



Obituario

Dr. Elsa Gutiérrez Baró: unfortunate loss for Ibero-American children and youth mental health

Dra. Elsa Gutiérrez Baró: lamentable pérdida para la salud mental infantil y juvenil iberoamericanas

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To honor the dead is to invigorate the living.

JOSÉ MARTÍ

Dr. Elsa Gutiérrez Baró (1928-2019), professor emeritus of the University of Medical Sciences of Havana, set out to the infinite space full of music, poetry, light and color, where good people go to sleep forever —how are you? exceptional woman— who, according to the Apostle, «loves and creates».

I met the founding director of the Adolescent Clinic at a scientific event, which was hosted by the Psychiatric Hospital of Havana, in December 1973, that is, more than four decades ago.



The oratory of the former president and Honorary Member of the Cuban Society of Psychiatry during the presentation of the presentation that led to this event captivated me, and when she concluded her magisterial intervention, I approached her to congratulate her -among other things- for the conceptual clarity and vehemence with which he exposed the imperative need to create a mental health institution, dedicated to the care of insular children and adolescents with neuropsychic or emotional disorders.

That project could be seen materialized years later with the opening of the Adolescent Clinic, the first in Latin America, and whose development and consolidation will be enshrined in body, mind and soul during the period in which it will occupy the direction of that assistance and academic center of excellence, a paradigm of that biomedical specialty on the largest island of the Antilles and outside our geographical borders.

From that chance encounter, a relationship was established between us, not only professional, but also emotional-spiritual, which grew gradually and progressively over time. So much so that, every time I was going to present a text (and wrote several) about his specialty at the Havana Book Fair or at any scientific or cultural institution, he asked me to cover the activity, which made me allowed to interview her —on more than one occasion— for the Radio Progreso Web Site and for the CubaLiteraria Portal.

Now my poetic memory evokes the conversations that we had on the phone or in person, and in which he told me —half seriously and half as a joke— «you have become, consciously or unconsciously (I do not forget that you have analytical orientation), in my chronicler and private interviewer [...] ». Then, I laughed with the naturalness and spontaneity that was identified in the scientific-academic environment or outside it; action that revealed —in all its dimension and magnitude— the simplicity and humility that characterized it from the personographic aspect.

To speak of Dr. Gutiérrez Baró is to refer, necessarily, to the Ana Betancourt School for the Survival of Peasants, which will operate at the beginning of the Revolution at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba, and the almost six-year-old magazine Women; Teaching-educational center and press media of those who were director until the dilemma was raised to choose between professional staff of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) or resume the exercise of the Hippocratic profession, since she had graduated, in 1955, Doctor of Medicine from the University of Havana. He didn't think twice: he chose to return to the career he had studied in our dear Alma Mater; immediately, he began his residency in Infant-Juvenile Psychiatry until he reached the titles of Specialist of I and II Degrees in Infant-Juvenile Psychiatry, as well as the scientific degree of Doctor of Science.

There are many and varied anecdotes that link me professionally and emotionally to the late child-adolescent psychiatrist, but I do not want to bore the reader, but only offer a brushstroke of who was in life Professor Gutierrez Baró, who internalized and incorporated into his style of confrontation that Medicine is «nutritious source of ethics,



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humanism, patriotism and spirituality», as Prof. Dr. Sc. Ricardo González Menéndez, his dear companion and friend, points out.

Rest in peace, Dr. Elsa Gutierrez Baró, since you fulfilled –by far– the work of life, and therefore, you will not die in the mind and soul of your relatives, as well as those who had the immense privilege of being his disciples, colleagues and inseparable friends. So be it!



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