

José Julián Martí Pérez (Havana, January 28, 1853 – Dos Ríos, May 19, 1895) was a great thinker and man of action recognized as the Apostle of Cuban independence. This eminent writer, teacher, politician, and strategist was also a pioneer in various fields. For example, he is known as the first Latin American journalist to work as a newspaper correspondent. He is also recognized as the main precursor of the important literary movement known as modernism. Through a study of his vast work, he can also be identified as a precursor to fundamental contemporary paradigms such as sustainable development and human rights (political, civil, economic, social, and cultural).

From a very young age, he dedicated his talent and works to Cuban independence from colonialism to Latin American and Caribbean unity, and to global balance.

For his ideas, he was imprisoned, tortured, and exiled to Spain while still a teenager. There he studied at the universities of Madrid and Zaragoza. Throughout his life, he visited various countries in Europe and the Americas and lived in several of them.

Founder and contributor to various newspapers and magazines, member of numerous literary and artistic societies, and architect of the final stage of the armed struggle against Spanish colonialism in Cuba, his vast written work, collected in dozens of volumes, is evidence of the multiple facets of his extraordinary intellectual endeavor. These facets include those of poet, educator, diplomat, tribune, and revolutionary ideologue. José Martí sacrificed his life during the 1895 war of independence.

The study and promotion of his life, work, and example have led to the creation of the National Program for the Study and Promotion of the Ideas of José Martí (Cuba, 1997) and the José Martí Project for World Solidarity (UNESCO, 2003).

“There is a wealth of essential truths that fit on the wing of a hummingbird and are, nevertheless, the key to public peace, spiritual elevation, and national greatness... Men must live in the natural and inevitable enjoyment of liberty, as they live in the enjoyment of air and light... [and] being cultured is the only way to be free.”