

Let's Open the Doors to Mutual Prosperity

William Kinsella is a COTA member who attended the COTA Cuban Cultural Mission. We want to share Mr. Kinsella's incisive and illuminating commentary and observations on contemporary Cuba and the cultural mission. COTA appreciates his support for and contributions to COTA's mission. Mr. Kinsella is Director of Constituent Services for the Office of Rhode Island Governor Lincoln D. Chafee. He lives in Providence, Rhode Island.

Please note: Mr. Kinsella's participation in COTA's Cuba Cultural Mission was a personal endeavor outside his official position and duties in Governor Chafee's office. The following commentary is his personal opinion, and does not represent those of Governor Chafee's office.

You did a fantastic job in your recent summary of capturing the COTA mission's essence and its agenda, all the while interjecting keen observations about the socio-economic-politico climate in Cuba that dispel conventional American stereotypes (a number of which I've encountered since returning from the COTA mission.)

The COTA mission provided an incredibly intimate yet diverse understanding of Cuba and her wonderful people during their transition to an open market economy with greater personal economic autonomy, high standards of living and progressive human rights. I was pleasantly surprised by the conditions and ongoing improvements occurring in Cuba and found only the fading and outdated communist propaganda billboards suggestive of the past. In fact, all that seems to remain of post-Revolutionary Cuban injustice is the US embargo.

This embarrassing embargo demonstrates the worst of stubborn, hypocritical US policy: it has earned widespread global condemnation, failed to achieve any of its objectives, benefits our commercial competitors, exposes democracy's failure to overcome the unwarranted political control held by a small cadre, all while preventing the US from benefitting from the tremendous economic growth, resources and potential of one of our closest neighbors. Ironically, the tides have turned in Cuba and it now appears as though it's the U.S. missing the boat to this land of opportunity.

It is my sincere hope that missions similar to ours will open the doors to mutual prosperity. I strongly believe an open dialogue will help change all misguided Cuban policies, ours and theirs, and am thankful for the opportunity to see Cuba during this remarkable time. Many thanks and congratulations to COTA, particularly you and Gil, and Arturo and Colin for organizing such a successful and enlightening journey. Thanks and best wishes to my colleagues on the mission – the success of our journey was due in part to our small group size, but also our incredible professional diversity – it was a pleasure getting to know you all.

All my best wishes and sincere appreciation,

Will