

Friendship between Venezuela and Cuba has been strengthening during the last two decades, in part due to the fraternal relationship between Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez. As Fidel Castro explained at the time of Chavez' death, "We have the honor of having shared with the Bolivarian leader the same ideals of social justice and of support for the exploited. The poor are the poor in any part of the world."

In fact, the relationship between the two countries has long been special. Because of dedication to liberator Simon Bolívar, Jose Martí lived in Caracas in 1881. For Martí that city was the "Jerusalem of America." There he founded the *Venezuelan Review* where he proclaimed, "Whoever says Venezuela, says America: let them suffer the same evils, be supplied with the same fruits, and pursue the same purposes."

On January 5, 1959, Venezuela became the first state to recognize Cuba's new revolutionary government. That government was only three weeks old when Fidel Castro traveled to Venezuela for his first foreign trip. He proposed to a welcoming crowd, "Let the destiny of Venezuela and the destiny of Cuba and the destiny of all the peoples of America be one single destiny." "Venezuela must be the country that leads in uniting the peoples of America," he added.