

Revolution, the dawn of dignity

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When I was six or seven years old, I had a beautiful but naïve idea. I liked to think that every morning as I got up to go to school, children everywhere around the world were doing the same thing. Back then, I never imagined that what was for me a normal, daily routine was only a utopia for millions of children, an unreachable dream. While I felt only the pleasant weight of books in my backpack, they endured hunger, misery, and desperation.

It didn't take long for me to understand why my reality was so different from theirs. The reason was that I had been born in the Cuba of Fidel, of the Revolution, where society's supreme principle was a commitment to the full dignity of humanity, as Martí taught us, where we had the rights we needed to fully develop as human beings, on both the individual and social planes, rights which were enjoyed by only the most comfortable minorities around the world.

This certainty with which we were born makes us unquestionably privileged, above all, because the Cuban people have never been passive or silent, sitting back and watching, but have rather played a decisive role in shaping our destiny. That is why when the Centenary Generation proposed an alternative, the people tipped the balance toward justice, and assumed as their own the arguments that

Fidel, with his visionary thinking, threw into the face of the tyrants during his historic self-defense statement, following the Moncada assault. This statement became the programmatic platform of the struggle, in which the most absolute of truths were defined: the rights denied the people must be respected and taken to their maximum expression. This was the revolutionaries' most brilliant maxim, which became after the triumph of the Revolution, and continues to be, the most basic reason for the existence of this project.

## **A HUMANIST REVOLUTION**

The clearly humanist character of the Cuban Revolution was apparent from the very beginning. The implementation of the Moncada program showed that those who had led the last stage of our struggles for independence would be true to every idea raised before the victory.

The radical laws put into effect during the first years of the 1960s opened the way for more ambitious goals, focused on equal opportunity and access to services for all, unprecedented in the history of Cuba. If anyone had any doubt, the massive mobilization that eliminated illiteracy showed that no obstacle would be too great to ensure that all Cubans would enjoy the rising sun of dignity.

The profound social transformations associated with the revolutionary process produced a state of law that evolved alongside the consolidation of socialism. The social ownership of the means of production allowed the equitable distribution of wealth and, therefore, the people's increasingly greater role in the construction of its own wellbeing. Fidel, and all those with him who led the Revolution's advance, were always convinced that the people were the only force capable of putting an end to what had been accomplished, and the only force capable of successfully defending it.

But once again, history has spoken, because human beings are never more free than when we enjoy all the rights that support this condition, and the humble - for whom and through whose efforts the project emerged - stayed the Revolution's course, and became the pillar that has today made it indestructible. Fidel many times spoke of this reciprocity, which has shown that no sacrifice in the name of social equality is in vain.

"The Revolution undertakes a task that ennobles, dignifies, human beings, and their best values. It is precisely the Revolution - the Revolution that seeks a just society, a better way of life, a more enlightened society - that holds patriotic values, and human values, highest. The right of human beings to acquire culture, go to school, to work, to live. The right of human beings to true happiness."

The extraordinary achievements of this island country in terms of human rights go far beyond having signed international treaties, or being a proud member of the

Council that works through the General Assembly promoting respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved in 1948.

Cuba has sought to make a reality of the elemental principles that dignify our species, although it would have been easier, at times, to renounce the struggle than to continue the battle. But it goes without saying that this people is not accustomed to taking the easy way out.

## **TODAY'S MONCADA**

Facing their Moncada today are younger generations who have never taken up arms, did not go up into the mountains, or risk their lives in the underground. Today's battle is unquestionably for the future, one that requires a vision which is renovated but maintains the essence of our social system, adapting to new times with the only weapon needed: a solid historical, moral, and ideological legacy.

May no one lose their sense of direction, no matter the 59 years that separate us from that January 1. What was done at that time and what we are constructing now have the same goal: making the Revolution sustainable, to safeguard of the most beautiful chapters in the history of humanism written around the world.

In times of "soft coups," of frustrated neoliberalism, and of inciting violence, being Cuban also means feeling safe under the protection of social stability, with dialogue as the basis for change, respect for peace as the foundation of establishing consensus, especially in terms of the collective construction of the society of our dreams.

After discussing the proposed new Constitution, and observing the extensive analysis conducted by our deputies in the National Assembly, I cannot help but feel that we are steadily moving toward a new era and a higher stage of social order, and that to do so, we must have a much more advanced Constitution to make this leap.

Even before the Cuban people have their word on the constitutional reform document, I have no doubt that human rights, which constitute a basic principle of the Cuban Revolution, will remain intact. And moreover, any change proposed in this area will be in the interest of expanding the range of rights to make our society increasing more inclusive.

On the basis of decisions we have made, Cuba is and will continue to be proof that the full dignity of human beings is not a utopian dream, but rather an achievable goal, although not a gift. It is won with sacrifice and effort, intransigence and unlimited dedication. There is enough evidence to support the assertion, evident since the generation of our founding fathers, and through that of those who would not let the dreams of Martí die in the year of his centenary, along

with those born after the triumph of the Revolution.

This feeling of being protected, sheltered by democracy and infinite respect for the human condition, must always accompany us, to never allow our people to be touched by the confusion and discouragement that sadly infects so much of Our America, and prevents the people from seeing clearly where justice lies.

Personally, I want the image I had as a child to stay with me. I want to continue dreaming of the possibility that all the world's children can go to school, with the only weight on their shoulders being the books that will make them more cultured, and therefore more free. But as we continue the battle to make this dream a reality, in my homeland, where this is the absolute truth, I never want to see it destroyed.

Our collective bet is on the present and the future of this project we have nurtured, but in our own way, without the damaging influence of those who are only interested in undermining the foundations of Cuban socialism, which we have constructed on the basis of our perspective and experiences. We are ready for loftier goals, because in every one of us what holds sway is Fidel's maxim, "the Revolution is the instrument of education, of culture, of sports, of human values, of spiritual values."

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