

Cuba in crisis: Romanticization or Resilience?

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I am pretty sure that what Cubans convey is something called resilience. But if we want to just change names, I embrace it from the very beginning of the text. I am going to “romanticize” the tragedy. I will do it that way because I have spent lots of hours without water and electricity. No youtuber or influencer told me so. I have also the duty to be grateful to those who have not slept so I can turn a electric light on; those who allow me to keep my rechargeable light at full capacity, and life itself since I have learned to give value to other sort of essential lights.

I already knew it, but these hard days proved me right: there are other types of darkness worse than those of the blackout: selfishness, pettiness, uprooting. Wishing, from a comfortable distance, hunger, misery and even civil war for the country where you were born? They are precisely the ones who speak pejoratively of our supposed tendency to "romanticize." Seeing us standing, sharing what we have, lighting up the nights with a smile, is not enough for them, so they try to

minimize this ability to reinvent ourselves by calling it "romanticization."

A friend on Facebook conceptualized it in very clear terms:

"Romanticization" is what some call the resilience of the Cuban people, the solidarity that always grows in difficult times and more so in the terribly difficult ones. Romanticization is, to some, wishing us the worst, wishing that SEN (National Electric System) would never resume its mission; running out of food, suffocating from the heat and being "eaten" by mosquitoes. That is what those who never raised their hands in protest while here in Cuba, and now portray themselves as the bravest 90 miles away.

"Well no! Once again: NO! They will have to try harder, maybe, if they dare, even with a pea!"

But I can play along, because I have plenty of stories to romanticize: my daughter's joy when we were walking through Centro Habana, far from our circuit, we saw the lights of the houses come on and we were filled in joy just like the neighbors (who are not our neighbors); her phrase when she arrived home after all morning charging our phones and lending the extensions and even the chargers so that some strangers could do it too: *"Mom, it broke my heart to have to leave before the lady who was using my brother's cable reached 100 percent."*

While someone who claimed to love me very much, in the midst of so much tragedy, only came up with the idea of ??accusing me of being an *"accomplice of the dictatorship"* and wishing me the worst punishments and hardships for the sin of trusting and not losing my calmness, a friend from the other side of the world wrote to me to find out how we were doing. At some point I reminded him that my team is the one that will remain here and he answered: *"You are on the winning team. Best times are just about to come for you."* Romantic contrasts that emerge in hard times.

What can I do if life becomes so "romanticizable" for me? Is it being grateful to the workers who left their wives, children, mothers at home, equally in blackout, to do everything to restore electricity to all of us, romanticizing? Is celebrating every bit of hope, encouraging each other, playing the latest songs on the speakers and setting up dominoes on

the corner, organizing sleepovers for our children or telling them about the blackouts in the 1990s, when we were young, romanticizing?

Well, may this altruistic and healing romanticization last forever, may it save us from hatred and irreversible darkness: that of the soul.

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff
