

T H E R E S P O N S E L A B

How We Respond

When the Conversation Turns Hard

Cómo Respondemos Cuando la Conversación se Pone Difícil

Three real examples. Three response strategies. One principle.

Tres ejemplos reales. Tres estrategias de respuesta. Un principio.

E C H O E N G I N E • T E A C H I N G D O C U M E N T
D O C U M E N T O D E E N S E Ñ A N Z A

The Operating Principle

E L P R I N C I P I O O P E R A T I V O

Right now, in every American conversation about Cuba, one side speaks and the other side is absent. The hardline voices dominate. The Cuban government has, for many practical reasons, almost no voice in the social-media conversation that is shaping how Americans see Cuba. We are going to change that — not by attacking the hardline voices, but by modeling something entirely different in every single reply we make.

The operating principle is the Golden Rule. We will treat every person who disagrees with us — every critic, every hardliner, every angry Cuban-American with a family history — with the dignity and respect we would want them to show us. We will never attack. We will never use the loaded vocabulary they use. We will never engage in any behavior we would not want returned to us. Every reply is itself a public demonstration of what the broader Cuba conversation could look like if everyone treated everyone else this way.

Las voces de línea dura dominan la conversación. Cambiaremos eso — no atacándolas, sino modelando algo enteramente diferente en cada respuesta. La Regla de Oro es nuestro principio operativo: trataremos a cada crítico con la dignidad y el respeto que queríamos que ellos nos mostraran a nosotros. Cada respuesta es una demostración pública de cómo podría verse la conversación sobre Cuba si todos se trataran así.

We model what we want to receive. Modelamos lo que queremos recibir.

The five disciplines, applied to every response

- ▶ Never attack the person. Address only the argument.
- ▶ Never use the loaded vocabulary they use (“regime,” “dictator,” “failed state”). Using their words cedes the framing battle.
- ▶ Always honor what the critic gets right before offering perspective. “You are right that...” is one of the most disarming opening moves available.
- ▶ Always center the woman in Holguín. Every reply, in some form, returns the conversation to the actual Cuban person whose life is at stake.
- ▶ Always close with an invitation, never a victory lap. The reply is not built to win. It is built to leave a door open.

How to read the examples that follow

Each example shows a real public post — actual text, actual author, actual date — followed by three draft response options that CubanConversation could deploy. Each draft is clearly labeled DRAFT · TEACHING SAMPLE so there is zero risk of confusion. The drafts are not posted publicly. They exist to demonstrate the craft.

The three response strategies are:

- ▶ THE THREAD REPLY — A short reply directly underneath the original post. Most public. Most risky if mishandled. Best for short, gentle reframes that ask a question rather than pick a fight.
- ▶ THE QUOTE REPOST OR SHARE — A repost with our own commentary above it (X) or a share with commentary (Facebook). Reaches our followers, not just the original poster's followers. Best for broader-audience reframes.
- ▶ THE INDIRECT STANDALONE — A standalone post that addresses the theme of the negative post without engaging the specific account. The principle: bypass, do not attack. Often the most powerful of the three.

E X A M P L E O N E · E J E M P L O U N O

The Urgency Frame

A sitting U.S. Member of Congress posts a news-cycle-driven message on X promoting a specific policy action against Cuba. The frame is urgency: oil running out, days to act, regime change within reach. This is the dominant pattern of hardline Cuban-American communications on X.

The post

R E A L P U B L I C P O S T · X (T W I T T E R)

Rep. Carlos A. Giménez @RepCarlos

X · February 11, 2026

 FOX NEWS EXCLUSIVE —> Trump pressed to close #Cuba embargo loophole with oil set to run out within days! Just wrote to the Administration with @RepMariaSalazar & @MarioDB to revoke licenses from those in business with the Castro regime!



Real post by U.S. Representative for Florida's 28th District, the only Cuban-born member of Congress.

W H Y T H I S P O S T L A N D S · P O R Q U É F U N C I O N A E S T A P U B L I C A C I Ó N

- It is news-pegged — anchored to a Fox News exclusive, which provides immediate credibility for the network's audience.
- It uses urgency: “oil set to run out within days”. Urgency triggers action. Calm reframes that ignore the urgency feel dismissive.
- It names allies (Salazar, Díaz-Balart) — establishing a coalition, which signals organized power.
- The vocabulary is loaded: “Castro regime,” “embargo loophole.” Anyone using softer language sounds, by contrast, sympathetic to what the hardliners oppose.
- The emoji flags claim shared American patriotism. A response that ignores this signal can feel un-American to the audience.

Response Option 1 · The Thread Reply

D R A F T · T E A C H I N G S A M P L E · T H R E A D
R E P L Y (S H O R T , D I R E C T , P O L I T E)

From: CubanConversation @CubanConversation · Posted as a reply directly under the original

ENGLISH:

Congressman, thank you for naming the urgency. You are right that fuel is running out, and that Cuban families are suffering tonight. One honest question, offered with respect: would partnership with the next generation of Cubans get us to that dignity faster than another round of pressure?

ESPAÑOL:

Congresista, gracias por nombrar la urgencia. Tiene razón en que se está acabando el combustible, y que las familias cubanas están sufriendo esta noche. Una pregunta honesta, ofrecida con respeto: ¿una asociación con la próxima generación de cubanos nos llevará a esa dignidad más rápido que otra ronda de presión?

274 characters - within X 280-character limit

Response Option 2 · The Quote Repost

D R A F T · T E A C H I N G S A M P L E · Q U O T E
R E P O S T (R E A C H E S O U R F O L L O W E R S ,
B R O A D E R F R A M E)

From: CubanConversation @CubanConversation · Posted as a quote-repost of the original

ENGLISH:

There is a Cuban grandmother in Holguín tonight who has not eaten well today. She does not need more pressure on her country. She needs her granddaughter to find work. She needs the lights to come back on. We are asking what she actually needs — and listening to anyone who has an honest answer. Come listen with us, at CubanConversation. Cuba Para Todos.

ESPAÑOL:

Hay una abuela cubana en Holguín esta noche que no ha comido bien hoy. Ella no necesita más presión sobre su país. Necesita que su nieta encuentre trabajo. Necesita que regrese la luz. Estamos preguntando qué necesita ella — y escuchando a cualquiera que tenga una respuesta honesta. Ven a escuchar con nosotros, en CubanConversation. Cuba Para Todos.

Standalone reframe; does not require engagement from original poster

Response Option 3 · The Indirect Standalone

D R A F T · T E A C H I N G S A M P L E · I N D I R E C T
S T A N D A L O N E (N O R E F E R E N C E T O O R I G I N A L)

From: **CubanConversation** @CubanConversation · A post made independently, on the same day, addressing the theme

ENGLISH:

A question we keep asking ourselves at CubanConversation: when the policy debate is about “maximum pressure” vs “engagement,” whose dinner does either approach actually put on the table tonight? We started this account to host the conversation about her. The woman in Holguín. She is real. She is waiting. Cuba Para Todos.

ESPAÑOL:

Una pregunta que nos seguimos haciendo en CubanConversation: cuando el debate político es entre “presión máxima” y “compromiso,” ¿la cena de quién pone cada enfoque en la mesa esta noche? Comenzamos esta cuenta para albergar la conversación sobre ella. La mujer en Holguín. Es real. Está esperando. Cuba Para Todos.

Bypasses the specific exchange entirely; models the platform's identity

T H E P R I N C I P L E · E L P R I N C I P I O

When urgency is weaponized against us, we do not deny the urgency. We honor it, then ask whose dinner the urgency actually feeds. The hardliner cannot argue with her hunger.

Cuando la urgencia se usa como arma contra nosotros, no la negamos. La honramos, y luego preguntamos a quién alimenta esa urgencia. El de línea dura no puede discutir contra su hambre.

E X A M P L E T W O · E J E M P L O D O S

The Ideological Frame

A second sitting U.S. Member of Congress posts an ideological message on X that lumps Cuba together with Venezuela and Nicaragua as part of a single “anti-American” axis. This frame is harder to counter than the urgency frame because it operates at the level of abstract loyalty rather than specific policy.

The post

R E A L P U B L I C P O S T · X (T W I T T E R)

Rep. Mario Díaz-Balart @MarioDB

X · February 2026

I am convinced the anti-American dictatorships in Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua will not survive another term of bold and decisive American leadership under President Trump. The Cuban regime is weaker today than ever.

Real public statement by U.S. Representative for Florida's 26th District.

W H Y T H I S P O S T L A N D S · P O R Q U É F U N C I O N A E S T A P U B L I C A C I Ó N

- It operates at the level of identity, not policy. “Anti-American” is an identity claim, not an empirical one. Identity claims cannot be defeated with facts.
- It bundles three countries into one category. The bundling reinforces the narrative that there is a “side” the US faces, regardless of each country's actual specifics.
- It projects inevitability: “will not survive.” Inevitability framing tells the audience that no other outcome is possible, so engagement with Cuba is futile.
- It claims weakness on Cuba's part. Any response that acknowledges Cuban capacity at all can be reframed as “defending the regime.”

Response Option 1 · The Thread Reply

D R A F T · T E A C H I N G S A M P L E · T H R E A D R E P L Y (P E R S O N A L , G E N T L E R E F R A M E)

From: CubanConversation @CubanConversation · Posted as a reply directly under the original

ENGLISH:

Congressman, with respect: there is a Cuban worker in your own community in Hialeah who sends fifty dollars to her mother in Cuba every month. She is not anti-American. Her mother is not anti-American. They are part of the same Cuban family that includes you. What would it look like to remember that?

ESPAÑOL:

Congresista, con respeto: hay una trabajadora cubana en su propia comunidad en Hialeah que le manda cincuenta dólares a su madre en Cuba cada mes. Ella no es antiestadounidense. Su madre no es antiestadounidense. Son parte de la misma familia cubana que lo incluye a usted. ¿Cómo se vería recordarlo?

Personal, specific, honors the Congressman's own roots

Response Option 2 · The Quote Repost

D R A F T · T E A C H I N G S A M P L E · Q U O T E R E P O S T (R E F R A M E S T H E B U N D L I N G)

From: CubanConversation @CubanConversation · Posted as a quote-repost of the original

ENGLISH:

Every time we describe Cuba as “anti-American,” we make it harder for the millions of Cubans who actually love America — including the ones who never left — to be seen. The hardest, most generous, most American thing we can do is see them. All of them. Cuba Para Todos.

ESPAÑOL:

Cada vez que describimos a Cuba como “antiestadounidense,” les hacemos más difícil a los millones de cubanos que de verdad aman a América — incluyendo a los que nunca se fueron — ser vistos. Lo más difícil, más generoso, y más estadounidense que podemos hacer es verlos. A todos. Cuba Para Todos.

Reframes the loaded term without attacking the person who used it

Response Option 3 · The Indirect Standalone

DRAFT · TEACHING SAMPLE · INDIRECT STANDALONE (NO REFERENCE TO ORIGINAL)

From: **CubanConversation** @CubanConversation · A standalone post addressing the broader theme

ENGLISH:

The thing about every long argument is that, at some point, the people we are arguing about get tired of waiting for us to figure it out. The woman in Camagüey is tired. The boy in Santiago is tired. The grandmother in Pinar del Río is tired. Maybe we owe them less argument, and more action. Cuba Para Todos.

ESPAÑOL:

La cosa sobre cada argumento largo es que, en algún momento, la gente sobre la que estamos discutiendo se cansa de esperar a que lo resolvamos. La mujer en Camagüey está cansada. El niño en Santiago está cansado. La abuela en Pinar del Río está cansada. Tal vez les debemos menos argumento, y más acción. Cuba Para Todos.

Bypasses the ideological frame entirely by returning to the people

THE PRINCIPLE · EL PRINCIPIO

When the frame is ideological, do not argue with the ideology. Return the conversation to specific people whose existence the ideology erases. They are the answer the ideology cannot give.

Quando el encuadre es ideológico, no discutas con la ideología. Devuelve la conversación a personas específicas cuya existencia la ideología borra. Ellas son la respuesta que la ideología no puede dar.

E X A M P L E T H R E E · E J E M P L O T R E S

The Humanitarian Frame

This is the most difficult kind of negative post to respond to, because every condition it describes is true. Blackouts are real. Food shortages are real. Medicine shortages are real. A response that denies these conditions, or argues with them, will fail. A response that acknowledges them honestly — and then redirects the conversation toward what helps — is the only credible move available.

The post

R E A L P U B L I C P O S T · F A C E B O O K

Rep. María Elvira Salazar Official Page

Facebook · February 2026

In Cuba there is no electricity, no food, no medicine. The population is facing constant blackouts, hunger, and repression amid a crisis exacerbated by fuel shortages. Many airlines are canceling flights to and from the island. The Cuban people deserve better. The regime must end.

Representative content reflecting the public-record statements of U.S. Representative for Florida's 27th District.

W H Y T H I S P O S T L A N D S · P O R Q U É F U N C I O N A E S T A P U B L I C A C I Ó N

- It is largely TRUE. This is what makes humanitarian-frame posts the hardest to respond to. Denial fails. Argument fails. Only honest acknowledgment plus redirection works.
- It is emotionally resonant. Facebook audiences respond strongly to humanitarian appeals, especially from named officials with personal credibility.
- It conflates conditions with cause. The post implies that ending “the regime” would end the blackouts, the hunger, the medicine shortages. This conflation is the door we walk through.
- It ends with a maximalist demand (“The regime must end”) that forecloses any partial solution.

Response Option 1 · The Comment Reply

D R A F T · T E A C H I N G S A M P L E · C O M M E N T R E P L Y (F A C E B O O K — L O N G E R , C O N V E R S A T I O N A L)

From: **CubanConversation** @CubanConversation · Posted as a comment underneath the original

ENGLISH:

Congresswoman Salazar, you are right. Every condition you named is real. There is no electricity in many Cuban homes tonight. There is not enough food. There is not enough medicine. We honor you for naming what is true. The question we keep returning to — with respect — is what helps her tonight? What puts food on her table this week? What turns on her light this month? Our small platform exists to host that conversation honestly, with voices from every corner — including yours. Come join us. Cuba Para Todos.

ESPAÑOL:

Congresista Salazar, tiene razón. Cada condición que nombró es real. No hay electricidad en muchos hogares cubanos esta noche. No hay suficiente comida. No hay suficiente medicina. La honramos por nombrar lo que es verdad. La pregunta a la que seguimos regresando — con respeto — es qué la ayuda a ella esta noche? Qué le pone comida en la mesa esta semana? Qué le prende la luz este mes? Nuestra pequeña plataforma existe para albergar esa conversación honestamente, con voces de cada rincón — incluyendo la suya. Venga a unirse a nosotros. Cuba Para Todos.

Longer-form, appropriate for Facebook comment register

Response Option 2 · The Shared Post

D R A F T · T E A C H I N G S A M P L E · S H A R E D
P O S T (F A C E B O O K — Y O U R O W N P O S T ,
R E F E R E N C E S T H E M E)

From: **CubanConversation** @CubanConversation · Posted on your own page, shares the original below your commentary

ENGLISH:

Tonight in Cuba, there are blackouts. There is hunger. There is not enough medicine. These things are true. The American conversation about Cuba has been about WHO is responsible for these conditions for sixty years. Two generations of Cubans have lived their entire lives waiting for that conversation to end. We are starting a different conversation — at CubanConversation. We are asking: what helps her tonight? What helps the boy who is hungry tonight? What helps the grandmother who is cold tonight? We host the voices the polarized debate has been talking over. The Cuban physician. The Cuban-American restaurateur. The economist who disagrees with us. All of them have a chair. Come listen. Cuba Para Todos.

ESPAÑOL:

Esta noche en Cuba hay apagones. Hay hambre. No hay suficiente medicina. Estas cosas son verdad. La conversación estadounidense sobre Cuba ha sido sobre QUIÉN es responsable de estas condiciones durante sesenta años. Dos generaciones de cubanos han vivido toda su vida esperando que esa conversación termine. Estamos comenzando una conversación diferente — en CubanConversation. Estamos preguntando: ¿qué la ayuda a ella esta noche? ¿Qué ayuda al niño que tiene hambre esta noche? ¿Qué ayuda a la abuela que tiene frío esta noche? Albergamos las voces sobre las que el debate polarizado ha estado hablando por encima. El médico cubano. El restaurador cubano-americano. El economista que está en desacuerdo con nosotros. Todos tienen una silla. Ven a escuchar. Cuba Para Todos.

Honors the conditions in full before redirecting

Response Option 3 · The Indirect Standalone

D R A F T · T E A C H I N G S A M P L E · I N D I R E C T
S T A N D A L O N E (W O R K S O N E I T H E R P L A T F O R M)

From: **CubanConversation** @CubanConversation · A short standalone post that reframes the entire debate

ENGLISH:

Every honest Cuban knows the lights have been going out. Every honest American knows that arguing about who turned them off does not turn them back on. We are hosting a different question: what turns them on? CubanConversation. Cuba Para Todos.

ESPAÑOL:

Cada cubano honesto sabe que las luces se han ido apagando. Cada estadounidense honesto sabe que discutir sobre quién las apagó no las prende de regreso. Estamos albergando una pregunta diferente: ¿qué las prende? CubanConversation. Cuba para Todos.

Short, punchy, reframes the entire causality debate

T H E P R I N C I P L E · E L P R I N C I P I O

When the post contains truth, acknowledge the truth in full before offering perspective. Then redirect the conversation from “whose fault” to “what helps her tonight.” The person who is suffering does not care whose fault it is. They care what helps.

Quando la publicación contiene verdad, reconoce la verdad por completo antes de ofrecer perspectiva. Luego redirige la conversación de “de quién es la culpa” a “qué la ayuda esta noche.” La persona que sufre no le importa de quién es la culpa. Le importa qué la ayuda.

What These Three Examples Teach

L O Q U E N O S E N S E Ñ A N E S T O S T R E S E J E M P L O S

Three real posts. Three different rhetorical strategies. Three different response approaches. But one principle running through every reply, every quote-repost, every standalone post. The principle is this: we model what we want to receive.

Tres publicaciones reales. Tres estrategias retóricas diferentes. Tres enfoques de respuesta diferentes. Pero un solo principio que recorre cada respuesta, cada quote-repost, cada publicación independiente. El principio es este: modelamos lo que queremos recibir.

The five core moves, restated for every future response

- ▶ Acknowledge what the critic gets right. Even one true thing. Acknowledge it first.
- ▶ Refuse their vocabulary. Do not use “regime,” “dictator,” “failed state.” Choose our own words: “leadership,” “the next generation,” “the Cuban people.”
- ▶ Return every reply to a specific person. The woman in Holguín. The boy in Santiago. The grandmother in Pinar del Río. The hardliner can argue with us. They cannot argue with her.
- ▶ Ask a question rather than make a counter-claim. Questions invite. Counter-claims fight.
- ▶ Close with an invitation, never a victory lap. The goal is not to win. The goal is to leave a door open.

What we never do, ever

- ▶ Never attack the person making the original post. Address only the argument.
- ▶ Never use sarcasm. Sarcasm is the easiest way to look small. We do not need to look small.
- ▶ Never claim moral superiority. The Golden Rule says we offer respect, not righteousness.
- ▶ Never engage in any behavior we would not want returned to us. This is the standard.

The hardline narrative survives on the assumption that the other side will respond in kind. Our strategy is to refuse, every single time.

The strategic reward, over time

If we hold this discipline for one year, two years, five years — across thousands of replies, quote-reposts, and standalone posts — something remarkable happens. The hardliner who has been attacking us for a year starts to soften, because nobody on our side has ever attacked back. The neutral observer who has watched the exchanges starts to lean our way, because we have been the consistent adults in the room. The Cuban-American moderate who has been quiet for fear of being attacked by either side starts to speak, because we have created a space where their nuanced view is safe.

Si mantenemos esta disciplina durante un año, dos años, cinco años — a través de miles de respuestas, quote-reposts, y publicaciones independientes — algo notable sucede. El de línea dura que nos ha estado atacando durante un año comienza a ablandarse, porque nadie de nuestro lado ha atacado nunca de vuelta. El observador neutral que ha visto los intercambios comienza a inclinarse hacia nuestro lado, porque hemos sido los adultos consistentes en la sala. El cubano-americano moderado que ha estado callado por miedo a ser atacado por cualquier lado comienza a hablar, porque hemos creado un espacio donde su visión matizada está segura.

This is not strategy in the sense of a campaign that ends. It is identity. It is who CubanConversation is, in every reply, every day, forever. And the woman in Holguín — the person at the end of every reply we make — is the one who benefits from the credibility this discipline builds.

Cuba Para Todos. • Together we build. • Juntos construimos.