
A “disguised” professor defending life

By: Giusette León García
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Yoel Díaz Temprano is the principal of the Abel Santamaría elementary school, located in El Vedado, Havana. Not many people have been able to recognize him in Facebook the last few days. Not even us, the students’ parents, who are used to see him leading every morning meeting talking about history, discipline, or Martí, one of his favorite topics.

But he is now dressed up with the right clothing in order to work with patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. The clothing keeps him healthy and safe. And he is also very difficult to recognize among other colleagues—all working in the education field—from the municipality of *Plaza de la Revolución*. They are contributing with the work carried out in the hospital popularly known as Covadonga.

How many of your colleagues are working here?

A total of 10. Two of them are principals, including a woman—principal at the Eusebio Cañer elementary school, located in 19 and 2 streets,

very close to where I work. There are also workers from the kindergarten, other elementary schools, and investment.”

What have you been doing in La Covadonga?

I, particularly, worked at the Mariana Grajales Ward as a nurse aide. But I did everything there. We dealt with 23 confirmed cases. Afterwards, I was deployed to the Intensive Care Unit. There, I do the cleaning in the ward, except for the room where the only case confirmed with COVID-19 is isolated, a 78 years old patient from the municipality of Cotorro.”

Lately, I have seen that you are posting on your Facebook profile the moment when patients with COVID-19 are discharged from hospital. Why?

“We have shared those photos of patients’ discharging because, no doubt, it is an achievement of our national health system. It shows, indeed, the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of care protocols implemented by this strategic sector in the society and how, despite the genocidal policy of the economic, financial, and commercial US blockade imposed on Cuba, we can beat death and save the lives of Cubans and foreigners with human resources trained 100% in Cuba.”

And your family, what did they say when you announced you accepted to do this job?

“It was the rough part. My mom is 73 and suffers from countless numbers of diseases. My dad is 80. To tell you the truth, they did not agree with me at first. But we had a political talk and now they support me and we have even talked systematically. Last Sunday, it was the Fathers’ Day and it was a mix of joy and nostalgia. In my 47 years, it was the first time I did not share with my dad. But he understands. Revolution followers must take their share of sacrifice. This is our Moncada, our Bay of Pigs.”

What has impressed you the most?

The unity between the health personnel and paramedics with all the people helping them out. We have been working like a unit with constant mutual support.

Any learning for your present and future work as a professor?

“There have been many in both my job as a professor and principal of an elementary school. Some of them are undoubtedly the work system, the implementation of group participation techniques, the importance of collective direction with individual responsibility being paramount; make every worker not only objects of the managing process, but also subjects of it, and how they can contribute to the process from their own personal experiences.”

Once you returned to your school. What are you planning to tell them?

“I do tell students, professors, and family members about my experience! I will tell them about how many people left their homes behind for a long time to fight the pandemic COVID-19.”

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff
