

# A Message to President Obama on Behalf of Cuba's Political Prisoners Who Also Seek Change

Dear President Obama:

Congratulations on your inauguration as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America.

Your election has ignited the flame of hope and change amongst all peoples, especially those struggling for freedom in the remaining totalitarian dictatorships in the modern world. So today, as we join you in this historic celebration, we also remember and call your attention to our families, friends and loved ones imprisoned by one of those regimes, Cuba, just 90 miles off the U.S. coast.

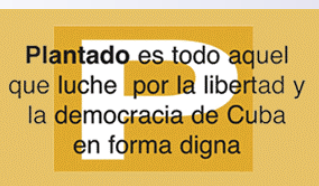
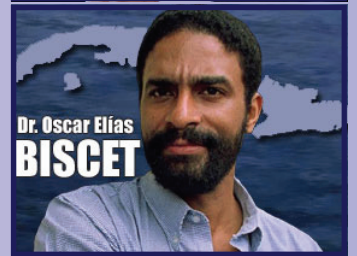
The message of change, which propelled you into the presidency of the most powerful nation in the world, is one that has propelled thousands into prison in Cuba. Daring to call for change in Cuba is a crime carrying 20 to 30-year prison sentences. As we celebrate your inauguration, thousands of human rights advocates and civil rights activists, such as Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, languish in Cuba's prisons for politically criticizing the government and seeking change. Moreover, countless numbers of young Cubans have been beaten and arrested simply for wearing white wristbands imprinted with the Spanish word for change, **CAMBIO**. ("Wristband That Says 'Change' Prompts Crackdown in Cuba," *Chicago Tribune*, 11/9/07).

Cuba remains the only totalitarian dictatorship in the Western Hemisphere. Geopolitically, U.S. support for **Cuba's pro-democracy movement** is imperative if democracy and prosperity are to be sustained across this region. Your support for this movement in Cuba is as vital to the spread of democracy, as support for the nation of Israel is vital to achieving peace and security in the Middle East. Any legitimization of the cruel regime in Cuba by the United States risks extinguishing the hopes and democratic aspirations of the Cuban people and dangerously feeds the authoritarian desires of other self-absorbed leaders in our hemisphere, who are eager to discard democratic institutions and the rule of law.

At this critical time, it is essential that our nation remains steadfast in its commitment not to unilaterally alter existing sanctions on the Cuban regime. U.S. policy toward Cuba should change only when three overarching conditions written into U.S. law are met:

1. The release of all political prisoners;
2. The legalization of all political parties, an independent media and labor unions; and
3. The scheduling of internationally-supervised free and democratic elections.

Your presidency will be presented with many challenges and great opportunities. Regarding the future of Cuba and its people, we ask that you focus on those most deserving of the friendship, support and recognition of our great nation: **Cubans striving for their nation's freedom**. The United States should not reward the oppressive regime that violently incarcerates its citizens for seeking democratic **CAMBIO**.



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