

Rafael Cancel Miranda's message to Toronto Forum on Cuba, for the occasion of International Human Rights Day

Hello my people,

a fraternal hug to each of you. A hug which I would like to give you in person, but for certain reasons that some of you know, I won't be able to do it because I cannot travel to Toronto.

And the reason is that on May 12th, 1898, we were bombarded by the U.S. Navy, killing us in the streets, in the homes.

Then we were invaded on July 25th, 1898 by the U.S. military. Then, in March 1917, despite the opposition of the Puerto Rican parliament, they imposed their citizenship on us and now, in the past few years, they have established that, in order for us to leave Puerto Rico to travel abroad, we must use the U.S. North American passport and I do not use the U.S. North American passport because I'm Puerto Rican.

If I travel, it's as a Puerto Rican, which is who I am. It is a violation of our rights that they try to deny us who we are, that they force us to travel as if though we were North American, when we are Puerto Rican. They are violating our right of being recognized internationally by our citizenship and our right to travel as who we are.

I remember, at the moment, the words of that great Mexican, Benito Juárez, "Peace is respecting the rights of others" and all of you, in fighting for the rights of all, are fighting for there to be peace in the world and to put an end to the savagery that is criminally being used against our people, including children ... including children.

I thank you and I assure you that, although I am not there physically, my heart is with you because, as people, it's as with people like yourselves that the human being becomes complete. I would feel good, good, very proud to embrace each of you, because I would be embracing dignity and that which gives life meaning, our humanism.

Many thanks. Always ever onwards and I assure you that we can win. We can win! We have the will and love, which is what's indispensable.

Thank you very much and a very big hug from this Puerto Rican, from here, from the nation of Puerto Rico.

Thank you very much.