

***Museo Plaza Mariana Grajales Coello: medio de enseñanza de la  
asignatura Historia de Cuba***  
***Plaza Mariana Grajales Coello Museum: a teaching tool for the  
subject History of Cuba***

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## **Resumen**

El trabajo contiene una alternativa para vincular la información que proporciona el Museo Plaza de la Revolución Mariana Grajales Coello, al proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje de la Historia de Cuba. Para su elaboración se utilizaron métodos de nivel teórico y del nivel empírico, lo reglamentado en documentos como: el Programa de la Asignatura y la Ley No. 106/2009 del Sistema Nacional de Museos. El principal resultado radica en la alternativa para vincular las informaciones de los museos al proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje. La propuesta ha mostrado su importancia al contribuir al fortalecimiento del trabajo de los docentes en función del estudiante y estimular la enseñanza de esta asignatura con el propósito de lograr su formación integral, que los nuevos conocimientos y habilidades favorezcan su protagonismo.

**Palabras clave:** Alternativa; Museo; Trabajo Metodológico; Historia de Cuba.

## **Summary**

The work contains an alternative to link the information provided by the Mariana Grajales Coello Revolution Square Museum to the teaching-learning process of Cuban History. For its elaboration, theoretical and empirical methods were used, as regulated in documents such as: the Program of the

Subject and the Law No. 106/2009 of the National System of Museums. The main result lies in the alternative to link museum information to the teaching-learning process. The proposal has shown its importance by contributing to the strengthening of the work of teachers in terms of the student and stimulating the teaching of this subject with the purpose of achieving their integral formation, that the new knowledge and skills favor their protagonism.

Keywords: Alternative; Museum; Methodological Work; History of Cuba.

## Introduction

The human being has always felt the need to preserve, to take care of what he loves, to conserve the things that have for him, a certain affective or cultural significance.

The ancient Greeks collected and bequeathed the term museum, they called mouseion to a temple erected in honor of the muses, a kind of academy where teachers and disciples met and could find collections of zoological specimens, manuscripts and objects of artistic value.

According to William (1954), Aristotle's library and the museum organized for him were two of the earliest collections of ancient times.

The Romans, following the practice of the Greeks, called them museum.

During the middle Ages, the monasteries preserved valuable texts, manuscripts that enriched historical knowledge.

The first rational attempts to organize museums date back to the forties of the 15th century, within the chronological framework of the Renaissance.

Until the second half of the 18th century, the exclusive character of private initiatives sustained by economic possibilities was maintained.

In the year 1726, instructions for the correct understanding and organization of museums or chambers of rarities were published, which seems to be the first publication of its kind in the world, offering advice to those interested in organizing collections, explaining the conditions that the premises should meet, how to conserve the pieces and how to classify them.

It was not until 1753 that history recorded the first institution created as a public museum (the British Museum).

The French Revolution of 1789 made itself felt in the evolution of the museum as a public institution, the British and Louvre marked milestones and became paradigms of this type of institution.

After World War I, in 1918, the International Office of Museums was created, in 1945 the International Council of Museums (ICOM), and in 1948 the periodical Museum appeared to disseminate its activities around the world.

In Cuba they have their origins in the private collecting developed since the first decades of the 19th century. With the revolutionary triumph, this activity underwent changes aimed at disseminating cultural roots, traditions and identity, for the enjoyment of all.

In the province of Guantánamo, with the dawn of the 1980s, there was a real whirlwind of cultural activity, with the opening, during the first five years of the decade, of 12 museums in all the municipalities of the province in compliance with Law No. 23 of 1979, which undoubtedly meant a new and fruitful stage in Guantánamo's cultural sphere.

From then on, the communities of each of the territories had an official space to learn more about their history, customs and traditions translated into a process of consolidation of knowledge and self-recognition of their own identities.

In this sense, the Guantánamo museums intend to orient their projection to the development of social ties and cohesion in the process of citizen training, interaction and collective reflection, to assume consistent and committed positions with physical and cultural accessibility for all and inclusive of disadvantaged groups, to become a space for reflection and debate on historical, social, cultural and scientific issues, as well as to establish themselves as promoters and defenders of respect for human rights and gender equality.

According to the International Council of Museums of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022), a new definition of museum has been given at the proposal of the Extraordinary General Assembly of ICOM in Prague, on August 24, 2022, in its article 3, definition of terms - paragraph 1 - Museum:

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution at the service of society that researches, collects, preserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. Involving communities, museums operate and communicate ethically and professionally, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing. (p. 12).

Taking into account that students do not frequently visit museums, are unaware of the historical information they provide and that few teachers of the subject approach these institutions to obtain information about the services they provide, we consider the linkage to them during the teaching-learning process of Cuban history to be insufficient.

In view of the above, the following scientific problem is proposed: How to design an alternative for the use of the Mariana Grajales Coello Revolution Square Museum as a teaching medium in the subject History of Cuba?

The close relationship between methodological work and social demands concretized in the objectives of the study programs, contributes to enhance the teacher's preparation, which leads us to propose the following objective: To design an alternative for the use of the Museum Plaza de la Revolution Mariana Grajales Coello as a means of teaching in the subject History of Cuba.

## **Development**

The social sciences, including Cuban History, are called to play a decisive role in safeguarding the national identity, forming the new man, and cultivating his intelligence.

Within the teaching-learning process, the teaching media are an essential component, they constitute a source of historical knowledge, and they contain information that favors the integral formation of the students, allowing improving the assimilation of what is to be explained or consolidated. Their importance lies in complementing the teacher's words, achieving the understanding of a concept, and their correct choice depends on the teacher.

In the Journal of Media and Education (2024), it is stated that "teaching media or resources are active components in any process aimed at the development of learning. It is an instrument or a channel that allows communication between teachers and students" (p. 113).

The use of each teaching medium has to respond to each and every one of the stated objectives, in order to approach the different media, it is necessary to consider the typology of didactic media that exist and include those that can be used by teachers in their training designs.

In our opinion, a series of factors are involved in the selection and subsequent use of teaching aids, many of them unrelated to the aids themselves, such as their availability and others that depend both on the students and on the place where we are going to teach and, in the latter case, on the environmental conditions in which the class is held. Aspects such as the location of the seats with respect to the screen or screens, the possibility of darkening the classroom, acoustic conditions, etc., can force us to choose some resources over others and even to do without them.

In Cuba, Ramiro Guerra, Miguel Ángel Cano, Pedro García Valdés and Horacio Díaz Pendás, among others, were among the first promoters of work with museums.

Trujillo (1914) refers to the use of the Museum for the transformation of the practical reality of the school. In spite of his concern, he does not propose a methodology for its use in teaching.

In 1978 and 1979, as part of the process of Improvement of the National Education System, a group of Cuban authors published a two-volume text on the methodology of teaching Cuban History for the training of teachers, where they dedicated a chapter to work with museums.

In 1990 the booklet *Learning History at the Museum* by Horacio Díaz Pendás was published for students of the Higher Pedagogical Institutes, where the museum is defined as a system of means for the teaching of History and a methodology for working with students is proposed.

Leal (1991), for his part, publishes a text on the methodology of teaching Cuban history for primary education, which also contains a chapter on the means for teaching where an ascription to the concept of museum as a system of means can be appreciated.

Díaz (2002) offers a compilation on the teaching of history with an epigraph dedicated to the use of the museum.

Once historical knowledge has been constructed, it serves as a basis for teachers to select with pedagogical criteria what should be assumed in the discipline and subjects in order to comply with the demands that society imposes on the school, hence teachers have the possibility of reviewing these sources to analyze them from another point of view or to use them as didactic mediators in the teaching-learning process.

In relation to this aspect, Díaz (2005, p. 43) classifies primary sources for the construction of historical knowledge for didactic purposes:

Original media: the object; historical witness; archaeological remains.

Reproduction of originals: models; models.

Audiovisual media: cinema; educational television; slides with sound.

Visual media: plates; photographs; caricatures; paintings; slides; posters.

Auditory media: radio; recordings.

Graphic or symbolic media: maps; chronologies; tables; diagrams.

Despite the progress in the use of teaching media, we are far from having educational services in museums that work following specific instructional and educational objectives; the teacher does not visit it before self-preparation and, therefore, does not always take it as a tool to work with students in a class.

According to the Royal Spanish Academy (2023), alternative is the option to choose among several things, possibility, and proposal.

From the pedagogical point of view, according to (Sierra, 2008),

The alternative is an option between two or more variants, which the teacher has to direct the formation and development of the personality of the subjects of education, based on the characteristics, possibilities and the context of pedagogical performance. (p. 28)

We assume as an alternative, the use of the Museum Plaza de la Revolución Mariana Grajales Coello as a teaching medium in the subject History of Cuba, starting from its structure and the indications to be fulfilled in order to proceed in the classes.

Since ancient times, there have been squares that served as political civic centers; nowadays, their social purpose corresponds to the current culture.

In the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, Article 32, paragraph (k), states that "the State protects the monuments of the nation and places remarkable for their natural beauty, or for their recognized artistic or historical value" (p 11).

Given the importance that the State attaches to museums, the National Assembly of People's Power approved Law No 106 of the National Museum System in 2009, which aims to ensure the organization of the museum system and the guiding methodological role that corresponds to the National Council of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture and those bodies and agencies of the central administration of the State.

In Chapter 3, Article 17 of the aforementioned Law, the functions that the museum as a scientific-cultural institution has to perform are set out, the following were selected as valid for the development of this research:

- To custody, conserve, catalog, communicate and exhibit in an orderly manner its funds and collections, according to scientific, aesthetic and didactic criteria.
- To research and promote the study of its collections or of the specialty to which the museum is dedicated.
- To provide advisory and consulting services to agencies, institutions or organizations in the field of museology.
- To establish communication with society through its collections.
- To develop a continuous and systematic work to achieve the interest of the population, especially children and young people, in the appreciation, knowledge and protection of the assets of the Cultural Heritage in its broadest concept, not only referring to the history of the locality, but including its traditions, ethnographies, flora and fauna, geography of the territory and culture in all its manifestations.

The Museum Plaza Mariana Grajales located in the city of Guantánamo, is the monument complex nationally recognized as one of the most relevant and largest commemorative monuments made from the year 1959, gathers high artistic and expressive value, in its sculptures pays homage to figures of national and local importance, especially the mother of the Maceo's family.

The greatness of Mariana Grajales and all the women who joined the Mambises was collected by the authors of the project as thematic support and collects with artistic quality the reading of texts of high and low relief the image of José Martí, the proposed monument is a triumphal arch of the people that contains a synthesis of the most outstanding aspects of the history of the province.

It is a local monument since 1995, with artistic and social value.

Its mission is to celebrate great political, patriotic and cultural events with the participation of the people, as well as the development of community work.

Its social purpose is to carry out different events, symposiums, workshops, contest awards, guided visits, ceremonies, concerts, floral offerings.

In the interior patio it offers the typical vegetation of the hills of Guantánamo set with natural materials, it is the only one in the Island that the visitor can cross from north to south by the pedestrian passage, it maintains contact with the population and the monumental group is assigned to the Provincial Center of Patrimony.

It has obtained achievements that endorse it as a relevant teaching tool to work on the History of Cuba. The alternative that is presented contributes to the fulfillment of the functions of the museum mainly, that of communicating and exhibiting the funds, collections and serving as an important means for the development of instruction and education.

Elements that typify the exclusivity of the Mariana Grajales Coello Revolution Square Museum:

1. First square named after a woman, which pays tribute to Cuban women.
2. The only one with its own music by maestro Frank Fernandez.
3. It has accessibility to the sculptural group 24 hours a day with permanent custody.
4. The monumental discourse brings us closer to a historical journey to the present time.
5. It pays homage to the glorious Border Brigade and its martyrs.
6. The platform base designed in the style of a checkerboard provides to identify us with the urban conception of the city, of the rectilinear streets and gridded blocks.
7. The first square conceived through a competition proposed by the Advisory Council for the Development of Monumental and Environmental Sculpture (CODEMA) and the province's Department of Culture.

8. According to specialists, it is considered one of the most beautiful in the country.

Requirements to be fulfilled with the implementation of the alternative

- To ensure that the teacher is motivated by the teaching and learning content, that it constitutes an internal source that moves him/her towards the search, the discovery of knowledge about the object of study, the ways of appropriation and forms of application in his/her practical life. The teacher must establish the preconditions with the students (motivational, organizational, informative, orienting, etc.), about the activity they will carry out in the museum.
- The teacher should study the correlation between the content of the museum and the program of the subject, in order to determine the historical knowledge with different alternatives that lead to the insinuation, inspiration, search, raise the motivation for the content to be learned from the problematization, together with the development of forms of appropriation to read the information contained in the sources.
- To determine the objectives that the students will fulfill through the activities they develop in the museum, in correspondence with the forms of teaching organization, if the learning activity that the student will carry out is to introduce new content, or to consolidate what has already been explained, or to control; or if, far from predominating one function, all of them intervene.
- To provide guidance to students about the usefulness of museum information using a language within their reach, seek the relationship with the reality of everyday life, so that they can internalize the message, leaving room for the student to implement what they have learned and be encouraged to search for new knowledge until they create something new and valuable for them.
- To coordinate with the museum specialist, in cases where this is the person who attends to the students, this person and the teacher should discuss the objectives to be achieved, the characteristics of the content being studied during the year, determining the aspects that should be emphasized.
- To promote favorable teaching-learning climates between the teacher and the students in all the moments involved in the activity of appropriation of historical content, both oral and written, where individual and collective activity is combined and prediction, discussion, evaluation, explanation and argumentation are promoted, so that interactive communication prevails.
- To ensure that the student's homework is the result of individual effort and thought, that responds to the demands and behavior of their zone of proximal development in such a way as

to raise their learning capacity, leading them to higher stages of development.

- The proposed alternative meets the requirements of the Cuban History Program for the Accounting and Finance career, it is part of the Cuban History discipline, with 32 class hours, it is taught in the 2nd period of the 1st year of the career and it is adjusted to the professional's model.

The educational objectives are:

- To develop through the deepening in the knowledge of the national history the formation of patriotic, socialist and internationalist convictions that propitiate a consequent attitude with their proceeding as revolutionary and socialist professional.
- To achieve through the reproduction of the process of formation of the Cuban people to apply creatively to this evolution the Marxist Leninist methodology, as well as to assume with the history and the interests of the Cuban people, their revolutionary traditions, their struggles and their continental and world projection.

Instructional objectives: In these the student should be able to:

- Broaden the knowledge about the History of Cuba, with a scientific basis, which will contribute to the understanding of the theoretical bases of the social sciences in Cuba, of its problems and its perspectives.
- To value the Cuban historical process as part of the general tendencies of universal history and at the same time as a particular process within it.
- To substantiate, through the study of national history, the roots of the socialist option adopted by our people as the only viable alternative for development and for the preservation of its national identity.
- To specify the characteristics of the development of the diverse branches of the national economy and the historical problems of this one, especially those of greater incidence in the formation of a work culture.
- To deepen the knowledge on the currents of thought and the personalities that have outlined the Cuban identity and animated the great national projects.

I- Ways of working with the museum established by Pendas (2005):

- a) Guided or guided visit.
- b) Independent work of the student supported by the observation guide.
- c) Class developed in the museum.

d) Linking what is learned in the museum with the class at school.

II- Aspects to be taken into account by the teacher when organizing the activities in the museum as a means of teaching:

1. View and select the objects in the museum that will serve as a teaching medium for the subject.
2. Study and select the content of the program units and receive a guided visit to determine how to apply the benefits of the museum.
3. Make a list of resources, objects and graphic media that do not exist in the school to contribute to the better assimilation of the content.
4. Work in the museum with Pedagogy.
5. Creative character and outside of rigid criteria.
6. Coordinate the activities to be carried out
7. Indicate tasks, supported by the observation guide and the course syllabus.

III- Proposal of activities for the teachers' work, linked to the contents of Topic 2 of the Cuban History Program for the Accounting and Finance career.

Activity No. 1

Topic 2: The struggles for independence between 1868 and 1898.

Educational and instructive objectives:

- To achieve through the reproduction of the formation process of the Cuban people that they assume their revolutionary traditions, their struggles and their continental and world projection.
- To deepen the knowledge about the currents of thought and the personalities that have outlined the Cuban identity and animated the great national projects.

Subject 2.1: The struggle for national liberation: The Ten Years' War, character, emergence of the Cuban national State, social composition and ideological expressions within the Revolution.

Objective of the activity: to deepen in the historical content using phrases of the revolutionary thought of Pedro Agustín Pérez.

Methodological guidelines: the teacher should go to the Museum and request the service of a specialist; the route is determined by the selected objectives and content. The teacher's task during the visit is to direct the observation towards all the elements of the rooms in order to extract the necessary information for self-preparation and orientation of the students' activities.

He will choose the phrase of Major General Pedro Agustín Pérez "I prefer death rather than see Cuba a victim of Spain's whip any longer, which appears in the first element of the Plaza Museum.

Suggested questions to ask:

1. What is the situation in Cuba and Guantánamo on the eve of the Revolution of 1868?
2. Who was Major General Pedro Agustín Pérez?
3. Read carefully the words of Pedro Agustín Pérez and argue their meaning for the Cubans of yesterday and today?

What relevance does the revolutionary thought of Pedro Agustín Pérez have for the current struggle of the Cuban people and what values did he bequeath to us?

5. What other personalities did we find in the hall of the colonial period in Guantanamo and what role did they play in our emancipation struggles?

### **Activity No. 2**

Thematic 2.2: Validity of the independence ideal, ideological combat, José Martí and the Cuban Revolutionary Party and the Revolution of 1895- 1898.

Objective: To value the importance of José Martí's revolutionary work as a guide, organizer and ideologist of the new war period and the validity of his thought throughout the Cuban revolutionary process.

The second element of the Plaza Museum will be used, which represents the passage through the province of the great generals of great national transcendence and the intense activities carried out, such as:

- The disembarkation by Playita de Cajobabo.
- Máximo Gómez and José Martí.
- The incorporation of Guantánamo to the war by the Maceo brothers.
- The disembarkation of Antonio Maceo by Duaba.

Suggested questions to ask:

1. Locate in the time graph the historical facts related above.
2. What was the political and ideological work developed by José Martí in Guantánamo?
3. What role did Guantánamo play in this stage of Cuban history?
4. Evaluate the historical personalities mentioned in this element of the Plaza Museum.

### **Activity No. 3**

Theme 2.3: The role of women in the wars for independence.

Objective: To value the importance of the revolutionary work of Mariana Grajales Coello as an example for Cuban women in the different periods of the independence struggles of our people.

The third element will be used, triumphal arch or town portico that means the union of mambises and rebel traditions, as well as the link of the old and the new Guantánamo, it is reflected the phrase "**Easy are the heroes with such women**" of José Martí highlighting the work of this one.

Suggested questions to ask:

1. Who was Mariana Grajales and what role did she play in our struggles for independence?
2. Why is she considered the Mother of the Homeland?
3. What role did women play in the history of Guantánamo and Cuba?

As an activity that integrates the themes of the theme, we will take up the phrase of José Martí that appears on the back of the monument, which will relate the content of the life and work of the Master and the role of Cuban women in history with the actions of Mariana Grajales Coello.

José Martí, "**Easy are the heroes with such women**"

## Conclusions

The theoretical and empirical methods used allowed reaching an accurate diagnosis. The proposed alternative, Mariana Grajales Coello Revolution Square Museum, as a means of teaching the subject History of Cuba, constitutes a guide for the teaching of developmental classes according to the teaching-learning process. It contributes to the strengthening of the teachers' work, achieving the integral formation of students with new knowledge and skills that contribute to their protagonism.

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