

From the UMAP Camps to the Axel Hotel

Jorge Ángel Pérez | viernes, 18 de marzo, 2022 5:18 pm



HAVANA, Cuba. - I was not writing for *CubaNet* yet when my friend, the writer Albertico Yáñez, was murdered. We never knew the reasons for his killing. We never knew if the police did a thorough investigation, we never learnt if they managed to identify the murderer. Rumors had it that the assassins were men in uniform, without specifying if they were from the police or from the Armed Forces. Rumor also had it that his friend, actress Susana Pérez, was the last person to see him alive.

Then, other murders occurred that I was able to report on *CubaNet*. One of them was that of Yosvani, whom all his acquaintances called “La Eterna” -the eternal one- because he always managed to recover from the opportunist illnesses that preyed on him after becoming HIV positive. “La Eterna” survived that damages caused by AIDS, but he did not survive the general homophobia. “La Eterna” was stoned to death in Pinar del Río. He did not survive after so many stones were hurled at him, after so much hatred.

I also reported on *CubaNet* about the murder of Ángel Herrera Oviedo at “Playa del chivo” beach. Ángel had no other home except that piece of coastline where young men make love to each other among the mangrove. Ángel never had a bed

with clean sheets where he could undress. Ángel reacted to the passion of his desire and went looking for pleasure. He found death, instead. The mangrove hid the identity of the murderer. There, upon the rocky terrain, an Ángel was left to die. And at home, a Cuban mother kept on waiting for her son.

Maybe the whispers of waves against the rocky coastline and the scent of wet earth awaken to some degree those desires. But safety never accompanies those desires. Safety lies in the fluffy thalamus, even if it isn't fluffy*. In Cuba, one can never rely on having a room and a bed where to make love to a lover, least of all when the lovers are two men. That is why, in Cuba, homosexuals resort to isolated places, and public bathrooms, and rooftops, and the urban ruins that kill our cities.

In Cuba, very few gay men own their own house, most don't even own a room. In Cuba, families live in crowded spaces, and they are always fighting. Love and sex don't always find the optimal space, the privacy that best suits love. In Cuba, many hotels are built, but very few houses. In Cuba, very few people can afford a hotel room. In Cuba, love is very expensive, sex is very expensive, and we already know that certain types of love became too costly, like homosexual love, which was paid for with prison, with the UMAP camps, and with other prisons.

In Havana, gays chose, and still do, buildings in ruin to fulfill their desires, like the one where the Parque Central Hotel was later erected, amidst the rubble and on top of obscure diseases. In Havana, one had sex amidst danger and in hidden places, far from the repressive and homophobic police. In Havana, men became sexually tangled in the back of what today is a hotel for LGBTIQ people. In the back of that Axel Hotel, in the rear of that space that now welcomes gay tourists, this new hotel where same sex couples will fornicate naked, if they pay what it costs, which is not little, it's quite a lot.

The Axel Hotel, a property of Gaviota S.A. that will be managed by GAESA, will offer many amenities to homosexuals who come to Cuba "from far away", from places where other tongues are spoken, where tongue kissing is the same as it is in Cuba. But those Cubans cannot enter the Axel Hotel to use their tongues, nor will they be able to stay at the hotel that will rise on the ruins of the once famous Moscú Restaurant, which, by the way, was also a meeting place for men, even if they got shit all over their shoes because the Moscú's ruins were also a place where people went to defecate.

I ask myself about how the service at the hotel will be. Will it specialize in matters germane to its clientele? How will the waiters dress? Will there be housekeepers or latch masters? Will they be partly naked? Will there be fitness training or bodybuilding? How will muscular male staff react to the demands of a man in drag who just arrived from Massachusetts or Berlin?

Can the reader imagine what “the old town undertaker” * would say if he found out that Raúl and Díaz-Canel have built a hotel for “little phenomena” that resemble those “little phenomena” that met around the vicinity of the Capri Hotel, those who annoyed the commander-in-chief so much, those he shamelessly called “little phenomena”?

And how about those that could not withstand the abuse and today are dead? What will those who committed suicide say? What will the families of the dead say, or the spirits of the dead? What will Luis Pavón and Papito Serguera’s victims say? What will those two –Papito Serguera and Luis Pavón– say? Could it be that they will die all over again, this time out of anger and indignation? What would “La Eterna” say, and Albertico Yañez, and Ángel Herrera? And so many, many others? What will we say? What will we do? Will the answer be silence like always?

I am furious that now they will use us for their agenda. It’s outrageous that their coffers will fill to the brim thanks to the sweat of gays, lesbians and trans, and all the rest that will come from all corners of the world to enjoy Cuban flesh, the flesh of *pingueros* and *jineteras* – male sex workers and young female prostitutes– which even today are sent back to their home provinces because they illegally reside in Havana. Or can it be that temporary permits will be issued in order to service the tourists staying at the Axel Hotel? Will sex workers now become self-employed entrepreneurs who pay taxes? Could it be that our despotic rulers no longer care about exercising their chicanery without restraint? Could it be that they decided to build the hotel very near Central Park where “male prostitute central” is located. They had it all planned! They had it all perfectly planned!

*From the lyrics of *Bodas Negras* by Julio Jaramillo.

ARTÍCULO DE OPINIÓN

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