

Grupo Nambia, Mexico City, Report on trip to Cuba, January , 2012

Five members of Grupo Nambia arrived in Havana on January 14th; one other member was delayed by work and arrived the next day.

First chore was to exchange our Mexican pesos for C.U.C. (convertible Cuban pesos) and also to Cuban Pesos. Dollars from the United States are not welcomed and the exchange rate for them is very low. We discovered that the Euro gave us the best exchange rate in Cuba. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_convertible_peso)

After finishing our financial transactions, we took a taxi to the home of our friend Reynaldo Estevez, MA, who coordinated our trip in Cuba. His help was the key factor in the success of our journey, introducing us to his friends in every place we visited. He maintained his enthusiasm through every step of our journey.

Ricardo Van Dyck was finishing his Master's degree at the University of Mexico, D.F. Mr. Estevez was a visiting professor, and Ricardo ("Richo") introduced Mr. Estevez to the Urantia Book.

Mr. Estevez is a close friend of high ranking officials in the Cuban government, which opened many doors for us as we gave presentations throughout the Island of Cuba. With his help and enthusiasm, we managed to connect well with people throughout the country.



Our group of six visiting Mr. Estevez in his home: Sandra, Mr. Estevez, Richo, Ericka, Karla, Octavio, and Agustin.

Given that our journey began and ended in Havana, we called this our “Havona in Havana” mission. We traveled from Pinar del Rio to Sancti Spiritus, visiting half of the sixteen provinces on the island. We hope to visit the remaining provinces on our next trip, hoping to be of greater service through our additional understanding of the country and the needs of groups of readers.

As usual, we didn’t have enough materials to hand out to all the existing readers, as well as people new to the book who wanted to study it after attending our presentations. We didn’t have enough time to spend with each group. We did manage to establish the foundations for two projects; one is “Blue Libraries” (book placement in public libraries throughout the country) and the other is establishing at least one study group in each one of the sixteen province in the country. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provinces_of_Cuba

The minimum wage in Cuba is \$12 to 15/month. Life is very difficult with such poverty; most of the people have three or more jobs to cover basic expenses. They work every shift possible (adding a new challenge to outreach). The best jobs are tied in with tourism; the additional tips in different currencies give people the best opportunities to pay for basic needs, personally I have never been in a place with so much material need, where the basic needs are not satisfied on daily basis, many people we met eat once a day other 2 and a few 3 times, the government has control over every piece of bread and the items for sale (those in good quality) are very expensive, I do not believe other country in Latin-American has such difficulties. <http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y04/dec04/06o13.htm>

There are two currencies in the country, the Cuban Peso and the C.U.C., the Convertible Peso. The C.U.C. pesos are currently worth about 25 Cuban pesos. You can get a good meal at any local restaurant in a public market for 30-50 Cuban pesos, but that same meal will cost at least \$10 in US currency, not having a Cuban friend by your side.

We could not achieve our goal of creating the Cuban Sister Society of Mexico’s Grupo Orvonton because the costs will be over any budget translated into US dollars about 5000 US and stay in Cuba as long as it takes since the first steps in the legal creation are done by the foreigner and once legalized a Cuban citizen can take over. Since we couldn’t reach that goal, we settled with creating a local association with members from all sixteen provinces. We will work with them to help structure the organization to benefit all the members. Right now we are sister organizations, not formally incorporated, with a commitment to send them books and study materials every month, using postal service (less expensive than a service like DHL).

The original budget for this trip (for all six travelers) was far less than needed in Cuba’s economic crisis. Given elevated prices for everything, we needed the equivalent of \$3000 US to complete the trip and return home, so each one of us put \$500 on our credit cards

to finish our mission, every visit took us at least an hour, God Bless CaDeCa (http://www.cubacurrency.com/casas_de_cambio_sa_cadeca.html) otherwise we would have been lost.

Our plan to do the connection between readers in the Island is a one year project, includes sending in the first 3 months 32 UB Spanish, 16 Cell phones (used or new), money to buy a SIM, secondary works and Cds and DVDs with material to start new groups, audios, USB memories, etc. For this reason we have done a subscribe button in our page www.orvonton.org so anyone interested in helping this project can donate money in a monthly basis through PayPal, in Latin America only Argentina has access to the donate button in PayPal services, so this is why we use the subscribe button instead. <http://orvonton.org/index.php/page/2.html>

The contacts and deep friendships we created will help build new study and outreach groups. We made a decision to focus on Cuba during Mexico's 2013 annual conference. Cuban readers and leaders will be our special invited guests; the conference will take place in Mexico City D.F. from March 28 - 31, 2013, and will be a pre conference gathering available too, the theme ¡*Hasta la Havona siempre!* " *Havona or bust!*" .

Below is the list of current contacts in Cuba. Many of our existing Cuban friends have left the island and moved to Europe to find work. This is why we are dedicating our resources to develop at least one group in each province. It is difficult and very expensive for readers to travel beyond their home areas to another province. Even a short trip will cost at least 8 C.U.C.s, or \$10. The economy and poverty make it impossible to combine groups.



Grupos de estudio en Cuba



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1.- Grupo Migueles

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3.- Grupo Avonales

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4.- Grupo Hijos de Dios Descendientes

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9.- Grupo Hijos de Dios Ascendentes Sra.

Ciego de Ávila **She moved to Italy**

10.- Grupo Susatia Sr. Camagüey

11.- Grupo Univitatia Sra. Elisa Fernández

Las Tunas **She moved to Spain** left no list

12.- Grupo Maquiventa Melquisedec Sr.

Holguín **He moved to Spain**

13.- Grupo Hijos Magisteriales **Sr. Olmer Reyes Zavala**
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16.- Grupo Compañeros Moronciales Sr.
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Some readers receiving materials:

