

## [Fidel: culture and emancipation](#)



For Fidel, a Revolution could not limit to the change of the material living conditions of the population. Even if there is an obvious improvement of the majority's situation, it would never be complete or lasting if it is not a cultural revolution, too. It has to change both the surroundings and the people themselves. For that reason, he said that a Revolution was the child of culture and ideas when he visited the Central University of Venezuela with Chavez.

One must stop to think about the cultural significance of the proclamation of the Socialist character of the Revolution on April 16, 1961 on the eve of the invasion to the Bay of Pigs. Only two years, three months and 15 days have passed since the triumph of the Revolution on January 1st, 1959. Together with radical transformations of all kinds for the benefit of the people, a massive renovation in culture and thinking had taken place at an accelerated pace. It was key for the ideas and principles associated to national pride, anti-imperialism, social justice and true democracy to become hegemonic.

After 50 years of suffering the constant influence of the United States under the neocolonial model, Fidel was able to proclaim that Cuba has made a socialist revolution of the humble, with the humble and for the humble in the face of the U.S. empire. It is evident that the budding revolutionary process have given major steps in such a short time to gain its cultural hegemony.

Despise the Bay of Pigs and other many aggressions (terrorist acts, murders of teachers and farmers,

the actions of counterrevolutionary bands), 1961 was key for education and culture. The Literacy Campaign, was completed that year; the National School of Art Instructors was created; Fidel met for three long days with representatives of the intellectual sector and gave that memorable speech that set the foundations for the cultural policy of the Revolution; the First Congress of Artists and Writers was held; the National Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba (UNEAC) was created.

In 1988, the Commander raised the flag of culture and spirituality in the Fourth Congress of the UNEAC as an essential element in the effort to provide a better life to the people. "Standard of living," said Fidel, "it's not only the tons of material things; it also needs several tons of spiritual things." For him, culture was more than just something for decoration. On the contrary, it was a transcendental emancipating force, that could decisively contribute to the 'human betterment' Marti believed in firmly.

On November 20, 1993, at the most critical point of the economic crisis that followed the collapse of the Socialist Bloc in the 1990s, Fidel spoke in the Fifth Congress of the UNEAC. Several delegates have been talking worryingly about the resurface among some of the artists and writers, of new forms of cultural colonialism, of trends that despise our roots and send misleading signals to foreign visitors and to young Cuban people eager to live fake 'modern' experiences. Amid that debate, Fidel uttered the phrase that surprised all those attending: "culture is the first thing we must save."

In a moment of deprivation, when there was a shortage of so many essentials, Fidel put culture first. Of course, he was not only speaking of the arts and literature. He was talking of a wider, deeper notion that has to do with the things that define Cuba as a nation, with what Fernando Ortiz believed when he said that culture is homeland.

There was a time when he made strong emphasis in the promotion of general comprehensive culture: a concept that encompasses historic, political, ideological, economic and scientific knowledge and, at the same time, the ability to understand and appreciate the most complex artistic and literary expressions.

This cultivated and free human being who stands at the center of Marti and Fidel's utopia must be prepared to thoroughly understand the national and international reality and to decipher and to avoid the traps of the mechanism of cultural and information domination of the empire and the enemies of the Revolution. They could neither be dazzled nor fooled.

In his spine-chilling speech on November 17, 2005, Fidel wonders, for example, how can illiterate people know if the International Monetary Fund is good or bad, or that the world is being ceaselessly subjugated and pillaged by this system. They simply don't know.

He likewise analyzes the subtle way publicity create conditioned responses in the human beings and take away their ability to think.

In the face of all this seduction and its toxic effects, culture is the best antidote.

The Commander explained that when it is said that "Communism is bad," all illiterate people, all the poor people and all the exploited people repeat by reflex "Socialism is bad, Communism is bad." The U.S. empire says "Cuba is bad."

All this ignorance and manipulation gives birth to a pathetic creature: the right-wing poor, the person that votes for their exploiters and what is worse, admire them.

When the Commander spoke in the UNEAC of globalization and culture. He called it the most powerful domination tool of imperialism. In that conflict, he said, everything is at stake: the national identity, the homeland, social justice and the Revolution.

On November 17, 2005, Fidel said he dreamed of the Cuba of the future, not as a consumption society, but as a society of knowledge, of culture, of the most extraordinary human development the human

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being has ever thought. A society with an exceptional full freedom

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