

Eddie Lemansky:

Afro-American members of the group who visited Cuba composed a statement on... which one of the -- one of them will read. I don't know. I don't think we have extra copies of it. Do they have them out there? So he'll read it. Charlie? Yeah, there's no point in reading this because they [inaudible].

Philip Abbott Luce:

This is Mr. Charles Berrard. (students applaud).

Charles Berrard:

Charles Berrard, B-e-r-r-a-r-d. I'm from Los Angeles, California.

Speaker 8:

What is your address?

Charles Berrard:

I don't have a permanent address in Los Angeles because I'm moving to New York.

Speaker 9:

How old are you?

Charles Berrard:

I'm 24 years old, and I was attending Los Angeles City College.

Speaker 10:

You're not -- you're a former student?

Charles Berrard:

Former student of Los Angeles City.

Speaker 11:

Are you working now, Charles?

Charles Berrard:

No. I just came back from Cuba. Before I came to Cuba, I was a truck driver and a student. There are no extra copies of the statement I am going to read, mainly because this statement will be given to the Negro press, not the white press. Too many times we've had what we've said or what we believe in press conferences distorted. We have had our actions in demonstrations for civil rights all throughout this country distorted and warped by the white press. So I don't feel there's any need for you to receive copies of this to distort what I'm going to say any further.

There are 11 black people who traveled on this trip to Cuba, one girl. And while in Cuba, we decided to call ourselves the Black Liberation Front. So this is who is addressing you right now, the Black Liberation Front. Statement by the members of the Black Liberation Front relative to our trip to Cuba: Members of the Black Liberation Front, composed of Afro-Americans who traveled to Cuba, feel compelled to issue this statement as to why they felt that it was necessary to defy the travel ban to Cuba.

Speaker 12:

A little louder, please.

Charles Berrard:  
What's that?

Speaker 12:  
A little louder, please.

Charles Berrard:

A little louder? We feel that we are members of an imposed oppressed group living within the scope of the United States power and influence, but not a single significant part or major force of that power and influence -- did you get that? Members of oppressed group living within the scope of the United States power and influence but not a significant part or major force in that power and influence. We are brutalized, murdered, raped, discriminated, and segregated because we are weak, because we are disorganized, because we are black. The constitution in the United States has never oppressed -- never preserved, defended, or pressed or protected our rights as American citizens. We seek solutions to our problems, solutions that will preserve our people who are being systematically liquidated in many sections of the United States by organized military police, paramilitary forces, and by mob violence. This activity must stop now.

Many nonwhite societies outside of the United States are attempting to merge the mutual interest of their black and white citizens. Cuba in our judgment is having success in this, while the United States is hard-pressed to grant its black citizens their total rights under the constitution. In Cuba, black men and women fight with Fidel Castro in the mountains and streets -- fought with Fidel in the mountains and the streets, in alleys and byways, therefore demonstrating their loyalties to the revolutionary aspirations of the Cuban revolution.

Black men and women have fought in every major struggle ever carried on by the United States government. We have shed blood and died irrespective of the cost to home and family. Today one of the black revolutionaries who fought with Fidel, Juan Almeida, is a vice minister and top leader in the revolutionary army. In the state of Georgia, white racists shot and killed a black high-ranking military officer because of their hatred, their hostility to his rank, and his influence in the military service.

One of the most far-reaching and important developments of the revolution has been in the area of mass education. In Cuba, the revolutionary government has carried out a program that has virtually eliminated the scourge of illiteracy while huge pockets of illiteracy remain in many southern areas of the United States and northern areas. In all sections of Cuba, black and white students are working together, studying together, living together, eating together, sharing together the toils, the rewards, that they feel are sure to be theirs in the new Cuba.

We, the Afro-Americans, who traveled to Cuba, were privileged to be a part of this vitality, this new look in Cuba and Cuban education. We were the guests of Cuban professors, teachers, and students at Cuban universities, Cuban technical schools, Cuban secondary schools, and Cuban schools for elementary and kindergarten-level children, and at the extraordinary teacher-training school in the mountains of Escambray in Las Vegas province and the Sierra Maestra mountains of Oriente province.

Black Cubans work as teachers, students, workers, technicians at both mountain regions where the fighting that preceded Fidel's march to power took place. This place is called Minas del Frio. At the teacher-training school in Minas del Frio in the Sierra Maestra mountains, black Cubans not only make up a large number of the student body, but what is even more important, occupy vital positions in the administrative, academic and ideological levels of the school. At our last day in Minas del Frio, we had

the pleasure of listening to the vice director of this school who gave a farewell address to us when we left. He was black.

The miseducation of black Americans, the challenge that must come in preparing black Americans for a full productive life in a so-called free United States has never been successfully met by the American educational leaders. The number of black educational administrators, professors or teachers, the declining ranks of the numbers and quality of black Americans who occupy positions of influence in American education, educational institutions attest to their lack of influence in these centers of higher learning. The inadequate inaccurate role of American history in giving due credit and justice to black Americans for their part in the creation and building of the United States is widespread and notorious.

In Cuba, one of their greatest military leaders, Antonio Maceo, was black. While one of the greatest living military leaders, a black man, is an el comandante in the armed forces, their pictures exist in many homes all over Cuba. Their history is Cuban history. This history is taught to all Cuban children, black and white. In Cuba, one of their greatest trade union leaders, Jesus Menendez, a black Cuban, laid down his life at the age of 37 because he was a Cuban worker for the cause of the Cuban worker.

In the area of personal involvement, the black Americans have met many people, formed new relations, and discovered many new allies hitherto unknown who have stated their vital interests in our struggle in the United States. To the black people of the United States, we can say take heart. Ours is not an isolated fight. No black man, woman, or child who was, is, or may at some future date be another victim of racist oppression stands alone. We have found that we have friends all over the world who stand ready to aid us.

We have attempted in this statement to address ourselves to the realities of Cuban life and in the United States for the black Cuban and for the black American, respectively. To the black Cuban child, life holds great promise for a bright future. What is the future of the black child in the racist fascist United States? It is the success of the Cuban story in seeking solutions to its racial, political, social, and economic problems that prompted black Americans from many sections of the United States to risk life, limb, and even prison in order that they might offer some new knowledge, some vital experience to a storehouse which seems to be destroying itself by useless racial conflict. While Cuba builds on its racial groups, the United States is destroying one of its most vital racial groups at the same time. It was to address ourselves to this problem that further communication with interracial societies like Cuba becomes vital. The most oppressed racial group in America; namely, the black Americans draw meaning, strength, and a continued importance from such liberating acts as travel to a disputed area such as Cuba. That's the end of this statement. Are there any questions? (Students applaud.)

Philip Abbott Luce:  
On to the next statement?

Speaker 13:  
Mr. Berrard, I have two questions.

Philip Abbott Luce:  
Just a minute. I think that we'll ask questions -- there's one more statement to be read, and then we'll have all the questions. Before that statement is read, however, I have a short announcement to make. We have just discovered that some goons from the House Un-American Activities Committee are in the audience, if not in here at least outside, and that they have had the audacity and the nerve to subpoena one of the executive members of the Student Committee for Travel to Cuba.

Speaker 14:  
Who is that?

Philip Abbott Luce:

Mr. Albert Maher. You'd think that they'd learn in one year that we're not about to be intimidated by such tactics, but, obviously, they haven't. (Students applaud). But on behalf of the students that were subpoenaed last year and the students that have just arrived from Cuba who I know will agree with this, certainly, let me forewarn the House Un-American Activities Committee or any of the other scum that hangs out down there that if, indeed, they attempt to pull the same kind of fiddle-fuddle that they pulled last year that there will be bloody heads, but the heads that are bloody will not be ours. (Students cheer and applaud).

Speaker 15:  
When is the subpoena returnable?

Philip Abbott Luce:

I don't know yet. I'll probably get one in a few minutes from one of those cretins.

End Part 2 – [00:10:42:92]