

2007

STEPS TO FREEDOM

A comparative analysis of civic resistance in Cuba
from February 2007 through January 2008



We Are One People

DR. ORLANDO GUTIÉRREZ-BORONAT

In 2007, the Cuban people visibly increased their non-cooperation with the dictatorship, paving the way for the most difficult, but possibly most promising phase of the civic resistance movement in Cuba.

Non-cooperation implies several things that are the result of the civic movement's sustained effort in Cuba through the years. In the first place, it implies that a sense of resistance, of dignity, of intolerance for repression and complicity with the regime has managed to visibly take hold among the Cuban people.

Some of the salient signs that a new attitude is taking hold—an original and spontaneous expression of the Cuban people's rebelliousness—is being demonstrated in a neighbors' refusal to participate street mobs against dissidents, in the Cuban workers' social resistance that the Castro regime calls "labor indiscipline," in the widespread boycott of the farcical voting for seats in the National Assembly of Popular Power, which resulted in the dictatorship itself having to recognize that more than one and a half million Cubans had not voted in these "elections."

There are, of course, other civic action campaigns that have gained traction in the country, mainly "With the same coin." This campaign, led by the ladies of the Latin American Federation of Rural Woman (FLAMUR), demonstrates the economic discrimination suffered by Cuban citizens on their own soil through a citizens' challenge. There is also the University Students without Borders Project led by the veteran peaceful freedom fighters of the Cuban Youth Movement for Democracy. As a social trend,

non-cooperation presents a new horizon for the study of social life in Cuba and for the study of the civic resistance movement.

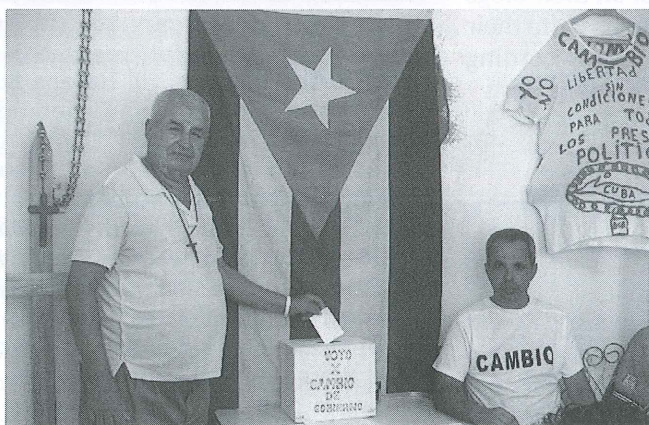
In exile, a broad coalition of organizations has joined together to support this effort on the Island, which was formally launched by Cuba's political prisoners, chief among them José Daniel Ferrer García, a member of the Christian Liberation Movement and one of the leading drivers of the Varela Project.



José Daniel Ferrer García

This broad coalition of exiled civil society organizations, working within the framework of the Non-Cooperation Campaign, empirically tested a concept fundamental to resistance: "We are one people."

Throughout 2007, on repeated occasions, campaign's activists went out into the streets of Miami and Hialeah to distribute massive amounts of campaign information. At the same time, more than a dozen Cuban stars produced television and radio spots supporting the Cuban people in their non-cooperation initiative. Something of greatest importance was then seen: how the social texture that unites Cubans on both sides of the Florida Straits gradually fused and joined together around this watchword of autonomous and individual resistance, and that at the same time, was spontaneously launched in various nuclei of Cuban society. A new phase in the civic resistance movement's struggle has begun. Liberation and reconciliation are the responsibility of the whole Cuban people.



A Cuban citizen at one of the voting centers prepared by opposition activists to demonstrate the people's refusal to support the electoral farce. The citizen is depositing his ballot in a box that says "I vote for a change of government" on September 12, 2007.