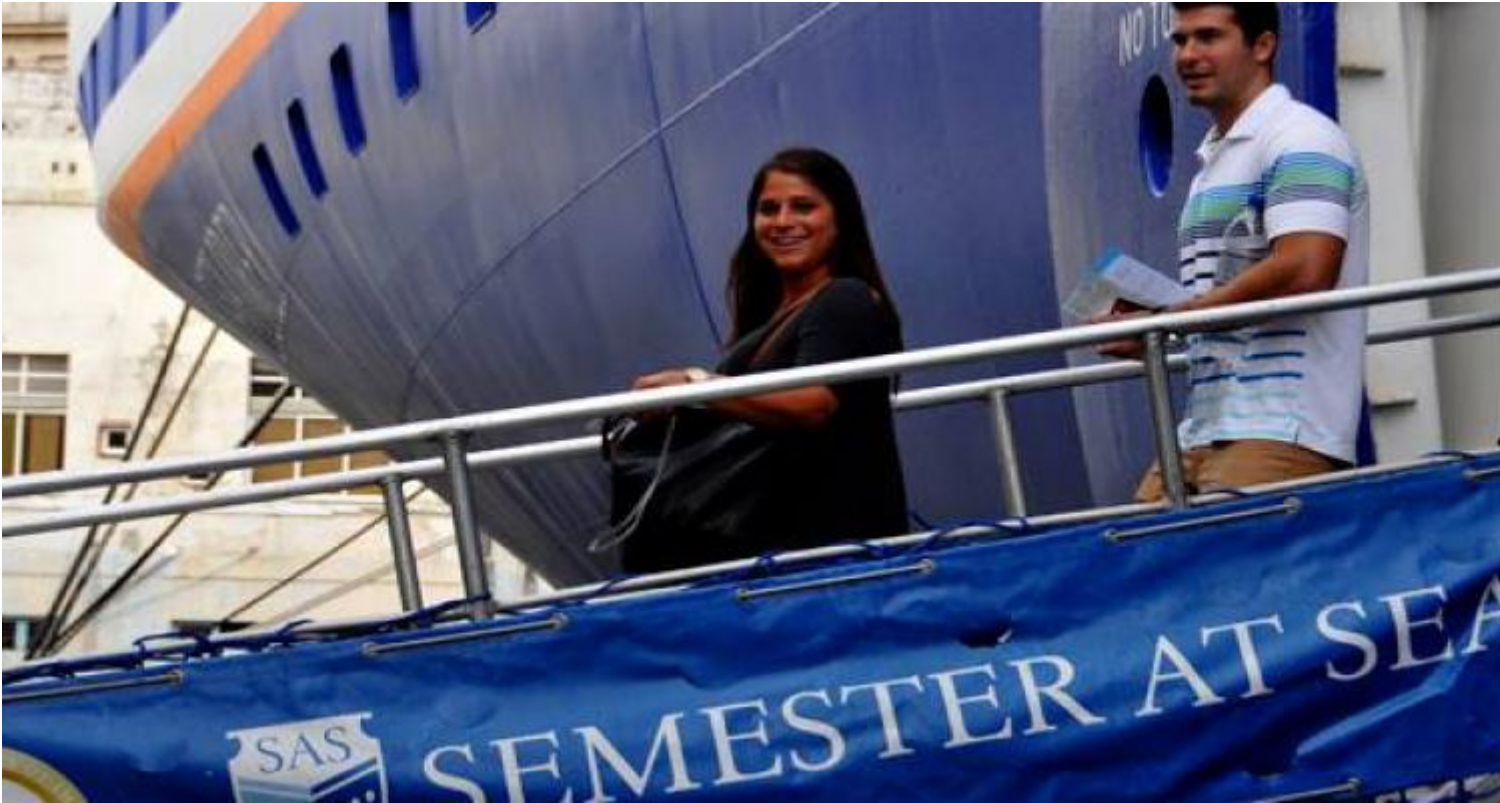


# *U.S. Students of Academic Cruise Approach to Cuban Reality*

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Havana, December 2 (RHC) U.S. Students of the Academic Semester at Sea program continue their visit to Cuba on Tuesday, with activities aimed at learning about the culture and social reality of the island, as well as exchanges with Cuban students.

On Monday, students at the University of Havana (UH) and Semester at Sea played friendly matches of basketball in both sexes, in a gesture where the sport became a platform for rapprochement between the two communities.

At the game, which coincided with the reopening of the university's basketball court Ramiro Valdés Daussá, the rector of the University of Havana, Gustavo Cobreiro, said it was a special day "because it is the first time in many years that a meeting between American and Cuban students takes place."

"It is significant that this reopening is a meeting between Cuba and the United States: it will become a symbol of rebirth in the relationship between Cuba and the U.S."

He said that the people of Cuba admire and respect the American people and their history, and are confident that this encounter will bring our peoples closer.

For his part, the Hero of the Republic of Cuba René González, dedicated the sporting event to the three members of the Cuban Five (Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino and Antonio Guerrero) who are still locked up in U.S. prisons.

Beyond the sporting results and the triumph of the Cuban teams (46-43 points for the mens' division and 34-23 baskets for the women), the sentiment of sympathy and unity prevailed.

“It was exciting, I thoroughly enjoyed this match against the team of Havana University,” said Kristiana Wright from California's Lutheran University and female basketball player.

Wright is one of the 624 students who arrived November 29th aboard the US cruiser MV Explorer and are visiting here until tomorrow as part of the Semester at Sea academic program, designed to enable participants to obtain firsthand knowledge about the countries they visit.

The Executive Dean of the Semester at Sea Program, Sue Weitz thanked Cuban educational authorities and students for the warm welcome and hospitality they have received since their arrival in Havana.

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