

[Thank you, Fidel, for being, above all, human](#)



Over the years, many have wondered about the source of the leader of the Cuban Revolution's inexhaustible energy. How was this exceptional man able to function without rest, with his thoughts perennially directed toward the wellbeing of his people, toward the possibility of a better world with a place for everyone, with rights and opportunities for all?

The answer to this question does not lie in his physical stature or athletic passion, not even in his ability to train his thinking and devour every chapter of the homeland's history. There was something much more powerful, something that led him to devote himself entirely to humanity, that gave him a vocation he could not renounce, of doing everything he could to transform and create, as the most sacred duty of a man. What made Fidel a natural leader, with exemplary humility and disinterest, the architect of this enduring work, was the greatest gift Martí left him and his generation: human sensibility.

Talent and willpower do not flourish, dreams do not take hold, nor are challenges surmountable, if the heart is not touched. One must feel, identify with just causes, and become part of them, if the destiny of humanity is to truly move in a positive direction. No one who does not feel the pain of others, who cannot put themselves in the place of the homeless, no one unwilling to take action, remaining passive and believing that nothing will ever change, no such person will leave much of a legacy in history.

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Yes, the boy from Birán, beginning at a very young age, learned respect, the value of every human being, that neither social class or the color of one's skin define a person, and that, on the contrary, it is our values that define who we are.

But, in the Cuba of his childhood, adolescence and youth, these characteristics made a huge difference. Poverty denied the most elemental human rights; humble origins meant discrimination and disadvantage; the lack of resources implied little or no ability to meet basic needs.

These were the reasons that led Fidel to assault the Moncada's walls, that put him on the path of no return - of victory or death - to do justice for Martí, for the people, for Cuba. If anyone ever doubted the determination he felt, his self-defense statement is the clearest explanation of the reasons he and his brothers went to such extremes and were absolutely sure that their act of incalculable dimensions would serve as a call to rebellion that could no longer be silenced.

There were no sugar-coated phrases or arguments used manipulatively by the orator, only harsh realities, truths laid bare, thrown into the face of the dictatorship with dignity. The truths of a people with no right to the land, to health or education, who could not dream of a decent home, or regular work. From this moment on,

Fidel Castro became much more than his own lawyer, much more than the attorney of those who chose armed struggle with him, but rather the advocate of the humble and abandoned, to whom history would later give the opportunity to vindicate themselves.

That young man who could have chosen the sizable income of a law firm or the comfortable life of a landowner, was not born to turn his back on the world around him. He learned to take a critical view, to develop his opinions, to construct solid arguments. He chose duty and devoted his existence to this duty, without ever losing his will to live and feel as his people lived and felt.

These were the values that also won him the respect of his comrades, since his keen awareness of others was always evident, his unequalled consideration for every single revolutionary in the Sierra Maestra or on the plains. He always listened to and defended women, opening doors to women who, on their own merits, assumed a leading role in every one of the stages of the revolutionary process. He respected his enemies, and on more than a few occasions during the armed struggle, gave them lessons in civics and fairness.

He felt the pain of farmworkers, and gave campesinos title to the land they had always worked but never aspired to own; he saw the frustration and abandon in the eyes of the illiterate, and launched the literacy campaign. He rejected exploitation and founded a country based on honest, dignified work, in which workers were always heard and represented. This was the Fidel who moved forward with the nationalization of industry, as an absolute necessity to end the bleeding of Cuba by the North; who before the world declared the socialist character of the Cuban Revolution, thus radicalizing the position in defense of the majority's wellbeing taken by the society being constructed.

He was the Commander in Chief of the truth, of the highest standards of transparency. He climbed on a tank in Girón because he knew that the militia was engaged in hand to hand combat with the enemy and he needed to be there. No one could stop him.

No one could stop him when the fury of Hurricane Flora was ravaging the island, risking his own life to personally direct the rescue operations to save his people, a people with absolute confidence in him. How much love for his people this immense man felt, visiting one hospital room after another when the hemorrhagic dengue epidemic was taking lives.

He shared the pain of Cuban families mourning the loss of their loved ones in cruel terrorist attacks, conveying in fiery language, on every one of these difficult moments, the confidence and certainty that

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every life cut short was one more reason to hold onto, ever more tightly, the self-determination we as a people had won to chart our own path, and use every national or international tribune available to unmask those who, presenting themselves as our saviors, sought to hide their hate for any country intent upon ending centuries of subjugation.

We saw him embrace the children of Chernobyl, opening our doors to give them the opportunity to recover their health, their dreams and smiles, after the terrible nuclear accident.

Fidel taught us that a people cannot live only for itself, that a country is only truly great when it is capable of giving of itself to the world, that is, to humanity. He showed us that solidarity is an unescapable principle for those who consider themselves revolutionaries. Under this principle, we contributed to ending apartheid in Africa, and travel the earth in white lab coats bearing hope after natural disasters, providing assistance free of charge to millions with no access to for-profit healthcare systems, confronting diseases like Ebola and the horrendous epidemic caused by the new coronavirus.

History and daily life gave this impetuous young man maturity, allowing him to understand how to defend Martí, how Cuba was obliged to become a beacon for all of America. Thus the continent's progressive leaders have always enjoyed the support of our island and timely condemnation of imperialist crimes, persecution, coups, and constant interference in the internal affairs of sovereign nations.

We have faced aggressions of all kinds: economic, political and mediatic. All have failed before the moral strength of this nation, with Fidel's name tattooed on its chest, opting for continuity without hesitation, regardless of his death, irreversibly united having also learned from him that dividing a people is the easiest way to defeat them.

Thus August is, and will always be, the month of Fidel's birthday, the month in which we will celebrate his life no matter how many years pass, because his physical disappearance cannot erase such a prodigious existence, with a legacy that transcends all time, that transcends flesh and bones.

The world would be a very different place, if the power-hungry could embrace even a bit of his visionary thought. We would be stronger today, more capable of facing situations that have universal impact, beyond our political, ideological and systematic differences, and we would think more about saving the human race, a species which, as Fidel warned, is in danger of extinction.

Although we clearly cannot expect some minds to change - as long as capital dominates the destinies of millions around the world, using them as raw material in its implacable machinery - we can do our part. And yes, we do so in Fidel's honor, in the name of all those who gave their lives for ours.

Congratulations, Comandante en Jefe, not only for another year of your infinite life, but for being, above all, human. For having kept your feet firmly on the ground, your eyes on the people, and your heart beating for the common good.

Here we are, standing tall, of our own free will, because this people -Fidel's people - never surrenders; because there are no doubts about the path taken; because we believe a better world is possible and we will not forego our part in making it happen.

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