

# LETTER TO THE CITIZEN PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC (1876)

Antonio Maceo

Citizen President of the Republic:

Antonio Maceo Grajales: native of the city of Santiago de Cuba; Brigadier General of the Liberating Army, and currently Chief of the Second Division of the First Core, respectfully presents himself before you and states: that for quite some time now, if you will, he has been tolerating various conversations that have been relegated because they were believed to have stemmed from the enemy who is notoriously well known to engage in this sport, and has used all sorts of weapons to divide us, to see if by this means it can defeat us. But later on, upon seeing that the class issue was growing and taking on a different form, I tried to see precisely from whence it came, and finally became convinced (as painful as it is to say), that it stems not from the enemy but rather from our own brothers, who, forgetting the republican and democratic principles which should guide them, have opted to serve personal political ends instead.

Therefore, in view of the aforementioned, he feels obliged to appeal to the Government which you represent, so that when you are fully immersed in the reasons I shall expound upon at a later time, you will proceed in a just manner and resolutely take the necessary measures to completely remove any blemish, or doubt concerning the conduct the one who has

expounded this, and to remove even the slightest stain from the name of one whose whole life's desire has been, is, and will be to serve his country; defending its proclaimed principles while risking his life, as he done many times, in order that the cause would triumph and its sacrosanct principles of freedom and independence remain unscathed.

The petitioner before you has known for some time, Citizen President, (from a person of good reputation and prestige), that there is a small circle that rumored it had divulged to the Government that it does not wish to serve under the orders of him who speaks to you, because of class distinctions; and later on, through a different channel, I have learned that they have additionally, not been willing to serve under me because I have confronted them and because I have replaced white men with colored men. Such is the situation this circle seeks to agitate and it is certainly plausible that they have launched this in order to wound as deeply as possible, the petitioner now before you. In doing so they are serving their own personal political interests, and to see if by this means they can put out of action, the one they consider an obstacle to their plans; thus trying to sink (because it has not been possible by any other means), the man who joined the Revolution for no other purpose than to give

his blood to see if his Homeland could achieve freedom for itself and its slaves. Despite having no ambition whatsoever and having shed his blood so many times, and being justified by his many wounds, and perhaps because those who envy him, see him protected by providence, they resort to slander, which grows incrementally. And your petitioner, who speaks to you without blood on his conscience, after discovering their actions, brought the matter up directly with one of the members of this small circle, upon which he discovered even more about their wicked goals, and the fact that they are surreptitiously, sowing the seeds of dissension and thereby creating discord. They are irritating people, and in the end, it will be our Homeland that will suffer the consequences.

And specially because the petitioner belongs to the colored race, without considering himself worth more or less than other men, he cannot consent to that which is not real; nor to that which he wishes would not happen, nor to that which should not be permitted to take shape and continue to extend itself. His dignity, military honor, current position, and the laurels he has so legitimately acquired do not permit him to do so. And with all his might, he energetically protests, lest now nor at any time he ever be considered an advocate of a Negro republic nor a propagator of so ill-fated a doctrine, particularly since I am part of, and not ungrateful to this democratic Republic, which has set forth as its founding principles; Liberty and Fraternity, and that refuses to recognize any other hierarchy.

And if the author of this letter were to become part of the Government, it would be so that things would proceed as planned; knowing that he who would be judged by you, would keep these principles in mind; for he who would not maintain them, would be considered an enemy of the Republic; because those who use weapons which directly or indi-

rectly favor our enemy's plans should be considered enemies as well, and thereby becomes worthy of punishment under our laws.

And if for some incredible reason this petitioner is denied the justice which he demands, and if for some political reason, (now that the question has been brought to the table), there were a desire to condemn this issue to an impasse, and I am relegated to being a simple spectator in a war that I embraced with as much faith as courage, because I believed in the sanctity of the cause, [the petitioner] request to be given his passport to go abroad, where he reserves the right to exercise those rights and protest to the civilized world, as he does here, now. But let this not remotely be understood as a pretext for abandoning the country, particularly now when it needs more than ever, the supreme effort of all its good sons; for he is neither incapacitated (despite the eleven honorable wounds on his body), nor is he tired; because this petitioner, Citizen President, is not a man who tires. Nor will he become tired as long as he sees his country without the rights it should be accorded because of the bloody struggle it initiated in 1868, to liberate itself from everything that was not republican. Lastly:

I am addressing this request to you so you can order the formation of the proper judicial proceedings so that truth would prevail, and those you deem worthy would be punished.

Barigua Military Camp. May 16, 1876.  
Ninth year of Independence. Homeland and Freedom.

A. Maceo

Translation by Kenya C. Dworkin y Méndez, based on the original letter as it appears in *Biblioteca Popular de Cultura Cubana. Antonio Maceo Grajales, Escritos*. Santiago de Cuba (s.a.): pp. 4-6. Quoted in Hortensia Pichardo (1973) *Documentos para la Historia de Cuba*, Tomo I, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana, pp. 394-397.