NA Cuba: ¡Sigan viniendo!
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NA in Cuba was first known to be established in January 1999 and functioned until 2004. For a long time we had not received any information about NA in Cuba, but we heard there was activity sometime in 2009, so in mid-2010, we attempted to establish communications with them. NA members who were visiting Cuba from Canada, Ecuador, Panama, Puerto Rico, USA, and Venezuela made contact with NA members on the island and we began to receive requests for help from Cuban members. Once we received the information, the Latin American Zonal Forum, along with NA World Services, planned the first of a series of fellowship development support events for NA Cuba. The first gathering in March 2011 was in the town of Aguada de Pasajeros, Cienfuegos, Cuba. We returned for a second event in Havana in November 2011, followed by a third event in Havana in September 2012.

In these three events we made presentations and had exhibits. We facilitated workshops about NA’s Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts, the groups, the service system, public relations/public information, hospitals and institutions, planning, and LAZF and NAWS projects and activities. Several NA members from Chile, Panama, Puerto Rico and Florida, USA, provided their own human and financial resources to participate in these events. Likewise, these NA communities and regions, the LAZF, and NAWS provided trusted servants, funding, NA literature—and, of course, spiritual support—during each trip we made there.

When NA Cuba reopened its doors in 2009 after being inactive for many years, there were only ten to fifteen active members, two groups, and four weekly meetings. They now have more than 100 members, seven groups, fourteen weekly meetings, a local service committee that provides services and facilitates PR/PI and H&I activities, workshops and events, and outreach efforts. We are grateful for everyone who has cooperated unconditionally with NA Cuba! Together we are united without borders, carrying the NA message to the addict who still suffers!

Mauro G, Caracas, Venezuela

Editor’s Note: Thanks to the efforts of LAZF trusted servants, we received several personal stories from NA members in Cuba. We couldn’t publish all of the stories in the print version of The NA Way Magazine, so they are gathered here in this special electronic enhancement.
Serving without fear

Hi, my name is Julio and I am an addict in recovery. I have had the privilege of participating with three other NA members of my community in the reestablishment of NA in Cuba. We are reestablishing NA here after having been closed down for six consecutive years for reasons outside of NA, related to norms of the government of my country. This is the biggest thing that has happened in my life, because in spite of being aware of the danger that we faced when we dared to open an NA group in Cuba again, I really experienced that the need for one addict helping another was bigger than anything else.

I still remember the night when I sat with my mom and I told her what I was getting myself into, and then I listened to everything she had to say about this matter, most of which was not very positive. The only thing I could share from my heart with her was that I’d rather be clean in prison than using in the streets. The beginnings of this process were all manifestations of love. Nobody had any idea how to make an NA group work. I had never read the NA Basic Text. I was the secretary of the group, and all of my fellow homegroup members were just like me. We only had one another. One week after we opened the group, we welcomed the first newcomer, with whom I had just served during the third Latin American Zonal Forum (LAZF) event to support NA in Cuba. It’s already been three years since we undertook this adventure to stay clean, and now we have six groups, ten weekly meetings, 60 members, and one local service committee—and all the newcomers who continue to arrive to our meetings.

NA is beginning to mature in my community. You know, in these past days as I was attending the LAZF event I would look around and see my fellow brothers from the beginnings of NA in Cuba with whom I have lived the darkest and most beautiful days, and who now have one, two, and three years clean, and even some who have 90, 60, and 30 days clean. I wonder what I did to deserve so many blessings when all I did my whole life was use drugs.

My higher power has been very kind to me because I’ve never been alone since I was introduced to NA, and that is why I shed some tears as I was writing this piece. Today I am experiencing what four crazy guys once dreamed about—opening NA meetings in Cuba again—and now that dream is a reality. I only have one more dream to fulfill, which is for the Cuban Region of NA to attend the World Service Conference, because my community has never had anyone to represent it at the conference.

If you are an NA member in a community that is still small, in which you are experiencing similar problems to those we experienced in my country, or if it is only you and one more member in your community, please don’t worry. Take care of the few NA members who are there and take care of the newcomers who are just getting to know NA, and be fearless, because God as we understand him is always there to guide us. Thank you, NA!

Julio,* La Habana, Cuba

Living life the NA way

Hi, my name is Felipe and I am an addict in recovery and a member of NA. I was a patient in a mental health hospital where I had gone voluntarily. While I was hospitalized, I was introduced to the NA message by my therapist. I felt very bad at that time and I felt completely defeated. I even came to believe that I would never recover from that physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual debacle. My body would not stop shaking and vibrating, and my mind constantly thought only about self-destructive matters: drugs, delinquency, death, etc. I was really in a grave state due to my addiction to drugs and to my obsession and compulsion to use substances, including alcohol. I didn’t eat or nourish myself.

In that institution I was diagnosed with neuropathy and with a number of other diseases. Neuropathy is a disease that attacks the central nervous system and drains the body of all its vitamins and energy.

My fellow members, my friends and brothers in NA Cuba, give me a lot of love every time I share with them. The most important thing is to continue searching inside, discovering and finding myself, learning from my past so I will not repeat that past again; and as a result I can remain drug-free and live life the NA way. Thank you to all of NA in Cuba, to the Latin American Zonal Forum, and to NA World Services for all your help and support. More will be revealed!

Felipe,* La Habana, Cuba

Love in NA

I never received so much love in my life as I have received in NA. Perhaps I never knew what love was until I arrived to NA. Recently I was told that a video we made during the first Latin American Zonal Forum event here in Cuba was shown during the 2012 World Service Conference. We watched the video here several times and I became very emotional. When the video was made, I never imagined that it would travel so far. Then we had the second LAZF event in November 2011, and just recently in September 2012 we had the third LAZF event to help NA in Cuba. Each of these events has enjoyed great success. Now in NA in Cuba, we have six groups, ten weekly meetings, more than 60 members, and one local service committee that provides PR/PI and H&I services. Thank you for all the love that you have given us. I hope to continue seeing you so I can share the rest of my life with you. With love,

Yanela,* La Habana, Cuba

*Name changed to protect identity.
A beautiful gesture

During the third LAZF event for NA in Cuba in September 2012, I was given a copy of It Works: How and Why as a gift. I was told that a member from Venezuela who has been clean in NA more than 25 years sent it for me, and he was suffering from a grave illness that would probably soon take his life. He asked one of the trusted servants from Venezuela to give his book to the person who was leading the opening meeting of the event. That day, thanks to God and to the NA way of doing things, I was being of service. I was very happy when I was given that book. I didn’t have a copy of It Works and it would have been a long time before I would be able to buy it even though NA literature is currently sold at a low price due to the economic situation we experience here. Afterwards, I decided to send a letter to the NA member in Venezuela who gave me the book to thank him for such a beautiful gesture and to tell him how fortunate I was to enjoy and benefit from his gesture. I am soon going to celebrate one year clean, and I love NA. It is really the only thing that is worth it. Here in NA, I found my mate, my work, my best friends, everything. They saved my life. Thank you so much!

Dalian,* La Habana, Cuba

Please don’t stop

I have been part of the organizing committee for the three cooperative events brought to us by the Latin American Zonal Forum for NA Cuba. I want to thank the LAZF and NA World Services for their help. NA began in Cuba in 1999, but then closed down from 2004 until 2009. We began again in 2009. We thought we were isolated, alone, incapable of communicating with you. However, one day several NA members began to show up separately in our local meetings from NA communities in Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, Canada, and other countries, and that’s how we linked up and truly connected with NA in the rest of the world. I never dreamed of having NA literature in my house or in our groups because our average salary here in Cuba (for those of us who earn the most money in our jobs) is ten to fifteen dollars per month—and that’s close to what it costs to buy one NA book, like the Basic Text. We also don’t have free access to the internet or to other NA literature, and that created despair and hopelessness, but when we started to receive help from the LAZF and NAWS, everything became easier and more accessible for us. Today we know we can count on you. In NA in Cuba we are not alone. NA is much bigger than what we believed. We are together and we are spiritually united with all of you. Please don’t ever stop coming to visit us and to share with us.

Javier,* La Habana, Cuba

My house is your house

Each time NA members come to Cuba to visit us from other countries or other NA regions or communities and they stay in my house, the experience they bring to me is huge. I would like them to come to visit more often, but I understand that their time, money, and responsibilities don’t allow them to do so. However, every day I ask my Higher Power to make sure that you not stop coming to NA in Cuba, and not stop supporting and cooperating with our development of NA in Cuba. Please, don’t forget about us. We miss you; we need you. We can’t do it alone. Every time you bring us workshops and NA literature, you cooperate with NA in Cuba and help the addict who still suffers and who doesn’t know NA. Just recently, in 2009, we only had one or two groups and seven or eight members. Now we have more than five groups and about 50 NA members in Cuba. The majority of us are young people under 25 years of age. There are only twelve members who are older than 25. We are waiting for you with open minds and hearts. NA in Cuba continues to grow.

Carlos,* La Habana, Cuba

* Name has been changed to protect identity.