



F r i e n d s h i p a n d H o p e : A J o s é M a r t í T o t e m

“All of us who live in the Americas are a unique force; the strength expressed through the work we do with the respect and dignity required for us to be free.”
Marcos Carvajal

The totem is a memorial inspired by life experiences, speeches and poetry of José Martí during the last four years of his life (1891-1895), built to represent four significant events during this period: **(1)**, the new pines – symbol of hope, **(2)**, the boat in which he traveled to Cuba to start the war of independence, **(3)**, his face facing the sun when he died and **(4)**, the white rose – symbol of friendship.

It was during these years, when Martí increased his emancipatory activities and soon after visiting Florida in search of consensus within the Cuban exile community, published in 1892 his “Simple Verses,” including poem XXXIX, well known as his first verse: “I Cultivate a White Rose”, the central image in the sculpture. This consensus that Martí sought was necessary for Cuba to advance its cause of Independence from Spain. The poem is a hymn to friendship, fellow love, and had the intention of avoiding hate or rancor.

*“I cultivate a white rose, / In July as well as in January,
 / For the sincere friend, / Who gives me his frank hand,
 / And for the cruel that tear, / The heart out with which
 I live, / Thistle nor nettle I cultivate: / I grow a white
 rose.”*

One of the speeches delivered by Martí in Florida in 1891 was “The New Pines” when he pays homage to the medical students murdered by the Spanish government in Cuba in 1871. In the speech Martí invokes the union of the old and new generations of Cubans for the well being of the motherland and explains his vision of a liberated Cuba by the young people that longed for freedom.

“...and in the height of the torn clouds, a pine, defying the storm, raised whole, its cup. Suddenly the sun broke over a clearing in the forest, and there, in the blink of the sudden light, I saw above the yellowish grass straighten up, around the black trunk of the

fallen pines, the joyful clusters of new pines; this is who we are, the new pines!”

The sculpture has a pedestal in the shape of a totem with the texture of a pine tree. Resting on the pedestal is the boat used by Martí to arrive in Cuba from Cape Haitian, to initiate the necessary war of independence of Cuba in 1895.

The face of Martí is represented inside the boat, facing the sun, offering us a white rose. In one of his verses he anticipated his death in 1895

“Do not bury me in the dark, / To die like a traitor: / I am good, and as good, / I will die facing the sun”

José Martí poetry is based on a dualistic vision of humanity: reality and idealism, spirit and matter, truth and falsehood, consciousness and unconsciousness, light and darkness.

Likewise the sculpture has dual characteristics of darkness and light, realism and idealism, and above all, the intention to foster friendship among the nations of the Americas in the hope that this friendship may be as Martí mentions in one of his speeches in 1891, “Around the star, on the new flag, this formula of a triumphant love: “With all, and for the good of all.”

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Historical Review: David Leyva González, Center for Martí’s Studies, La Habana, Cuba

Title: Friendship and Hope: A José Martí Totem-Sculpture

Date Created: 2016

Creator: Marcos Carvajal Barrios

Location: Sarasota, Florida

Physical Dimensions: Sculpture model size: 7.75”H x 2”W x 4.25”D

Site model size: 26.50”H x 28”W x 22”D

Medium: Enamel on terracotta clay with gold leaf and mixed media