

On July 26, Cuba has a lot to Be Proud Of

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Photo: Bill Hackwell

Today marks the 66th anniversary of the simultaneous assaults on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba and the military garrison in Bayamo led by Fidel Castro and less than 200 combatants in what is known as the impossible storming of the heavens against the brutal U.S. puppet dictator Fulgencio Bautista, who in the 7 years before the Revolution, carried out a reign of misery and poverty punctuated by torturing and executing 20,000 Cubans.

The attacks marked a new stage of Cuba's quest for independence and sovereignty

that is deeply ingrained in all Cubans. Fidel, however, made it clear that July 26 was not the beginning of the revolution; that was born in 1868 when Manuel Cespedes freed his slaves marking the beginning of the Wars of Independence against Spain. Heroic Moncada, which today serves as a middle school, was a dramatic reawakening of a flame that the Imperial powers could never extinguish.

For the Cuban people July 26 is a day of great pride for all the gains they have made through determination and sacrifice against all the nonstop attacks and a unilateral blockade by the United States that has remained in place throughout the last 12 presidents.

The ideals and principles of July 26 remain vibrant in Cuba and can be seen in the legacy of a people whose example has raised the bar of human conduct between each other and nations too. While insistent and determined in maintaining their sovereignty Cuba is the first to make and promote respectful agreements based on what is mutually beneficial with other nations while constantly promoting world peace as a goal.

Cuba opens its arms to the world not to profit off it but to make it a better place. Fidel Castro was the first world leader to sound an alarm about the global climate crisis back in the 1980's. When it comes to health and education Cuba is not just interested in that for their own country but for others too. Cuba is rightfully proud to export teachers to help combat illiteracy and has medical brigades working in 66 developing countries.

Just this past week Cuba's Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) graduated another 500 doctors from 84 countries most of whom received full scholarships. Brought into existence in 1999 by the Cuban government, ELAM has graduated nearly 30,000 doctors from 115 countries in those 20 years including 170 from the United States, whose only cost was a moral one to go back and work in a community of need. This is not a token public relations program but one that has become the

largest medical school in the world and a project that the Cuban people have given to the world.

The World Health Organization has reported that Cuba has 9 doctors per thousand inhabitants where the United States has 2.3 doctors per thousand. And the Cuban Ministry of Health has just announced that Cuba, a country of 11 million, has over 2,000 of its citizens who are right now over 100 years old. This is not a fluke but rather the priority of a society that never discards people even after they are no longer productive, or are living with a disability. All Cubans at all levels and capacity have access to health, education, culture, sports etc. to keep them fully engaged their entire life.

A Save Our Children report has ranked Cuba as the safest country in Latin America to be a child or adolescent (not to mention visit). And UNICEF has declared that Cuba, despite the blockade, has no malnutrition. Cuba has eliminated Malaria through its preventative health model, Cuba has eliminated mother to child HIV transmission, Cuba has invented a new drug that arrests lung cancer, Cuba's infant mortality rate per 1000 is 4, Cuba's life expectancy is close to 80, social indicators better than many developed countries including the US; and on and on.

So let's ask the question once again, why is it there is so much sustained hatred coming from consecutive administrations? Well, it's because Cuba provides an inconvenient good example of what collective striving for a better world looks like. An example that was catapulted onto the world stage with the attack on the Moncada Barracks, July 26, 1953.

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