

My name is Pedro Pablo Alvarez. I was born in Cuba on January 25th, 1948. I'm one of the ex-prisoners of the Group of 75. On March 18th, 2003, I was arrested in the famous Cuba's Black Spring. My oppositional work was mainly as an Independent Unionist, but also I was part of other projects where the democratization of the country was demanded. At the trial they accused me of committing acts against the security and sovereignty of Cuba. I was sentenced to 25 years in prison being the prosecution's request for "life imprisonment"

In May 2003 I was taken along with other brothers in arms to prisons far away from our homes. In my case I went to Canaleta Prison in Ciego de Avila over 500 km away of my family, I was there fourteen months in solitary confinement, with a poor diet, they gave us the right to take the sun irregularly, it was very humid, with very poor hygiene and many rodents and insects, mosquitoes, cockroaches, frogs, etc. We were allowed to communicate with families by phone once a week, twenty-five minutes and visits were two hours every three months. One of the things that is part of the prisoners' torture are the events that family has to go through when family visit takes place and especially when traveling is involved from one province to another, this increase the travel cost plus the burden of supplying food to poor prison feeding and the abuses they are subjected by the authorities of the Prison. Then the more difficult, living with the common prison population in these prisons called "high risk" have to live with the most detestable individuals in society, murderers, rapists, thieves, fools, etc. In this underworld is the worst blight that can be imagined and of course the ones working with the prison authorities, who harass and humiliate those who like me who were in for a political cause against the regime. I spent five years in this environment.

This is how, in March 2010, I came to Miami and I decided to stay in America. At first I was very confused and deeply troubled. Applying for myself, my wife and my son to stay in the United States was very draining for me at both psychologically and economically. In January of 2011, I was granted with asylum political.

During this period of time I have contacted James P. Boyle, who is the Program Specialist at Florida Center for Survivors of Torture, part of Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services. Mr. James accompanied me to the interview with the immigration officer, giving me all his full support and solidarity. Since beginning to work with the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture---

Since my enrollment in the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture, I have worked with the agency on my health issues (including issues concerning back pain, stomach issues, high blood pressure and respiratory issues). In addition, the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture has helped me to prepare for my asylum case, and upon receiving asylum, they assisted me in obtaining food stamps and other benefits. Finally, they helped me to obtain eye glasses

Today, thanks to Mr. James P. Boyle and The Florida Center for Survivor of Torture. It is very important that you get the support of organizations like this; at times you need the most. Without organizations such as the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture, I am not sure how I would have managed.