

# PRISONERS OF COLOR

ISLAS WILL DEDICATE A PAGE IN EACH ISSUE TO THE AFRO-CUBANS SERVING TIME IN CUBA'S PENAL SYSTEM

In many countries people are detained for trying to exercise their rights of freedom of expression, association, assembly, or movement. Some are imprisoned because they or their families are involved in political or religious activities. Some are arrested because of their connection with political parties or national movements that oppose government policies. Trade union activity or participation in strikes or demonstrations are common causes for imprisonment. Often, people are imprisoned because they questioned their government or tried to publicize human rights violations in their own countries. Some are jailed on the pretext that they committed a crime, but it is in fact because they criticized the government. People who are imprisoned, detained or otherwise physically restricted because of their political, religious or other conscientiously-held beliefs or because of their ethnic origin, sex, color, or language and who have not used or advocated violence are considered to be prisoners of conscience.

## ROLANDO JIMENEZ POSADA

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Attorney Rolando Jiménez Posada, a prisoner of conscience, was born into the bosom of a humble working family on December 4th, 1969, on the Isle of Pines. While he was quite young, he fulfilled his “internationalist mission” in the Republic of Congo.

He registered with the National Revolutionary Police upon his return from Africa, as well as at the “Eliseo Reyes” Superior Institute of the Ministry of the Interior, from which he graduated with a degree in law.

For several years he worked as an official in the Anti-Drug Department of the Ministry of the Interior. He faced problems and had confrontations with his superiors and the administration due to his declared disagreement over the repressive methods,

beatings and injustices to which citizens were subjected on a daily basis at the hands of those in charge of maintaining the Public Order. This drove him to voluntarily leave his job.

As a civilian, he was as a legal specialist for the Isle of Youth’s Office of Municipal Veterinary Medicine. Towards the late nineties, he joined the Agramontista Current of Independent Lawyers and later founded the “Henry David Thoreau” Pinero Democratic Center, whose mission is to give legal and judicial counsel to Cubans who have had their civil rights violated by the State’s authorities and institutions.

Jiménez Posada suffered continuous harassment, arrests and beatings by Cuban government security agents until one day, after the repressive wave of March-April



2003 he was detained and locked up in the “El Guayabo” prison on the Isle of Youth. He spent three years and three months there without benefit of a trial, by which time his incarceration became the longest of any prisoner awaiting trial in Cuba. Five months after his arrest, Amnesty International declared him a prisoner of conscience.

Jiménez-Posada was finally subjected to a trial plagued by irregularities and violations. He was not allowed to defend himself in a closed-door trial at which neither he nor his family was present. Its outcome was that he was condemned to twelve years of prison for allegedly having revealed State security secrets, and for contempt against the Head of State. The second indictment was on account of about a hundred anti-government posters that popped up in different areas of the city. The court’s sentence assured that Jiménez Posada had admitted his guilt, which is entirely false.

During his lengthy imprisonment, Jiménez Posada has been kept in punishment cells for almost four years and is victim to virulently bad treatment, on account of his skin color and his status as an ex police officer. His jailers have given him numerous seri-

ous beatings during which he has suffered severe physical trauma.

Severe prison conditions have made Jiménez Posada’s congenital asthma much worse, so much so, that he now has a serious cardiac condition caused by the anti-asthmatic steroids he has had to take. Prison authorities have on many occasions denied him access to his medications.

During his incarceration, Jiménez Posada has kept up his human rights activism and made declarations concerning the violations and beatings that his fellow inmates must endure. While in prison, he has also written two open letters to the Cuban President asking for democratization and freedom for political prisoners.

The authorities have often subjected Jiménez Posada’s family to harassment and repressive tactics. His young nine-year old son, Rolando de Jesús Jiménez Gutiérrez, has witnessed the harsh treatment his mother, independent journalist Lamassiel Gutiérrez Romero, has suffered both at home and during prison visits; she has been attacked by violent pro-government mobs.

Jiménez Posada’s mother has also been a victim of repression. Specifically, she was assaulted by her neighborhood delegate to the People’s Power Assembly and head of her block’s Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, who as her neighbor offended her and threatened her life at her workplace.

Currently, Jiménez Posada is the only political prisoner in Cuba who is an attorney. A committee of more than a dozen Cuban attorneys in Florida has come together to champion his cause. They have carried out various international campaigns to support their valiant young colleague, an exemplary, young Cuban fighter for democracy who respects human rights.