

A necessary debate: Can the flag be “used”?

29/05/2017



Lots of people wear clothes inspired in the American flag, and some would like to wear the Cuban flag. Why not? How to do it?

-I was given the whole packet —said the girl dressed in the stars and the stripes of the American flag—. I see it pretty. It is a very good material. Why shouldn't I wear it? This is not politics. It is fashion.

-When you are wearing the flag of your country, you are doing politics, said an old man who is in line to buy a newspaper.

-If I had my lycra with the Cuban flag, I would use it as well, but do you know where I can buy it?

-Wearing a Cuban flag in a lycra would be an unacceptable disrespect to our national symbols, answered the old man.

This opinion exchange took place in the corner of O and Infanta Streets, but for sure, it has been target of discussions in many other places.

The truth is that it is increasingly noticed the number of people wearing pullovers,

shirts, jerseys, short pants, and lycras with a crystal-clear promotion of the American, and other countries' flags.

Many overlook this fact and believe it is just fashionable. To others, it raises concerns.

It may happen that many wear other countries' flags with no ulterior motives. It may be possible that these people believe wearing the symbol of other countries does not mean a statement of principles to them. The truth is that wearing (use, hoist, or carry) a symbol has certain implications that go beyond beauty and functionality.

It may be sound exaggerated: nowadays, the most effective war is not won by means of cannons, but symbols.

And it seems quite logical the equation: before one symbol, other symbol.

Probably the girl with the lycra is right. But the old man is right, too. A symbol is not only a design over a fabric. A symbol means reference, history, ideas.

A lycra is too “earthly” to print it with the national flag.

Is it not legit the desire of wearing our flag in a pullover? We wear Marti and Che, why not the flag?

The debate of wearing national symbols on clothes or accessories is not simple. And the legal framework leaves room for doubts. I agree, we cannot manufacture clothes with our flag, but to what extent are unwise the usage of our flag in clothes and accessories?

It is tough to generalize.

Looking at it closely, the flag should not be gotten dirty, squeezed, or gotten wet. But can we deny an athlete to carry it on his/her shoulders?

But who is the one in charge of setting the rules?

We should set the differences between object and symbols (although symbols, of course, are represented through the object).

However, it is still shocking to see the amount of little paper flags on the tarmac after a massive rally, stamped down by people, dirty, broken. What can we do?

These days, symbols are increasingly linked to routines. And even though we see it without thinking too much, symbols' transcendence should not be superficial.

It is not about worshipping a design. It is about the respect to what it represents,

the identification with certain values.

When a teenager, a young (wo)man, any person...decides to wear a cloth decorated with the American flag, consciously or unconsciously, she/he is conveying a message, which is not only commercial. This message would also have historical and cultural background.

Perhaps some did not notice, but there is no innocence behind these “commercial” campaigns.

Is it casual that the American flag waves in most of films produced in that country?

This is not a war between “good” and “evil”. We are dealing with an authentic contrast between cultural schemes. It is necessary to be aware of the motives, strategies, and implications of such war.

Our symbols are not mere imagination. They are not commercial brands. They mean lots of things. And obviously, they confirm our identity in times of globalization.

We must reconsider rules

It hurts (and we should be worried) that it is hard for a common citizen to buy a good flag. Having a flag at home, to show it off in special times, or keep it like a treasure, is still a dream, a need for many Cubans.

It has to do with national pride, the respect for those who died defending it.

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Diaz / Cubasi Translation Staff
