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**Panama: Honoris Causa to Raul Castro: Symbol of Friendship**

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Cuban First Vice President Miguel Diaz-Canel, said today that the title of Doctor Honoris Causa conferred to Cuban President Raul Castro is a symbol of friendship and historical similarities between the peoples of Cuba and Panama.

The highest honorary academic recognition awarded by the University of Panama was unanimously awarded to the Cuban leader because of the international political stance exemplary to promote dialogue and understanding between various currents of the continent. In addition, the accepted policy of the Cuban government in the creation of forums for consultation as Petrocaribe, ALBA and Caricom, through which the Caribbean nation promotes solidarity programs aimed at improving the education and health of the people, says the document..

In a speech, Diaz-Canel said it is an honor to receive such a distinction at the hands of the highest educational institution in this country brother, linked to the revolutionary struggles for sovereignty and the return of the Canal Zone.

A work in which a hundred Cubans, most of them members of the Liberation Army, such as the Bronze Titan Antonio Maceo and his brother Jose, leading figures in the struggle for the independence of Cuba, he said.

He further highlighted the contribution of Dr. Carlos J. Finlay, whose studies and health campaigns helped eradicate yellow fever in Cuba and Panama, thus avoiding decimate the workforce that built the interoceanic route.

Diaz-Canel recalled how the people, youth and the revolution in his country supported the heroic struggle for the return of the Canal, led by General Omar Torrijos, whom the Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, considered a symbol of continental unity and a consistent, loyal and worthy friend.

He said that for Cubans this distinctive (University of Panama) keeps a historical symbolism, because it was an active witness of the battle to arrest those responsible for the assassination attempt against President Fidel Castro

during the Ibero-American Summit developed here in November 2000 .

This university has been the scene of important facts and events associated with the emancipation of the continent, but also rostrum of the struggle of the Panamanian people for their sovereignty, said Díaz-Canel.

For his part, the Rector of the University of Panama, Gustavo Garcia Paredes, said that after the revolutionary triumph of January 1, 1959 on the island, people began to think otherwise, while cleared the way for the start national liberation process in the region.

The academic said President Raul Castro was able to restore relations with the United States without sacrificing the dignity and the principles of the Revolution.

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