

2009 Highlights

US Women & Cuba Collaboration

National Advisory Board/Right to Travel Campaign

During 2009 we focused most of our work with the National Advisory Board (NAB) on our Right to Travel Campaign. In early March we convened a meeting of key NAB members and supporters to strategize on the Right to Travel Campaign as well as the 2010 women's delegation. This meeting took place in the context of optimism about potential change in Cuba policy by the recently installed Obama administration and hope for lifting the travel ban. The NAB members present then participated in the two day lobbying day and strategy session organized by Latin American Working Group and Washington Office on Latin America. We lobbied Congressional offices of representatives from Washington, Montana and California.

In the summer of 2009, we organized a NAB conference call specifically focused on the Right to Travel Campaign with Mavis Anderson, LAWG staff person and NAB member, to update the NAB.

In September, we mobilized our NAB and constituents to participate in the nation-wide effort to pressure Congress to pass travel legislation lifting a portion of the travel ban – CubaGo.

Women's Delegation

In late 2009, we began preparation for our first women's delegation to Cuba in five years. Women's delegations have been important in our campaigns of Education about the Reality of Cuban Women's Lives and the Right to Travel. The delegation scheduled for March 2010 with the theme, "Women's Human Rights, Racial Justice and Social Welfare." Preparation meant reestablishing the ties that were essential for delegation travel to Cuba as well as outreaching to our network and National Advisory Board to recruit for the delegation. Due to the license that the delegation would travel under, specific requirements were needed for selection of delegation members. New educational materials were compiled to ensure delegation members were prepared for informed discussions with the Cubans

Website

In 2009 we dedicated a substantial amount of our human resources to revamping our website and using it as a day to day tool in keeping our new and old constituents informed of our work and connecting them to other resources on Cuba. Given the information blockade still in place, our website continues to expand the number of people, especially women, who come to us to become active in our campaigns, travel with us to Cuba and use information found on our website in their work.

Events

In 2009 we sponsored/cosponsored a number of events advance our campaigns and to do general education work about Cuba and Venezuela

- March - Co-organized International Women's Day in Seattle
- May – Tabling at the Washington State National Organization for Women (NOW) Conference
- July – Presented at the Union Women and Community Activist Summer School sponsored by the Washington State Labor Center at Evergreen State College
- August – Cosponsored Women's Equality Day Celebration with Seattle NOW
- August – Sponsored speaking engagement/fundraiser for Ramon Alejandro Bernal, Seattle medical student studying at the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Havana, Cuba. We continue to distribute Bernal's updates on Cuba and ELAM and to raise money in support of his studies.
- October – Organized a Seattle community event for Guillermo Ferriol Molina, one of the main lawyers for the Cuban trade union movement and guest speaker at the 2009 annual National Lawyers Guild Convention. Originally scheduled to speak at another community event that featured the Venezuelan Ambassador based in San Francisco, Ferriol's U.S. visa was issued late and then he was detained in Miami. However, Ferriol's eventual visit was a victory in the area of lifting the travel ban as it was his first time to get a visa in almost 10 years.