

Havana, March 14, 2010

Mr Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil:

Someone once told me that the ships that traded African slaves left part of their cargo in Cuba and the rest along the Atlantic coast of Brazil. Thus were separated brothers and sisters, parents and children, and friends of a lifetime. And so our bifurcated people share the same root.

Thus, anything that tries to separate us seems perverse, and we dream that one day there will be free movement between all of our American nations, so I can hardly understand that the authorities of my country would prevent my visit to yours.

On the first occasion, in October 2009, I tried to attend the presentation of my book *De Cuba con cariño* published by Contexto. The immigration office that grants exit permits to Cuban citizens informed me that I was not authorized to travel. This was the fourth time they had denied me this authorization. Previously I had been prevented from traveling to Spain to receive the Ortega y Gasset prize, later to Poland and after that to the United States to receive a special mention in the Maria Moors Cabot awards from Columbia University. I have been invited to Brazil for a second time, now for the presentation of a documentary about me, made by a group of filmmakers in Jequié.

I am convinced that I will find no difficulty in obtaining a visa from your embassy in Havana, but I also am certain that the authorities in my country will again refuse me permission to travel.

You have given recent signs of having great confidence in the good faith of the Cuban government. I hope that perhaps those who lead my country would like to keep that confidence alive in you and – in the interest of not disappointing it – they would agree to your request to give me permission to visit Brazil. You will only be asking, in my name, what for any Brazilian – and for any human being – is an inalienable right.

Forgive me for having taken your time to read this letter, and please forgive me as well for having written in Spanish. I do not ask your forgiveness, however, for this belief of mine that you yearn for the same rights for Cubans that you want to see enjoyed among Brazilians.

Yoani Sánchez Cordero