

An Ethical Path for Cuban Civil Society

As part of the independent Cuban civil society, we believe that every moral choice is a strictly non-transferable decision, absent from all imposition. We also recognize that, because of its relational character, citizens seek to socialize and get incorporated into communities that have received an established *humus* solidified with values and virtues known as community *ethos*, whether family, group, national or international. By agreeing to an ethical path, we reject a dogmatic moral, prohibitive in itself, of frivolity and debauchery. We opt for dialogical ethics against an authoritarian moral, ethics that intrinsically link freedom and responsibility. We propose to educate ourselves to assume, in our principles and in our attitudes, the following ethical path, rooted in the best of our Cuban heritage:

1. We acknowledge that a human being is the central character of his own story. Thus, the person must be the beginning, the middle and the end of any institution or historical process. Human beings are not the means, nor can they be an object in the hands of others, therefore they should not be manipulated for scientific, social, political or economic experiments. We believe that all human beings are equal before the law and diverse in their abilities and personal choices.
2. We must encourage consistency between what we believe, what we say and what we do. Any personal, civic and political engagement must be inextricably supported by ethical behavior without which all individual or community action loses value and meaning.
3. Cuba, that is, the nation known as the community of all its citizens on the Island and in the Diaspora, its wellbeing, its freedom, its progress and common good, is the inspiration and the end of all civic and political action, banishing spurious interests. We consider that the meaning and purpose of our ethical commitment to Cuba is to build a peaceful, fruitful and prosperous coexistence in our country, rather than a simple coexistence with those who are different or adversarial.
4. We opt for peaceful methods and for seeking nonviolent solutions to both national and international conflicts and our interpersonal relationships. We

opt for the absolute respect for human life and declare ourselves against all violence and the death penalty.

5. The discrepancy of opinions and political debate should leave no room for personal or group attacks, insults or denigrating exclusions, or defamation.
6. We believe that property, knowledge, and power are to serve and that without agile and honest institutions there is no possible governance. We believe that without civil sovereignty there is no progress, articulation, or primacy of the governance of civil society as a valid participant. Corruption, lies and excessive material interest are the main enemies of civility in the world today, so, as part of the independent Cuban civil society, we reject these evils and opt for transparency, favor truth and the primacy of spiritual values.
7. We seek a modicum of ethics agreed to through a consensus building process. We differentiate the processes of dialogue and negotiation. Therefore, we believe that an ethical minimum must surface from a dialogue leading to consensus agreements, while specific covenants should surface from negotiations, which must be observed and followed by the parties.
8. A civic ethic of minimums agreed to by consensus is an achievement of pluralist humanity. Its basis is the full and utmost dignity of the human person, achieved through acknowledgment, education and defense of all rights for everyone, proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights resolved by the U.N. in 1948, which we fully embrace as our inspiration and ethics program.
9. We adhere to the three fundamental values summarized by the best aspirations of humanity: freedom, equality, fraternity and their corresponding rights. First generation rights extol the value of freedom, they are civil and political rights. Second generation rights commend the value of equality, they are economic, social and cultural rights. Third generation rights endorse the value of universal brotherhood as ecological rights for a healthy environmental balance and the right to a peaceful world.
10. Consequently, we wish to opt for inclusion and democratic participation; moral authority, not authoritarianism; proposals, not prescriptions; what ideas are expressed, rather than who speaks them; programs and not just leaders. Unity in diversity, not uniformity. Rational convictions, not fanaticism. The decriminalization of differences, not intolerance. Decentralization and subsidiarity should replace centralism and

- totalitarianism. Ethics must take precedence over technique and science. Commitment must win over indifference. We opt for the ethics of politics and economics, of national coexistence and of international relations.
11. This ethical commitment should translate into attitudes and proactive actions to heal the anthropological damage and overcome civic and political illiteracy with the systematic labor of citizen empowerment. Since we reject any moral imposition, we believe that education is the only valid way. So we direct our efforts towards an education liberating of ourselves and of all alienation, in order to be able to contribute to the ethical and civic education of all Cuban people, inspired by Human Rights and their corresponding Civic Duties.
 12. Civic and political activists or intellectuals should not be society's moralizers. Being chosen to represent does not confer moral authority, but political commitment, subject to scrutiny and public willpower. We believe in representation as a service to society. This representation must be the product of popular choice, limited by time and succession. Civic ethics is forged by each person, and it is the community's responsibility to establish, educate, promote and safeguard the *humus* of the ethics of the nation open to the world, based on the great values of truth and freedom, justice and love.

By adopting this ethical pathway, we want to identify its roots in the ethics of our founding fathers. The teaching of the Apostle José Martí reminds us that: "For love we see, with love we see, it is love that sees." We believe in civic friendship and in the reconciliation where that righteousness should flow, which Maestro José de la Luz y Caballero called the "sun of the moral world." Finally, we share Father Félix Varela's philosophy that taught us that, "There is no Motherland without virtue or virtue without piety".

Havana, 25 February 2015

162nd anniversary of the death of Father Félix Varela