

El Yara (Mayo 8, 1886): "Adopted Homeland"

It is not only the native homeland that has the right to expect help from its children in the calamities that afflict it. There is another homeland that also has the right to our concern, and that is the adoptive homeland. To the first, we are bound by the inviolable ties of birth, family traditions, childhood memories, and our earliest friends, everything, in short, that almost instinctively draws us towards the place where we were born. To the other, equally weighty considerations adhere, albeit of a different nature. The man who leaves his native land in pursuit of what he cannot find there, or to improve his condition in any respect, and finds what he aspires to in another country that is not his own: freedom, if he flees tyranny; bread to satisfy his hunger; stimulus for his industry or talents; laws that protect his individual rights, and sometimes even a family, that man has his adoptive homeland where he finds such benefits, and the duties that morally bind him to it are in their kind as sacred as those he has by nature with his native land. The latter is the common mother of those born to her, but like the woman who cannot nurse or keep in her lap the child of her own womb and entrusts him to the nurse who breastfeeds him and lavishes maternal care on him, she is unable to prevent the child from developing a pure and enduring affection for her who, though not his mother, lavished her cares upon him, likewise the adoptive homeland awakens in the hearts of those who are not ungrateful, duties and affections that gratitude demand and social relations foster and expand.

Key West has been the adoptive homeland of a large part of the Cuban emigrants for seventeen years now. Here, not only those persecuted by the outrageous tyranny of the Spanish government have found a hospitable refuge, but also those who, driven from the centers of work by the oligarchy of the peninsular element prevailing there, have had to leave their native land to avoid perishing from hunger and earn their bread of subsistence honestly in a foreign land. Here many of them have come without a penny, most of them ragged, despite their honesty and aptitude for work, the majority of the Cuban element who today dignifies this place at the forefront of this country's industry and commerce. Here, finally, we Cubans have found, under the protection of American laws, not only the freedom and rest we did not have in our native land, but also a wide field in which to unfold our activity in all phases of progress and to contribute in greater measure, with the natural resources of the country, to make of a poor fishermen's settlement a flourishing city. So, if Key West has the right to our gratitude for the hospitable reception it has always given us, we have the duty, not only out of that gratitude but also for what we have contributed to its prosperity and greatness, to consider it as an adoptive homeland, worthy in every respect of our consideration and affection.

If today Key West, due to the great fire of last March 30, finds itself in a difficult economic situation, because we have all lost something in the fire, and all, capitalists or industrialists, are suffering the consequences of such a great catastrophe, and it depends on the activity and spirit of concord whether Key West returns to what it was, it is necessary for all of us to contribute to this work of repair with uplifted spirit and generous initiative. And this can be achieved in a short time if the tobacco manufacturer, the principal industrial power here, the landowner, the warehouse owner, the grocer, and all those who thrive among the artisans and poor consumer class, bear in mind that the present moments should not be ones of usury to suddenly compensate for the losses suffered, but of general reconstruction, in which each one must contribute with his grain of sand to the direction of public affairs. The

proletarian class, the worker, is no less obligated than those others to contribute by overcoming obstacles that paralyze work, the only source of wealth and well-being. The work of rebuilding this adoptive homeland of so many Cuban emigrants must be common, reciprocal, mutual, of all, from the one who has accumulated capital to the one whose capital are his hands for work, for we are all suffering the consequences of the catastrophe and we must all mitigate them with uplifted spirit and generous initiative.

Key West, our adoptive homeland, has the right to expect this from us, and Cuba, our native land, will thank us for it.