

He used his minute



Havana surprises, not because of what it shows, but rather what it suggests. Yesterday I went with my mother so she wouldn't have to run her errands alone because she's getting on in years. Imagine my surprise when we arrived at one of those public service places (I'm going to respect its anonymity) and the young man who attended us relayed his admiration in a low voice and looked me right in the eye, intensely and complicit.

I didn't respond because I thought he'd mistaken me for someone else. Then he said: "I watch the channels." And he winked. And he went on: "You're very brave and you're totally right. You were right to do what you did. I would have gone (to the Plaza of the Revolution) and said, 'How is it that the children of the leadership leave the country and in three months have their own business in a foreign country?' That can only happen with the people's money." I told him I couldn't talk, that I was only free on probation. "I know," he responded.

The only thing I said, perhaps so he'd hear it straight from me and know who I am, is that they've geared up a tremendous defamation campaign against me, accusing me of being connected to the American secret services and to drug trafficking, which is far from the truth. "Don't worry," he said. "Everyone here already knows their defamation techniques and nobody believes them."

My mother and I concluded our business and said goodbye as if nothing had happened. But I left feeling much stronger because at least that fellow Cuban had given me an uncensored minute.

I left feeling much stronger because the man I didn't know who called me by name and extended his hand to me, which I reciprocated (more out of courtesy), and the young woman in the back seat of the ten peso Cuban-only taxi who stared at me intensely no longer make me think they're security agents following me ... They now make me think of something much more human: of the people, my fellow citizens, and that they must be the very reasons my parole officer insists every day, and with great high-handedness, that I should not leave the house.

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