

Miami Beach, January 15, 2009

Judge Reggie B. Walton
U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia
C/O Kathleen E. Voelker, Attorney at Law
1776 K Street NW Suite 800
Washington DC 20006

Your Honor:

This is a character letter on behalf of Mr. Felipe Sixto. I knew him very well in 1999-2003 when he was a graduate student at Florida International University and I was Visiting Professor and Research Scholar on International Relations and Latin America. In the Fall of 1999 Mr. Sixto took my graduate seminar "Social Welfare in Latin America," wrote an excellent paper on health care in Cuba and received A+, the highest grade in the class and even more significant because he was a senior and competed with seven graduate students. I had worked on the subject for 40 years and Mr. Sixto's collection of statistics was the most comprehensive and detailed I had ever seen (including my own work), hence I cited it in several of my books and articles.

Based on his work I encouraged Mr. Sixto to apply for the Master Program in International Studies at FIU, wrote a very strong letter of support, and he was admitted with financial aid. He enrolled in another graduate seminar of mine, on "Comparative Economic Systems in Latin America" where he expanded his original paper to include a systematic comparison between the health care system of Barbados and Cuba, graded A+ again, and one of the highest two among 15 graduate students who took my seminar.

In February 2001, I recommended Mr. Sixto for a research grant to do field research in Cuba; later I advised him on his MA thesis comparing the health systems of Barbados and Cuba. In the Spring Term of 2002 I selected him as my research assistant and, under my supervision, he continued his work on Cuba. In 2002 I recommended Mr. Sixto's paper on Cuba's health care system as a chapter of the book *La Seguridad Social en Cuba: Diagnóstico, Retos, Perspectivas*, edited by Lothar Witte, from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and published by *Nueva Sociedad* in 2003.

In 2002 Mr. Sixto applied to American University's Washington College of Law, I recommended him and he was admitted, and he earned a Juris Doctorate at the end of 2005. While going to law school at night, he worked full time at the Center for a Free Cuba, where he supervised the translation to Spanish, publication and distribution of a monograph of mine on the Cuban economy.

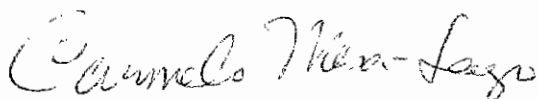
Mr. Sixto was the best student I had in the four years I taught at FIU, and ranks as the 10 most rewarding students I taught during my 35 teaching career, at the University of Pittsburgh, FIU, and universities in Germany and Spain. He was an incredibly hard worker and amazed me with his capacity to gather, systematize and compare statistics,

even if he was not trained as an economist. He worked extremely well conducting independent research and had an unusual motivation for graduate work. He never complained and completed his assignments on time and with excellence. During the years of our relationship I had him in the highest regard, as a graduate student, professional and human being.

It goes without saying that I was stunned when learning about Mr. Sixto mishandling of funds while employed at the Center for a Free Cuba. Nevertheless, it is my understanding that he has restituted the sum of money he embezzled and I read a letter published in a local newspaper where he deeply regretted his conduct and cleaned of all responsibility Mr. Frank Calzon, the Director of said Center.

It is my hope that you take into account this letter documenting Mr. Sixto's exemplary behavior prior to his wrong doing and are merciful in your sentence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carmelo Mesa-Lago".

Dr. Carmelo Mesa-Lago
Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Economics and Latin American Studies
University of Pittsburgh