
[Eusebio Leal Spengler: One of the most real and useful Cubans of our times](#)



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I can assure you that on few occasions have I felt as sad as I did this Friday (July 31). Despite this, it is always a privilege to talk about Eusebio.

It is difficult, because of the variety of issues, richness, originality, daring, rigor and greatness of Eusebio is such that I cannot help but confess that these words are no more than a very limited approximation of one of the greatest Cubans of all time.

In few people like Eusebio Leal Spengler have I found the harmonious way in which so many different components of knowing, feeling, loving and thinking about Cuba are articulated.

I could tell you that his work is great; however, I don't think it would be original if I said that he has received the investiture of Doctor Honoris Causa and Professor of Merit from 20 national and foreign universities; and he has given masterly and academic lectures in more than 74 universities in no less than 45 countries, placing Cuba's scientific and cultural image in the most egregious academic spaces in various parts of the world. In turn, he has received high decorations from at least 29 nations.

However, these titles and decorations do not express the essence of the man who was born on a plot of land in Havana, who earned his living as a pharmacy messenger and who came to have an unusual mastery of culture before graduating from a university.

His essence was that of a man of the people who humbly wore the clothes of a worker, who walked around Havana talking to each of the humble people who approached him and who dreamed of rebuilding Havana to give the present the extraordinary dimensions of our history. He is simply a great man of the people.

He has received the most important titles, those that do not come in scrolls, that are not granted by academics, but those that he loves and recognizes the most, which are those granted by a multitude of people impressed and grateful.

It is fuller than pupils, broad and sharp minds and sensitive and noble hearts in the face of the exorbitant wealth of urban and human rescue from the footprint of men, who built the image of Havana or of other Cuban cities and towns that we enjoy today.

The work of Eusebio, first thought out, then organized, and later spiritually and culturally materialized, which we can all observe when we make a pilgrimage to Cuba and its capital, is already registered as part of the heritage of humanity. It has been an iron will, a dedicated and accurate intelligence, and a deep knowledge that has allowed this man to domesticate the past and turn it into a jewel of the present.

His direction, in charge of the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana, includes the restoration and completion of 80 works of cultural heritage, 14 hotels, which recall spaces and moments of Cuban culture in different times gathered in a whole by the present that contemplates, a hundred tourist facilities and 171 social works, and including 3,092 homes.

All this over a period of ten years, and I do not include here what he has done in the last five years. When referring to his work, he always highlights, with humility and gratitude, what Fidel's dialogues and support meant for his achievements.

Eusebio Leal is one of the most fruitful writers of our time. The number of his works is surprising. We are talking about 3,531 records, which covers up to 2010. I am making this comment because there are still ten years of intellectual production left in the set we have mentioned.

The collection is extremely varied: articles, pamphlets, printed speeches and books. They all respond to knowledge acquired in those incessant searches, which seem to have left no time for rest or, perhaps

more appropriately, for the enjoyment of time to grow inside to help others find ways to identify themselves and their own culture.

If you look closely, there is no flabby word, no lost word, no improperly placed in their oratory and writing.

Those who look at his work in words will have no choice but to acknowledge that, step by step, they discover and identify with the proposals of Eusebio, of Dr. Leal, because they contain discoveries found in countless material and spiritual documents.

We can see the tireless investigation and permanent rescue that sustains Eusebio's creative work. Some titles, I am already talking about books, constitute an essential legacy of an era, already apparently distant, but which express a world of yesterday that explains, in a certain way, the world of today.

These are splendid memories that are already part of our history. Books such as *Fiñes*, *Funded Hope*, *Not to Forget*, *Legacy and Memory*, and *The lost Diary of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes*, are undeniable contributions, rigorously collected and thought out, not for a dead history, but for the living thought of the present and future creativity of our country.

Oratory, as a genre, constitutes one of the most difficult, because it combines knowledge of a subject, the elegance of discourse, the beauty of language, the harmonious logic of content, the poetry that delights and the dialectics that it teaches.

Like few others in our recent history, Eusebio Leal has developed oratory in an extraordinary and very personal way. He has brought to the Academy and the tribune the art of saying.

I remember the moment when I met him with a wheelbarrow in hand and his exclusive way of dressing in grey work clothes. Those archaeological and historical searches led many, mockingly, to think that those dreams of reconstruction were like those of Calderón de la Barca. (A Spanish 17th-century poet)

Today it may seem that everything was easy and in my opinion, it was very difficult to pierce a raw reality with the fine point of will, ingenuity, and knowledge.

Listening to him, the interlocutor perceives that beyond what the Academy teaches, there is the incessant search of a self-taught person who enjoys crossing the limits of the disciplines.

Perhaps, as he has called himself, he has been a child of his time, of this time of recklessness, which the future will judge with the cold logic that distance grants; but this is a privilege not of the gods, but of men.

I also remember now when I entered a university classroom, I don't know how many years ago, I found him sitting as a student in the History department. He needed the degree that is so much in demand, but his knowledge was already greater than that of a graduate.

Here he looked for the methods, the systematizations, the theories that the academy discusses, and promotes. The young professor enjoyed and learned from the pleasant dialogue with the wise historian without a degree.

The Habanero, knew how to love his city and work for the rescue and prevalence of his material and spiritual values. But when we observe his work in this city as a whole, we can also understand the breadth of his vision. Museums, libraries, schools, homes, and colleges gave the project a warmth that brought back to life the city that only made sense as the habitat of our human space.

Recalling a phrase of José de la Luz y Caballero, pronounced in 1832, when referring to Bishop Espada, I would like to say that Eusebio "makes me taste the noble pride that the heart that beats in me is

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Havana". And that "habanidad de habanidades" is nothing other than the fact that Cuba also beats with the habanero heart and the whole world contributed to the richness of its streets.

He is faithful to his surname, loyal to his ideas and principles, Spengler, which the writer translates on a whim as splendid in his dedication to Cuba, to its Revolution and to the patriotic legacy of all the builders, of this, as the title of one of his books: his always Loved Homeland.

As I walk the streets of our Havana, as well as those of many other Cuban cities, I will continue to feel Eusebio's presence and hear his firm and charming voice. You do not leave, you stay, in the souls of those we love, create, and believe in those ethical values that you also helped to sow.

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