

Martí Lives



**A Visual Imaginarium
of Mythological Roles
Played by José Martí
Since His Death in 1895**

by Jerry A. Sierra

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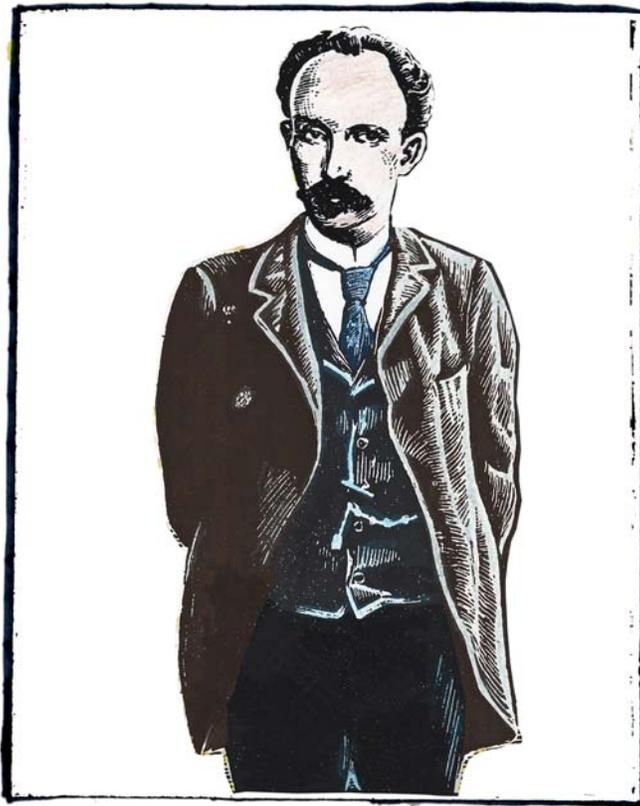
I cultivate a white rose
In July as in January
For the sincere friend
Who gives me his hand frankly

And for the cruel one who tears out
The heart with which I live
I cultivate neither nettles nor thorns
I cultivate a white rose

- José Martí from Simple Verses, 1891

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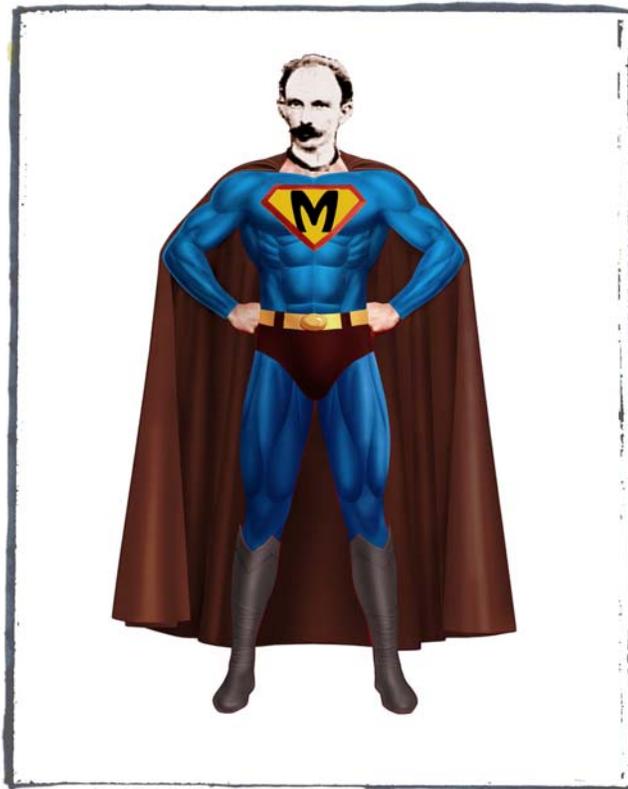
José Julián Martí y Pérez
January 28, 1853 – May 19, 1895



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José Martí - The Myth

Mid 1930s – Present



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THE AGE OF JOSÉ MARTÍ

BY JERRY A. SIERRA

I confess; I'm a Martiano.

I embraced Martí as my long distance *spiritual mentor*, a human puzzle of ethical/philosophical magnitude which, once fully assembled would enrich the spiritual resonance of my existence.



Martí's presence in my life touches on my most compelling interests; first, my need to research, study and assemble facts is fulfilled by the creation of **The Martí Portal** at historyofcuba.com (some items from which are included in this book); my need to visually interpret ideas and touch humorously on serious concepts are satisfied by combining Martí's image with modern elements and personalities... and my need to contribute something useful to my American culture is satisfied by presenting Martí's work in English, and putting together this title about the myth of Martí (and, of course, developing and publishing historyofcuba.com).

There are also personal reasons; my need to comprehend how it was that suddenly, at age eleven, I found myself and my family 3,000 miles away from home, consuming (in large doses) the culturally pounded idea that everyone I loved and left in Cuba was either enemy to be killed, or victim to be rescued.

And finally there's the scientifically un-provable fact that as a genuine *Habanero* (I was born not far from where Martí was born, only 104 years later) I've a DNA requirement to a measure of Martí in my life.... Like a vampire needs blood... not some synthetic imitation.

Then there's what Martí represents... There's no comparable figure to latch onto in American history or modern celebrity culture. The morning wake-up-broadcasts shows us what the beautiful people wear and what the rich people buy... and after the catastrophe of the day, which they repeat over and over, comes the obligatory and soothing cute pet/cute baby video.

We can now download their app and watch the rich, the beautiful and the catastrophic repeatedly in our cell phones, pads or laptops. These intuitive apps will think for us, so we don't have to take our eyes off whatever screen is near, and they will think us much better thoughts than we could think for ourselves.

In one of his *notebooks* Martí wrote that "the first duty of man is to think for himself..." but that may be detrimental to our growth-addicted economy.



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Martí's presence in the 21st century touches on the clear need for more *humane* human beings and humane leadership... the kind that have appeared only rarely, with names like Ghandi or Mandela... and humane enterprises (the kind we still haven't seen, as our only acceptable motivation so far is profit).

I was introduced to José Martí as a young boy in Cuba. The names *Martí*, *Maceo* and *Gómez* entered my consciousness around the age of 8, but I would not come to appreciate their value and uniqueness until I was near thirty... by then they were almost completely out of my life. The young communist teachers who had so gently pounded these names into me never mentioned that not one of the three was a communist. It didn't matter. Something about these men seems far above petty definitions and shallow political limitations.

When Raul Castro appeared on CBS' 60 Minutes (December, 2014) announcing peace talks with the U.S., behind him were portraits of *Martí*, *Maceo* and *Gómez*.

Years earlier I had searched for them at public libraries in Santa Monica, Marina Del Rey and East LA. This was back in the dark ages when public libraries had type-written card catalogues. I didn't find *the boys* often, but when I did... it was glorious.

By the time I turned 30, Martí returned to my life as an exotic mystery... perhaps denied us on purpose by a culture with no Martí.

Just as Castro and Batista claimed Martí as their very own, the anti-Castro movement also claimed ownership of Martí's ghost, and thus, during the Reagan era, Radio Martí emerged, eventually mutating into TV Martí. Practically everything broadcast from these two sources was cold-war rhetoric designed to cause a violent overthrow of "Castro." (Would Martí support ANY efforts against "Castro" that ignored the cost to Cubans living on the island?)

It seems sad that the only thing most Americans know of Martí is from these efforts to promote Democracy through deception.

Somehow, while in my '20s I figured out that something was wrong with the emperor's clothes, and began my own amateur inquiry, into which Martí bloomed like a white rose on a field of green grass and distant mountains.

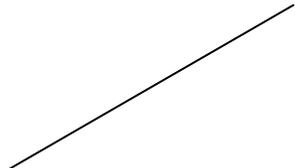
I looked to Martí, not for insights into the riddles of modern living, but for a hint into the spiritual serenity to become a more enlightened human being... more capable of embracing the actual gifts my life offered, not just those I pursued consciously.

Instinctively I was drawn to Martí; while the main drive in his life had been Cuban independence, I was near-obsessed myself with Cuban history and raising the awareness of such among Americans, which are generally encouraged NOT to explore their own history. Any potential similarities end there.

I was also obsessed with learning as much as I could about Martí and my home island. For a while it was a secret hobby, as I didn't know how to explain my curiosity about an island so far away to friends who weren't curious at all about their own past.

Over the last 120 years Martí has been "invoked" numerous times by those in need, like a Jedi Master long gone but still able to communicate with living Jedi... there's no way he could fulfill all that's been asked of him since his death... but he can still help us battle the forces of darkness.

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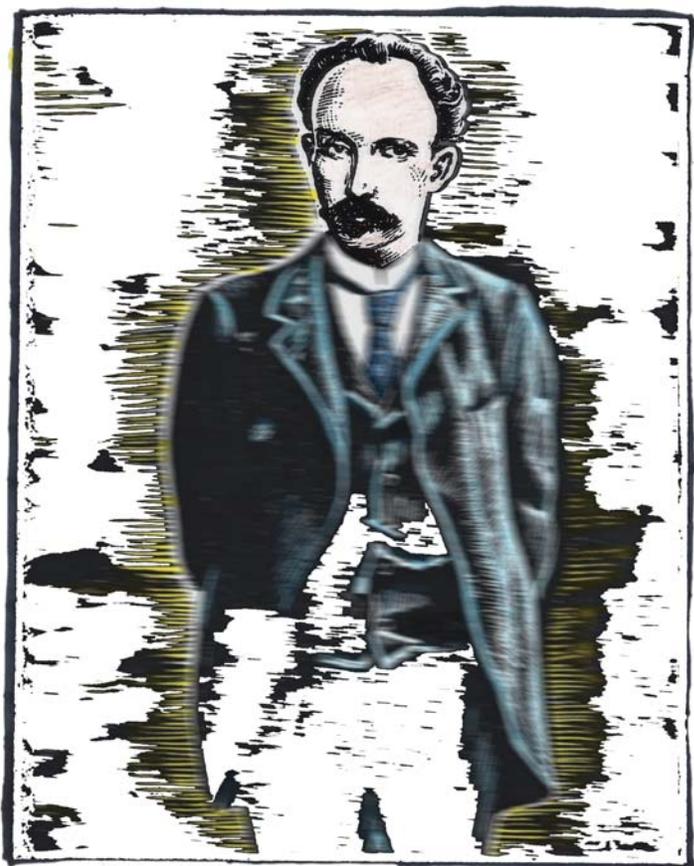
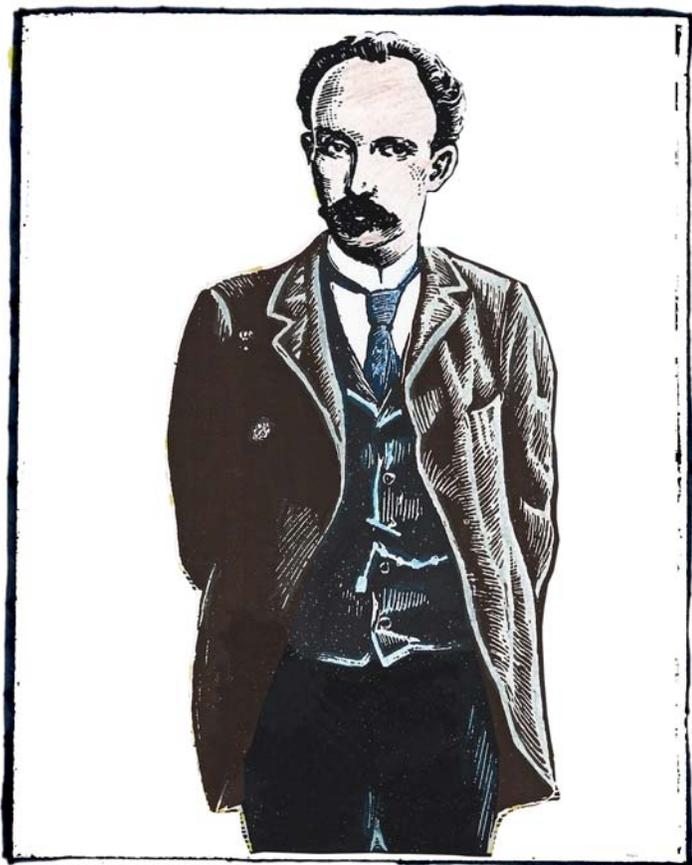
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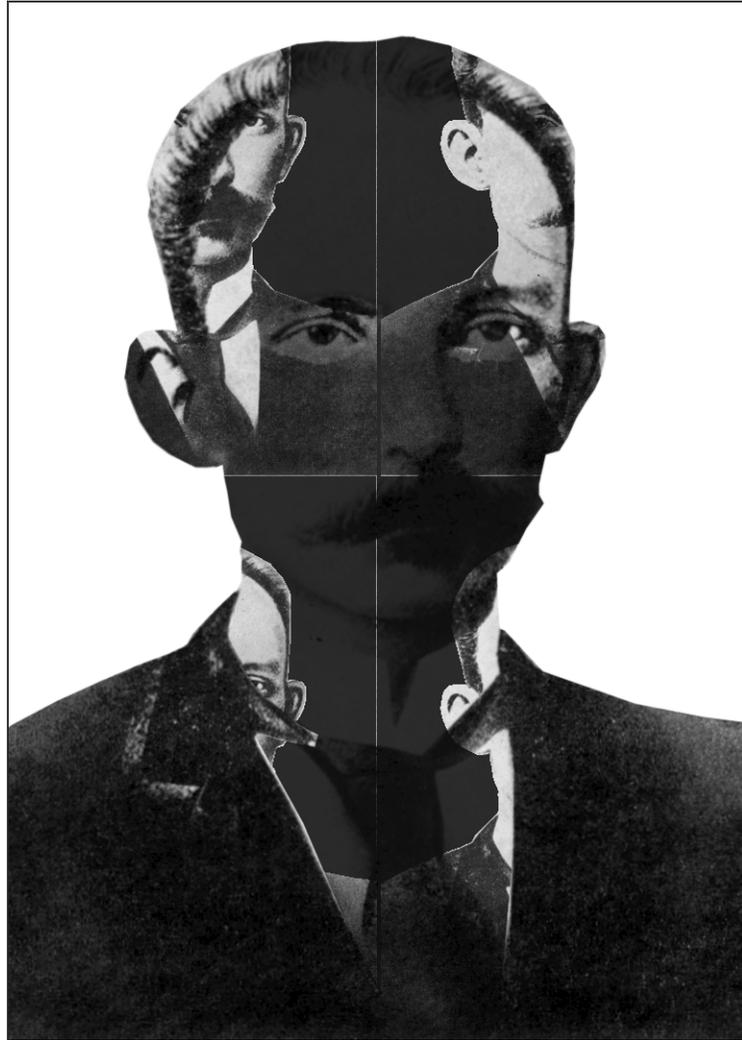
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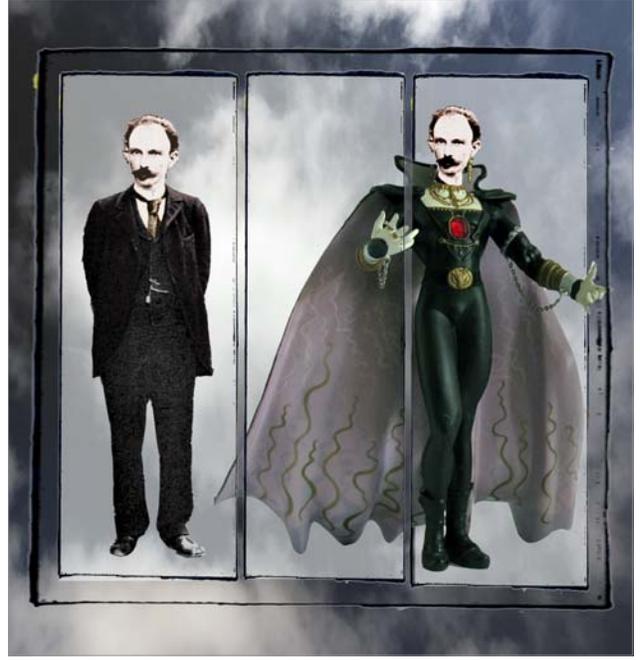
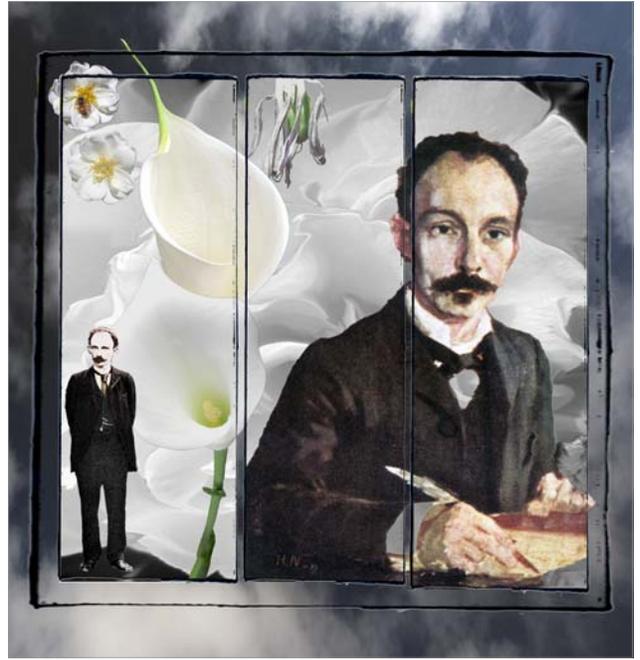
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LIVE AT THE LYCEUM

Excerpts from a speech by Martí at the Cuban Lyceum
in Tampa, Florida on November 26, 1891

For suffering Cuba, the first word. Cuba must be considered an altar for the offering of our lives, not a pedestal for lifting us above it...

My breast swells with pride, and at this moment I love my country even more than before, and I now have an even greater faith in its serene and well-ordered future—a future rescued from the serious danger of following blindly, in the name of freedom, those who make use of their yearning for it to bend it to their own purposes. Still more firmly do I believe in a Republic of open eyes, neither foolish nor timid, neither haughty nor professorial, neither over-cultured nor uncultured, for I can see—by the sacred affirmations of the heart when we are together on this night of brain and brawn, together for now and for later, together for as long as patriotism prevails—I can see those Cubans who put their free and frank opinions above all things, and one Cuban who respects them.

...

I want the first law of our Republic to be the Cuban cult of full dignity for man. Every true man must feel upon his own cheek the slap upon any other man's cheek.

...

Above all, let us band together in this faith. Let us join hands, in avowal of this decision, where all may see them, and where there is no forgetting without punishment.

...

You must create, there in our country, in order to give us dedicated work later on. You must create, there where the corrupt

proprietor rots whatever he looks upon, a new Cuban soul, hostile and bristling—a proud soul, different from that magnanimous and home-loving soul of our ancestors and illegitimate daughter of the misery that sees vice go unpunished, and of the useless culture that finds employment only in the dull contemplation of itself!

...

Without the worms that enrich the soil, no sumptuous palaces would be built! We have to enter truth with our shirt sleeves rolled up, the way a butcher enters a carcass of beef. All truth is sacred, even without the scent of garden pinks. Everything has ugly, bloody entrails... It is from life's foulness that fruits derive their nectar and flowers their color.

...

Enough, enough of mere words! We are not here for flattery, but to feel our hearts and see that they are sound and able; we are here to teach the despairing, the disbanded, the melancholic, the force of our idea and action, to teach them the proven virtue which assures them of happiness to come, to teach them our true stature...

...

Let us rise up so that freedom will not be endangered in triumph, by confusion or clumsiness, or impatience in preparing it. Let us rise up for the true Republic, those of us who, with our passion for right and our habit of hard work, will know how to preserve it. Let us rise up to give graves to the heroes whose spirit roams the world, alone and ashamed. Let us rise up so that some day our children will have graves! And let us place the star of our new flag this formula of love triumphant: "With all, for the good of all."

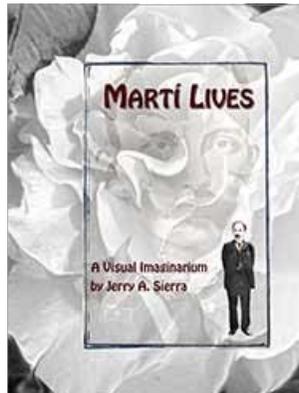
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112 pages in color

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Includes:

- An introduction to the myth of Martí
- A full bio
- A timeline
- Fantasy images of the myth in action
- Restored images of Martí
- Excerpts from a speech in Tampa



“You take your rights.

You do not beg for them. You do not negotiate for them. You do not buy them with tears but with blood.”

- José Martí, 1894



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