

## Statement on the 90th Anniversary of Cuban Independence *May 20, 1992*

I would like to mark this day, the 90th anniversary of Cuban independence, by sharing my vision for a free and democratic Cuba. Just as the struggle for Cuban independence was hard fought, so too is the struggle of the Cuban people today to gain their freedom. The Castro dictatorship cannot and will not survive the wave of democracy that has swept over the world, and I believe the Cuban people are closer than ever to winning that freedom. On this Cuban Independence Day, I want to reiterate my firm solidarity with the Cuban people as they strive to bring peaceful, democratic change to their country.

Independence Day is the occasion to pay homage to the great heroes and freedom fighters of the past. But as we honor them, I also want to salute all those in Cuba who are placing themselves at personal risk by calling for peaceful change. We particularly want to express our admiration for the ever-growing number of Cuban men and women who are courageously speaking out against Castro's abuses of human rights and his denial of the Cuban people's most basic civil liberties.

We are working hard to ensure that those Cubans striving for human rights and civil freedoms have the broadest possible international recognition and support. I am pleased that the United Nations will be naming a special rapporteur to investigate and report on the human rights situation in Cuba. We will continue to help get the truth to the Cuban people through a free flow of information. Today, I reaffirm my commitment to oppose Castro at every turn and not to pursue normal relations until his dictatorship is done.

Castro's vision of the future is to cling

to a failed past. His determination to keep Cuba an antidemocratic Communist state dooms the Cuban people to a predetermined fate. He tells them that their only choice is between "socialism or death." And he dismisses the basic rights of people, the rights to free speech and free association, as the "garbage" of democracy.

I reject Castro's vision of doom as I believe the Cuban people do. I see Cuba's future as one of hope and expectation. I believe that Cubans will enjoy a peaceful and democratic future, one in which they will be able to elect the leaders of their choice. My vision is one in which Cubans have open access to the newspapers, television, and radio; will be able to travel and study wherever they like; and will find jobs in a prosperous Cuba, resulting in better lives for their children and their grandchildren.

And I want the Cuban people to know that my administration and the American people will be prepared to help in a transition to a stable and free Cuba. Our elected officials, our businessmen, many of our ordinary citizens, and especially the members of our hard working and prosperous Cuban-American community are willing and able to help rebuild Cuba by lending their know-how to repair the shattered Cuban economy.

So on this historic occasion, I look forward to a new day of Cuban independence when decisions about their future are made through free and fair elections that reflect tolerance and respect for the views of each individual. This will be the foundation for building a new and better Cuba, a free Cuba.