

THE ST. AUGUSTINE-BARACOA FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

True friendships can transcend cultural and ideological differences.

Humanitarian Aid Committee Chairperson
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A 501 (c)(3) Charity

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Ted Turner
Jonathan Kline, President, CNN
Anderson Cooper
Christiane Amanpour
Rosario Dawson
Sheryl Crow
Jimmy Smits

My name is Kristy Weeks. I am the chairperson of the Humanitarian aid committee of the Friendship Association. I nominated Irania Martinez Garcia for CNN Heroes and was ecstatic for her when she and her work **Defending the Planet** were honored. I watched CNN Heroes again last night for inspiration in writing this letter. I will use your words "*italicized and in quotes*" to convey my thoughts.

Christiane, as you stated "*CNN Heroes was an unprecedented event*" as was the recognition of a Cuban woman, an "*ordinary person*" and her heartfelt cause. You wanted to "*sing the praises of a group of heroes working on critical causes to help those in need*". Now we need you to make right CNN's decision to give Irania's \$10,000 prize to UNICEF instead of to her.

As you stated **Rosario**, "*people like Irania have made an extraordinary impact.*" The U.S. embargo against Cuba has made an extraordinary impact, too. However, it's a very negative one to the people of Cuba. It hasn't hurt Fidel, Raul or Ramon. They have what they need, want and desire. The people of Cuba are the real victims, people like Irania who lose their children to leukemia caused by environmental toxins which prompts them to spend the rest of their lives cleaning up garbage dumps in "the armpit of Cuba" (as the Cubans call Guantánamo) that are truly the affected ones. I am not here to argue whether or not the embargo should be lifted. I just want justice for Irania and her fellow workers. I want her to have what the other honorees of CNN Heroes received and what was promised her - money that she can use to improve the working conditions in the waste dump and to replicate her project throughout Cuba.

Anderson, *"be the wind beneath our wings"*. Open your eyes and heart to what has happened. We realize there is a \$250,000 fine for breaking the rules of the embargo and we don't want CNN subjected to it. That is why the founder of our group, Soledad Pagliuca McIntire, spoke to CNN attorney, Claire Kimball, several times giving her options of where to give Irania's money so that it could still help her cause.

The St. Augustine-Baracoa Friendship Association is an all-volunteer organization that works diligently to help the people in Cuba by doing environmental and humanitarian work there. We are a non-profit 501 c 3 charitable organization and are licensed by the U.S. Dept. of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, to travel to Cuba to work with the Cuban people. We also hold a license from the U.S. Dept. of Commerce to deliver material aid to the people of Cuba.

It was on my last trip in May of '07 that I had the privilege of meeting Irania and visiting the dump/recycling center. I had seen a blurb on CNN about Heroes in an airport transit lounge. As soon as I returned home I nominated Irania. CNN could have legally donated the money to the Friendship Association or The Christopher Reynolds Foundation, an organization that funds environmental projects in Cuba including the Friendship Association projects.

Sheryl, take the stage. Your power, courage and charisma can help. Put your heart into your earth and help us. As you stated *"I think there is a sense of urgency. And we saw with Irania how amazingly people are stepping up with ingenuity."*

CNN, *"Embrace your consciousness,"* as Sheryl Crow stated.

All of you, be our heroes and help Irania receive the money she was promised to further their work. You can do this by:

- making a donation to The St. Augustine Baracoa Friendship Association or the Christopher Reynolds Foundation earmarked for Irania Martínez. Every penny will go to the purchase of items they desperately need. We will ship them via container and furnish you with a receipt for every single penny.
- voicing an opinion and helping us fight for Irania
- attending our **"Rock the Runway~ Couture with a Cause"** where we intend to combine a "Green" fashion show and Rock concert to raise additional funds for Irania's projects.

Please, help us help Irania!

Very sincerely yours,

Kristy Weeks ~ Chair Humanitarian Aid Committee ~ kristyw@aug.com or kristy@getpanache.com