

Cuba is Culture

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The Cuban Culture Day is celebrated this October 20th. And every time we talk about culture, we talk about the very essence of our nationality.

We cannot refer to nation without culture. And this statement may seem excessive, but the truth is culture defines nationality. Homeland is not constrained to geography either, as it has to do with our identity as well.

Culture, of course, is much more than artistic and literary expressions of a people. It is everything related to men's knowledge and behavior, their marks on Earth.

It is precisely culture what builds ties between men. It is the testimony of their knowledge and actions, and the space for their spiritual fulfillment. And spirit and thinking are the main features that have distinguished us from animals.

Cuba extols its culture the day Perucho Figueredo shared with the people of Bayamo the lyrics of our National Anthem.

Ten days earlier, Carlos Manuel de Cespedes began the first of our wars for Independence.

That revolution was, in first place, a cultural revolution. It was the result of the blossoming of Cuban culture.

It had been a while since we weren't Spanish or African from overseas; there was a sensibility, a peculiar way of assuming existence, an artistic heritage, a unity of customs that singled us as people. Towns don't admit oppressions. The Cry of Yara is the absolute consolidation of our nationality. In Bayamo, October 20th, the Revolution was given one of its symbols.

Many of the leaders of that uprising were scholarly men. Beginning with Céspedes.

Granting freedom to his slaves was also an act of great cultural implications: he acknowledged all men's full dignity, the rights countersigned by the great revolutions.

The Ten Years War landmarked the beginning of the deed of a nation: the same deed along all these years. Antonio Maceo, man of light, was the key player on the event that became a link between wars: the Baraguá Protest.

José Martí understood the historical continuity of our struggle that didn't stop in 1898, because freedom was incomplete.

In the end as Fidel Castro recognized: there has been a single revolution in Cuba: the one started by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes in La Demajagua. It is, it must be, an eternal revolution, expression of the purest desires of a nation.

Cuba has a great privilege: its most prominent politician was (is) also one of its greatest poets, the most universal of its intellectuals: José Martí.

Some have tried to separate those two paths. There are those who say Martí should have devoted more time to literary creation, instead of devoting himself to the organization of a war.

Asserting that is to ignore the ethic and humanist foundations of Martí's thinking.

Poet Martí and revolutionary Martí are, in short, only one Martí. The struggle of its people was an act of creation for him. Likewise, the Republic he dreamed of and whose attainment he couldn't see came true.

In addition to the lyric of writing, José Martí kept up a lyric of action: his death in Dos Ríos was an irreparable loss for the revolutionary cause, but became metaphor of heroism.

Martí was seed.

Cuban Culture Day is everyone's day, because we do not exist outside culture. The milestones of our culture and its artistic and popular expression have shaped the wonderful mosaic of our culture.

Cuba is its culture.

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