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**“What is one’s moral obligation when faced with an unjust system?”**

In October 2009, this question<sup>1</sup> was posed at an academic symposium in Harper’s Ferry, West Virginia (USA) as participants discussed John Brown’s 1859 Harper’s Ferry attack on slavery and racism.<sup>2</sup> Around this same time, Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Americans were struggling with this same moral dilemma as they pondered the fate of Dr.

Darsi Ferrer wasting away in a Cuban prison. But for these folks and Dr. Ferrer, this was not an academic exercise.

The writers and associates of *Islas* salute the Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Americans that joined the international outcry against the unjust imprisonment by Cuban authorities of Dr. Darsi Ferrer. Their request to the President of Cuba “to stop the unwarranted and brutal harassment of black citizens in Cuba who are defending their civil rights,” is commendable and the type of unifying action that the Diaspora community should continue to take. In this issue of *Islas*, you will read about the fate that has befallen this international civil rights leader, Dr. Darsi Ferrer; the international spotlight that shines on Cuba’s race and race relations issues; Cuba’s response to the intellectuals and activists around the world that expressed deep concerns; and Dr. Ferrer’s remarks.

While the public outcry is an excellent first step, we must remember that the continuing support of Dr. Ferrer and the civil rights struggle in Cuba are paramount. For *Islas*, we will continue to monitor the situation and provide a media to further the discussion.

#### Notes:

1- Columbia University historian Eric Foner asked this question in October 2009, as he discussed slavery and race at the Harper’s Ferry conference on John Brown.

2- One hundred and fifty years ago, John Brown led a raid on the federal armory in Harper’s Ferry, West Virginia. He hoped to strike a blow against slavery. Instead, he created a hostage situation and was hanged for it. Scholars discussed the many faces of John Brown (abolitionist, religious fanatic, terrorist, civil rights activist) and his many legacies at a conference in Harper’s Ferry. (Washington Post, October 15, 2009)