)*



## The Lead Players

**Fernando** - 47 years old. ICAP liason and our mother-hen. Makes us laugh so much. Very good English. He is always funny or funny trying to be. On the bus one day, I asked if he misses his two kids. He says he calls home to Havana every few days. His daughter is a teenager and too busy to notice he is gone but his son, 8 misses him but he knows ten minutes after he gets home and hugs him he'll run off to play with his mates. However, he says his "wife never sleeps at night whenever he is away. Her lover never lets her. HaHa making a joke."

**Victor-Denis** is a talented 31 year old cameraman who has been following Fidel and others around since he was 22. He is the father of two. He was assigned to cover this 50th Anniversary Brigade from Canada and film a National TV and Archives documentary. He and I have been taking video from two angles and will splice them together.

For several years the Canada solidarity movement has been trying to produce one. Last year someone filmed their trip but it did not come to fruition. Initially, I was asked at to come and film and spend part of my time here producing one. It has now gone far beyond that. This will be the first digital editing done in Cuba. Victor knows a little about editing, having only done tape to tape assistance in the national broadcast studio. He has looked at Final cut-pro (a glorified iMovie) a little and I am now going to work with him to produce a half hour snapshot for classroom presentation to solidarity students. (Last year Vancouver Brigadistas Tamera and Noah did a presentation at many high-schools including Kitsilano. They commented they recall the kids there asking the most intelligent questions. yay Kits!)

We also plan on creating a more complete DVD documentary of this year's Canada Brigade. So for now the other things I was to be involved with, will be on hold. Hey this is Cuba afterall.

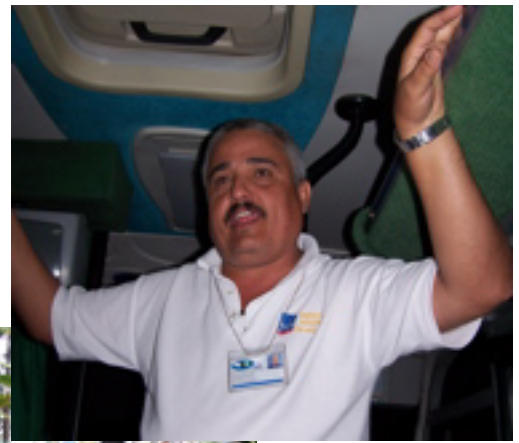
**Bob** - 53 year old ex-U-Man history prof, Winnipeg cab driver and Cuban solidarity activist.

**Maheli**- 47 year old Mexican/Canadian prof at George Brown University Toronto. Long time Cuban activist. Social workers do a practical in Cuba with her. Very jolly mother of two teen daughters with perfect English and Spanish and a son with accented english.

**Jesus**- 32 years old, our field interpreter. Excellent English and Russian (the Russian Brigadistas told me). He is a widowed father of a beautiful 11 year old daughter. His wife died of brain cancer two months ago. Very nice guy. He often reminds me to correct any mistakes in vocab or pronunciation after a presentation. Most are very slight but he wants to get even better.

He and Fernando have found me a place near ICAP and the University. They have done this lots of times before. He is also going to organize government sponsored Spanish lessons something he has done before. As well, he has offered to handle any future immigration visa issues (extension,etc.). He will do the voice-overs on the English and Spanish version of the DVD to be used in Solidarity South America presentations.

**Victor**- 36 year old plain cloths security, lead driver, good English and very funny. He will charm all of our ladies.



Lead  
vehicle  
driver  
**Victor**



## Weather report

The weather has been very warm/hot, sometimes humid and occasional short cloud bursts with several wild and windy squalls. The worst has been.... almost hurricane winds and torrential hot warm rain for about a half hour.

## **“Brief” Journal excerpts**

### **Monday July 31st**

We had a short meeting and were issued an ID tag. This tag will prove to be a passport of recognition and appreciation by Cubans we are in contact with everywhere during the Brigade.



In the a.m. the brigade placed a flower wreath at the Plaza Guevariana then left for the birth place of Fidel in Biran, where we learned of the great compassion and love of and for the Castro family. The farm was a collective lived on and worked by whites, blacks and mixed people. It was at this point I began to understand how a young man and future lawyer, who saw starvation and deprivation throughout Cuba, began to formulate his ideas for a free Cuba where all would be cared for like his parents had cared for their small community. After lunch at ICAP, Instituto Cuban para Amistad del Pueblo /Cuban Institute for Friendship with the People (of the world) we toured Holguin on foot. In the evening we went to a street dance in Holguin. Mucho salsa dancing which most of us faked.

### **Tuesday August 1**

Bused to Baria where we had a cultural event at the point where Columbus first came ashore to Cuba.



We had a Native/Spanish re-enactment/ dancing followed by exploration of the archaeological site. Around 4 p.m. we arrived

at the Bayamo School of Art Instructors in Granma Province, which usually accommodates 600 students who will eventually graduate in dance, music, painting, etc. Most will go on to be instructors. This will be the most rustic accommodation of all. Toilets flush with bucket water, eight-bunk dorms, and fairly thin mattresses. The dinning room kitchen is primitive, the food will be beans/rice, lots of fruit and a little meat daily... we will live exactly like the students who themselves will be our guides and will turn out to be amazing over the next week. In the evening we went to Holguin and were welcomed by local authorities.

It was like something out of the news or movies, seeing the three highest ranking officials “march” smartly in wearing the drab green. The Provincial Secretary jokingly said, “If we look uncomfortable in battle dress it is because we don’t wear it very often. But this is a time of concern in Cuba and we must be ready for imperialist aggressions”.

Fidel is recovering from an intestinal operation last night brought on by exhaustion and the three excused the fact that they may not look comfortable in their army greens but in times of all national “emergencies” when America might take advantage the armouries are prepared and reservists are in their battle gear. It was a wonderful welcome somewhat like being given the keys to the province of Granma. Next day, TV broadcast interviews with several of our spanish speaking Brigadistas. We would notice no difference in the daily lives of Cubans, although the Globe and Mail and assorted other right-wing Canadian papers will exaggerate as usual. Whenever Fidel has a hangnail or cold, his imminent end is forecast. A small number of Cuban Americans will get press coverage dancing in the streets of Miami rejoicing and licking their lips at the prospect at getting hold of Cuba so they may return to beat the crap out of her with capitalism.

### **Wednesday August 2nd**

We are woken up daily with very loud Cuban music which I have copied and which will be used in the video. Breakfast will generally be toast, yoghurt, cafe con leche and fruit with the occasional egg. Local authorities then shared info in the school “theatre” on how this typical province is organized. It was followed by an organizational meeting setting out the agenda for the next week as well as rules while staying at the school, e.g. No smoking around students. (there is a big national anti smoking program for students and none of ours smoke at this time). After lunch we had a tour of the city of Bayamo the second oldest city in Cuba founded at a strategic point on a large river. The evening saw us engaged in the first of a number of salsa lessons with the students and vice-principal, a dance instructor.

### **Thursday August 3rd**

Our first day of volunteer solidarity work. We will not be painting the school (there’s no paint) but instead will work the entire time in the fields with the school crops. The surprise of the day was that for this 50th anniversary a dozen well known “combatientes” or veterans of the revolutionary liberation army were here to have breakfast and work in the field. Most are now in their 70’s and 80’s and put a lot of us to shame. Our work will consist of weeding fields, hoeing, picking papaya, plantain and guava,

**Cuba is not COMMUNIST or Socialist it is  
“Compassionist”**



planting, etc. At the end of today's three hour stint the combatants will look fairly fresh while most of us will look sweaty, dirty and tired- many of them were farmers. There are ten men and two women including the "famous" la Gallega... a female commander of the Marianna's in Fidel's army. In the afternoon we had a question and answer session in the school theatre and a photo session outside with the combatiente. It is at this time that I asked if they had ever thought about Fidel's upbringing at the farm as a model to the revolution.



**La Gallega y Yo**



**Fraea and combatiente Felix**/"topa topa" faster faster



Isaakil our newly arrived ICAP rep said he had just been there for the first time several weeks ago and had the same thought. Many Cubans have never been there and no documentary has ever been made. This along with a DVD on Celia Sanchez, would turn out to be a future plan for Victor and I. After dinner with the veterans we mixed it up and the women in our group danced with them while one guy who had yelled topa topa during our work, (slang for faster faster) sang. They were very happy to be with so many young women. I danced with La Gallega. There are 51 Brigadistas, the largest troop ever for this special year. Eleven are men the rest women. Bravo for the new generation of activist leaders, mostly women.

### **Friday August 4th**

Work day two was more of the same but it was fun working with and trying to talk with the students. They are teaching us Spanish on the go. After the fields the students showed us a tiny village down the road from the school next to a small river, Rio Sol. It is completely canopied and surrounded by jungle like plants. It was almost cool and so much fun drifting along in the current. Very photogenic. We wore our cloths in and scrubbed them before walking back to the school. After lunch we went to town and wandered. Saw the student art display in the local gallery. Amazing quality. Wowwww. We're very proud of our students already. After dinner salsa lessons in the plaza at the school. So much fun. The students are so patient with us.

### **Saturday August 5th**



After field work, more swimming then into town. We were given a presentation on **Carlos Manuel de Céspedes** who freed his workers to fight in the first liberation revolt against the Spanish. He was a remarkable Renaissance man of his day. Google/ Wikipedia him. After dinner the students put on an incredible night of entertainment - guitar/percussion/ song and dance. These kids make their own entertainment and have very little TV. They are all very demonstrative in their affection to each other and more and more towards the Brigadistas. It is their way.

### **Sunday August 6th**

After a great session of field work with the students with lots of nationalist singing e.g. Commandanté Che Guevara and Volveran about the Five detainees in America we headed out to visit the national botanical gardens where they have hundreds of native plants as well as 71 different species of world palms. We planted a friendship tree... a kind of large leafed banana plant used to roof houses in the villages here, symbolic as they said of how "Canada, has helped keep a roof over their heads". The students get so



emotional and then we all get teary eyed and hug them. They really are proud of their country and very appreciative of Canada. BUT they really do not understand why so little of our world lives an unsustainable lifestyle. They have a saying here, "He who has the most is never happy; he who can live with the least is." and yet they are generally happy lively people so ready to smile back. In the evening we had a brigade meeting to voice any concerns. Several of us suggested we start work earlier when it was cooler so instead of up at 7 fields by 8 we are now up at 5:30 fields by 6:30 which will turn out to be much more pleasant. The Cubans were trying to accommodate us but will now turn out to be much happier with us. Salsa and earlier night, bed by 11.

### Monday August 7th

No work but this would be a long day. The countryside was so beautiful driving along the Sierra Maestra mountains to Che's command post in Las Mercedes. Very moving for all.



Next we attended the Green Medicine labs. Incredible. Since the revolution they have focused on natural remedies. Most of our common medicines, headache etc. are plant based. Since the embargo/blockade they moved heavily into this research. Several Brigade members had skin infections from bites and heat rash. Paula was given some ointment made from scorpion venom, Guava flower etc. and within half an hour her swelling was down. Andrew had been putting commercial salve on his open sores to no avail. After a day of their natural remedy he was

drying up and much more comfortable. Natasha had some ultrasound on knee swelling from a fall the day before leaving Canada, then massage with some menthol, etc. salve and it is back to normal after several days even after the long hike tomorrow. I would continue to be her massage therapist at school. The solar research centre was excellent. Although Cubans do not heat water to shower they are using it more and more to preheat hot water for coffee, soup etc. which saves fuel. We have seen that the primitive banana leaf covered houses far from the grid are being set up with solar panel electric. See later image. The high-school attached is involved in all of this as well as "companion planting" instruction. The Santo Domingo battle museum was very inspiring. In the evening we danced in a town square to live music. The police here are very much a part of the people. There were half a dozen of them with one specifically keeping a protective eye on our young ladies. The Brigadistas formed a congo line to which a lot of the Cubans joined onto. That was quite amazing. Afterwards some of the Brigadistas went onto the stage to sing Commandant Che and Volveran as well as Cuba Libre. The "ron/ rum" is very good here and although I'm not a coke or pepsi drinker I tried their much less sweet lime tangy TuKola and it was refreshing. Some of us prefer the naranja (orange- pronounced narank-ha) and pineapple juice with banana and papaya slices with our ron... and the occasional shot straight-up. Wild nite that one. We had our cop dancing 2nd in line after "hot-chikita" Natasha in a final conga of the night.

### Tuesday August 8th

Huge hike day. We bused into the Sierra Maestra as far as they could travel. Then we shifted to five person jeep type vehicles and the extreme drive began. Imagine Oak Street hill but 5 to 10 degrees steeper. Woww what fun. Following that we divided into two groups at the parking lot. One had a 20 minutes nature presentation followed by a map of the area, chosen to draw the army into Guerrilla warfare. This is one of the toughest hikes I have ever done. It makes our mountains, although far less high, seem like a Sunday walk. Some of it was like short segments of the Grouse grind and the hike up Post Creek to Lindeman lake seem like a stroll. We imagine the Rebels carrying 30 kg packs, ammo and 10 kg weapons on the move at double time.



The history of the area is as such. As the wealthy land owners in Cuba forced the peasants off the good bottom land they moved to subsistence farming in little plots carved out of the hillsides of the Maestra much the way pot growers might in BC. Ingenious



irrigation's systems were developed over the centuries. These farmers knew the mountains like the back of their hands and had a huge advantage over Batista's armies and Che utilized this fact. Batista's American Sherman tanks and vehicles were useless up here. Over a two year period the better equipped army was reduced in size to one which could be beaten in one final spirited battle at Santa Domingo village to break out towards Havana. After a humid hour and half hike we arrived at the command centre of "Commandanté de la Plata" and it was spectacular. All of the simple palm covered buildings were built around huge branched trees and hidden from the air. They were definitely on the high ground, although the three surrounding steep peaks were constantly manned with hidden sniper's in guard posts.



**Caretaker's cottage half-way to the top**  
(note the solar panels - common "off grid")

After the 3 hour return hike we headed down to Santa Domingo, to a typical "mountain" hospital to hand over one quarter of our medical supply donations sent from the Montreal and Toronto area ex-pat Cuban and solidarity communities. They have plenty of common natural medicines like aspirin and vitamin C tinctures but little in the way of sterile bandages and heavy duty antibiotics, (donated by ex-pat Doctors) as well operating saline, stitches, syringes etc. It was quite an emotional exchange. One can't help but see the teary appreciation in everyone's eyes. After that, we waded through the shallow river to the final Sierra battle site on the flats beside the river's bank. The bullet ridden concrete, army command post is the site of memorabilia from the final battle. La Gallga and Fidel are shown on either side of the surviving guerillas. Fidel, arm in bloody sling, smiling with cigar in mouth. Both Che and Fidel were wounded several times during the revolutionary war. They were the lucky ones. Fidel was a giant of 6 foot plus among these surviving photogenic smiling Uncle Alf size peasant/farmer/warriors. The locals had put out a small spread of assorted fruits in the museum as well as coconuts with straw to which all of us partook.

It was quite a long morning and few of us weren't really very hungry until we arrived at a river resort to be hosted to a lunch of chicken, rice, olives and fresh guava juice. A well know group of six old combatientes known as the Quinteto\* Rebelde, ate, performed and fraternized with us. After the show Tom and I bought them a round of beer and photos with all were had. Tom, a one beer a day guy and I had three beer- however, afterwards

we were able to soak sober in the rapids of a shallow river five minutes walk away. Most of the Brigade slept part way back on the bus... I sat in the co-pilot seat and laboured with Tom's electronic dictionary to elicit what it was like for our driver to fight in Angola where his "negre" people originally came from 250 years earlier. He is tiny but his voice is a deep base like the great opera singer Paul Robeson. That night Fernando, Jesus, Victor-Denis, Tom, Robert, Bob, Myhalee, the three drivers and I sat around with several bottle of ron, Kola, fruit juice and relaxed while the kids danced up a storm on the plaza. We all ended up with a "conga" line and some of the staff joined in.

### **Wednesday August 9th**

Today we went to see the other part of this very fortuitous revolutionary puzzle. First we went to see the sugar plantation at Colorades Beach where Cespedes freed his indentured negre workers and encouraged them to take a shot at the first revolution. Next we saw Celia Sanchez's family home. Her father was a doctor who moved to a very poor part of Cuba and set up the first and only practice there to attend to the very large population, mostly peasants. Celia was one of six girls, two boys. She grew up like Fidel in a compassionate family and assisted her father in surgery. Her father inspired her towards the revolution. On the tour I mentioned to the guide that it was quite a coincidence that she and Fidel, so like minded happened to come through Cuba's history at the same time. She said it was one of the great coincidences of the Revolution. (Google/Wiki "Celia Sanchez").

We were then off to Los Cayuelos, the site of the landing of the Granma where we were given an incredible welcome, singing, dancing and a 50th Anniversary tour. There is a replica of the old yacht, which now resides in the Havana museum. Completing the day, we had a banquet under the trees up the playa where we had our first swim (for many of us) in the warm, blue Caribbean.

### **Thursday August 10th**

Today in the fields we were gathering remains from previous crops and building long compost piles. Oxen are used to rip the roots and remains up. Some of us drove the oxen and old plough. Made for great video and photos. Wisconsin Tom the retired school admin is 6'4" and looks a lot different behind the plough then tiny Parissa the petite Vancouver kid. She loved it and did it



for an hour. Our women's centre visit was rescheduled and instead we went to the central government centre for a power point and lecture on the system of government. Frank questions were answered frankly. Mine was "You mentioned that no one, even Fidel can veto the 609 member National Assembly. Is Fidel himself elected and has he ever had a time when he almost lost? Is he in fact just a figure head?" The answers were "Yes. Yes and No" with accompanying further explanations. Fidel's popularity waned for a while during the "Special Period" (Soviet

collapse) but inspirational and encouraging speeches garnered him enough votes on two occasions in those two elections five years apart.

Salsa lessons turned into rumba/samba tonight. Several of us spent some of the time later watching *World According to Bush* DVD. Everyone thought it crazy scary stuff.

### **Friday August 11th**

We continued to prepare fields today. These plots approximately 100 meters by 100 meters are bordered by hand planted lemon grass, anise, oregano and a number of herbs. Companion gardening is practiced on a large scale here and as in childhood we walk amongst clouds of butterflies. After the work we went swimming in the river then went to visit a dairy factory. The natural ice cream was wonderful. After dinner we went to town to wander among the Friday night crowds.

### **Saturday August 12th**

Our last day of volunteer work consisted of border planting and calabash seeding. Fidel has asked people to spend a few hours doing volunteer work tomorrow and then have street games and dancing for his birthday. Che, Celia and Fidel always partook of physical labours outside their desk jobs in whatever activity was closest at hand. Fidel discontinued this regular practice when he reached the age of 70. They especially liked working during the canya del sucre harvest, although Fidel also loved working in the tobacco fields doing assorted labours. Che liked warehouse work packing around sacks of sugar.

It has been interesting seeing the difference in work rate in the volunteers. Full credit given to the “princesses”\* for enduring the more primitive sleeping and bathing conditions here... however, physical labour has not been their strong suit. (\*several young women away first time from home).

Brigade concerns meeting was followed by a surprise visit to a CDR- Committee for the Defence of the Revolution, evening block party for us. Cities are divided into sections of several city blocks, something like a Block Watch group... although these serve political organizational purposes as well. Citizens at the grass roots level forward area concerns to their elected reps. The CDRs also maintain a small secured armoury and cache of weapons. This has always been the way since the start of the revolution. Ex-Batista and then US CIA backed terrorists have always been a problem and concern, and repeatedly every time Fidel is deemed vulnerable by the USA. (See “Los Cinco” within) When reports of Fidel’s health appear in the US the CDR’s are ready for action throughout the country. There have been hundreds of documented CIA backed attempts on Fidel’s life as well of course, of CIA terrorist backed activities, bombing, murders and attempts at economic disruption. The United Nations WHO believes a strain of mosquitoes carrying Dengue fever was released by air in a number of locations around Cuba. Several years ago isolated cases began to occur far apart. The disease usually starts in a small area and gradually spreads. In the case of Cuba small outbreaks occurred far from each other. This disease is especially deadly to the elderly and young. There have been approximately 400 dengue deaths. It remains a problem and spraying is undertaken.

### **Sunday August 13th**

We were off early to Dos Rios to see the site of Jose Marti’s death at the age of 42 leading the revolutionary army against the

Spanish imperialist. This area is a higher plateau with many small rivers and bridges. It’s mostly prairie like rolling hills. Dos Rios is a battle field at and between the confluence of the Contra-Meastro and “Cautious” rivers. We picked up officials and a wreath with Canada Che Brigade Solidarity ribbons, in the town and drove on to the memorial. It is a quiet, beautiful garden area with a large obelisk over the spot where José was killed leading the charge. His body is buried under the obelisk as well. This largest Cuban river cuts a deep wide path through a ravine next to the monument. The river is perhaps 1/4 the size and volume of the Fraser. After a short stop back in the town to watch simple street games and celebrations the remainder of the day was dedicated to preparing for Canada night back at school as well as Fidel’s birthday, although his official celebration will happen Dec. 2nd in order to allow world leaders attending to reschedule. This was done when the celebration was postponed. The decoration committee did a great job with red and white balloons and rolls of plastic flags from Canada.

Mashed potatoes (freeze dried flakes - not bad), fried chicken, gravy, canned mixed veggies and chocolate cake were prepared by the dinner committee. I joined the entertainment committee and choir. Filipino/Canadian Antony was MC and he was hilarious. “Halifax” a 17 year old from guess where, translated. He has excellent Spanish. As we only had about 20 minutes worth of acts, I had quickly prepared an iMovie from images of Canada starting from NFLD sunrise and ending with long beach sunset taken from all the trips Tee, Stu, Thms and I took around the country. It showcased the diversity of the geography and was accompanied by music from groups or singers from the area. Celine Dion (Quebec) and Brian Adams (North Van) are huge here. Go figure. The Cubans sang along at these points. We’ll leave the DVD for their library... but some of the Brigadistas want copies so I gave one to Tom to take back to Canada and copy “by request”.

### **Monday August 14th**

I am sitting in the kitchen at 5 a.m. and the radio report is talking about the spread of dengue fever... and the mosquito spraying by the department of health. I can pick up the basics of it but asked the only other early riser Winnipeg Bob for more. The Brigade is woken every day at 5:30 by the same crazy music “Conga”. Today we were allowed to sleep in until 6:30 a.m. if we wanted due to the celebrations last night.

This morning we visited the battle site where Fidel’s army began the beginning of the end for Batista’s army. The women’s Marianna squad took the enemy’s weapons away first here. After this we visited a small comprehensive hospital. I took a wonderful picture of Rafael Arias our motorcycle escort. He had picked up a small boy from a stroller. The child had only one eye. One final surprise awaited us as we finished on top of a local peak in a restaurant lookout. We were treated to a farewell fruit buffet with “gallons” of freshly squeezed guava, orange and watermelon juice. A special treat of guava paste and goat cheese was actually quite tasty.

In the afternoon we visited the women’s centre rescheduled from the 10th. They have many programs here specifically supporting women and the family in society. Cuba still wrestles with the remains of the latin “macho” society but then Canada struggles with it as well. A much higher percentage of women are in



leadership and government here, however. The presentation mentioned that men are being encouraged to help with domestic chores. My question was "The young women wash the clothes of the young men at the school and offered to wash mine. Do you consider this a kind of 'gateway' activity that perpetuates the males not doing domestic chores?" Whew that opened a kettle of fish. More on that in my complete journal. One final visit to Bayamo

All of our close retinue were present for one final dinner here at the school and a fantastic dance, music and song presentation of the history of Cuba done by the students. What a talented bunch of kids. There will be many tears tomorrow. A local quartet then played many of the revolution tunes we have come to know... including "Che Commandanté" which we all now know and joined in with.

This part of the Che Brigade has only lasted two weeks and yet all agree it has been so intense and full it seems like months. We have been totally immersed in all facets of Cuban culture. We've seen her with all her warts and in all her glory. I feel so fortunate to have been a part of this incredible experience prior to starting my work in Havana. I am also excited about being a part of the Documentary project and starting work on the DVD.

## Tuesday August 15th

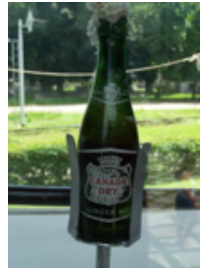
After many teary good byes, we spent the day on the buses getting to Villa Clara where Che's remains were brought in 1997. We checked into the Santa Clara Libre Hotel where we were served Cuba Libres and dinner. Then we were free to wander the city. I started off in the rooftop bar having a passionate discussion with Fernando and Victor Denis about Canada and my concerns for her. We discussed how Cuba could be a model for Canada. The revolution must come to severely alter the inequities in wealth. Then we spoke about one or two more documentaries. It is my intention to do one on the Castro farm and its seed as the blueprint in Fidel and Raul's minds for Cuba and South America. As well Celia Sanchez's documentary must be made. Remarkably neither has really been done before.

## Wednesday August 16th

We were off for Che's memorial. For me it was the most moving experience of the trip. We were each given a flower to place under the memorial statue. As you all know, I have dislocated fingers, fractured an arm and broken my nose numerous times playing rugby and nary a tear was shed. However, when we were told one of the photos of Che was taken the year illiteracy was announced as eradicated, tears welled up and trickled down. There is so much to the revolution but as a teacher of 20 years, that was the one that hit me strongest. The taller of our guides put her arm around my shoulder and asked if I was okay. I had Mylee explain the above at which the two got teary eyed. This Che guy is pretty moving at times. I was curious to read a sports paper in the museum in which we find out Che also played rugby with a passion. Go figure. I never knew. The grotto where revolutionary bodies are interred was hauntingly beautiful. Next we went to see the train wreck monument. The front end loader was a Cat D6 like



the one on Kibbutz Ginegar and was manufactured in Sydney NS. As usual, many of the train parts were manufactured in Canada. Che's arm in the statue is casted as he broke it leaping from the top of one building to another. He was wounded only once before in battle, a flesh wound in the upper arm shoulder. One of the strangest things was seeing a molotov cocktail in the



rail car which was made from a Canada Dry bottle just like the ones grandma South used to give us once a month as a treat. I'm glad our family never got into pop much and I love the way my own kids are crazy about plain old water. So many Canadians drink so much pop and it's either loaded with deadly sugar or even worse aspartame. The guide told us Canada dry was once very popular

here. We left for the Havana, stopping briefly on the way for a box lunch. After checking into the hotel and having dinner, James and I played catch in the huge pool and had a great discussion about Metis history.

## Thursday August 17th

Today we had our last activities as a group. We met with the families of Los Cinco - "the Five" at the ICAP headquarters.

Lunch followed at Friendship House. After that we had a lecture on Foreign Policy and Human Rights in Cuba and then met with the ICAP national authorities for a debriefing, sharing session. Then it was free time in the city followed by huge celebration with dinner, song, dancers and then a live music salsa dance.

We went for a swim in the pool then sat around chatting as half the brigade goes home tomorrow.

## Friday August 18th

The remainder of us are off to explore Havana. I'm rooming with Robert now and will see Havana with him as he has been six times before. Apparently it's been fixed up a lot since he first started coming.

## Saturday August 19th

Happy birthday Joanne... hope it was a good one. The George Brown contingency was at the airport at 4 a.m. for 6 a.m. flight home. The rest of us went to Havana for the morning. Rob and I went to see the Museum of the Revolution. The buses took us to a beach East of Havana for a swim from 2 to 5. The water was pretty amazing. In the evening a group of about 40 Canadian volleyball players arrived for an exchange.

## Sunday August 20th

We dropped the rest of the group at the airport and then the three of us that are staying were delivered to our respective accommodations in Havana.

**TeeStuThms, please read *Motorcycle Diaries*, his *Collected Writings* and a good Che biography or two and know this - if Che were alive today he would surely tell us the revolution is far from over. As long as we four fight against gross inequities and reject consumerism in our global village we will never be apart.**

**Haste La Victoria Siempre**



# P E o s l c i o c r e t



I have never had a police escort anywhere in my life. Throughout this experience we will be lead by Raphael a motorcycle cop and several government officials in a red Lada flying a Canadian flag. They will do a great job clearing road traffic and securing intersections. Raphael is a wonderful man and proud father of two. He lost many of his close friends in Angola. He takes great pride in his Yamaha 750 Virago. He, like our bus drivers, Fransica, Jose and Louis, white, black and mixed, typical of the people of Cuba. They will sleep, eat, dance and attend all events with us throughout the trip. All of them, like so many of the males attending to our trip seem to take great pride in being loving fathers. As there are several younger activists with us, they will be overtly affectionate surrogate fathers.

## Some of the Brigadistas

Many are struggling students who have been active in school politics, Free the Five and Solidarity with Cuba groups.

**Tom** is a 61 year old retired district technology administrator of Scandinavian background. We made a connection right away when we found out we had both used PCs but preferred Mac. He was an Indo-China history major when his number came up in Wisconsin for the Vietnam war. After three clever deferrals he was forced to draft dodge to Canada-Winnipeg. We usually go off touring together when free time in city.



6'4" Tom enjoys one of the ever present luncheon coconuts.

**Robert** is a 45 year old Ontario farmer who has been studying organic farming and is mentoring others. He is an ardent birdwatcher in paradise. He has visited Cuba and hosted Cubans near Peterborough over the years.

**Andrew** is a crazy Filipino Canadian social work student. Funnier than ever all he time. Very bright.



**Natasha** 28 lived on the streets of Toronto for two years. She is a vegetarian, non-smoking social worker who is specializing in street proofing kids.

**Paula** is a 28 year old daughter of Vietnamese boat people. They went to Saigon from Peking China in 1969 to teach. She is a darling with an infectious laugh and very bright. Currently at city prosecutor in Toronto. Her close friend Terik 36 is a probation officer who has been a TO gay community activist and member of Cuban Solidarity as well as Palestine for Palestinians since he came to Canada from Jaffa in 1990.

**Fraea** is a quiet 20 year old only child from Wonnock BC. Her parents are both activists in Greenpeace and antiwar movements. She was home schooled after grade 9 and has been involved in many activist activities. She is extremely well read in politics and literature in general and can quote from many areas. Fraea can be



seen holding flowers in the photo with a veteran in a previous photo. She has continually been told "that is an excellent question" during most of our sessions. She is trying to evaluate any propaganda we may be being fed. She is an excellent source of info and I often sit and pick her brain re youth view point. She is developing a bit of a relationship with

**Stefan** a Prince George brainiac who is entering the first Med class at UNBC this fall. He generally hangs with his very bright, shyer younger brother **Jonah**.

**The Russians**- Paulina 20 and Jane 21 Ivanova were students of Judy Ireland at Sutherland, and speak highly of her as a teacher. They have been involved with Cuba since they came to Canada when they were in grade 9. They have perfect English... very bright. Jane is actively involved in Free Los Cinco.



**Hrudi** is a 40 year old Iranian ex-pat who is still working to change her home country. She was forced to leave for political reasons 8 years ago.

**James** is a soft spoken 36 year old Cree first nations leader. At times he borders on angered passion at what is happening to his people. He is accompanied by four remarkable women from the Aboriginal movement. He and I have had many discussions about the revolution that must come in Canada.

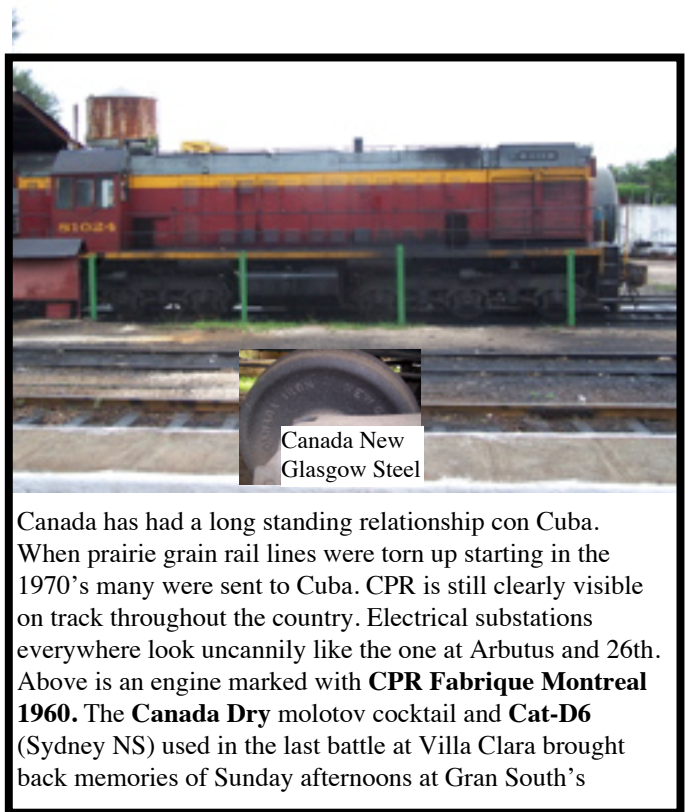
I'd be the third oldest here but most of these kids are way smarter than I was at their age and it is a real privilege to be included with their Brigade. This anniversary brigade is the largest ever at 51 members, however it pales in comparison to the brigade from South America... but then it is extremely important for Cuba to establish their system in that part of the world. Pretty much all of these Brigadistas have been very actively involved in various Cuban solidarity movements.

We have such a diverse group although they have a common sentiment of solidarity. As some of you know, I have been a very busy person in my life. I have never been to Cuba and have never had any desire to travel to tropical isles, whether Hawaii or Barbados. My travels last year to the Ukraine were a personal vendetta to prove to Microsoft they were wrong and to solve some issues for computer techs I had several years of contact with there. My decision to go to Palestine/Israel was to take advantage of an Israeli Peace initiative to teach IT and English to Palestinians. My intention and long term plan was to stay for some long time and perhaps retire there. Apparently as you know the Palestinian leadership did not want my services. I returned to Canada and was at loose ends for a few weeks. Just as things seemed to be going nowhere, I was introduced by a long time

associate, to the Cuban Ambassador to Canada, Ernesto Silva Darius. Some of you know that I had been helping out the teachers union here and perhaps also that I had helped organize for some time in sending down used computers and baseball equipment. After several meetings I was offered a number of new things to be involved with down here.

There have been thirteen previous brigades to this one... but this is a very special one. A number of the brigadistas have been before... and have been invited back for this 50th Anniversary of the Revolution which coincides with Fidel's 80th Birthday.

A few Brigadistas speak fairly good Spanish, some speak a little and some have none. I am understanding more and more in context daily and getting by with very basic speech. We all get tremendous and patient language help from everyone especially the art school students. These are half a dozen guys and a dozen gals grade 9 to 12 who have given up several weeks of their summer holidays to be here at the school with us. They had to be picked by merit from the large number of students who wanted the opportunity.



Canada has had a long standing relationship con Cuba. When prairie grain rail lines were torn up starting in the 1970's many were sent to Cuba. CPR is still clearly visible on track throughout the country. Electrical substations everywhere look uncannily like the one at Arbutus and 26th. Above is an engine marked with **CPR Fabrique Montreal 1960**. The **Canada Dry** molotov cocktail and **Cat-D6** (Sydney NS) used in the last battle at Villa Clara brought back memories of Sunday afternoons at Gran South's

## Eve of Destruction

The [D] Eastern world [G] it is ex [A7] plodin',  
[D] violence flarin' and [G] bullets [A] loadin',  
You're [D] old enough to kill, but [G] not for [A] votin',  
You [D] don't believe in war, but's [G] what's that gun you're  
[A] totin'?

And [D] even the Jordan River has [G] bodies [A] floatin'  
But you [D] tell me, [G] over and [A] over and  
[D] over again my fr [Bm] iend,

Ah, [G] you don't believe we're [A] on the Eve of  
De [D] struction. [G] [A]

## La Gallega

This diminutive greying redhead aged 62 went to the mountains to fight. When women were only given supply jobs she went to Fidel and said she and some of the women wanted to fight. They discussed it and decided it would be a good example for the revolution. Fidel explained it to his officers and the one who was assigned to train them was quite reticent. A photo at the museum shows him standing with the woman's combat unit with a grumpy look on his face with a broadly smiling Fidel in the background. They would go on to prove just as or more effective as the men taking at one time a very difficult armoury. The last battle scene we went to we were told she lead the women's Marianna brigade which releaved Batistas army of weapons first in that battle. She can be seen earlier in this letter with me... and not an ounce of fat on her.

## Specialty Schooling



High school students in Cuba who show special talent may choose to enter a speciality school in their province. These are mechanical/technical/math/science (welding, electronics, construction, etc.), arts/literature/history (dance, guitar, piano, painting, sculpture, etc.), physical education/therapy/sports medicine, science/biology, etc., agricultural sciences/mechanical maintenance, etc. and sciences for medicine. Most take English and History as well.

## ELECTIONS

All children study civics/politics from grade 1 and in grade 3 all kids become "guardians of the ballot boxes"... that is, every ballot box is guarded by a minimum of one 15 year old and two younger students. A "non-military supervising adult (teacher usually) is present. As well, students in groups of three carry election ballots to house-bound adults. They explain the issue allow a secret ballot, seal it in an envelop, have it initialled and return it to the box. Students may vote at age 16. As well, there are elected high school and university student union reps in every level of government. The other groups represented are the National Association of Small Farmers (some of those guys are petty big though), the CDR - Committee for the Defence of the Revolution, Young Communist League (exemplary students), and the Cuban Women's Federation as well as Generalistas (unassociated common people.)



One of our family member vehemently incorrectly pointed out to me just prior to leaving that I should always remember that "Fidel Castro has never been elected". I did not want to try to explain how Fidel has been elected for 40 years. Here goes now. Try to understand that whatever you may believe comes to you through US and CIA propaganda. Fidel and Raul must be nominated, accept nomination and be voted on within their own province, Granma, every five years like anyone else in the National assembly. There are 609 representatives in 16 provinces and the many local area councils within these. This is a secret ballot. In most elections at all levels of government, municipal, provincial and national the voter rate is approximately 97% as verified by the United Nations. In the last election Fidel and Raul were two of 8 candidates elected in Granma province, receiving 99.45% and 99.07% votes respectively. By secret ballot at the National Assembly Fidel was voted president. His closest advisor is a sanitation engineer in Bayamos who is extremely well read, highly respected at the grass roots level and very personable. When he picks up your garbage he listens to your concerns. All politicians are volunteers. Some are full time at every level but their government wages are generally the same as everyone although all travel expenses are covered. It is a great privilege to represent people in this country. The communist party is a small minority in government. The right of recall is a very easy process. A complaint is fielded, a secret ballot is held and a 51 % majority results in a re-election.

The love of Fidel is endemic here. Of course Che remains the exemplary hero of the revolution. People boast about the longest Fidel speech they ever sat through using terms such as inspiring. Victor tells a hilarious story in Spanish and actions. Four years ago Fidel gave an hour and a half speech away from the podium to some high-school grads. Victor, one of five cameramen was assigned to shadow Fidel on the stage with a steady-cam and film the audience. After a half hour Fidel was getting tired so he put his hand on Victor's shoulder. Within the next hour the steady cam was working overtime as his legs started to shake with the extra weight. When he got home he had to take a muscle relaxant and lay down. The way he told it was hilarious. I got it on film with his camera.



## Socialism is just a label.

Fidel and Raul grew up on a large farm in Holguin province. When Batista flooded an adjoining valley the Castro parents adopted the villagers, built a clinic, school, library and store. The community built a dozen small homes. The farm was expanded as more land was cleared. Fidel and Raul grew up not with communism or socialism but with "compassionism". When Fidel saw the abject poverty systemic in the rest of Cuba, he expressed to his mother a desire to extend his family farm to other locations. She said, "why not all of Cuba?" Fidel attended law school to see if there was some legal way to change Cuba. Nada! While in Mexico he met Che Guevara. Che expressed abhorrence at what was happening in South America with multinationals forcing farmers into starvation. They joined forces to first set Cuba free with plans to do so in Bolivia, Venezuela, etc. The rest is history. When the USA tried to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs and were wiped out, Fidel conferred with the people and then said, "if the USA does not like socialism then we will call ourselves socialist. In 2004, yes that is '04 the constitution was amended to read, "Cuba will never be a capitalist country."

## News Break

Fidel is dying NOT. As grandpa-father Bill will somewhat understand, Fidel is no doubt feeling somewhat further along than his prime. As he has lead an incredibly fortuitous life in his first 80 years, it is almost as if he can see the liberation of oppressed abused South American countries on the verge of happening. His buddy Che's dream was to fulfil José Martí's goal, (Google/Wikipedia him). Fidel would like nothing better than to see Bolivia, Venezuela, etc. free of the banana republic history and terror. Fidel was operated on for intestinal bleeding brought on by exhaustion. During his multi week visit to promote a system of trade between Cuba and South American countries similar to the EU cooperation, he was continuously on the go and slept 4 to 6 hours per night. Several Spanish speaking Brigade leaders and member were interviewed and appeared on National TV. It was quite exciting to watch the next day... it is kinda kewl seeing the Canadian flag being shown in a positive light, especially with our involvement in military actions in Afghanistan.

## Assignment Cuba

Cuban's are surprised to hear there are homeless in Canada. They are surprised to hear there is such a large disparity in wealth. They are confused to hear that there is a two tiered hospital system moving more and more towards privatization with waiting lists of six months for MRI and many many months for hip and knee replacement. They are surprised to hear that obesity is a growing problem especially among our youth. They do not understand why so many people are being diagnosed and medicated numb for depression. They are shocked to hear that democracy no longer exists in Canada. That the government is in fact controlled by the wealthy, the corporations and the multinationals. That foreign policy is more and more shaped by corporate greed. And most of all they are dismayed to hear of the fast growing connection and cooperation through NAFTA and foreign affairs politics to the United States of America.

Several of us are remaining here to learn from them, to share with them and to ponder how the revolution must come to

Canada. Canada is a young country in comparison to Cuba and can learn much from her. Student activists in particular see the inequity of National and Provincial governments granting antiquated, proven false, Reagan "Trickle-Down" Economic tax breaks to the corporate wealthy of Canada, while the masses of poor and disenfranchised grows and student university fees skyrocket. When I went to University it was about \$500 a year while wages were about \$5/hour. Thirty years later students make \$10/hour and pay \$4000 tuition. Canadian youth see a country in which property ownership by non-Canadians and speculators has driven the prices permanently out of their reach. When my parents bought their home it was worth several years wages whereas now the earnings of a lifetime cannot afford our young a decent property in their own childhood community. The revolution must come. The Revolution must come to outlaw Consumer Capitalism and Madison avenue advertizing machine which continue to decimate the environment and the planet. All education in Cuba is free and considered an important investment in the future of the country. The revolution must come. Canada holds little or no future for her grand-children. The revolution must come.

An article I wrote and that was translated into Spanish by an ex-student Daniel Gimenez appeared in the Cuban papers last year. That is part of why I am here. To help teachers and government design curriculum that will show why the lifestyle so many Canadians enjoin is so unsustainable and something Cubans while striving for a slightly better life might always recognize that the one .Americans and Canadians live is far far from sustainable and so deadly to the environment and planet in general and that eventually it must be abandoned.



**Uncle Alf sized, wiry 78 year old veteran, Captain Auras from Che's 8th Column, outworked many of the younger Canadians. (I used the gloves one day then passed both pairs on to our escort cop when I realized my hands would survive. They were perfect for gripping and bug protection)**

On that note, thank you to all those - Steve, dad, and Derek who let me help around the home estates. I was totally able to jump in to hard farm work with no sore muscles. I am so glad I played beach v-ball at the heat of the day before heading here... it's been blazing at times.

## Why six guys are called Quintette!



This refers to the traditional five musicians who used to play during the fire-fights in the mountains for inspiration (kinda like Scottish bagpipes I guess). Their commander leader is “just” a singer added after the revolution! Whatever. They were excellent.



Images taken from MPGs suck

## Carlos Manuel de Céspedes

freed his indentured blacks and encouraged them to join the first revolution in the late 1800's. He suggested all men should do three things in their life- have children, plant a tree and write a book.



**Cacique Hatuey**, a first nations chief who was about to be burned at the stake by the Spanish for leading the last rebellion, was told, “If you recant your position you will go to heaven when you die!” He asked if the Spanish went to heaven. When he was told “yes”, he said “I don’t want to go there then!”.

## Pesticide Freeing

Cuba never really got into artificial fertilizers but with the embargo and price of oil has left them behind. Most of the fields we see including the ones we work in are based on companion gardening. I remember as a kid seeing many butterflies, not anymore. Here there are clouds of many species of brightly coloured and even black with white striped “mariposas” so beautiful to work among in the orchards and fields. None of the food we eat has herbicides or pesticides. Of course the trade off is that there are no massive agribusiness like factory farms. Around all the assorted fields we work in and travel along there are assorted herbs, marigolds and assorted flowers. Weeding is necessary but students of all ages throughout the country take a few hours of their weekly school phys-ed activity in the fields. Goats are grazed under all orchards. The day the combatientes worked with us we spread out across a field of calabasa melon, several people picked the flowers for the medicine while the rest of us pulled up the vines and harvested the melons. Later, we had a chance to drive the oxen plough which pulled up the roots... which we gathered into composting piles. An old Massey Ferguson (Canada donation) then tills the soil. The compost will be added in a few weeks and with this heat and a few turnings it is certainly ripe and ready. They use this process to take many more crops in year.



Céspedes



## Globalization is Terrorism

There was always one complaint protesters made against globalization, lo those many years ago, that promoters of globalization never answered: the homogenizing effect of globalization would bring heightened cultural alienation and rising social dissociation everywhere. Of course protesters also pointed out it would make some people or nations poorer, a complaint globalization's promoters focused exclusively on and easily defeated, for it is true that increased trade generally increases prosperity for many. The first charge should have been paid closer attention to.

While I was in Israeli in 2005 I saw first hand how consumerism had changed since I was last there in the early 1980s. The Israeli government has gone into damage control to help citizens deal with massive credit card debt and widespread bankruptcy. Meanwhile millions of Palestinians live in abject poverty a certain recipe for alienation and hatred.

The hatred for this consumer oriented lifestyle was only punctuated by the blasts of 9/11. Mistaken as religious fanaticism, it continued through riots in Sydney and Paris and bombings in Bali, Madrid and London. It is our conspicuous planet destroying lifestyle that is being attacked, not our religious difference.

The rise of religious fanaticism is evidence of high cultural alienation and ever wider spreading social disassociation.

(Saudi Arabians are even more consumer oriented than we are and thus will be the last Islamic state to protest openly or be bombed by the USA.)

Canadian's can be assured that involvement in Afghanistan to the point where prisoners are turned over for American torture chambers will bring more and deadly attention their way. Bombing plots will be hatched first for Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

Terrorism must be understood and accepted at it's root cause - economic globalism as promoted and pushed around the world beginning in 1986 with the signing of the first NAFTA agreement.

Our way of life is environmentally disgustingly destructive and must be factored into the phenomenon of terrorism. Those who promote globalization must be held directly accountable for the rising death toll. Globalization critics always argued that its increase would have deleterious effects on social and cultural standards, effects that would come to be felt in ways that would make the economic gains of globalization pale in comparison.

What our alarmed leaders today call "terrorism" is nothing less nor more than the next stage in reaction to and protest against capitalist globalization. AND the erosion of civil rights, forced deposition of foreign governments, transformation towards a war economy, the brutal waging of war and mass murder of tens of thousands of innocent civilians is only the next big stage of globalization.

It is everyone from the share holders of the Carlisle Group and Haliberton down to the everyday leisure shopper who is to blame for terrorism and the war against it.

## Capitalism is Consumerism

**Travelling in Europe and East Europe** I realized they there are hell bent, fast tracked and gearing up to maximize a reflection of American consumer capitalism. Poland, the Ukraine, Turkey... all of them are ripping up mass-transit tracks and building bigger highways for goods sharing. Ironically and sadly, peasants in the South UA live a harder, simpler life than anywhere in Europe. An elbow-grease lifestyle all G8 peoples must eventually live closer to in fifty years or less. East Europe was definitely not the place for me.

**Moving on to Israel** I saw first hand how consumerism had changed since my wife and I were last there in the early 1980s. There were no malls when we were there. Now they are every where. There were a few good highways and cars were used sparingly, now they are everywhere.

The Israeli government has gone into damage control to help citizens deal with massive credit card debt and widespread bankruptcy. Meanwhile millions of Palestinians live in abject poverty, a deplorable life I witnessed close up first hand when I was given the guest seat at a dinner on a door, sitting on a cinderblock while the family squatted on the floor to eat. This privation is a certain recipe for alienation and hatred, though the students I worked with were desperately hopeful and yet placidly ready to die for the future of others if need be.

**And as if Capitalism isn't bad enough**, the U.S. government has been completely and totally infiltrated and now controlled by their rabid and crazy Christian right wing. PLEASE take the time to watch *The World According to Bush* DVD I left behind, because Harper et al are heading that way, "God Bless Canada" eh! Mr. Harperstein!?!

## Globalization & Democracy - the Hijacking of Canada

Uncle Stephan, one of the brightest people I know especially in the area of economics and specifically the area of housing, made several very passionate comments to me that were very useful in helping me formulate my thoughts in the area of Democracy, Capitalist Consumerism and Socialism.

Several of those heartfelt emotional comments were "Capitalism is the only thing that works. Capitalism is the only system that can turn things around. I disagree. I agree with his point that in order to do so, all environmental costs of consumer goods must be factored into the price but if you read my article included herein you will see my point of view.

He also said emphatically, "Socialism does not work. Just look at Russia and China." I will address that later within.

Stephan barked at me that "Fidel was never elected". On this piece of CIA propaganda he is wrong. Despite what the CIA and the USA have fed the West for decades, Fidel has never run Cuba as a totalitarian dictator. (One who takes advantage of his position to live a life of ease and luxury unattainable by the masses as did China's Gang of 6 and almost every leader in the USSR, replacing the decadents of the Tsarist aristocracy with

their own). Fidel has always remained a figurehead, a benevolent father figure who knows he is the main thing stopping Globalization from ravaging his country and people. His country is in transition towards his immanent death. Fidel has been elected every five years for 40 years. Perhaps none of you actually understands the Cuban system of government. In fact, Fidel was almost not elected during the "Special Period" after the fall of the Soviet Union and subsequent economic struggle in Cuba. As children died due to the US blockade his popularity slid from 97+% to just make the cut of those elected in his province. His comment was "That was a close one but I am now ready to work even harder for the revolution!"

Steve concluded most vehemently: "we're not all equal, some of us are smarter, more educated, contribute more and are thus compensated more. That's just the way it is. That's life! Get over it!"

As much as I love Stephan and all of you, (slightly more right wing Andrew included), I disagree and believe all of these are simply gifts of social position and mother nature. I have to implore that- "It" can no longer be "business as usual" in Canada or any of the G8 nations who already lead Canada in consumer responsibility. We can no longer accept "the way it is and just get over it". Democracy has crumbled in our "free" world. Witness the USA and a non-elected President, Chaney, Rumsfeld et al wreaking havoc on the world. Witness the Emmerson floor-walk as a symptom of the right wing Canadian agenda to mesh further with the USA that surely no person true to their Canadian roots wants. Even if we were to have totally stopped the phenomenon of meaningless capitalist consumerism ten years ago, it would still have been too late to "save the polar bears". If we abandon the capitalist consumer system tomorrow and poured all our technology, science and hard labours into reversing things we will still be in dire straits. If we were to all take public transit most of the time, private vehicles only when really necessary it's too late to stop the glacier extinction. BUT we won't. Capitalists are in total control of our lives. Madison avenue brainwashes us for at least six minutes every half hour of TV. SUVs are desirable top sellers- oil prices be damned, because we want excitement in our boring lives. Helping keep computers running for local Mental Health centres or answering phone lines at the Crisis Centre is not fulfilling and hardly at all a glamorous rewarding activity to most... nowhere near as desirable an activity as mall-cruising.

Coca Cola, General Motors and Madison Avenue have hijacked society. The greed of capitalism prevails. They've had fifty years to perfect an advertizing system that makes every TV commercial convince us that leisure shopping is a "wonderful" activity; the status quo and a way to achieve the good life. In 1970 Alvin Tofler in *Future Shock* warned us to use the coming era of immense leisure time wisely with recreation and volunteerism. We did not. We went on to fill that time more and more with a sick cycle of TV watching and shop, shop, shopping. When we get bored with TV we go out and buy something. Anything. When we accumulate too much we fill our garages and rented storage space then have garage sales which serves to relocate some of the junk to alternate storage. Capitalism has become food gluttony's evil twin.

**Wikipedia- Democracy, Plutocracy and then try try to remember**

**"Those who ignore the past are bound to repeat it".**

Please please please my dear family one and all, if you love your country read something other than the right wing CanWest Global Media Vancouver Sun/Province.

Georgia Straight (*Harperstein* July 14 Issue) and Common Ground come to mind. The July '06 Common Ground (red and white maple leaf cover) is full of excellent articles:

David Suzuki - *Ads Promote Pollution* p.21

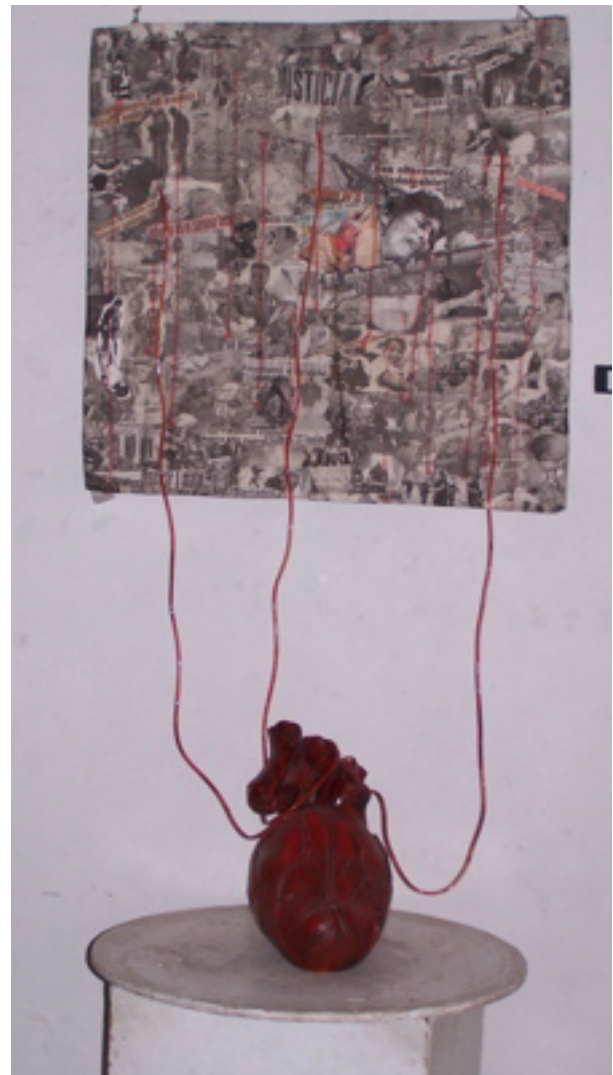
Drug Industry - *Antidepressants, a prescription for Suicide* p.10

*BC Energy at Risk* - p.22

The Disassembling of Canada - *Thinking the Unthinkable About Canada* p.16

STOP polluting - GVRD Soap use p.15

*Winning the Cancer Game* - p.24



High School student Art - Granma Province Cuba



## **While Canadians are lulled to sleep by CanWest Global media, the rich and powerful right-wing plutocracy is displacing our democratic institutions, little by little.**

Democracy isn't a description of a kind of government but rather an ideal that arises from suffering and oppression- "from the wars against disorder, from the sirens night and day, from the fires of the homeless, from the ashes of the gay." . (Hey Thms Google this Leonard Cohen song "Democracy.)

If ideals manifest themselves through human action, then democracy manifests itself in the ongoing struggle by the many to reclaim the economic and political power hoarded by the few. That is democracy.

Whenever we abandon the struggle, we betray the ideal. C. Wright Mills put it more eloquently than I can: "Regardless of the motive, to attempt withdrawal is to become subservient to existing authorities and to allow other men to determine the meaning and worth of one's work".

Bad things happen when democracy is betrayed, as I fear it's being betrayed in Canada. The consequences of this betrayal are described in Murray Dobbin's *The Myth of the Good Corporate Citizen: Democracy Under the Rule of Big Business* (1998)

Dobbin shows that for a long time young Canada's political system was totally controlled by powerful corporations and individuals. This only changed in response to escalating civil disobedience (e.g. Winnipeg Postal Strike), labour militancy and grassroots political organizing (e.g. Tommy Douglas, medicare), that is the ideal of democracy. While their victories were limited they were successful in forcing elected governments to implement some policies befitting all Canadians, rather than just the powerful and the wealthy. The early 1970's marked the culmination of these efforts. After that, things began to change.

Canada's major policies are no longer designed by Parliamentarians and their bureaucracies. Dobbin writes that since the late 1970's, "the most important policy directions taken by Western governments have been discussed refined and agreed upon not in the established democratic forums but in closed, exclusive clubs established for this purpose." These "clubs" include international organizations like the Trilateral Commission, the World Economic Forum, and the Bilderberg Group, as well as local organizations like the Canadian Council of Chief Executives.

Such groups have an abiding contempt for democracy. Consider the Trilateral Commission, one of the most important forums for the world's economic and political pawnbrokers. In one of its first commissioned studies, published under the name *The Crisis of Democracy* (1975), author Samuel Huntington wrote that Western societies were suffering from too much democracy. For government to function, Huntington argued, marginalized groups had to remain apathetic and uninvolved in politics, the traditional acceptance of "hierarchy, coercion, discipline, secrecy and deception" in government had to be restored and the public needed to once again feel compelled "to obey those whom they had previously considered superior to themselves in age, rank, status, expertise, character or talents."

This contempt isn't confined to international power-brokers. If their support for the Fraser Institute (one of the most vile right-

wing think tanks in Canada), is any indication, Canada's elites feel the same way. The Institute was established with the explicit purpose of changing Canada's "ideological fabric" and reducing public support for the welfare state. It is generously funded by corporate donors, wealthy patrons, and right wing "charities" such as the John Dobson Foundation. The Institute has developed close ties with both the Liberals and Conservatives. Despite the shoddiness of the research it produces, it's work is guaranteed to receive widespread coverage in Canada's corporate media. Witness it's annual trashing of public schools. On the basis of this evidence, it's safe to say the Fraser Institute represents the views of the wealthiest sector of Canadian society.

Walter Block the Fraser Institute's senior economist from 1979 until 1991, articulated these views at the Institute's 1986 symposium on democracy: "Why does it follow that we have an equal right to vote in the political process? Voting in a political process is not a negative freedom, it is a positive freedom and it is an aspect of wealth. We don't say that everyone has an equal right to vote in IBM... . It depends on how many IBM shares they bought. If we look upon the polity as a voluntary organization we must recognize the legitimacy for unequal votes." This is the clearest endorsement of plutocracy imaginable.

Besides being the most class-conscious and politically active segment of Canadian society, Canada's elites also have vast resources with which to push their plutocratic agenda. Through networks of powerful friends, lobbying groups like the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, and the National Citizen's Coalition, think-tanks like the CD Howe Institute and the Fraser Institute, media empires like CanWest Global and their financing of Canada's ruling parties, they've transformed our ideological and political landscape, reversing nearly all the gains made by working people since the 1950s.

According to Dobbin, our elites have the same objective as their international counterparts. They want the world's money, technology and markets to be controlled and managed by trans-national corporations. They want to replace local cultures with a global consumer culture dedicated to the quest for material gratification and to thereby eliminate loyalties to compete for the chance to offer their services to investors at the most advantageous terms. They want corporations to have freedom to act solely on the basis of profitability without any concern for national or local consequences. The only way to achieve these ends is by eliminating the ability of governments to challenge corporate power. This would and is turning elections into meaningless pageants and our elected representatives into impotent pawns.

These goals are radically opposed to those shared by most Canadians, who know that unrestrained corporate greed is destroying our communities, encouraging psychopathic values and laying waste to our environment. Global warming (perhaps better termed "frying"), is the most terrible consequence of this avarice. Unless our corporations are restricted by local and international law, their activities will disrupt our climate to the point where our economies and perhaps our very civilization will be shattered by storms and flooding, drought and famine, desertification and disease. That's why right-wing institutes like the National Post and the Fraser Institute refuse to acknowledge

global warming despite the unprecedented scientific consensus on the issue. They know that if global warming is real, then the only way to address it is by legislating constraints on corporate greed and that the only thing that could bring this about is a resurgence of democracy throughout the developed world. **They deny climate change because they despise democracy.**

What about the rest of us? Too many of us think that democracy and the struggle it entails, is an ethically neutral “lifestyle choice”, much like a hobby. This is a dire mistake. Democracy makes a claim upon us, one backed up by all the suffering tyranny has ever inflicted upon the human spirit. To dismiss the ideal is to dismiss the suffering and to dismiss the suffering is to show hatred for the sufferers. Conversely, by embracing the ideal, we stand in solidarity with them; like all worthwhile ideals, democracy, in the end, is a form of love not just for all our fellows but our lonely planet as well. **Lance Read - Canada**

“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten we all belong to each other” -

Mother Teresa

In his Gospel, Thomas tells us that Yeshua said  
“Everything we need is already inside us”.

“One’s own self is hidden within one’s own self.”  
- Nietzsche

## History of Revolution 101

In *The Medium is the Massage*, McLuhan states that we live in a Global Village, a simultaneous happening where time and space has vanished.

Since 9/11 this fact has struck home harder than ever before. The privileged developed world is under attack. They are not at the gates of Marie Antoinette’s castle or villa of the Czar. The majority oppressed will not be dragging each of us off individually to be hung, shot or beheaded. Instead, their violent, idealistic representatives will continue to terrorize our society until the economic disparity between the have and have-not countries is minimized.

This global community we live in means that the world is more closely connected than ever before. Nomadic herders in remote areas of the planet can view world events on CNN or the internet at the same time as anyone else in the cities of the developed world.

History has proven that when the masses in their majority are aroused, little can stop them.

### French Revolution Nutshell

King Louis XV and King Louis XVI both led extremely extravagant lives. They spent lots of the government's money on luxuries even though the government had some financial problems.

In the late 18th Century the peasant population increased dramatically. This growth in population increased the demand for more land. Land was being divided into smaller and smaller sections to cope with this problem. Eventually some sections of land were not even enough for a peasant to support his own family.

The wars in America left France in huge debt. To try and pay this debt the nobility increased the feudal dues for the peasants. The peasants' hardships increased greatly which further increased their resentment towards the nobility. Poor harvests in 1787 and 1788 led to a food shortage. The peasants could barely (if at all) feed themselves let alone pay taxes. The peasants started to threaten violence if their situation wasn't improved.

There was an increased competition from British textile manufacturers. This left many people without jobs, which meant a huge increase in unemployment.

Inefficient methods of government led to major financial difficulties. The Nobility paid no tax so revenue had to be raised in a different way. The French government had to borrow heavily which just increased the debt. The government continued to spend far more than it received in taxes. Eventually the government went completely bankrupt. This immediately led to the French Revolution.

### Russian Revolution Nutshell

The causes of the 1905 revolution in Russia can be traced back as far as 1861. The Tsars who ruled in Russia were firm autocrats in an era where the nearby Europe was transforming to liberalism and republicanism. The influence of these groups, as well as internal problems and foreign policy were all causes of the revolution.

In the 19th century, Russia was very much Medieval in its ways, and this is especially highlighted by the fact that Serfdom still existed. The Serfs were little more than slaves of the Tsars and had no rights. Alexander II was the first to recognise this and in 1861 he granted Emancipation to the Serfs. He felt it "better to abolish Serfdom from above than to wait for the Serfs to liberate themselves from below." Although with hindsight it can be said that this action caused more problems than it solved, it was a major step in dragging Russia forward from Medievalism. This granting of limited freedom to the Serfs led to growing unrest as they called for further rights, and so it can be said it was a long term cause of the revolution.

Alexander also set up limited local authorities known as Zemstva. The main action of these groups was to draw up reports on agricultural conditions. This led to greater awareness and a liberal class of Intelligencia was set up. They opposed the autocracy and later became known as 'the Kadets'. The opposition of the Kadets to the Tsar was also a long term cause of Revolution.

During Alexander's reign extremist opposition to the autocracy also fermented. The Narodniks attempted to rally the peasants against the Tsar, but failed because of class differences. However, the Narodniks were to progress despite this initial failure and they became very influential in the 20th century in the form of the Bolsheviks.

Alexander III did not agree with his father's reforms and when he came to power in 1881, he set about suppressing the peasants and all opposition to the Tsars. His Rustication policy forced Russian culture on the 50 million non-Russians in the empire. The Jews also suffered greatly under his reign. Pogroms were organised attacks on the Jews which forced many to emigrate. Censorship was also increased and the freedom of universities



was reduced. Alexander's mistakes lay in the fact that the people had had a taste of freedom under his father, and now he was taking it away again. Revolution was impending.

Opposition to the Tsars continued to grow during Alexander III's reign. The Social Revolutionaries rallied the support of the peasants. They hoped that if they killed the Tsar, the whole system would topple. The Marxists concentrated on the workers in the cities. The growth of socialism marked the arrival of leaders such as Lenin and Trotsky. The Kadets also continued to grow. All that was now needed for a revolution was a spark to light the fire and bring all opposing groups together.

This occurred under the reign of the last Tsar, Nicholas II. A strict autocrat, he told those who hoped for local governments in the form of Dumas that they were "carried away by senseless dreams". His German Tsarina, Alexandra, was disliked by the people, as was their mutual devotion to the actions of the suspicious monk Rasputin. Growing opposition and urban and rural unrest was commonplace.

When war with Japan was impending, Nicholas saw it as an opportunity to rally loyalty to the empire once more. However his major error was that he underestimated the strength of the Japanese. Describing them as "little yellow monkeys", he believed his fleets would crush them. However, the Japanese defeated the Russians and destroyed all her fleets, even the Baltic fleet who made a last attempt to save face for Russia. The defeat in this war and the expense it incurred were direct causes of the revolution which occurred just a few weeks later. A general strike in Russia occurred in 1905, with both urban and rural workers protesting together. Father Gapon lead a group of workers to the Winter palace with a petition for reforms for the Tsar. The protest was a peaceful one and the workers carried portraits and candles for the Tsar. However, the guards shot at the people, killing one thousand and injuring thousands more. This action completely alienated the people and their loyalty to the Tsar was no more. It was "the political activation of the masses". This massacre was the spark that started the 1905 revolution.

Although the outcome of the revolution saw the settings up of the Duma, these were controlled to reign as an autocrat. However this revolution was an indication of the power of the people and it can be said that it was a dress rehearsal for the February and October Revolutions of 1917.

### **CNN News Me**

McLuhan's Global village means that impoverished Afghanistanees and Columbian villagers are brought commercial images of the decadence of our world. Impoverished workers of our New-World slave economy return from the sweat shop factories where they are paid pennies a day, barely enough to survive, sit down in front of a community television to be bombarded with images of we the privileged others who use, wear and play with the products they make.

We are the new "aristocracy" in a global community. We live in a period more decadent and gluttonous than that of the Kings of France and the Czars of Russia. We, in the privileged world living high, eating cheap bananas, cocoa and coffee at the expense and health of impoverished pickers in Columbia and Guiana; wearing shoes and clothing made by starving children;

using hardware made for our simple silly entertainment, all of this serves to further culturally alienate the poor.

Is it any wonder that a larger and larger majority of our fellow human beings are standing up and showing through violence, that they are not going to stand for their children and themselves living a subsistence life while we consume more and pollute more than we ever have in history.

The killing of the aristocracy and Czar's family, the beheading of Marie Antoinette, her husband and their aristocratic friends were the results of bloody revolutions for sure. Are we so surprised that impoverished peoples of the world are using whatever reasons they choose to justify the killing of members of the global capitalist consumer communities, the NEW aristocracy?

**The disparity between members of our privileged, consumer society and our fellow economically oppressed human beings is greater than any other time in history. We can fortify America and continue to bomb and kill others or we can abort our gratuitous consumer lifestyle otherwise we can expect the revolution. Stand by for further bombings at the very least.**

**LANCE READ Canada**

### **Cuba**

Living in this land of Revolution  
I see many minds in total fusion.

Oh Canada! social unity does not exist.  
The wealthy gorge, the homeless persist.

Its inherent Imperialistic mindset ignores  
Global village neighbours from behind closed doors.

We feast on the backs of others in famine ,  
Itinerant farm worker, coffee picker and child slave labour.

Spiritual, emotional void constitutes our first world life  
Our rampant materialism goes unblamed for third world  
strife.

As students dance and Salsa music plays  
Our 1st world eyes are opened in just 13 days.

We shall ingest all of their stories  
Saluting those who've fallen in glory.  
As we witness the evolution of the revolution.

The Western world explodes  
Oblivious to their delusion,  
While most fiddle through the night,  
Others prepare to escalate the fight.

**L 2006 R**

### **Cacique Hatuey**

Escuela des Instrutores de Art

The Art School we're at does some incredible stuff in music, dance, sculpture and especially art. The media teacher still uses an old 8 mm camera and edits to VHS manually. What they could do with some used iBooks, a used digital camera or two and iMovie I cannot even imagine. Tom had brought his older iBook but was not actually using it so he passed it on to Wibur, the principal for personal use. He was a little overcome to say the least, though he immediately spoke with his secretary about how handy it would be for meetings.

## ***Los Cinco- The Five Height of American Hypocrisy***

In 1998 five Cubans of impeccable background entered the United States on a fact finding mission to monitor the movements of American backed terrorist groups who have been responsible for over 3500 Cuban deaths over the past 40 years.

March 1960- Havana dockside passenger liner blown up - 101 dead. (Commando F4 take credit)

Since 1960- there have been hundreds of CIA backed attempts on Fidel Castro's life.

1971 - swine fever biological attack kills half million pigs (Omega-7 takes credit)

1976 - Bombing of Aviccion Flight 455 - all 73 dead

1981 - Dengue fever epidemic infects 300,000 - kills 154 (Omega-7 takes credit)

1997 - Triton, Chateau Miramar, Copacabana and La Bodeguit del Medio hotel restaurants bombed many dozens killed including an Italian tourist (Brigade 2606 takes credit)

September 1997 - Los Cinco uncovered information that Omega-7 was going to blow up a convocation stage in Panama. Fidel spoke to 3000 students after the three terrorists carrying 24 kg of C-4 explosive were arrested by Panamanian Secret Service.

1998 - Los Cinco are arrested and charged with interfering with United States internal security.

2001 September 11th Twin Towers bombed - U.S. declares war on terrorism

Los Cinco are "credited" with gathering information preventing 170 acts of terror. They are each given sentences ranging from 15 years to over two life sentences for interfering with US security. Much of the "proof" is classified under the US Homeland security act.

May 2004 GW Bush allocates 54 million more dollars over two years for programs aimed at overthrowing Cuban government

August 2005 - 11th Circuit Court of Appeals releases decision to relocate a new trial out of Miami mandatory under US law.

August 2006 - Bush's Supreme Court overturns the decision based on Terrorist laws. There can be no further appeals.

Since 2002 - the Vancouver Free the Five committee has been protesting once a month on Monday at noon outside the US Embassy on Pender - no one is listening. The Right Wing US media has suppressed the plight of these innocent men.

Antonio Guerrero, Ruben Campa, Gerardo Hernandez, Luis Medina. and Rene Gonzalez are highly educated non-violent Cubans who are heroes of the Cuban struggle against terrorist acts against their country. All of them are devoted husbands and three of them are fathers who have been imprisoned for 8 years while their children grew up.

The Brigade, many of whom have campaigned to Free the Five, were honoured to have a private meeting with family members of Los Cinco. We listened to the tearful accounts as Antonio's mother, René's brother and most upsetting of all the account of Gerardo's eldest daughter as she recounted the many special events that her sisters and she have gone through without their father.

Please my dear family consider becoming more aware of this travesty of justice by a country which claims to be in a war on terrorism while at the same time jailing five Cubans who have never once themselves committed an act of violence while gathering information to stop countless murderous plots to wreak havoc on the Cuban people. There's nothing you can do to stop the U.S. from murdering innocent people in Iraq, but you can lend your support to demonstrations for Los Cinco. There will be a mass demonstration on **September 26th**.

**Please see: [www.freethethefive.org](http://www.freethethefive.org)**

### **Gerardo Nordelo**

Born June 4, 1965, Havana.  
Graduated 1989 Masters  
International Political Relations,  
Ministry Foreign Affairs.  
Newspaper and gallery  
caricaturist and artist. Two life  
terms plus 15 years.



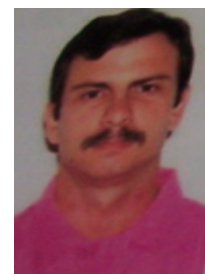
### **René Sechwert**

Born August 13, 1956, Chicago,  
U.S. Pilot and flight instructor.  
Two daughters age 24 and 20  
(2006). His diary on the  
irregularities and violations in  
the process he was subject to  
has being published. Fifteen  
years.



### **Fernando Lllort**

Born August 18, 1963, Havana.  
Graduated Summa Cum Laude  
International Relations, Ministry  
Foreign Affairs. Nineteen years.



### **Antonio Rodriguez**

Born October 18, 1958 Miami  
U.S. Airfield construction  
Engineer, Technical Institute  
Kiev. Head of Santiago de  
Cuba International Airport  
expansion. Published poet in  
English and Spanish, *Desde mi  
altura*. Two sons 21 and 16  
(2006) Life plus ten years.



### **Ramon Salazar**

Born June 9, 1963, Havana.  
Summa Cum Laud Economics,  
University Havana. Three  
daughters 19, 14, 10 (2006)



***Please  
support  
Free the Five***



## Canada - GREAT North

When people here in Cuba want to know how I can trash talk the great country that nurtured me I can give them a number of reasons. She nurtured me the way Royalty coddled their young, while the working class lived in deplorable conditions simply because of cast, class, fortune or favour. She raised me on the backs of a world wide slave economy that kept others living in minimal conditions.

Of course we really didn't know any better then. Now we do. We must. CNN images of world disasters shout at us and we simply cocoon and ignore them. I never really bought into the consumer way of life, but as I grew to understand how my country's lifestyle was made and stayed great I rejected it more and more, even while I saw SUV consumerism escalating among my peers.

My country is a great country the way Genghis Khan was a great conqueror leaving death and destruction as his hordes spread across the land. Canada's destructive trail is not restricted to the local environment or people, it is foisted upon the entire globe as, per capita, we are the greatest country at helping turn up the temperature.

Canada is a great country in the same way the United States is a great country in her quest to control the world and keep oil flowing to perpetuate the capitalist consumer war economy system.

Our government is currently not only supporting the most environmentally destructive project ever undertaken by Canadians, it is ardently promoting the Athabasca Tar sands project. Hectares and hectares of lifesaving carbon sink peat bog are being destroyed daily in order to produce oil to feed the U.S. beast to keep Canada a great country. Fresh water under NAFTA is next. Isn't that great!?!

Canada is a great country for almost all the people who live within her borders, while she at the same time imports thousands of tonnes of crap, stuff and things from China, one of the fastest growing and most environmentally destructive economic engines ever. Next time you as a Canadian buy something you really don't need to survive, or simply to make a lazy life slightly easier remember that it was manufactured using power generated from one of dozens of new soft coal power plants, with dozens more coming on-line to meet the great Canadian appetite for Walmart products.

Canadians once used to be proud of their ability to thrive in the cold of their climate, now they crank up the thermostat or use super inefficient propane heaters to sit outside and chat instead of bundling up. How great is that!?!

As the planet warms quicker and quicker as a result of Canada's consumer habits, as the polar bears die off at an alarming rate, as the ice caps melt at an astonishing pace, and the great coral reefs expire, perhaps stop and ponder how great a country Canada really is!

As more and more south sea island and coastal people begin to suffer the effects of our great Canadian way of life; as millions more begin to suffer drought and starvation due to the effects of global warming which our great Canadian way of life perpetuates, pause and see if you really feel proud of our great Canadian capitalist consumer country.

Ironically, Canadians have been incredible at raising Terry Fox funds for cancer research, while on the other hand being consumer irresponsible which is resulting in an alarming rate of cancer increase world wide. Isn't that Great!

And the large majority of Canadians aren't concerned at all because they live in one of the greatest countries on earth.

**Lance Read - a Canadian in Cuba**



Havana has been a real eye-opener. In comparison to all the other smaller towns and countryside. It is the dirtiest part of the country so far. The old city of Havana where the tourists are taken is not too bad as some of you have seen. Surrounding districts like the one I am in near the University are really run down. Most water is pumped from trucks into holding tanks propped here and there on top of buildings. There are so many people working to restore the place and yet there is just a mountain of work to do.

