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Youth is not the Future, but the Present

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This April 4 should be the perfect day to ask ourselves in today's Cuba, with answers and no rhetoric, what else shall Cuban youth do?

60 years ago, when UJC and OPJM were founded, young people from a rising Revolution had a lot to do especially in a nation meant for humbled people, against a confessed powerful adversary and several open fronts.

Time passed and history has put truths and dreams in place. We did not move from our planet Earth, not even from our hemisphere. Hence, some threats are still here and the enemy is there stalking. However, many colors have shaded reality and some achievements became usual.

Then, among sweet songs and slogans, this April 4 should be a perfect time to settle hopelessness with coarse sandpaper to wake up a sort of faith that moves mountains. In order to ask ourselves with answers and no rhetoric, what else shall Cuban youth do?

"Young people? Everything," said Lisbet, 22, graduated of Chemical Engineering, who shared her time between a laboratory and a bar, "our life starts now. We just have to find ways to make the best of the things we have learned. The opportunities for studying in our country, but also learning how to survive with a salary that does not meet our needs. There are days you come here high-spirited but your work conditions are horrible. It is weird. But young people must reinvent life in such circumstances without giving up on our dreams, growing, and feeding, dressing up, and having a life. Who is going to develop a nation with so many new things such

as technologies and ways to organized better the economy? I can earn some money by working as bartender without giving up on my profession. There are even new laws. Who is going to do all of these? But we, the young people. It is our duty...”

Alejandro is a bit older and works as a tourist guide even though he majored in Design. He began by saying that he is not pessimistic and believes in the future. He is member of Cuba’s Communist Party (PCC) by conscience. He is aware that it is one thing to be the forefront of the group, it is another to be the rest of the group. But he feels we need that group to forge our nation. He then points out:

“Cuba’s youth today? They must study and get ready by making the most of the unrivalled advantages of our educational system to find the right space for our own professional and personal growth in state-run companies if the Cuban economy flourishes with investment and Mariel (N.T: Mariel’s Special Development Zone) to start from the ground up the self-employment modality and be successful by contributing to society, or travel abroad looking for new opportunities, unleashing our full potential, saving some money, and investing here. Everything is possible in today’s Cuba. Everything is understood, everything but leaving without coming back.”

It seems that the main question for young people in today’s Cuba is to stay here or just leave. It seems as if the challenge, the courage most of them shall face, is to stay here rather than the adventure of leaving to try their luck. Yanira is a social communicator and her answer conveys wishes...:

“I would love young people not to lose their energies and try to build a nation to our likes, pace, and needs. I would like that all the education we have been provided throughout our life we can use it in not accepting imported ways and models that have nothing to do with our culture. The worst scenario for Cuban youth in the future would be to bow our heads because we allowed others to colonize us politically, economically, and culturally. I trust it will never happen. I trust—despite all of our economical shortage that certainly triggered economic migration— most of us have decided to stay here and do our best from here.”

With the insight of a singer-songwriter, Rey Montalvo targets the need of breaking up and maintain—simultaneously—, which has been an old challenge for Cuban youth:

“Being young does not mean to be progressive. In this century of divided societies, of mechanism that only seek to alienate human beings from their environment to limit their ability to transform, youth cannot copycat ancient patterns. Young people have to fight against imposed common senses, barriers, inequality in every way. The biggest challenge for young people is just to be a young man/woman. Youth is not future, but present. It is a continuation, but also rupture. Rupture generates movement and movement is paramount so society does not get stalled. Legacies are not marbled statues to caress or polish. I rather think they are a half-written papers where wisdom is added and highlighted in order to donate it to others.”

We also asked young painter Maisel Lopez the same question:

“Cuban youth’s goal is to focus on efforts to build a society where the human values that have distinguished our people prevail. But it is also to develop and encourage the taste for Cuban traditions, not using mincing words or being blindfolded before something wrong. But we must highlight everything we do in a right way. Cuban youth must be on a par with the rest of the world. They must use every platform and technological tools to complement the cultural

development both ways, personal and collective.

They should not know Cuban history as another subject to examine and get good grades. It is paramount to take cognizance of the fact that every benefit and achievement has cost much generous blood. Therefore, it is essential to be updated on things going on around the globe and cultivate our media intuition to discern fake news and when someone is trying to manipulate us. The Cuban young man/woman must be proud of his/her flag, heroes. He/she must feel rage when someone speaks ill on the glorious name of our island CUBA.”

And CUBA was written in capital letters by conviction. The same conviction that made singer-songwriter Alex Alday Perez to answer with resolution: “what is left for us? Keep working hard Giusette. There are lots of things to do yet. And I trust young people know that more than a moral obligation, we shall embrace it as a responsibility. It is on us that our nation can move toward a sustainable development. A lot of things depend on us. And the most important element is that there is a will to achieve it. Few days ago, I made a short documentary film on my father-in-law Victor Fowler and he spoke, like a visionary, about our generation. He added that we should learn how to integrate everything in a fresh, contemporary mind willing to contribute. I totally agree. We just need the right tools, being heard, being the leaders, being understood, and we will make our nation progress. You will see.”

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