
Cuban Families in Pandemic

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Neither the United Nations - nor any other entity or person in the planet - could have imagined, when in 1993 they instituted May 15th as International Family Day, that in this 2020, the families of the world were living such a life-threatening moment in the history of mankind.

Neither here in Cuba could anyone guess. However, as in most of the world, families in Cuba today have an irreplaceable role during this fight against the Covid-19 where our own lives depend on it.

And there will be books, documentary films, stories... about how much we Cubans have done, indoors, to help in this battle against the pandemic. But as we wait for them to come, this world anniversary cannot go unnoticed without acknowledgement of how much Cuban families do today.

It's impossible to generalize because families are since long ago as diverse as reality itself; however, in each of the houses, each in its own way, we are all struggling, creating, and trusting.

"Families are at the core of intergenerational relations and they are our support during this crisis," thus summarized it the UN on the occasion of the commemoration of this day.

It's a very short statement to accommodate everything that is taking place in Cuban homes these days: they have become either school, a laboratory where you experiment with recipes and get creative replacing unattainable ingredients, a recreational space, and a room for psychological therapy.

They also made surgical mask as a family, how magically a portion of mincemeat turns into a bunch of croquettes, and the spare is shaped into a couple of hamburgers.

Of course, not everything is rosy and moves from harmony and growth in families. Although unpublished on front

covers, surely along the stress and anguish over the coronavirus, annoyances, intolerances, and also domestic violence have increased.

In our country, where homes are in fair or poor shapes, and the population density is significant in some municipalities, where there are problems with the supply of running water and also food, of course, cohabitation can be difficult, especially due to the necessary social isolation.

Life should not be the same in a two-bedroom home where only one couple lives in, as in another, also with two bedrooms, where three adults, a teenager and a child live together, with just one bathroom, and running water in the tap comes every three days.

For the record: there should not necessarily be more discrepancies in the case of the extended family; sometimes it happens the other way around.

Although generational differences and the need for privacy are often sources of conflict, the key to avoiding problems lies essentially with those who live in the house, not in the house itself.

And Cuban families today are showing, once again, flexibility, tolerance and intelligence: either to alert the one who came in and forgot to wash their hands, the other who is "feigning being exhausted" and spends days without helping with any house chores, but messes and eats a lot, the one who shout at grandma.

Sometimes humor saves the day, a funny remark; others, the right word, but spoken without that annoying or accusatory tone; sometimes it's even the humming of a song; the truth is that the resources we use, indoors, to cope with difficult moments are varied and original.

Above all, there's a reason that makes Cuban families strong: we love each other. Therefore, now we protect ourselves, we cover our faces with surgical masks and we save hugs and kisses for later.

They will find their recipients, we know that. But today, International Family Day, let's all give ourselves such heartfelt applause as the one we give away to health personnel every evening. We deserve it.

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