

Story 15: The story about Hatuey



Story shared by: *Jorge*

Representing: *Cuban and lives in Belgrade.*

The Story:

In the 15th century, Spaniards came to Cuba and started to colonize the island. One they, Spaniards imposed a new system in Cuba - which we call colonisation of the island. As a part of the process of colonisation, they took the native population and “integrate” them into Spanish society. But this integration was terribly violent, so a lot of native Cuban people decided not to follow the Spanish rule. They rebelled against the Spanish. And one of them was Hatuey.

Hatuey’s rebellion is said to be the first one against the Spaniards, and he represents the real spirit of the Cuban people. When the Spaniards caught Hatuey, they put him on the bonfire. Before they lit the fire, a priest asked Hatuey if he wanted to say anything to atone for his sins so that he could go to heaven.

Hatuey then asked the priest: “Do Spanish go to Heaven as well?”



And the priest answered: “Yes, the Spanish go to Heaven.”

Then Hatuey said: “Then, NO, I do not want to go to that Heaven!

Then Spaniards set the fire and Hatuey died.

Today, in the eastern part of Cuba, people often say that they have seen lights in the countryside. For them, it is the light of Yara. Yara is a village where the spirit of Hatuey goes out every night because he could not go to Heaven. It is said that he is still moving around this region where the rebellion happened and where he was killed.

Jorge explained to us: When you go to school, you learn the story about Hatuey as a part of history. It appears in history books, but it is a kind of a mixture of legend and history. We cannot exactly know what happened in 15th century, but the part that tells me it is a legend is when Hatuey talks to the priest in fluent Spanish – although he is a Cuban native who opposed colonisation. He is the first Cuban national hero and a symbol of liberty. Hatuey is still present in Cuban popular culture, he is everywhere - there is even a brand of beer called after him.