

**Statement from Reforma Regarding Censorship of Children's Book
Approved by Reforma Executive Committee: June 25, 2006**

Reforma, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking (www.reforma.org), opposes the banning of the children's book *Vamos a Cuba* in the Miami-Dade Public School district and in any school district in the Americas. The recent action by the Miami-Dade School Board to remove the book from all Miami-Dade County school libraries will have negative repercussions for many librarians working in libraries in Latino communities in other parts of Florida, but also throughout the United States and beyond. Reforma opposes the censorship of this and other children's books.

Reforma, in existence for 35 years, has always been concerned with information access for Latino communities. Having open access to current, accurate, unbiased and relevant information about life in Latin America is essential for Latino youth in the United States. Books are an important source of information and understanding for our children, particularly as information about Latin American countries, including Cuba, is hard to come by in the media that saturates Latino children's lives. **All** Latino children should have access to information about Cuba. Additionally, **all** children regardless of ethnicity, national origin, or languages spoken in the home should have access to this information in their native language.

Some parents in Miami have suggested that the facts in the book are inaccurate, but this is not the case. Reforma members from various locations in the country, including Florida, have reviewed *Vamos a Cuba* and have found it sound, appropriate and informative for children. After evaluating the series, librarians in New York City purchased the books including the one on Cuba; they are popular among Latino children, who use them for school assignments. The book has also been reviewed and accepted by other school districts such as the Los Angeles Unified School District. According to one Reforma member and school librarian, "I was in Cuba in 2000, and visited many schools, institutes, libraries, and other such places. Everything in the book about Cuba is accurate as far as I could tell..." While there may be differences in interpretation of Cuban society based on social class origin or history, the facts in this book are accurate. Other interpretations of Cuban history and society may be added to the collections by supplementing other books, not by taking this one off the shelves of the school libraries.

About the book *Vamos a Cuba*:

Vamos a Cuba is a 32 page hardcover picture book written in Spanish and published by Heinemann Library, an imprint of Reed Educational & Professional Publishing in Chicago. It is part of a small series of books in Spanish about Latin American countries that includes Colombia, Puerto Rico, and Costa Rica, and fits within a larger series of mostly books in English that give young children information about many countries throughout the world. One of the highlights of the book are the 25 large full color photographs of contemporary Cuba, its landscapes and people. The book includes bibliographical references, a glossary, a list of basic facts, and an index.

References

Aguayo, Terry. "Miami-Dade School Board Bans Cuba Book," *The New York Times*, June 16, 2006: 24.

Schreier, Alta. *Vamos a Cuba*. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2001.
