



ROSA MARIA PAYA ACEVEDO

EDUCATION

Master of Public Administration in Global Leadership, Columbia University, New York, NY
B.Sc. in Physics, University of Havana, Havana, Cuba
Certificate, Foundations of American Constitutionalism, Georgetown University, Washington, DC
Certificate, Global Competitiveness Leadership Program, Georgetown University, Washington, DC

EXPERTISE

- **Democracy, human rights, and combating authoritarian regimes and their criminal networks in the Americas.**
- **Inter-American diplomacy, multilateral engagement, and migration crises** linked to political instability.
- Strategic advisor on **Latin American geopolitics, transatlantic legislative advocacy**, and the authoritarianism and networks of influence.
- **Civic Leadership and Coalition Building** across the region.
- Hostile actors in the Americas.

BIOGRAPHY

Rosa María Payá is an internationally respected democracy advocate, human rights leader and expert in Latin American policy, renowned for her efforts to promote freedom, human rights and democratic governance across the Western Hemisphere. She serves as Executive Director of the Foundation for Pan-American Democracy, where she engages with high-level policymakers, including U.S. Congress, European Parliament, and multilateral organizations, to advance regional security, human rights, and democratic stability. She has built an extensive network of influential leaders across the Western Hemisphere and Europe, leveraging her unparalleled credibility to shape impactful initiatives.

She is a respected thought leader with deep ties across Europe, the Americas, and international institutions. A sought-after speaker, Payá has testified before the U.S. Senate, UN Human Rights Council, and parliaments worldwide. Her thought leadership is featured in *The Washington Post*, *Politico*, *CNN*, and *El País*.

As the founder of *Cuba Decide*, she spearheads the most prominent pro-democracy movement uniting Cuban civil society, activists, and opposition groups to demand political change through a binding plebiscite.

Daughter of the late Oswaldo Payá, a Sakharov Prize laureate assassinated by the Cuban regime, Rosa María has continued his pro-freedom legacy with unparalleled determination. Her accolades include the *Morris Abram Human Rights Award* (2019) and *Common-Sense Society Courage Award* (2022).

OTHER HONORS & AWARDS

CHLI Ileana Ros-Lehtinen International Leadership Award (2020)
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Václav Havel Human Rights Prize Shortlisted Nominee (2018)
Universidad San Sebastián in Chile Medalla de Honor de Liderazgo y Compromiso Público (2018)

ACHIEVEMENTS

Launched the Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum

Spearheaded the creation of the Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum, a diverse platform that brings together legislators from Canada, U.S., Europe, and Latin America to coordinate legislative actions aimed at advancing democracy and human rights in Cuba and across the Western Hemisphere. The forum major sessions were held at the U.S. Capitol in 2022 and at the European Parliament (Brussels) in 2024.

Amplified Global Awareness of Cuban Atrocities, international interference and hostile actions against US.

Organized hearings at the U.S. Congress, European Parliament, and UN Human Rights Council, exposing systematic repression and criminal networks of Cuba and gaining support from key stakeholders.

Forged Groundbreaking Multilateral Agreements

Negotiated the Latin American Youth Network's collaboration with the OAS, setting a precedent for youth leadership in regional democratic initiatives.

Unified Regional Youth Movement and Civil Society for Democracy

Founded and led the Latin American Youth Network for Democracy, uniting activists from 20 countries. Coordinated civil society coalitions that shaped international denunciations in key forums such as the Summits of the Americas, exposing human rights violations in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

Elevated Awareness of Communist Crimes

Instrumental in designating July 22 as the *Day of Victims of Communism* in Miami, commemorating the assassination of her father, Oswaldo Payá.

Advanced Democratic Accountability in the EU, Latin America, US and Canada

Led advocacy that influenced European policy, urging the activation of the human rights clause in the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement and human rights resolutions in several Latin American countries. Her advocacy also contributed to the imposition of Magnitsky sanctions by the U.S. and the advancement of similar strategies within the Canadian Senate.

Established International Recognition for Cuban Human Rights Advocacy

Created the Oswaldo Payá Liberty and Life Prize, awarded to figures like Luis Almagro, OAS Secretary General. Positioned human rights defense as a central issue in hemispheric public discussions.

EXPERIENCE

Executive Director, *Foundation for Pan-American Democracy* (2015–Present)

- Leads strategies to support Latin American civil society and pro-democracy movements.
- Engages with heads of state, parliamentarians, and international organizations to influence policy.

Founder and Coordinator, *Cuba Decide* (2015–Present)

- Builds and coordinates a global coalition advocating for a democratic transition in Cuba.
- Designs impactful campaigns to challenge regime propaganda and mobilize citizen action.

Advisory Board Member, *Axel Springer SE*, Berlin, Germany (2022–Present)

Board Member, *Center for a Free Cuba*, Washington, DC, (2021–Present)

President, Latin American Youth Network for Democracy (2015–2017)

- Expanded the network’s reach, signing formal agreements with institutions like the OAS.
- Directed regional campaigns highlighting human rights abuses in Cuba and Venezuela.

Professor of Physics, Belen Jesuit Preparatory School, Miami, FL (2014–2015)

- Taught advanced physics courses while inspiring students through lessons on critical thinking.

TESTIMONIES, INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES & LECTURES

- **U.S. Congress:** Testified on historic protests in Cuba and the crackdown on free expression (2021).
- **European Parliament:** Speaker at Human Rights Conferences (2013, 2016, 2019, 2024).
- **United Nations Human Rights Council:** Civil Society Hearings (2013 & 2016).
- **Summit of the Americas:** Civil Society Forum (2018).
- **Oslo Freedom Forum:** Keynote Speaker (2016, 2017).
- **Geneva Summit for Human Rights:** Speaker on Cuban civil society (2013, 2022).
- **U.S. Senate:** Women Leaders Countering Authoritarianism (2022)
- **National Assembly of the Republic of Ecuador,** Plenary Session Hearing 2022
- **Foreign Committees of the Senate of Chile,** Hearing 2016
- **Comparison of Governing Philosophies and Political Ideologies Florida Department of Education Summer Civics Professional Development Series,** Lecturer Broward College, 2022
- Lectures at Brown, Tulane University, Columbia University, Johns Hopkins University, and Skidmore College, among others.

SOME PUBLICATIONS

- Jaque mate a Maduro 2024 [Link](#), ***El Mundo, Spain***
- There's a better way for Biden to support democracy in Cuba 2018 [Link](#), ***Washington Post, US***
- Memories of My Father 2019, [Link](#), *The Presence of the Past: Essays on Memory, Conflict, and Reconciliation*, **US Book** (p. 195)
- The EU must not betray Cuba 2016, [Link](#), ***Politico, Europe***
- Un momento definitorio 2014, [Link](#), ***El Mundo, Spain***
- Here’s what Cuba really needs, Mr. Obama 2014, [Link](#), ***Washington Post, US***
- Cincuenta años de soledad 2013, [Link](#), ***La Tercera, Chile***

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Extensive travel across Latin America, Europe, and the U.S.
- Featured in 2018 *Global Americans* New Generation of Public Intellectuals
- Languages: Spanish (native), English (professional proficiency)
- Recognized by *People en Español* as one of the “Most Powerful Latina Women” (2013)