

# Cuba's parallel reality in Paris

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Mijaín López. Photo: Victor Villalba Gutiérrez

Miserable is a society that imposes repudiatory practices of inquisition and falsehood. Miserable are those who deny Cuba the joy of its nine Olympic medals, the same number won by Denmark, a country without a U.S. blockade and without

the press and the media reproaching its performance in Paris.

The publicity strategy to turn every success of Cuba into a failure has an interesting peculiarity: it operates by continuous streaks, by brief and intense periods in which a thematic axis is installed. From the alleged arrival in Caracas of 32 flights from Havana to intervene in the Venezuelan elections, the non-existent Chinese military bases in Cuban territory, the presence of Russian submarines with nuclear weapons in Havana Bay that did not actually take place, the alleged failure of Cuba in the Paris Olympics, everything is aimed at producing an “agenda”.

The vertigo with which the publicity events follow one after the other suggests that none of them reaches a minimum of power in public opinion: their objective is not essentially to modify opinions, but the installation of a parallel reality, the agitation of prejudices, the persistence of hatred as an excluding source of legitimacy of a government that leads the country in its worst economic crisis while under permanent siege.

The last cry of this fashion, however, seems to be crossing a barrier and beginning the transition to a new period, flatly denying reality, ignoring the evidence of facts that have been corroborated by millions of spectators attending the Olympic Games. Cuba was not only the Latin American country with the highest number of medals won, surpassed only by Brazil, but also the Cuban athlete who for the first time in history won five consecutive medals at the Olympics in the same sport, Mijaín López.

Neither Bolt nor Phelps nor Lewis nor other sport legends achieved what Mijaín did. He made his debut in Athens 2004 and from Beijing 2008 to Paris 2024 he took the gold medals in Greco-Roman wrestling, a discipline that was practiced in the classical world before the birth of Jesus Christ and in which since the establishment of the Olympic Games no other gladiator held the scepter for so many years. Until Mijaín appeared, a compendium of culture and the comings and goings of national history: black with a Russian name, known throughout Cuba as the *Giant of*

*Herradura*, because he is 1.93 meters tall, weighs 130 kilograms and was born in a small town of that name with barely 10,000 inhabitants, which did not exist on the map until American settlers discovered its fertile lands and settled there at the beginning of the 20th century.

His family descends from Africans who worked all their lives for the rich whites of that area until they became literate with the 1959 revolution and, thanks to it and to the plans to extend sports to every town in the country, while his father, Bartolo, tilled the land, Mijaín and his two brothers won medals in national and international boxing and Greco-Roman wrestling championships.

And this Cuban athlete was selected to represent the athletes of the Americas at the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games in Paris.



Cubans celebrate the return of their Olympic delegation. Photo: Victor Villalba Gutiérrez

But with this attitude of contempt for others, of cult of violence that takes pleasure

in the suffering of others, not a few media and agencies, in addition to the pack of cyberspace, have denied the medal to Mijaín and the other Cuban Olympic athletes. With indignation we read everywhere the “expected failure”, “worst Olympics for Cuba”, “decline”, “sports crisis”, “shipwreck” and other nonsense, and as a footnote, insignificant, the results that most of the nations of this planet would have liked to have.

The French philosopher and urbanist Paulo Virilio anticipated in the book *Cibermundo, la política de lo peor* (1997), a long interview with his compatriot Philippe Petit, that “the day will come when virtual reality will defeat the real world.... One's own body will cease to exist in favor of the spectral body, and one's own world in favor of a virtual world”. For saying these things, which are our daily bread, Virilio was accused 30 years ago of being an apocalyptic.

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