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Taking to the streets to free 'The Cuban 5'

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The men known as 'The Cuban 5', Fernando Hernandez, Ramon Labanino Salazar, Renee Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero and Gerardo Hernandez, were arrested on September 12, 1998 and convicted on June 8, 2001 in a Miami, Florida federal court on charges to commit espionage and threatening United States national security.

The "Month of Remembering the Cuban Five" began Sept. 12 this year with protests and picketing in cities around the country including San Francisco, Minneapolis, Washington, D.C. and New York City to make people aware of the injustice that fueled the campaign to convict the men, according to The Popular Education Project to Free the Cuban 5. The month-long schedule of events extends to October 12.

"Free the Cuban Five is important as an international political campaign for all freedom loving people, as support grows every day for five men who were assigned the task of protecting the national sovereignty of their homeland, Cuba," Benjamin Ramos Rosado of The Popular Education Project to Free the Cuban 5 told demonstrators in lower Manhattan.

"The Cuban Five are not spies," Mr. Rosado added, explaining that the men were to "infiltrate" Cuban-American right-wing terrorist organizations based in Miami to monitor their actions. He called the men "anti-terrorist fighters".

"In this year 16 of their unjust incarceration, we must all work with even more resolve to demand that the remaining three be immediately freed," Mr. Rosado told The Final Call.

In the past two years, Rene Gonzalez and Fernando Hernandez were released from prison and are living in Cuba. "We need to place more emphasis on the fact that freeing the 'Five' is now an international movement," Mr. Rosado added.

Gloria La Riva a member of the San Francisco chapter of FreetheCuban5.org told The Final Call she agrees with Mr. Rosado's assessment: "It will take a worldwide movement of struggle to win the three remaining members of the Five's freedom."

The National Committee to Free the Cuban Five reports Gerardo Hernandez has a double life sentence, Ramon Labanino received 30 years, and Antonio Guerrero, 21 years 10 months.

"We have to continually push ourselves to be creative with new ideas of mobilizing new audiences, new approaches to this struggle," said Ms. La Riva.

According to Puerto Rican nationalist Luis Rosa in Chicago, the demonstration for the Five was vibrant, positive and diverse. "The issue before us is keeping the Cuban Five case on the front burner," said Mr. Rosa

"The U.S. government is using the Cuban Five, now the Cuban Three as examples to terrorize anyone who stands for freedom," he said, adding, "But no matter what Washington does, the Cuban Five stand as an example of resistance, and how to fight this imperialist monster."

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