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**One Nation, one Culture**

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20/10/2021



Culture is not a decoration. Culture is not an accessory, or a complement. Culture is not that superficial structural framework. Without culture, simply, there is no nation. And that was precisely a vital postulated made by the most universal of all Cubans, José Martí. He voiced he had two nations: Cuba, and the night. Cuba, the physical space, stone upon stone. But also the symbolic universe entailed by such realization. The night stands for poetry, art, the soul of the nation. Martí embraced two homelands; which turned to be just one, by the way.

It was such a privilege for this country: its most lucid politician is also one of its greatest poets. José Martí represents that wonderful symbiosis from which the Homeland concept sprouted. We could not talk about freedom without our own culture, different to those of other countries. Some argue that the main reasons behind the 1868 uprising in Cuba had to do with economic issues. Absolutely not, that was primarily a cultural Revolution. The assertion of a pretty much consolidated identity.

Many of our first heroes were men of culture. And some were even artists. And this art devoted itself to the needs of the Revolution since its very early days. It bears significance that October 20th was named the Day of Cuban Culture, honoring that first time the Bayamese people sang the letters of the National Anthem. The unredeemed city bore witness of the most beautiful metaphor of Cuban poetry, which was attempted —and somehow they succeeded in doing so— leading figures of the Cuban art and literature: that of a nation united by bonds stronger than that of kinship or situational interest. Culture is that vitality.

Cuba is now facing one of its greatest challenges. There are several windmills. There is an exacerbating pressure on us. The rule of the circumstances is very challenging. But we must not ignore one idea: that of Cuba being the

result of only one Revolution. And it must be understood as a Revolution of ideals. A permanent Revolution, like the culture from which it feedbacks. This culture treasures many of the keys to our future.

Fidel Castro stated it once: culture is the first thing that must be saved. Not everyone understood the importance of that phrase back then. But today, it is leading the way.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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