

## **FAREWELL SOLITUDE by Rogelia Castellon**

**June 8, 2007**

I write this, today, because I find the silence that envelops our political prisoners to be unjust. Because I do not see powerful voices fighting for them, because Oscar Elias Biscet still lives inside that sad silence.

I often think about Cubans, my brethren on the Island. They are all prisoners to the sorrow of not being free. Many voices of the free world do not mention them, do not defend them. They do not use their voices that others listen to help liberate them.

Today I stop in the silence of a Cuban prison, and I can see the scars from the crime to which each Cuban political prisoner is subjected. There are so many, so many, wounds!

And I ask, why Lord why? Why is it that so many do not understand the Cuban tragedy and remain indifferent to it? Perhaps because they turn a deaf ear to the voices that denounce the tortures, the unspoken sorrow, and the crimes hidden away among the rocks of Castro's never ending wall in front of which prisoners are shot to death by firing squads. I can see them here. They shut their eyes to feel the silence of the solitude that takes them through paths of dreams that have come to nothing. They extend their arms to receive a hug that is hanging in the wind. However, the hug does not arrive to erase that sadness that is seen and heard in these cells. Every man is accompanied by Solitude. If you approach them and speak to them, you will see a slight smile, looking for human lips always longing to hear a loving voice, the voice of a loved one. Then, I would like to say, I'M BY YOUR SIDE, I WANT TO HUG YOU!

I walk into a very dark cell and I approach its occupant. Tyranny does not permit light to shine through. It believes that by so doing, it will drive away their thoughts! Fools! They do not know dreamers. They do not need light to dream, nor to think nor to love ideas. They will always continue to be free, but their executioners do not know it. I know its occupant. His name is Oscar Elias Biscet, a vertical man. He still has the integrity that one day brought him to their jail having been accused of not respecting the Cuban flag! Of not respecting the flag for which he has given up his freedom! The flag that he used as a protest symbol in favor of the rights of the people. Biscet does not lament, does not throw forth complaints, it seems as if sorrow cannot touch him. He is still a man of protest, and he is often a silent man. As I look at him, I can foresee his great desire; one day he would like to see our people living in freedom. On that day, he will carry the Cuban flag in his hands without protesting; he will only hold it up before the world as a symbol of love and rebellion.

As I look at him, I learn a lot from his unspoken sorrow, of his sad smiles, and above all, his moments of silence which I cannot penetrate because they are his and to be heard by God, to ask that Oscar Elias Biscet may receive from His infinite mercy the strength needed to withstand the effects of a tyranny that hides him and mistreats him because it fears him. The regime recognizes the strength of this man of faith and recognizes his encouraging words. Yes, it is afraid of him. Why? Simple, it knows the truth in this man, fit to alert the people in bondage, fit to speak with the words that those who love a free homeland hope to hear.

Here, in the prison, there are many men who live solely in solitude or should I say, instead, they live with Solitude, the eternal companion, always beside each one of them to help them recall their lives and the dream of finding in each spring time the joy of encountering days with a future. Each has been sentenced for different actions. But behind all of them, lies one truth; they have been sentenced because they confronted tyranny. They have been sentenced for speaking up. They have been sentenced for being men of truth.

Words are absent from these cells. So are peace and freedom, love and company, bread and words. Beautiful words with a taste of distance. The prisoners want our presence because they see us as free men and women capable of pushing solitude away. She, who is always guilty of the absences. I had not given much thought about how sad it is to live in silence, to live in a silence imposed by the power of the bayonet. Now, that I understand it, I would fight to have the word erased from dictionaries in a new Cuba. I will live life looking for words capable of showing companionship, love, and joy!

I think about Biscet, and all I see is the price that he and other prisoners have paid in hopes of offering the magic word to people who have had their rights taken away. I do not want to mention their sorrows because they do not speak about that topic. I wait only that moment during which all of them can infinitely repeat the dream word: liberty.

I think about the tyrant and say to him, you will die persecuted by the memories of the men and women you killed or imprisoned, you will die accompanied by the contempt of the Cuban people. And you will die accompanied by SOLITUDE during your departure.

Biscet, I also think often about your joy when the longed for moment arrives when you will hear the hand of a friend knocking at your cell door to tell you:

You are a free man!

I bring you the good fortune of having sent Solitude away for good.

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