

65th Anniversary of Prensa Latina: Detroit Reception Held for Cuban Photo Exhibit

Press agencies from Revolutionary Cuba are continuing to make waves internationally

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On Friday November 15, 2024, Washington, D.C. correspondent for Prensa Latina, Deisy Francis Mexidor, who writes for the Cuban news agency which is celebrating its 65th anniversary, was the special guest for a gathering at the Swords into Plowshares Art Gallery located in downtown Detroit.

This reception was held in connection with the National Network on Cuba (NNOC) annual meeting.

The reception and the annual meeting attracted activists from the city and around the country.

Prof. Emeritus Charles Simmons of Detroit, a longtime Cuban solidarity activist and journalism teacher at several higher educational institutions including Howard and Eastern Michigan University, spoke at the reception on his first visit to Cuba during 1964. Six decades later the same blockade remains in force which complicates normal relations between Cubans and the people living in the United States.



Cuba solidarity reception for Prensa Latina correspondent

Simmons recounted a meeting involving his youth delegation of 1964 and Commander Ernesto Che Guevara. Guevara fought alongside President Fidel Castro and the July 26th Movement which came to power in the aftermath of the seizure of power on January 1, 1959. Simmons and his comrades stayed in Cuba for two months.

In later years, Simmons went on to work as a senior correspondent for the Muhammad Speaks newspaper of the Nation of Islam during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The newspaper was founded by **Malcolm X** when he was a member of the NOI. During this period the paper had one of the largest circulations of African American newspapers in the U.S. and internationally.

Francis emphasized as it relates to her work with Prensa Latina that:

“Personally, I feel honored to belong to the Prensa Latina family. Each photo of mine tells its own story of events and movements. For example here in the United States at the demonstrations against the war in Gaza in favor of the Palestinian people; in South Africa during the visit of the Cuban Five, in Namibia with members of a local tribe or in the depths of the Sierra Tarahumara in Chihuahua, Mexico, where the Rarámuri indigenous people were like those forgotten by God. However, a woman carrying her child on her back smiled so much at me that I could not imagine that at that moment she had gone more than three days without food and her people were dying of hunger. Prensa Latina has survived more than six decades in the midst of strong challenges.”

History of Prensa Latina

The news agency Prensa Latina was established to provide alternative information on Cuban and world affairs. At present, PL has two bureaus in the United States with one in Washington, D.C. and the other in New York City.

Deisy Francis Mexidor in her address at the reception stated that the agency has bureaus around the world including Lebanon where they evacuated recently in light of the escalating bombing by the Israeli Air Forces (IAF). Cuba and other revolutionary countries in Latin America such as the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have consistently expressed their solidarity with the people of Gaza in Palestine and Lebanon.

Cuba like Palestine has for decades been a target of imperialism. Every year there are overwhelmingly majority votes within the United Nations General Assembly calling for the lifting of the blockade against the Caribbean Island-nation. Over the last year since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Flood, votes within the UNGA have endorsed the formation of a Palestinian state and for the ending of the occupation.

Just two days after the photo exhibit reception and NNOC annual meeting, it was announced that a co-founder of Prensa Latina, Gabriel Molina Franchossi, 91, had passed away. His professional life represents the Cuban revolution and its internationalist origins.

[In a PL article published](#) on November 19 it revealed that the journalist was:

“A fighter against Batista’s dictatorship with the Revolutionary Directory, Molina graduated in law and journalism, a passion that guided his life and earned him respect as a professional. In addition to founding Prensa Latina, he established the newspapers Combate, Granma, and Granma Internacional, directing the latter for 27 years, and also served as vice-president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television.”

From the very genesis of the revolution Fidel Castro and Che Guevara encouraged the creation of a news agency which would have global coverage. This decision has been an indispensable element in the longevity of the socialist state and the political vitality of the ruling Communist Party.

Corporate press services, radio, print and television networks routinely spread misinformation against the Cuban government and people. Today, more than ever, in light of the advances in telecommunications technologies, Cuba can broadly transmit its own perspectives on domestic and world events.

In a report published in 2023 on the history of PL [it notes](#):

“The origins of Prensa Latina went back just three weeks after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in January 1959, when, as part of Operación Verdad (Truth Operation), a massive press briefing was held in Havana, to which more than 400 national and foreign journalists attended. The newly-born Government presented the radical changes that the country was undergoing.... With this premise, revolutionary fighter Ernesto Che Guevara and journalists Jorge Ricardo Masetti and Carlos María Gutiérrez conceived the idea and organized an agency that would transmit news as an alternative vision to the international news agencies. With an initial group of 20 journalists, translators, and technicians, and Masetti as its director, Prensa Latina made history on June 16, 1959,

transmitting its first news cable in New York and opening the way to break the media information.”

Cuban media outlets have set a standard for reporting on world affairs from the viewpoint of the working class and oppressed peoples. Other agencies such as Telesur of Venezuela have been heavily influenced by their Cuban counterparts.

Francis in her remarks noted the advancements made by Prensa Latina over the last 65 years saying:

“There have been many transformations in the international media landscape, but our main objective has remained unchanged—to report with an alternative message connected to the truth and different from that of the major Western media. Prensa Latina remains committed to tell the stories of the peoples and countries whose voices are not usually heard.”

Cuba, Africa and World Revolution

On the following day there was a cultural program held on the city’s southwest side where various artists performed before the NNOC delegates. The weekend of events attracted many youth activists working in solidarity with Cuba and other international issues.



Cuba solidarity activist at reception

Several of the delegates were also involved in solidarity work with Africa, particularly the political and economic processes unfolding in the Sahel region of West Africa. In Mali,

Burkina Faso and Niger, the three states have joined together to form an Alliance of Sahel States (AES) to defend themselves against the destabilization efforts launched by the imperialists in Washington and Paris.

Cuba recently issued a statement in solidarity with the Southern African state of the Republic of Zimbabwe which has been under draconian sanctions by Britain, the European Union and the U.S. Zimbabwe was attacked in 2000 when the parliament passed a comprehensive land reform bill returning half of the commercial farms back over to the African people who had been colonized and displaced during the late 19th century by the British.

Joining in with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU), Cuba endorsed the annual Anti-Sanctions Day on October 26. This public action continues a decades-long tradition of solidarity with the African continent.

Between 1975-1989, hundreds of thousands of Cuban internationalists served in the Republic of Angola to consolidate the independence of the country and later to drive out the-then racist apartheid South African Defense Forces (SADF). Cuban solidarity with the liberation movements of Southern Africa including the South-West African People's Organization (SWAPO) of Namibia and the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), paved the way for the independence of Namibia and South Africa in 1990 and 1994 respectively.

Cuban medical workers intervened between 2014-2015 in West Africa when the states of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia were being severely impacted by the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). Later in 2020, Cuba assisted in containing the COVID-19 pandemic in several AU member-states including South Africa and Angola.

This practical solidarity work will inevitably continue as Africa and other geopolitical regions wage struggles against systematic oppression and underdevelopment. Cuba's socialist internationalist policies are a role model for other states in the Global South.

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Featured image: Cuba solidarity early days Prensa Latina reception, Nov. 15, 2024 (All images are from Abayomi Azikiwe)

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