

# Maestra

## A Documentary Film by Catherine Murphy

The Cuban Literacy Campaign in 1961 was one of the farthest-reaching and most successful literacy campaigns to date, a pinnacle moment in the social history of the Americas. The documentary **Maestra** tells the personal stories of the youngest women literacy workers who went to the mountains and valleys across the island to teach—and found themselves deeply transformed in the process.

Over half of the newly literate adults were women. Many learned to read the alphabet—and write their own names—for the first time. For the young women who left their homes and went to the mountains to teach, the campaign remains one of the most important experiences of their lives. It was the first time in Cuban history that thousands of young women broke free from many limitations that they faced as women and went out on their own. Many say it was the first time they felt “independent, capable, and free.”



Photo courtesy of Liborio Noval December 22, 1961

Exploring this moment through personal testimonies, **Maestra** explores the connections between national liberation and personal liberation, and the importance of empowering women and girls. Based in living history, **Maestra** aims to spark contemporary dialogue, reflection, and positive social change.

*"This film brought tears to my eyes. Thank you. It is beautiful."*

**Alice Walker**, Writer and Peacemaker, Author of *The Color Purple*

*"This exciting project by Catherine Murphy rescues one of the most important literacy campaigns of the Americas. It's protagonists narrate their experiences, and through their own voices, we learn of their unique and collective experience. Catherine has dedicated her time, energy and know-how to this important project. The result is worthy of this historical challenge."*

**Eduardo Galeano**, Uruguayan Writer/Journalist, Author of *The Open Veins of Latin America*

*"In an age when so many teenagers—especially girls—are afflicted with low self-esteem, **Maestra** shows how a whole generation of Cuban youth blossomed by venturing out to the countryside to spread the gift of literacy. Proving the old adage that it is better to give than receive, this film shows how a government mission to help the poorest lifts the entire society to new heights. Watch it and rejoice!"*

**Medea Benjamin**, Founder, Code Pink/Women for Peace; Global Exchange

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