
Havana's First Birthday without Eusebio

By: Vladia Rubio / CubaSi
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Havana turns 501 years old today and the celebration has somewhat a low profile.

And it is no surprise. It has been a cheerless year. The pandemic has clouded the horizon. Today, our Havana wears face mask, something unbelievable last year's November 16th, where fireworks abounded.

Of course, those lights were not shining that bright because Eusebio was already sick by then. He is gone now.

This is going to be the first birthday of the city without Eusebio and consequently, it has a low profile. Today, white sheets are not hanging on Havana's balconies.

Anyway, as he would have wished and we deserve, the village of Saint Christopher of Havana is celebrating a new anniversary while walking on tiptoes in the face of this new normalcy, no hugs, but with no reason to lower the glance, now that a very-well-thought governmental strategy — provinces and the nation as a whole — has let us sorted out the obstacles imposed by Covid-19.

The work has been done so well that Havana did not report any case yesterday. Which does not mean, naturally, that the threat has vanished. But it does mean that Havanians, and most of Cubans in general, are learning and assuming tough lessons of avoiding hugs, kisses, and social-distancing, washing our hands, wearing face masks and so on.

We got used to — in a time of hard fight against coronavirus, see the streets empty, with no passers-by or transportation — to hear the silence only interrupted by the siren of an ambulance.

We have seen the Havana's seafront yawning alone, bored, while there are endless lines to buy food and the blockade imposed by the US tightens.

Havanians and the people of Cuba, familiar with the situation, familiar with handshakes, the good morning and

goodbye kisses, learned by heart to remain self-isolated and see how precautions are taken if someone sneezes nearby.

Nonetheless, there are reasons to celebrate and the city does it. In fact, the program of activities started few days ago at the Minor Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, where the concert "*Eusebio Leal in memoriam*" and the opening of the Carmen Montilla art gallery took place — the latter in front of the Basilica — with the exhibition of Silvia Rodríguez Rivero's "*Complicidades*," with the Cuban President in attendance.

The city celebrates its 501st anniversary and does it by boosting social and production programs, including the execution of construction works; namely, the remodeling of the Julio Díaz González's National Rehabilitation Hospital, in Fontanar neighborhood, Boyeros municipality.

The Havana's deputy governor, Yanet Hernández Pérez, briefed the Cuban Agency News about a series of social projects to be inaugurated next Sunday and Monday, which include the street lighting of the Parque Central Hotel and Galiano Avenue, as well as the reopening of the Diablo Tun Tun piano-bar, Miramar's *Casa de la Música*.

Hernández Pérez also referred to actions to beautify, clean up and order the city with a plan of activities including painting, pothole repairing, lighting, signaling, as well as the restoration of parks and bus stops.

"When we studied the actions, we took into consideration the restoration and recovery works carried out in the 500th anniversary festivities, not to mention the perspective of new projects by different city entities and agencies," noted the deputy governor, who also mentioned the premiere — tonight — of a documentary dedicated to the City Historian at the Martí Theater.

But along with official festivities, speeches and inaugurations, one of the best ways to celebrate the city anniversary will be to remain "*Leales a Leal* (Loyals to Leal)," as reads the heart-felt communicational campaign handled by the Office of the City Historian, devoted to continue Eusebio's legacy.

Give priority to beauty, decency, kindness, solidarity with others, as Eusebio always did, are probably one of the best ways to pay tribute to Havana and its everlasting Historian, who stated "I want nothing for myself. I am not even longing for that thing called posterity; I want nothing. I just want to have been useful."

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff
