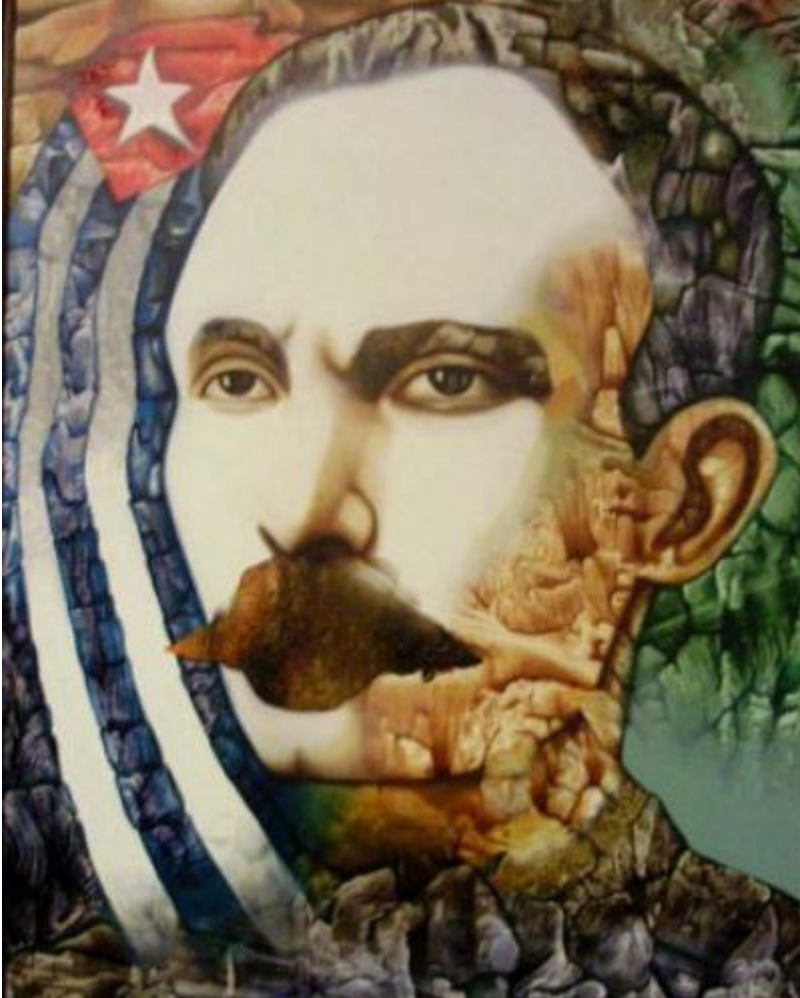


# *The Voice of Cuban National Hero José Martí (Part I)*

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**GJ:** Gerwyn Jones here and pleased that you could join us in this edition of *The Voice of José Martí* with Juan Jacomino.

**JJ:** Yes, glad that you are with us in this exploration of the wide ranging thoughts and writings of the architect of modern Cuba, José Martí.

**GJ:** Today we are going to present segments of 2 of Martí's articles, firstly from July 10, **1880** when Martí was 27 years of age and when he began to record his Impressions of America. The textual source for this is Esther Allen's translation *José Martí, Selected Writings*, published by Penguin.

Our second selection is from the March 23, **1894**, "The Truth about the United States," from the Ocean Press anthology *The Jose Martí Reader*, edited by Walter Lippmann.

**JJ:** Our objective in presenting Martí in our weekly programs on RHC is to encourage you, our listeners, not only to read him yourselves, to enjoy his unique style, his flow of ideas and the sheer beauty of his poetry. But, perhaps more importantly, as

Cuba continues to engage in regular open dialogue with almost all of the countries of the world, to assist visitor to the island in the necessary understanding of what it is to be Cuban. What it is to live in a country that has produced far more than its share of leaders in just about every field of human endeavour.

**GJ:** In this program we are going to focus on Martí's experience of North American life from his first extended stay in 1880 to the year 1894, a year before his death.

Reacting to his first encounter with capitalism in New York in 1880, Martí wrote the following in the literary magazine, *The Hour*:

**JJ:** Material power, as of that of Carthage, if it rapidly increases, rapidly falls down. If this love of richness is not tempered and dignified by the ardent love of intellectual pleasures, if kindness toward men, passion for all that is great, devotion to all that means sacrifice, and glory, are not as developed as fervorous and absorbent as the passion for money, where shall they go? Life wants permanent roots ; life is unpleasant

without the comforts of intelligence, the pleasures of art and the internal gratification that the goodness of the soul and the exquisiteness of taste produce in us.

**GJ:** Over 120 years after Martí recorded these first impressions, in our age of the airbus and the internet we are now witnessing the double enigma of seeing SOME COUNTRIES blind to the obvious need for gun control and then electing totally inexperienced politicians as leaders. In its 1894 essay "The Truth about the United States," Martí starts off with a customary note of caution...

**JJ:** In Our Americas it is vital to know the truth about the United States. We should not exaggerate its faults purposely, out of a desire to deny it all virtue, nor should these faults be concealed or proclaimed as virtues.

There are no races; there are only the various modifications of man in details of form and habits, according to the conditions of climate and history in which they live, which do not alter the identical and the essential. Superficial men — who have not explored human problems very thoroughly, or who cannot see from the heights of impartiality how all nations are boiling in the same stew pot, and how one finds in the structure and fabric of them all the same permanent duel between constructive unselfishness and iniquitous hate — these superficial men are prone to amuse themselves by finding substantial variety between the egotistical Saxon and the egotistical Latin, the generous Saxon and the generous Latin, the Saxon bureaucrat and the Latin bureaucrat. Both Latins and Saxons are equally capable of having virtues and defects; what **does** vary is the peculiar outcome of the different historical groups.

**GJ:** Moving, then, from exploding the myth of race and asserting the role of geography and history for countries Martí focuses on the United States...

**JJ:** It is supinely ignorant and slightly infantile and blameworthy to refer to the United States and to the real or apparent conquests of one or more of its territories as **one** total nation, equally free and definitely conquered. Such a United States is a fraud and a delusion.

What the honest man should observe is precisely that it was impossible to fuse the elements of diverse tendency and origin out of which the United States was created, within a period of three centuries of life in common or of one century of political awareness. But that compulsory social intercourse exacerbates and accentuates their principal differences and turns the unnatural federation into a harsh state of violent conquest.

**GJ:** In view of the election of the last elections in the US, José Martí could not have been more up to date...

**JJ:** It is a quality of lesser people and of incompetent and gnawing envy, this pricking holes in manifest greatness and plainly denying it for some defect or other, or this going to great lengths of prediction, like someone brushing a speck of dust off the sun. But it is a matter of certification rather than of prophecy for anyone who observes how, in the United States, hatred and misery are posing a threat and being reborn.

In Our Americas it is imperative to know the truth about the United States. More men were lost in the United States Civil War than in in the naturally slow process of putting the surface upon the New World, where the rule of Spain had left all the rage and hypocrisy of theocracy, and all the indolence and suspicions of a prolonged servitude.

**GJ:** Faced with the tendency of the building of walls to separate the North and the South, again the words of Martí are highly relevant...

**JJ:** From the standpoint of justice and a legitimate social science it should be recognized that character in the US has gone downhill since the winning of independence, and is today less human and virile; whereas the Spanish-American character today is in all ways superior, in spite of its confusion and

fatigue, to what it was when it began to emerge from the disorganized mass of a grasping clergy, unskilled ideologists and ignorant or savage Indians.

The crude, uneven and decadent character of the United States, and the continuous existence there of all violence, discord, immorality and disorder is being blamed upon the peoples of Spanish America.

**GJ:** And José Martí could have easily added that building a wall to keep your Latin neighbors out would serve little purpose other than locking-in one's own problems!

And thank you for joining us on this episode of the Voice of José Martí, I'm GJ

**JJ:** And I'm JJ. Looking forward to next time.

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