

A SPECIAL INVITATION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES FROM BRIAN GORDON SINCLAIR: HEMINGWAY ON STAGE

July 2, 2014

Dear President Obama:

Greetings from "Ernest Hemingway" or, at least, from the "spirit" of Ernest Hemingway. For many years now, I have written of and portrayed the Nobel Prize winning author to the point that I am often asked to speak in his persona.

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Today, I have the pleasure of addressing you from the headquarters of the House of Culture for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Dominican Republic. I speak to you as a citizen of Canada, as a citizen of the European Union, as a friend of Cuba and as a friend of America. I also speak to you as one who loves freedom everywhere.

Unlike many others who have written to you with great passion and in the name of justice, I speak not of politics but of love. Ernest Hemingway opened a doorway that allowed me to discover the vibrant love of literature and people that is Cuba. He lived there for over twenty years until forced out by America's fear of socialism. His spirit, however, is still there. I know that because when I meet the people of Cuba, as a writer and performer of Hemingway, I can feel it, deeply. His spirit exists in the people, in their hearts.

Hemingway has moved into legend. In Havana, in Holguin and in Santiago, I have had the pleasure of sharing that legend. I have portrayed Hemingway at the 50th Anniversary of the meeting of Fidel Castro and Ernest Hemingway. They met at an international fishing tournament organized by Hemingway and where Fidel won the tournament trophy. I have appeared in Holguin at the Cuban 5 Colloquium, not only speaking in support of freedom but also relishing the joy of a great festival of the people called Los Romerías de Mayo and I have appeared in Santiago de Cuba, sharing my work with student audiences in the Cathedral of Santiago and

participating in the astounding International Festival of the Caribbean. In each case, my experience was intensely personal. In each case, Ernest Hemingway led me to and through an island that I did not know, to an island that now summons me to know more, much more. I hope that island will summon you as well.

Again, I will avoid the rhetoric of protest and politics. I will not speak of unjust imprisonments. I will not speak of trade sanctions designed to create "hunger, desperation and overthrow of government", nor will I speak of military prisons on foreign soil and, finally, I will not speak of more than half a century of antagonism. I know you are familiar with these issues. I will only suggest some excellent, recent books that illuminate the relationship between America and Cuba:

What Lies Across the Water by Stephen Kimber;  
Cuba and Its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion by Arnold August;  
The Economic War Against Cuba by Salim Lamrani.

Instead of polemics, I will speak of children gathered round, eager to hear the stories of Ernest Hemingway and I will speak of baseball.

Recently, I became the patron of the Ernest Hemingway children's baseball team, known as the Estrellas de Gui-Gui or the Gigi All-Stars, in San Francisco de Paula, Cuba. The team was originally formed in the 1940's to provide an activity for Hemingway's sons when they visited their father. It was named after Hemingway's youngest son, Gregory, also known as Gig and Gigi. During this time, Hemingway provided uniforms, equipment and drove the kids anywhere they could scrounge a game. At Christmas, the children were invited to Finca Vigia (Lookout Farm), the Hemingway estate, where Ernest would tell stories to the children and give each one a present.

Three years ago, the Director of Museo Hemingway and Oscar "Cayuco" (the Homerun Kid) Blas, the 84 year old surviving member of the original team, decided to revive the Gigi All-Stars. It has been my pleasure to assist with that revival. In December of 2013, I not only had the privilege of arranging uniforms and equipment for the team but I also revived the storytelling tradition along with the presentation of a gift to each child. One of the stories I told explained how the children stopped stealing mangoes from the estate when they had a positive alternative - the great American and Cuban pastime, baseball. The event was so successful that it will continue as an annual event as long as the team exists.

Mr. President, "Ernest Hemingway" now summons you to Cuba. I ask that you make this visit to honour the legacy of a great American writer. I also ask that you make this visit for the love of baseball, for the love of children and for the love of our common humanity. I guarantee, you will love the game; you will love the children and, by the end of your visit, you will love the warm, friendly, generous people of Cuba. This year, let us give the Gigi All-Stars a real present – real and enduring freedom.

By the way, Mr. President, at Finca Vigia, we will be able to eat all the mangoes we want. We will also be able to end a blockade, free some prisoners and become friends. In the name of Ernest Hemingway, let us meet; let us do this. As a well known American president once said, "It's the right thing to do."

My kindest regards to you and your family. I look forward to your response in the near future.

Sincerely,

Brian Gordon Sinclair

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