



Cuba Skate is an American nonprofit initiative based in Washington, D.C. Started in 2010, Cuba Skate's aim is to support and broaden action sports culture in Cuba by providing access to materials that are otherwise unavailable on the island. In doing so, Cuba Skate hopes to foster a constructive social environment for Cuban youth that will have a positive impact on the greater community. Cuba Skate expands the future for these athletes and uses skateboarding as a tool for cultural diplomacy. Through two-way cultural exchanges, we hope to connect Cubans with the international skateboarding community.

In coordination with Cuba Skate, and as a result of the organization's longstanding commitment to sports diplomacy, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts invited the three most prominent and celebrated Cuban action sports athletes to participate in an international skateboarding festival hosted by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Orlando Enrique Rosales Caraballo, Reinaldo Jorge Vicet Reyes, and Yojani Perez Rivera were invited to represent Cuba Skate as skateboarding ambassadors in the upcoming ***Finding a Line*** festival. ***Finding a Line*** will be a multi-disciplinary festival that celebrates an exciting and influential subculture by highlighting local, national, and international artists, as well as the creative ties and improvisational elements shared between skateboarding and live music. Most exciting about this festival is that on September 10, slated as Cuba Skate day, the Cuban skateboarders were to skate alongside professional skaters and young American counterparts.

During their stay in the United States, the Cuba Skate Ambassadors were also scheduled to undertake a bi-coastal USA tour, including symposiums at the University of Miami, Georgetown University, and the University of Southern California. This tour was intended to inspire the three trailblazers to return home with lessons learned to continue growing the cultures and communities of skateboarding on the island.

These types of people-to-people exchanges are exactly what President Obama believes will improve relations between our countries. President Obama stated, "I strongly believe that the best way for America to support our values is through engagement. That's why we've already taken steps to allow for greater travel, people-to-people and commercial ties between the United States and Cuba. And we will continue to do so going forward."

State Department representatives at the U.S. Embassy in Havana, who had been in contact with Cuba Skate staff, were made aware of this invitation and met with the Cuban skateboard ambassadors to collect their paperwork and refer them to the Consular office. **Unfortunately, after months of preparation—emails, international phone calls, meetings in Havana and Washington, D.C. with Cuban and American representatives—the Cubans were denied visas to participate in the Kennedy Center festival and take part in the USA tour to engage with American skateboarders and the industry.**

Cuba Skate would like to respectfully request your support in advocating that these Cuban applicants be re-interviewed and granted Visas to honor their longstanding commitments to the Kennedy Center and other institutions. Ideally we would like to see these interviews and visas expedited so that the Cubans can attend the upcoming Kennedy Center festival on September 10.

Sincerely,

Miles Jackson
Executive Director

"I believe that American engagement is the best way to advance our interests and support for democracy and human rights. Time and again, America has demonstrated that part of our leadership in the world is our capacity to change. It's what inspires the world to reach for something better."- President Barack Obama

About Cuba Skate

- Cuba Skate is a nonprofit initiative based in Washington, D.C. Started in 2010, Cuba Skate's aim is to support and broaden action sports culture in Cuba by providing access to materials that are otherwise unavailable on the island.
- The Cuba Skate mission is threefold: bring skateboarding materials to the Cuban youth, renovate local skateparks, and create self-sufficiency for these athletes. Through two-way cultural exchanges, we hope to connect Cubans with the international skateboarding community.

Kennedy Center

- The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts invited Orlando Enrique Rosales Caraballo, Reinaldo Jorge Vicet Reyes, and Yojaní Perez Rivera to represent Cuba Skate as skateboarding ambassadors in the upcoming Finding a Line festival—an intersection of skateboarding, media, and arts at the Kennedy Center.
- Orlando, Reinaldo, and Yojaní are the pioneers of skate culture in Cuba. They work with Cuba Skate to distribute skateboarding materials to the Cuban youth, organize necessary repairs at the local skatepark, and are catalyzing the entire community of skateboarders in Cuba to become more self-sufficient. They work with the Cuban Institute of Sports (INDER) to mentor youth in after school and weekend skateboarding clinics, offering youth the opportunity to skate that was not around when they were children.
- This will be a multi-disciplinary festival that celebrates an exciting and influential subculture by highlighting local, national, and international artists, as well as the creative ties and improvisational elements shared between skateboarding and live music. The festival serves as a point of intersection for cultural exchange within the international skateboarding community and beyond.
- Throughout the month of September, Cuba Skate will be curating two installations in the Hall of Nations, and Chairman Neftalíe Williams will be exhibiting skateboard photography from California, South Africa, Brazil, Cuba, and other parts of the world. Most exciting about this festival is that on September 10, slated as Cuba Skate day, the Cuban skateboarders would skate alongside professional skaters and young American counterparts.

Additional Events

- This bi-coastal USA tour—with planned symposiums at the University of Miami, Georgetown University, the University of Southern California, and a handful of other schools, skateparks, and cultural centers along the way—was intended to inspire these three trailblazers to return home with lessons learned to continue growing the cultures and communities of skateboarding on the island.

Visas

- On Thursday, August 27, these three Cuban sport ambassadors were interviewed in the U.S. Consulate office in Havana, Cuba. However, they were denied visas pursuant to 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act as they were found by the reviewing consular officer in each matter to not have overcome the presumption of intent to immigrate

Requests

- Cuba Skate would like to make two requests. The first would be that these Cubans are granted expedited visas; and if that does not happen by September 10 (date of Cuba Skate Day at the Kennedy Center), visas for a later date.