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African Americans and the African world.

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**Letter from U.S. Artists,
Arts Presenters,
Arts Educators and
Cultural Scholars
in Support of Cultural Relations with Cuba
To President Barack Obama**

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February 17, 2009 (submission date)

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear President Obama:

We are artists, arts presenters, arts educators, cultural entrepreneurs and scholars, and cultural heritage and policy professionals from diverse political persuasions. We have been adversely affected by the cultural embargo imposed by the U.S. government against both Cuban and American artists and cultural institutions. We are writing to request that you make concrete changes in U.S. policy towards Cuba that will allow for the uninhibited flow of art, culture, information, ideas and debates, as well as travel by artists, cultural workers and professionals, and arts and cultural aficionados between the two countries.

U.S. policies towards Cuba – worsened many times over by the previous administration and criticized throughout the world – have prevented us from engaging in critical communication and collaboration with our Cuban counterparts, compromising our

nation's cherished ideals of freedom of expression and preventing cultural interchange between two societies that share a historic relationship lasting over two centuries.

In 2007 we [requested policy changes from the Bush Administration](#) so that respectful, critical dialogue and principled exchange could take place between the peoples of Cuba and the United States and our respective governments. Our petition fell on deaf ears. As citizens, artists, scholars, educators and cultural workers from all artistic practices and from advocacy and service organizations in the arts, we now call upon your Administration to:

1. open a respectful dialogue with the government and people of Cuba in accord with established protocols supported by the community of nations;
2. end the travel ban that prevents U.S. citizens from visiting Cuba, and allow for Cuban artists and scholars to visit the United States, thus eliminating the censorship of art and ideas, and
3. initiate, by working with the U.S. Congress, a process that can result in the development of normal, respectful bilateral relations between our countries.

The artistic and cultural communities in the United States and in Cuba are catalysts of imagination and creativity. We are committed to serve as bridges for our fellow citizens. Now, we need our government to take leadership and re-open the pathways of exchange.

We look forward to working with you to advance the interests of the United States and of Cuba.

Sincerely,

Patch Adams, MD, Clowns Against War, Arlington, VA

Michael Alexander, Executive Director, Grand Performances* & Chair, California Arts Council*, Los Angeles, CA

Mavis Anderson, US-Cuba Cultural Exchange, Washington, DC

Jorge Artiles, Music Event Producer, Havana Productions*, Miami FL

David Asbell, Executive Director, Lobero Theater Foundation, Santa Barbara, CA

Stuart A. Ashman, Cabinet Secretary, State of New Mexico Cultural Affairs, Santa Fe, NM

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Philip Ballman, Co-Founder, Mondo Mundo Agency, Brooklyn, NY

Laura Bickford, Film Producer, Los Angeles, CA

Larry Blumenfeld, Journalist and Music Critic, Brooklyn, NY

Beth Boone, Artistic & Executive Director, Miami Light Project, Miami, FL

Jimmy Bosch, Musician/CEO JRGR Records, New York, NY

Joe Boyd, Record Producer and Author, London, England

Robert Bozina, Professor of Music, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA

Bill Bragin, Director of Public Programming, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts*, New York, NY

Vinie Burrows, Actor & UN Representative, Womens Int'l Democratic Federation, New York, NY

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Judy Cantor-Navas, Journalist, New York, NY

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Regina Cervantes, 9/11 Rescue Worker, Cast of SiCKO*, Yukon, OK

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Susan Criner, Owner, Gulf Coast Entertainment, Houston, TX

Jose Cruz, President, Jazz/Latino, Inc., Guilderland, NY

Hector Cruz-Sandoval, Filmmaker/Producer, Los Angeles, CA

Juan Dies, Executive Director, Sones de Mexico Ensemble, Chicago, IL

Charlie Dos Santos, Producer/Engineer, New York, NY

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Cory Fisher, Journalist/Field Producer, SiCKO*, Nevada City, CA

Dale Fitzgerald, Arts Presenter, The Jazz Gallery, New York, NY

Juan and Miriam Flores, Independent Scholars, Brooklyn, NY

Quetzal Flores, Musician/Producer/Pro-Activist, Quetzal, East Los Angeles, CA

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Rob Gibson, Executive & Artistic Director, Savannah Music Festival, Savannah, GA

Danny Glover, Actor & Activist, San Francisco, CA

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Ralph Irizarry, Musician & Indie Label Owner, Brooklyn, New York

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Saul Landau, Filmmaker, Alameda, CA

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Vivien Lesnik Weisman, Filmmaker, Santa Monica, CA

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Ev Mann, Executive Director, Center for Creative Education, Kingston, NY

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Robert Martin, General Manager, Lensic Performing Arts Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Bill Martínez, Arts Immigration Attorney and Presenter, Martínez & Associates, San Francisco, CA

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Marilyn Miller, Professor, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

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Manuel Valera, Musician, New York, NY

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Jack Walsh, Executive Producer, Celebrate Brooklyn Performing Arts Festival, Brooklyn, NY

Bill Wolfer, Producer/Musician, Palm Springs, CA

Cindi Younker, Director of Programs, Buckman Arts Center, Memphis, TN

Isabel Yrigoyen, Presenter/Producer, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA

Mark Weinstein, Musician, Glen Ridge, NJ

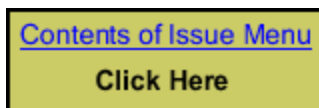
Erica D. Zielinski, General Manager, Lincoln Center Festival, New York, NY

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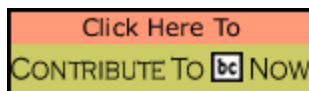
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