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The Revolutionary Life of Fidel Castro

By Gloria La Riva
August 16, 2016



This August 13, Fidel Castro Ruz, leader of the Cuban Revolution and international inspiration for people struggling for a better world, turned 90. His age alone is a remarkable achievement, considering more than 630 documented assassination attempts on his life by the CIA and other nefarious agencies.

Despite the enormous historical impact that Fidel Castro has had in Cuba and Latin America for more than 55 years, it is astounding that his voice has never been heard nor his words widely known by the people of the United States.

But Fidel's legendary life of revolution is certainly noted elsewhere. All this year in Cuba, and around the world as his birthday approaches, there are countless activities to celebrate his life.

It is a shame that Fidel Castro's life and his audacity in defeating a bloody dictatorship to then build socialism, is hardly known by the American people. They would find a man of enormous courage and humanity who delivered his country from a neo-colonial status to a sovereign country with a major imprint on the world stage.

They would learn that Fidel Castro has expressed admiration for the American people, despite U.S. government policy that has tried to overthrow the revolution and done so much harm.

Think about this. In March of this year, President Barack Obama in Havana spoke on Cuban national television, uncensored on evening prime time, when undoubtedly millions of people watched him, curious to know if and how U.S. policy would change toward Cuba. Uncensored.

But how many people ever heard Fidel Castro — or Raúl Castro — over the airwaves in the U.S. or in a daily newspaper? To ask is to answer.

Part of the U.S. blockade of Cuba has been the travel ban, keeping us from seeing Cuba with our own eyes. Its intent was to isolate Cuba and keep people of the United States from understanding the Cuban revolutionary process or who the Cubans and their leaders really are.

Fidel Castro was one of Washington's first demonized leaders, to justify the U.S. government placing the Cuban population under screws to extract their surrender to the old ways of domination.

The blockade has been extremely harsh, to the tune of more than 1 trillion dollars in damages to the Cuban economy, not including the human toll. And yet, Cuba's infant mortality rate reached an astonishing low 4.2 deaths per 1,000 last year, a testament to their healthcare system.

Fidel Castro's proposals of international solidarity also extended to the United States.

How many people know that right after the Katrina disaster, Fidel Castro quietly — without fanfare — offered George W. Bush more than 1,000 Cuban medical personnel, who were prepared to arrive in New Orleans within five hours of Bush's would-be approval and treat the beleaguered victims along the Gulf Coast without a single cost to the U.S.?

Bush completely ignored the offer. After several days, Castro then publicly repeated the offer, hoping it could become a reality. Instead more people died needless deaths.

How many people know that young Americans are studying for free in Cuba, to become medical doctors in the U.S., thanks to the Latin American School of Medicine?

Cuban medical workers were decisive in combating Ebola in western Africa. When that health catastrophe seemed as if it could potentially spread around the world, many breathed a sigh of relief in witnessing Cuba's role.

By extending support to the people of southern Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, surely Fidel Castro knew that would earn even deeper enmity from Washington, an ally of the apartheid regime.

But he nevertheless called on Cuban volunteers to aid in defeating the invading South African army in Angola. Those 300,000 men and women helped break the chains of apartheid, and led to Namibia's independence.

Fidel Castro's 90th birthday last Saturday should merit some reflection in the United States on who he really is, beyond the relentlessly negative image that the U.S. administrations and media have conveyed to the people of the United States.

Several times in the last 25 years, I have had the honor and privilege of meeting Fidel Castro. I am certain that I will never personally meet a greater humanitarian or revolutionary.