

La dirigente cubana Mariela Castro Espín sobre la ‘conquista progresiva de nuevos derechos’

El primer boletín de Mujeres en Lucha/Women In Struggle incluye extractos de las presentaciones del seminario web “Qué podemos aprender del Código de Libertad para las Familias de Cuba” que tuvo lugar el 22 de enero. El siguiente es el mensaje en video de Mariela Castro Espín, directora del Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (CENESEX) de Cuba y diputada a la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular.

Hola compañeras, reciban un saludo cordial, soy Mariela Castro.

Quiero comentarles que hay dos hitos principales en la revolución cubana respecto al derecho familiar. Uno fue el código de familia aprobado en 1975, que además fue un proceso también de consulta popular y se llevó a referéndum. Un código que además permitió instituir ya valores importantes que se estaban promocionando en la sociedad cubana para la igualdad de derechos entre los hombres y las mujeres, sobre todo en la vida familiar, en la distribución equitativa de las tareas educativas, de las tareas del hogar. Un poco para empezar a erosionar esa herencia patriarcal de la división sexual del trabajo.

Ese código jugó un papel muy importante. Se consideró uno de los más avanzados del mundo en esa época. Un código heteropatriarcal todavía en algunos aspectos y heteronormativos específicamente. Pero ya a la sociedad cubana no se le podía pedir mucho más en esa etapa.

El trabajo de educación, el desarrollo científico, sobre todo en el campo de las ciencias jurídicas, de las ciencias sociales y humanísticas, llevaron a que también la sociedad cubana adquiriera una cultura mucho más sólida en el campo de la familia y en el campo del derecho familiar. Pero también todo lo que se avanzó respecto a los derechos de las mujeres y todo lo que incluso se refleja a nivel estadístico, porque Cuba tiene el segundo lugar a nivel mundial de mujeres parlamentarias: el 53% del parlamento cubano está integrado por mujeres. Nuestra Asamblea Nacional de Poder Popular, en niveles de dirección hay cada vez más presencia de mujeres. En el campo científico cubano predominan las mujeres, y hay varios sectores de la sociedad cubana a nivel profesional donde la presencia de las mujeres cada vez más alta.

Así que en Cuba hay un respeto por las

mujeres; pero todavía, el patriarcado, aunque ha sido erosionado y debilitado por los avances de nuestra Revolución, realmente todavía hace resistencias importantes y eso nos genera desafíos.

Después de 47 años de vigencia del Código de familia y todos los elementos nuevos que se fueron incorporando, las leyes en las que Cuba se suscribía y se comprometía como estado, leyes en el campo del derecho internacional, en el campo de los Derechos Humanos, todo lo que iba avanzando nuestra Revolución, ya era necesario actualizar ese código.

Pero se empezó por la reforma primero, de la estrategia de desarrollo económico y social del país con la participación del pueblo con sus criterios, con sus críticas y sus propuestas. De ahí se pasó a la reforma constitucional que fue una reforma sustancial de 2019 aprobada en abril de 2019, también sometida a consulta especializada, consulta popular y llevada referéndum con una participación altísima. El 87% de la población aprobó esa constitución en la que ya se blindaban los derechos de las personas LGBT, se abrían caminos importantes por ejemplo, para lo que le llaman el matrimonio igualitario, pero también para fortalecer la mayor protección a la salud sexual y reproductiva, los derechos sexuales y reproductivos.

Hay muchos otros elementos que ustedes podrán leer en este documento tan valioso que hay quienes consideran el más avanzado del mundo. Expertos internacionales lo consideran así. Pero además, un código que al igual que la Constitución, fue escrito con el corazón, con la inteligencia y la sabiduría de nuestro pueblo.

Se le llama también el Código de los Afectivos porque se ponderan los vínculos afectivos por encima de esa camisa de fuerza que existía de los vínculos biológicos.

Realmente esto tiene un significado muy grande porque a pesar de la oposición de al-

gunos grupos religiosos y particularmente la Iglesia Católica a evitar los avances de la Revolución en la conquista progresiva de nuevos derechos, realmente se logró con la participación de nuestro pueblo, llegar a un código ampliamente aceptado aunque fue el primero que en el que hubo un 33% de votos negativos. Pero está bien, eso demuestra la resistencia que todavía existe en relación con estos temas, y todos los desafíos que nos generan para seguir transformando las conciencias, que nos permitan generar una ciudadanía activa con relación a las necesidades de transformaciones sociales y transformaciones subjetivas para hacer una sociedad cada vez más justa y equitativa.

El proceso de transición al socialismo es complejo y las conciencias siempre avanzan de manera más rezagada. Y esto es lo que ha estado sucediendo. Ese es el significado que tiene. Nuestro pueblo aprobó una constitución y un código de las familias muy avanzado dentro del contexto de sociedad socialista de derechos y Justicia social.

Me siento muy satisfecha con el resultado, pero también siento la responsabilidad que todavía tenemos de seguir avanzando para educar y comunicar de manera permanente todos los elementos basados en la ciencia que ayuden a aportar elementos de análisis para monitorear y evaluar cómo va la aplicación de esta nueva legislación en la regulación del derecho familiar.

Muchas gracias por su interés en el tema. Les invito a leer este documento tan valioso que ha sido el resultado de la construcción de consensos durante los 47 años que duró el código anterior. Y esa es la importancia que tiene., cómo nuestra sociedad está avanzando en la adquisición de conciencia y de una cultura mucho más rigurosa con relación a los temas que este código trata.

Muchas gracias por su interés y reciban un afectuoso saludo; hasta la próxima. 📧



tinyurl.com/456j53nv

WOMEN IN STRUGGLE MUJERES EN LUCHA

Cuban leader Mariela Castro Espín on ‘progressive conquest of new rights’

The first newsletter from the Women In Struggle /Mujeres En Lucha includes excerpts of presentations from the webinar “What We Can Learn from Cuba’s ‘Code of Freedom’ for Families” that took place on Jan. 22. The following is the transcript of a video message from Mariela Castro Espín, director of Cuba’s National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX) and deputy of the National Assembly of Popular Power.

Greetings to all, I am Mariela Castro.

There are two main milestones in the Cuban Revolution regarding family law. One was the Family Code approved in 1975, which also went through a process of popular consultation and was taken to a referendum.

This code allowed for instituting important values that are being promoted in Cuban society for equal rights between men and women, especially in family life, in the equitable distribution of educational tasks and household chores, to begin to erode that patriarchal heritage of the sexual division of labor.

That code played a very important role and was considered one of the most advanced in the world at that time. Still a heteropatriarchal code, in some aspects, and heteronormative specifically, yet not much more could be asked of Cuban society at that stage.

Education and scientific development, especially in the field of legal and social sciences and humanities, led to strengthening of Cuban culture regarding the family and family law. Progress was made regarding the rights of women.

All of this is reflected at a statistical level, as Cuba ranks second in the world for women parliamentarians: 53% of the Cuban parliament consists of women. There is an increasing presence of women in the National Assembly of Popular Power at leadership levels. Cuban women predominate in the sciences and there are several sectors of Cuban society at a professional level where the presence of women is increasingly greater.

In Cuba there is respect for women, but the society is still patriarchal. Although the patriarchy has been eroded and weakened by the advances of our Revolution, there is significant resistance, and that creates challenges for us.

After 47 years of the Family Code being in force with all the new elements that were

incorporated, the laws in which Cuba subscribed and committed itself as a state, laws in the field of international law, in the field of Human Rights, everything that our Revolution was advancing, it was already necessary to update that code.

But it began first, with the reform of the country’s economic and social development strategy with the participation of the people with their criteria, with their criticisms and their proposals. From there, it went on to the constitutional reform, which was a substantial reform of 2019 approved in April 2019, also subject to specialized consultation, popular consultation and referendum with a very high turnout. 87% of the population approved that constitution in which the rights of LGBT people were already protected, important paths were opened, for example, for what they call equal marriage, but also to strengthen greater protection for health and reproduction, sexual and reproductive rights.

There are many other elements of the 2022 Families Code that you will be able to read on this valuable document that some consider to be the most advanced in the world, that is, international experts consider it to be so.

This code, like the constitution, was written with the heart, intelligence and wisdom of our people. And so this is also called the heartfelt code, because the bonds of affection are given precedence over the straitjacket of biological bonds.

This is truly very significant, despite the opposition of some religious groups and particularly the Catholic Church, to prevent the advances of the Revolution in the progressive conquest of new rights. This has truly been achieved with the participation of our people in reaching a widely accepted code, although it was the first in which there were 33% negative votes.

And that’s fine. It shows the resistance that still exists regarding these issues and all



Mariela Castro Espín at Cuba’s annual March Against Homophobia and Transphobia in 2017.

the challenges that they generate for us to continue transforming awareness that will allow us to create an active citizenry regarding the need for social and subjective transformations, for achieving an increasingly just and equitable society.

The transition to socialism is complex and individual awareness is always in the rearguard. And this is what has been happening. That is the significance. Our people have approved a constitution and a very advanced family code, within the context of a socialist society of rights and social justice.

I am very satisfied with the result, but I also feel the responsibility that we still have to continue advancing to permanently educate and communicate all the elements based on science that help provide elements of analysis to monitor and evaluate the application of this new legislation in family law.

I thank you very much for your interest in this issue and I invite you to read this valuable document that has been the result of building consensus for the 47 years that the previous code lasted. This is the importance it has, how our society is advancing by becoming more aware and moving towards a much more conscientious culture regarding the issues that this code deals with.

Thank you very much for your interest and warm greetings. Until we meet again.

Comprehensive summary (in English): tinyurl.com/bdez3deu 📧

End the U.S. economic war against the Cuban people!

By Cheryl LaBash

Sixty years is a long time. But that is how long the United States government, led by both Democrats and Republicans, has waged an economic, financial and commercial war against the Cuban people.

Even before that, the Eisenhower administration recognized that Fidel and the July 26th Movement — Raul, Che, Almeida, Camilo, Vilma, Haydee, Celia, Melba and so many more — would stay true to their promise: liberation, equality and sovereignty for all the Cuban people.

An April 6, 1960, State Department memo admitted the fact that the Cuban people supported the revolution. So it prescribed the path taken by the U.S. from then until today:

“Every possible means should be undertaken to weaken the economic life of Cuba,” the memo states. “If such a policy is adopted, it should be the result of a positive decision which would call forth a line of action which, while as adroit and inconspicuous as possible, makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of the government.”

Although the goal didn’t change, the tactic did. On Dec. 17, 2014, President Obama and President Raul Castro agreed to begin a different road. President Obama even visited Cuba — and as a result many people wrongly believe the blockade ended then. Some things were eased, but behind it all, the coercive economic measures continued.

Then, in June 2017, President Trump declared he would return to the failed direction outlined by the State Department in 1960.

And then came the pandemic. Cuba had to close its main source of hard currency — tourism — and used its reserves to save lives,

develop five COVID vaccines (three now in emergency use) and send its famous Henry Reeve Brigades to countries needing help against the pandemic.

U.S. uses pandemic as weapon

The United States saw its opportunity to use the pandemic as a weapon. Some 243 new measures were implemented to block any financial possibilities for Cuba. Surely the Cuban people would be desperate enough to embrace capitalist landlords, bankers and bosses.

Then as a parting shot, after the 2020 Biden election, Cuba was again declared a “State Sponsor of Terrorism.” Certainly an insult as well as an injury to Cuba.

Although President Biden has been in office two years, he has done virtually nothing to lift the pressure on the Cuban people. The SSOT can be lifted with a letter from Biden!

Instead, we have been inundated with propaganda about “human rights” to justify turning back the changes made by the Obama administration in 2014-2015.

There is no alternative truth. Cuba is not a state sponsor of terrorism, but has been targeted by terrorist acts organized and financed in the U.S. The intensified blockade has hurt Cuban families on both sides of the Florida straits. For three years, Cubans in Miami have said “end the blockade” in the streets every month.

And it hurts farmers, workers and ordinary people in the U.S., too. Cuba has de-

CUBA It's a target not a terrorist
Off the 'State Sponsor of Terrorism' list



#DeList & #UnblockCuba
#BetterWithoutBlockade



veloped medical treatments that make 70% of diabetic amputations unnecessary, and a lung cancer vaccine that prolongs the quality of life of patients.

Guess what? The U.S. categories of “legal” travel to Cuba do not include medical treatment. It’s the only country in the world where U.S. travelers need to declare a U.S. government designated category.

Elected bodies representing more than 44 million residents from California to Connecticut, from Montana to Michigan to Alabama, have called for the blockade to end, including city councils and labor organizations, school boards and county commissions.

The last weekend of every month, caravans are held to end the blockade in Miami and cities across the U.S. and around the world. Make a sign with hashtag #UnblockCuba and #OFFtheList.

Participate in the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference March 11-12 or the May Day Brigade.

Stay in touch with the National Network On Cuba on social media. Web: NNOC.org; Facebook.com/CubaNetwork; Instagram: NationalNetwork4Cuba; Twitter: @NNOCuba.

Sixty years is too long. This campaign needs you to act now. [📧](#)

The Social Evolution of Humanity
Marx and Engels Were Right!
Bob McCubbin



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The Social Evolution of Humanity Marx and Engels were right!

This study of the evolution of humanity focuses on human social/sexual relations and, in particular, the changing social status of women. It offers a selection of scientific evidence that updates and augments the viewpoint expressed in Frederick Engels’ masterful work, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.*

Bob McCubbin

McCubbin is the author of ‘Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression: A Marxist View.’ Published in 1976, during the beginning of the modern LGBTQ2S movement, McCubbin’s unparalleled achievement was to offer a historical analysis of how LGBTQ2S oppression developed.

‘People in the U.S. have a lot to learn from Cuba’s Families Code’

By Gloria Verdieu

I remember my first trip to socialist Cuba in November 2000. I attended the Second World Meeting of Friendship and Solidarity. I have the poster that was given to all participants. It has a quote from José Martí: “The world is a beautiful temple where all men on earth fit in peace.”

I knew then and I know now that “all men” translates to “all of humanity.” We can all fit in peace on this beautiful earth — our home.

The reason I went on this trip was that I wanted to see what socialism looked like.

The conference was attended by people from over 60 countries condemning the U.S. blockade. I came with a delegation; buses took us to the many programs on our packed schedule. We visited factories, polyclinics and communities, where we learned about the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs). There were cultural performances in these communities.

The daily events gave the delegates a chance to experience what life is like with a government that is concerned with the needs of the people rather than profits.

The delegates gathered daily at the Karl Marx Theater, within walking distance of our hotel. When I went walking, I did not feel any restrictions, though I did not wander too far.

We didn’t know if President Fidel Castro would speak at any of the conference gatherings. I figured not — with thousands of people there, it would be a big security risk.

During our final meeting at the Karl Marx Theater, Fidel appeared on the stage. No bulletproof glass barriers, no extra security checks that I was aware of.

Fidel began to speak; we were given devices for interpretation. People listened and listened until it was time for discussion. Fidel gave lengthy, thoughtful answers to questions, not only from the delegates, but from Cuban workers.

At one point a child ran on stage and Fidel gave him a hug and said something that I could tell was a show of affection for him and his family.

Healthcare in Cuba vs. U.S.

One of the many things that had an impact on me was when we visited one of the polyclinics.

There was a group of doctors at the clinic, and one explained to us how closely connected doctors are with the communities they serve. They know who smokes, drinks, takes drugs (prescribed or not), struggles with mental illness, which teenagers are sexually active — intimate details that individuals voluntarily share with their doctors. Doctors know the health of families in their community through home visits and family counseling.

Doctors were told things that we in the U.S. would not dare tell our primary health care provider, because it could mean higher monthly costs for those who have insurance coverage, or changing health care providers, which means transferring all your health history to another doctor. You can be denied coverage or even lose your job because of a chronic health issue.

Health care is a huge problem in the U.S. There have been many reforms, many updates to the system, and yet there are still millions of people who have minimal or no health insurance.

I continue to learn what socialism looks like and how participatory democracy works. I was impressed with the way Cubans at home and abroad were involved in the decision-making process of updating Cuba’s Families Code. Some 6.5 million people participated, a sincere display of democratic centralism.

As an organizer of the Socialist Unity Party’s Prisoners Solidarity Committee, one of the many things that registered with me in Cuba’s new Families Code is its promise to promote happy, healthy families. Everyone is included (great-grandparents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, in-laws, close partners), from the most senior members to the youngest, and every-



Delegates to the Second World Meeting of Friendship and Solidarity in Havana, Cuba, November 2000.

one in between. You choose your family.

It also promotes the right to a family life free from violence and unprovoked stress. A family life that values love, affection, solidarity and responsibility.

I recently attended a day of solidarity with formerly incarcerated prisoners and families in California’s capital, Sacramento. So many things are wrong with the “criminal justice system” in the U.S., which is why we know that it cannot be reformed or updated; we must shut it down.

You can see and feel the grief and stress of the families with loved ones in prison, and of those recently released, who are having a difficult time transitioning to life outside. Housing, healthcare, jobs and community acceptance are some of the obstacles that formerly incarcerated individuals face.

There are over 2 million people in prison in the U.S. Many more are detained in immigration centers and holding cells awaiting litigation, affecting millions of families.

Cuba: ‘We encouraged family to stay involved’

Gerardo Hernández, who was one of the Cuban 5 political prisoners held in the U.S., and is now head of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, highlighted the differences for families in Cuba: “Our purpose is to help. We talk with the family, we encourage the family to stay involved, because it is understood that the family suffers when a loved one is incarcerated.

“Prisoners need not be discriminated against because they went to jail. Our objec-

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Cuba's Families Code shows: Queer people need a socialist revolution!

By Melinda Butterfield

Good afternoon siblings, friends, and comrades.

It's an honor to follow the beautiful message of solidarity from Comrade Mariela Castro Espín. The organization she leads, Cuba's National Center for Sex Education (Cenesex), just celebrated its 35th anniversary, a tremendous milestone for the Cuban people and all progressive peoples of the world.

Marking the anniversary, the Transcuba Nacional organization said that Cenesex has "developed important research and contributions in the sciences that have aided the development of Cuban society in terms of sexual rights. It has educated and trained professionals and activists who bring about social transformations around the realities of human sexuality. The particular attention paid to trans people has made Cenesex a home of respect, love and inclusion."

What a contrast to the situation that queer people, especially trans people, face here in the United States in 2023!

Have you heard of Christynne Lili Wrene Wood? She is a retired African American city worker in Santee, a suburb of San Diego. This trans woman has become one of the latest targets of the anti-trans panic that has swept the country since last year.

On Dec. 29, Christynne was finishing up her weekly water aerobics class at the local YMCA. She showered and changed in the women's locker room as she always does. But that day, she was targeted for a transphobic attack. A 17-year-old girl was put up before the media afterward, claiming she was "traumatized" by seeing someone with "male genitalia" in the women's changing area.

Trans women are women, regardless of what genitalia they have. None of the women who regularly participate in water aerobics with Christynne had an issue changing with her. But the fact is, Christynne has had

gender reassignment surgery, so she could not have been mistaken for having "male genitalia."

It was a set-up for the far-right crusade to demonize trans people. The lie was repeated by Tucker Carlson and other fascist mouthpieces. A hate rally was staged outside the Santee YMCA last week. Christynne had to listen to these lies being repeated as she counter-protested with supporters across the street.

Christynne explained to a reporter: "There's a movie out right now about how that kind of a lie and hysteria can lead to tragedy. The movie's about Emmett Till. The lies of a person got that child beat to death and that's just the kind of group [here] that would love to pull a stunt like that. Thank God, I've got protection and people with me that see to it that I don't suffer that kind of pain. But don't you think that there aren't people over there right now that would

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'Struggle against sexual, gender violence goes hand in hand with decolonization'

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Buenas tardes compañeras y compañeros,

First, I wanted to thank Mariela Castro for taking the time to record this message. Because, as we know, part of the effect of the U.S. blockade against Cuba is that the application Zoom cannot be used there.

As a member of Mujeres En Lucha/Women In Struggle, which is a member organization of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF or FDIM in Spanish), I also wanted to acknowledge the fact that Mariela's mother, Vilma Espín, was instrumental in saving the FDIM after the dismemberment of the European socialist countries.

At that time, Vilma was vice president while the FDIM headquarters was in Berlin. And it was her swift action of saving documents and materials from that office,

securing them, that preserved the FDIM from extinction.

Compañeras, this topic is also very pertinent to our process in Puerto Rico. As a colony of the U.S., we suffer in greater degree some of the ills that affect the U.S. Violence against women and LGBTQ+ people has been on the rise, including against children. This has been fueled by a rising wave of fundamentalist religious sectors which affect the government's actions and policies, and seem to be a copy and paste of what happens in the U.S.

So, for us here, the struggle against sexual and gender violence has to go hand in hand with the struggle for decolonization, for independence.

But as the poem of Lola Rodríguez de Tió says, "Cuba y PR son, de un pájaro las dos alas," "Cuba and Puerto Rico are wings of the same bird." We can look up to Cuba's development and Families Code as an inspiration.

We hope to fulfill here in PR what is



expressed in the introduction of the new Cuban Families Code: "The emancipatory conception of the family that guides the transformation of Cuban socialist society intertwines social interest and personal interest, promotes its development, contributes to the formation of the new generations and satisfies deep human, affective and social interests of the person." 🐦

'Indigenous communities are fighting to keep our families together'



Protesters defend the Indian Child Welfare Act outside the U.S. Supreme Court, Nov. 9, 2022.

By Mahtowin Munro

The new Families Code is an incredible achievement of the Cuban people, born out of thousands of hours of discussions and a desire to ensure that ideas and policies properly reflect what families should have at this historic time in their socialist system.

I contrast what Cuba has with what we have in the U.S. – or perhaps I should say, what we don't have. I will largely speak about this from an Indigenous family perspective, but we know that conditions are also abysmal for other oppressed and marginalized communities.

Because I have been to Cuba, I know that there are many supports for families there, with day care and health care right there in their communities. Housing is a right, whereas here there are many thousands of unhoused children – more than 100,000 in New York City alone.

In Cuba, families are supported and the children are treated with great care, and this

is reflected in the confidence of the children themselves and the extension of key rights through the Families Code.

Here in the U.S., children are criminalized as part of the school-to-prison pipeline. Many thousands of children, disproportionately children of color, are detained, disciplined at schools, and subjected to harsh discipline. Some of these children are as young as kindergarten age.

In the U.S., it can be hard to even have a family. Back in the 1970s, it was revealed that the U.S. government was sterilizing Indigenous women, Puerto Rican women and Black women without their consent.

It can also be hard to choose not to have a family. This is true not only because of Roe v. Wade being overturned. For instance, the Indian Health Service, upon which many Indigenous people rely, does not provide abortion services. So Native childbearers must overcome substantial hurdles in order to get the services they need.

Indigenous, Black and other women of

color are less likely to have the prenatal care that they need as well. In addition, maternal mortality and infant mortality rates are much higher in Black and Indigenous communities than for white people.

Boarding schools = concentration camps

The attacks on Indigenous families have been severe and have endured for generations. These attacks are not accidental, but are key features of settler colonialism and capitalism. Because settlers and the U.S. government have been dedicated to stealing Indigenous lands and extracting resources from the lands, Indigenous families and communities have been shattered in many ways in order to weaken ties to the land and to make it easier to steal and exploit even more land and resources. These attacks are meant to destroy our spirits and cultures, break our communities, and break our ties to the land.

The Indian boarding schools that were established in Canada and the U.S. in the

latter part of the 1800s were very much part of consolidating these attacks that had been occurring since invasion. The Canadian and U.S. governments worked hand in hand with churches to fill the seats at these schools.

While some Indigenous families were persuaded that their children would be better off at the schools, many families were coerced and told that they would not receive their rations if they did not let their children be removed, at a time of starvation when many Indigenous people were denied the right to hunt and fish on their own homelands. Many children were forced to attend these schools, even at the point of being kidnapped from their home communities.

Once at the schools, which in reality were not schools but concentration camps for kids and instruments of genocide, children were stripped of their clothing and put into uniforms, had their hair cut off, were beaten for speaking their own tribal languages,

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Gloria Verdieu

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tive is not to make a repressive action against those persons but to help those persons, who are victims themselves in many cases.”

Cuba’s neighborhood CDRs number 138,000, with over 8 million members, and continue to work on programs and solutions to the problems of petty crime, drugs and mental illness.

The United States incarcerates more of its youth than any other country in the world. Most states continue to use outdated and harmful “training school” models, confining children in remote, prison-like facilities cut off from their families and communities.

Overcrowding and violence, prosecution of youths as adults, and the long-term consequences of incarceration on the individual’s chances for success in adulthood are huge controversies.

President Miguel Diaz-Canel stated, “before our people and the world, that in Cuba no one under 16 years of age is imprisoned!”

People in the U.S. have a lot to learn from Cuba’s Families Code, especially from the process in which it was passed. All citizens over 16 years of age were eligible to vote in the Families Code referendum.

We must support Cuba by demanding the U.S. government end the more than 60-year blockade and remove Cuba from the so-called “State Sponsors of Terrorism” list. We must demand normalization of relations and an open dialog with Cuba.

We must learn about socialism and Cuba’s participatory democracy. Socialism is the path to a better world for everyone. 📌

Mahtowin Munro

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and were physically and sexually abused on a routine basis.

In some of the schools, children were not allowed to return home at all for years. When they became older and went back home, they often no longer felt they belonged and could not even speak their own language. Children died at these so-called schools, by the thousands.

These institutions did not close until the 1960s and in some cases later than that. In the U.S. and Canada, there have been recent efforts by Indigenous people to speak the truth about what happened at these institutions, to demand reparations, to talk about the resulting intergenerational trauma, and to begin the very hard work of trying to find and identify unmarked graves at these schools.

Far from being over, the attacks on Indigenous families continued. By the 1970s, about a third of Native children in the U.S. had been taken from their families and adopted, usually by non-Native families, where they grew up without knowing who they were.

ICWA under attack

Following a huge effort by tribes and individuals, the Indian Child Welfare Act was passed in 1978 and was intended to keep Native children in Native communities.

However the ICWA is now under attack. Right-wing think tanks like the Goldwater Institute, evangelicals, and funding from energy companies have led to a case now before the Supreme Court that could and may overturn ICWA.

Indigenous children are also much more likely to be in foster care, with many hur-

dles existing before their families can get the children returned.

There are many more attacks against our families, including the ongoing epidemic of violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit people in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and elsewhere. In the U.S., at least 84% of Native women have experienced violence. While the government and police often say that this is due to the violence of Native men, in fact it is non-Natives who commit the vast majority of this violence.

Native women are murdered at a rate of 10 times the national average. The rates in urban areas, where the majority of Native people live, are also disproportionately high. Indigenous women hold families and cultures together. When one of them is attacked, disappears or is killed, the impact is shattering.

This is not a new issue, but rather is part of the ongoing violence against all Indigenous peoples that first began when Europeans arrived.

The violence against Indigenous women, Two Spirit people and children has deep roots in the invasion and colonization of Indigenous homelands, and in white supremacy, marginalization and poverty. The violence is a mechanism of domination and oppression. It is intended to terrorize, disrupt and demoralize Indigenous populations. It is a direct function of white supremacy, settler colonialism and capitalism.

But Indigenous communities throughout the Americas have been fighting back and are continuing to do everything possible to keep our families together, strengthen our communities, and defend the land and water. 📌



Graphic: Favianna Rodriguez

Women in Struggle / Mujeres en Lucha is a Member of **FDIM - FDIF Women’s International Democratic Federation and the National Network on Cuba**

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Melinda Butterfield

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love to come over and rip me [apart] piece [by] piece?”

Since the beginning of this year – in just three weeks – more than 150 pieces of anti-LGBTQ2S legislation have been introduced in states across this country, primarily aimed at criminalizing trans lives. This includes bills to cut off all gender-affirming health care for adults as well as youth and to essentially make it illegal for trans people to exist in public.

Doctors and children’s hospitals are threatened with bombings. Neo-Nazis attempt to shut down drag events, aided by local cops. Parents who support their trans kids are threatened with prosecution.

What are the supposed friends of the LGBTQ2S community in Washington doing to stop this? Not a damn thing. They tell us to vote for them, the way they told women to vote for them before standing aside and letting abortion rights be stripped away. Meanwhile, supposed liberals like Hillary Clinton and the New York Times are joining in the anti-trans rhetoric, showing that this attack goes far beyond the Trumpist right.

The Biden administration and Congress have made it crystal clear that their priority is funding wars for empire on the other side of the world and continuing the six-decades-long illegal blockade of Cuba – not protecting the rights of people here.

That’s why it’s so important for queer people and all workers to learn from Cuba’s example.

Here are some highlights of the new Families Code Cubans approved last September:

- Protection of all forms of families, including chosen families, with no discrimination;
- The parental relationship is based on responsibilities and duties;
- The rights of children and youth, elders and the disabled to independence, dignity, accessibility, and respect;



Chrystynne Wood addresses the city council at Santee City Hall on Jan. 25

- Consequences for violence or other abuse in family situations;
- Equality of marriage and common law unions;
- Gender equality, including for trans and nonbinary Cubans;
- Equality of rights in adoption and technologically assisted methods like in vitro fertilization;
- Duty to contribute to the family and recognition of the value of domestic labor;
- Institutional and community responsibility to uphold these rights.

The guiding idea of the document is that family plurality, diversity, and human dignity are at the center of the Cuban Revolution. The definition of a family is now based on affection and emotional ties rather than blood relations. It’s a “code of freedom” to choose the form of family that works best for its members.

I attended an event at the Cuban Mission to the United Nations, where diplomats talked about the new Families Code and answered questions. Two things really jumped out at me. One was the genuine pride the Cuban comrades had for this accomplishment. The other was the number of people from nonprofits and queer communities here, who were desperate to learn how Cuba was able to accomplish this at a time when our rights are being mercilessly rolled back.

The diplomats explained the years-long process of consultations held throughout all

of society, from neighborhoods and workplaces to mass organizations; how there were 25 drafts incorporating thousands of amendments suggested at these discussions. They talked about the decisive role of young people in arguing for updating the country’s family code to be more inclusive and how they won their elders over to support the referendum.

And they talked about how this was not something that happened out of the blue – it was built up throughout the whole history of the Cuban Revolution, for more than 60 years – the struggle against patriarchy and the vestiges of capitalism and colonialism in everyday life.

This last point is very important. It was a diplomatic event, so the Cubans couldn’t put too fine a point on it, but the essential thing is this: The Cuban people made a socialist revolution. And LGBTQ2S people in the U.S. need a socialist revolution here to secure our rights.

The U.S. ruling class has decided to go all in on scapegoating trans people. But they won’t stop with us. The broader LGBTQ2S community is next on the chopping block.

The capitalist system is based on the principle of divide and rule. A historic struggle like the Stonewall Rebellion can shake society and win important reforms. But as long as capitalism exists, those gains are always in danger of being taken away. To truly secure our rights to equality, to decent jobs, to housing, education, and health care for all – including gender-affirming care – we need what Cuba has: a socialist revolution.

It’s time for the LGBTQ2S movement, and all people’s movements, to reject the losing strategy of relying on the Democratic Party and capitalist electoral politics. We need a return to the militant struggles of Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, of ACT UP and Queer Nation, and of Leslie Feinberg. And while we do that, we need to keep our eyes on the prize: replacing divide-and-conquer capitalism with a society based on solidarity that puts people’s needs first. 📌

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