

## Cuban culture suffers under U.S. blockade

Written by GTAWU

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After more than half a century, the economic, financial and commercial blockade imposed by the U.S. on Cuba continues to affect and increasingly damages diverse spheres of national culture.

According to sources from the Ministry of Culture (Mincult), it is estimated that since April 2013 through March 2104 the blockade has caused damages to Cuban music, visual arts, literature, arts education and the film industry in excess of 22 million dollars.

The blockade affects promotion, diffusion, and commercialization of Cuban arts, negatively impacts the price of cultural products and services and limits international consumers from enjoying Cuban music, given the control which transnational arts and music companies – the majority U.S. owned – exert.

Mincult statistics show that in regards to music, live performances by Cuban artists in the U.S. must be classified under the character of cultural exchange, without commercial contracts. Cuban companies do not receive any commercial benefit and the groups are prohibited from performing for commercial purposes during the period of exchange.

Throughout 2013, the Cuban Music Institute planned various cultural exchanges and although

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the number of projects which were organized was similar to that of 2012, the quantity of musicians who traveled to the U.S. decreased. From 2013 through March 2014 the U.S. government rejected 97 visa applications made by Cuban artists.

Another important limitation of the blockade which affects Cuban culture is Cuban artists' participation in the Grammy Awards. Submitting products for the competition is a complex and difficult process, given that there is no direct and legal way of safely doing it. Payments can not be made from Cuba via bank transfer, a requirement all participants are obliged to meet.

The sale and promotion of Cuban art is subject to U.S. Treasury Department restrictions, despite the fact that Bergman amendment allows for the legal purchase of Cuban art.

In addition, the blockade directly affects arts education, impacting on teaching and creative quality.

The basic study materials needed to train artists figure among the most expensive in the world, and the constant difficulty in obtaining them is one more example of the obstacles created by the hostile anti-Cuban, anti-human policy, imposed for over half a century by successive U.S. governments.

In addition Cuban students and teachers are limited from participating in different events, from theater, dance, ballet, visual arts and music, which take place in the U.S.

Similarly, teachers and students linked to the Arts Education System are prohibited from visiting the U.S., in order to impede U.S.-Cuban exchanges in this field - which limits the possibility of exchanging methodological, educative and artistic ideas that could aid in the development of teaching techniques - as well as obtaining financial resources which would allow Cubans to participate in such events.