

OBJECTIVES

In accordance with its rules, the José Martí Prize, which is in the pure tradition of UNESCO's International Simón Bolívar Prize, was created to promote and reward an activity of outstanding merit that, in accordance with the ideals and spirit of José Martí and embodying a nation's aspiration to sovereignty and its struggle for liberty, contributes, in any region of the world, to the unity and integration of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and to the preservation of their identities, cultural traditions and historical values.

REQUIREMENTS

Candidates may be a person, a group of persons or an organization. The prize-winner shall receive the sum of US\$5,000 and a diploma. The nominations shall be submitted to the Director-General of UNESCO – before the deadline fixed for each edition – by the governments of Member States or Associate Members, in consultation with their National Commissions, or by appropriate non-governmental organizations having consultative relations with UNESCO.

Only one nomination may be submitted by each government or organization. Nominations should be accompanied by a curriculum vitae for each of the candidates, whether individual or collective, together with a detailed description of the work in recognition of which the nomination is made.

FREQUENCY

The Prize is awarded every second year, in the years of UNESCO's General Conference sessions.

The Prize is awarded by the Director-General of UNESCO on the recommendation of an international jury representing the five regions of the world. The jury consists of seven members, five of whom are appointed in a personal and honorary capacity for a period of four years, one is appointed by the Government of Cuba and another by the Director-General.

The Prize was awarded for the first time in 1995. The laureate was Professor Celsa Albert Bautista (Dominican Republic), an educator, historian of Africa, poet and researcher who contributed to a wider dissemination of the ideas of José Martí.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris cedex 15
telephone: 33 (0)1 45 68 37 48
telex: 204461 Paris, 270602 Paris
telefax: 33 (0)1 45 68 55 97
e-mail: e.cross-frias@unesco.org

1999 UNESCO José Martí International Prize



República de Cuba

'... honrar honra'

The International José Martí Prize was instituted in 1994 by the Executive Board of

UNESCO at the request of the Cuban Government to commemorate the centenary of José Martí's death in Dos Rios on 19 May 1895.

In doing so, the Executive Board recognized the value of his ideals and thereby raised José Martí the humanist, martyr and apostle to the status of an example for humanity.

José Martí (Havana, 1853–Dos Ríos, 1895) was a man whose life and work stand out with brilliance at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Throughout his life, José Martí strove to be a free citizen of the world, combining the qualities of a man of extensive culture, a humanist, an educator, a scientist and an advocate of science, who possessed a real gift for communication.

José Martí is one of UNESCO's precursors. His works, which amount to some 28 volumes, reveal the many facets of his outstanding intellectual and ethical qualities, those of poet, educator, diplomat, journalist, revolutionary ideologist and forerunner of the modernist movement.

By relating daily struggles in their most varied manifestations, José Martí pioneered the role of press correspondent in the region. His work as a journalist and press correspondent includes hundreds of articles on Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and the United States, which made a significant contribution to the revival of the press in the region.

José Martí saw education as a tool of vital importance for helping individuals to develop and to bring about the development of their environment, whether social or material: *There is an accumulation of essential truths that would fit on to a hummingbird's wing and yet they hold the key to civic peace, spiritual enhancement and national greatness... People must live in the natural and inescapable enjoyment of freedom, just as they enjoy light and air... [and] being educated is the only way to be free.*

Those words by the champion of Cuban independence, José Martí, appear in a fine article on education, published in New York over a century ago. With his keen teacher's intuition, Martí appreciated that education and broad-based training provision for young people would play a decisive role in securing the future of the newly formed Latin American republics (...). He advocated the teaching of science, which, at the time was only just beginning to be included in the curriculum: *'This straightforward and wholesome form of education; this application of intelligence to seeking and finding answers to questions about the natural world; this calm employment of the mind in research [is what] we desire in all the newly formed countries of Latin America.'*

Federico Mayor

José Martí advocated the idea that knowledge is acquired and transmitted through contact with nature and via experimental methods: *'The scientific element should be like the skeleton of a public education system... scientific education should rise, like the sap in trees, from the roots to the very top... elementary education should also be scientific...'*

In the field of culture, he strove for an authentic, free, universal and, more particularly, liberating culture stemming from the deepest roots of native America.

As an author, José Martí was 'a humble worker who never shunned any task: he translated scientific tables as if they were outstanding poems; while he maintained regular correspondence with Argentina and Mexico, he wrote periodicals in New York from cover to cover, from the most minute description of new machines to enthusiastic reviews of art exhibitions...'

Pedro Henríquez Ureña

He was also a poet and wrote verse.

'... poetry has its share of honesty and I've always wanted to be honest (...). Just as every human being has his physique, every inspiration has its language. I love harsh sonorities, sculpted verses, as vibrant as porcelain, as light as a bird, hot and spell-binding as a tongue of molten lava (...). They are fragments of my entrails (...). Never has a single one appeared warmed up, artificial, re-created in my mind, but always as tears streaming from the eyes and blood gushing out of a wound (...). They are written not in ink but in my own blood.'

That is the initial facet of a complex personality that emerged when he was still little more than a child, concomitant with the legendary Liberator. At the age of 19, he found himself in the prison of San Lazáro before his sentence was commuted to exile in Spain. Once there, he studied law at the Universities of Madrid and Zaragoza.

But José Martí was a man of duty and sacrifice: *'... a weight exists so as to be carried because sacrifice exists so as to be deserved; because the right to give light can only be acquired by being consumed in fire.'*

It is for that reason that his political commitment overrode that of the author and poet which was what was most profound in his being, in order to devote himself to the liberating assignment that fate called for, exercising his reason *'against a nation incapable of governing a people which could be quite simply happy without it'*.

It was for that reason that he created the Cuban revolutionary party, whose statutes he drafted, thereby institutionalizing the very foundations of Cuban liberation. He also set up an organ to disseminate propaganda which he himself headed until his death, the newspaper *Patria*, in which he outlined the main policies which the party should follow in an article entitled 'Our ideas'.

His ideas on independence transcended purely political preoccupations:

'A people is not independent once it has shaken off its masters' chains; it begins to be independent when it has plucked out of its very being the vices of resigned slavery... the habits of past servility, ... the memories of weakness and praise which despotic domination uses as instruments of domination over enslaved peoples.'

