

# *Caribbean Festival approaches death from culture and sociology*

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Santiago de Cuba, July 5 (RHC)-- The 3rd World Congress on Death opened sessions at Heredia theatre in Santiago de Cuba, in the framework of the 42<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Caribbean Festival.

Carlos Lloga, general coordinator of the event said death is a recurrent theme on the scientific agenda of Casa del Caribe, the main institution organizing the Caribbean Festival –also known as the Fire Festival-- in the eastern Cuban territory. He mentioned several research projects by Cuban scholars to contribute a more in-depth study and better understanding of this natural process.

This year's edition of the Caribbean Festival has Mexico as guest country of honor and is dedicated particularly to Mexican celebrations of life and death --The Day of the Dead—which was declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2003.

In this context, the 3rd World Congress on Death favors academic exchanges and debates on world personalities who are no longer with us, ecological destruction and other issues related to Caribbean cultures and their common and unique approach to death.

Mexican archeologist Patricia Ledesma reflected on the death rituals in Mexico and in most countries across the Latin American and Caribbean region, which include floral wreaths, food offerings.

Cuban scholar Omar López, historian of the city of Santiago de Cuba, pointed to several different religions and their unique, distinctive way to deal

with death. In Santiago de Cuba, for instance, families paint their departed loved ones, as a way to preserve their image and their spirituality.

He spoke extensively about the Santa Ifigenia cemetery, which keeps the remains of heroes of Cuba's Independence and those of other unknown heroes, African kings, religious leaders, celebrated artists. Not by chance, Santa Ifigenia Cemetery was declared National Monument of the Cuban Nation in 1937, a status ratified in 1979 by the Cuban revolutionary government.

The Caribbean Festival or Fire Festival is held annually in July, organized by Casa del Caribe in eastern Santiago de Cuba. It celebrates common and unique features of Caribbean cultures, idiosyncrasies and traditions towards promoting and preserving them.

The ongoing World Congress on Death in the framework of the Festival offers an artistic, sociological, historical and religious approach to the natural process.

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