

CELEBRATE CUBA'S 16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DAYS AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA & TRANSPHOBIA

«Por Todas las familias, el amor es ley»

«For all families, love is the law»

A SPECIAL WEBINAR FEATURING  
SPEAKERS FROM CUBA, THE U.S. &  
CANADA, MUSIC & Q&A

THURSDAY JUNE 29, 2023  
8PM EASTERN TIME  
5PM PACIFIC TIME

¡Un webinar bilingüe en  
inglés y español!  
A bilingual webinar in  
English & Spanish!



**Isel Calzadilla Acosta**  
Coordinator of the Isabelas,  
the first group of lesbian  
and bisexual women in Cuba  
(Santiago, Cuba)



**Azza Rojbi**  
North African queer activist and  
Coordinator of Friends of Cuba  
Against the U.S. Blockade -  
Vancouver (Vancouver, Canada)



**Moon "Luna" Vázquez**  
Puerto Rican lesbian  
activist, US Women and  
Cuba Collaboration Steering  
Committee member (Seattle, US)



INTERNATIONAL U.S.-CUBA NORMALIZATION CONFERENCE COALITION  
**WWW.US-CUBANORMALIZATION.ORG**

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website to  
register



## People Around The World Uniting With Cuba! The urgency of ending the U.S. Blockade on Cuba

By **Tamara Hansen**

February 2022 marked 60 years since President Kennedy signed the economic blockade into law. This angering anniversary means that every Cuban under 60 was born and has lived their whole life under this unjust and brutal U.S. policy.

Since marking 60 years of the blockade in February, it has been a challenging year for Cuba. The Saratoga Hotel explosion, the Matanzas fire, and most recently, Hurricane Ian. From Canada, we have been fundraising and working to provide solidarity, but we know the more important help is to bring an end to the cruel U.S. blockade of Cuba.

Some people argue it has no effect – so why does the U.S. government keep it?

In just the first seven months of 2021, the blockade caused Cuba losses of more than \$2.5 billion. This number represents an average impact of more than \$365 million per month and more than \$12 million per day. Cuba cannot purchase any product, from medical equipment to school supplies, if it has more than 10% or more components manufactured in the United States. Anyone who dares to ship products to Cuba by air or sea risks having their ships and airplanes barred from entering the United States ports for six months.

The acceleration of U.S. attacks on Cuba and Cuba's challenging post-pandemic recovery reinforces our responsibility to strengthen our efforts to defeat the blockade on Cuba. This must be a political priority for the solidarity movement, all friends of Cuba around the world, and the great heroic Cuban people.

As working people discover more about Cuba around the world, we know how Cuba's inspiring vision of the socialist project has shown what it means to put human beings ahead of profit. Cuba's leadership in healthcare, education,

pandemic response, and response to climate change all provide necessary examples for working people in our own countries – in Canada, the Philippines, and worldwide.

It is up to us to overcome the lies and slander against the Cuban revolution and show working people that a better world is possible and necessary — and that, despite challenges — Cuba is showing us the way forward! Cuba today undoubtedly is the vanguard of the struggle to win a new world, a socialist world.

**Building an international Cuba solidarity movement**

While Covid-19 has made our Cuba solidarity work very different and more challenging, we have also been able to

use new technologies to maximize our cooperation across time zones and borders. Like tonight, it is 5pm in the Philippines and 1am here in Vancouver, Canada – but we are here together, united on Zoom for dear Cuba. While we work locally or nationally in the U.S. and Canada, we strive to build a stronger and more effective Cuba solidarity

Summer 2023



The Newsletter of  
**Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba - VCSC**  
**WWW.VANCUBASOLIDARITY.COM**

Hey President Biden,  
**CUBA IS NOT A  
'SPONSOR OF  
TERRORISM'!**  
**REMOVE  
CUBA FROM  
YOUR LIST!**





## Cuba solidarity in Canada & Internationally

The second consistent monthly project has been to unite with the international caravan movement on the last Sunday of every month. Carlos Lazo and Puentes de Amor have inspired us in Vancouver and

Lift the Blockade on Cuba!  
¡Abajo el bloqueo contra Cuba!  
¡Viva Cuba revolucionaria!  
¡Viva Diaz Canel!  
¡Viva Raul!  
¡Viva Che!  
¡Viva Fidel!

## Celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cuba's Moncada Day & The Gains of the Cuban Revolution

**Wednesday July 26**  
**Trout Lake Park**  
**3:30pm - 6:30pm**  
 (Near the Concession Stand,  
 look for the Cuban flags!)

- Speakers
- Poetry
- Salsa lesson
- Live music
- Pinata
- Good food & BBQ

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba  
 A Member of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC)  
[www.vancubasolidarity.com](http://www.vancubasolidarity.com)  
 Endorsed by: Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade - Vancouver

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FRIENDS OF CUBA



AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE  
FCAB-VANCOUVER

@NoBloqueoVan | NoBloqueoVancouver@gmail.com

## Join the New Postcard Campaign in defense of Cuba

Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver and the NY-NJ Cuba Si Coalition launched a postcard campaign aimed at U.S. President Biden which declares, “Cuba is NOT a ‘sponsor of terrorism’! Remove Cuba from your list!”.

As part of this campaign, people can send postcards as often as they want to the White House. It is a physical reminder to their mail room about this ongoing campaign and this injustice by the U.S. government against Cuba. But also, as folks are mailing their postcard they can take selfies and share them on social media – making this also a public education campaign. Furthermore, these postcards could be used to hand out at events and protests as a way to engage with people and encourage them to take action in support of Cuba!

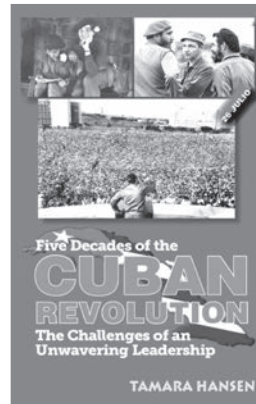
We hope that you will join us in this exciting new campaign in solidarity with Cuba. If you would like more information or to order postcards please email: nobloqueovancouver@gmail.com

Hey President Biden,  
**CUBA IS NOT A  
'SPONSOR OF  
TERRORISM'!**  
**REMOVE  
CUBA FROM  
YOUR LIST!**



### Battle of Ideas Press

#### 5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership



By Tamara Hansen

Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba over a dozen times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.

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## Cuba's New Families Code & the Dynamism of the Cuban Revolution!

By Azza Rojbi

The new Cuba Families Code should be seen within history and the reality of the Cuban popular democracy and its popular mass institutions. Since the beginning of the revolution, Cuba has always encouraged the Cuban people to mass mobilize for a better change. The Families Code is another example that shows us firmly how Cuba is a revolution in motion.

In this specific case, I would say that this motion started in 2019 when 86% of the Cuban population approved a new constitution. The new constitution stands for human rights and the protection of the Cuban people. This families code is the continuity of the constitution and expands the protection of all Cuban families.

The new code is another step in the revolutionary process of Cuba. It further consolidates the human rights that the Cuban people and families achieved since the revolution. This new families code does not limit the existing code, but it expands it. It does not restrict the rights of anyone but again expands and extends them. This is a very important point to reiterate.

### LGBTQ2S+ Rights and the Families Code

I now want to speak a little bit as a queer activist here in Canada. I want to speak about the point of LGBTQ2S+ rights. LGBTQ2S+ people in Cuba are protected from discrimination under

the country's current constitution.

Trans people in Cuba have had access to free, gender-affirming surgery and health care since 2008. Additionally, in Cuba, trans people can

correct their legal names and gender on official documents without having undergone surgery since 2013. Cuba also has a national network of trans people and supporters called TransCuba, designed to provide support and family counselling and build social awareness about trans issues across the country. This is more than we can say about the United States or Canada, where many trans



people are constantly under attack, their rights threatened, and access to gender-affirming care is difficult, very expensive and even inexistent in parts of the U.S. and Canada.

The new families code expands on the rights of the LGBTQ2S+ community and families by expanding the definition of family. It protects the rights of same-sex parents to construct a family, whether that is through marriage, adoption, or assisted reproduction.

### Mass Popular Consultation

The mass majority of the Cuban people are deeply involved in their

popular democratic practices and are responding positively to exercise their rights to advance and build a socialist society for all. The fact that 6.4 million people participated in 79,000 meetings to discuss this new families code indicates the broad participation of people in shaping their destiny and the progress of society as a whole in Cuba.

I would say that this is not something new for Cuba. The Cuban socialist revolution, from the beginning, was not only a popular revolution supported by the Cuban people, but it also brought with it democracy from below. A democracy that is for working and oppressed people. A democracy that is based on the interest of the Cuban people. A democracy that is based on the human rights of all Cubans. No wonder the Cuban revolution, Cuban democracy, the Cuban government, and its leadership have always enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of the Cuban people.

This new families code is again the best proof showing how dynamic and alive the Cuban socialist project is. It also demonstrates the close relationship between the people and the leadership of the revolution, including the government, state, and the popular mass revolutionary institutions such as the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), the Cuban National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX), the University Student Federation (FEU) and others.

I want to highlight for a bit the importance of the work of CENESEX in advancing LGBTQ2S+ rights in Cuba. I believe it was in 2016 that Janine Solanki, national coordinator

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# Lift the Blockade of Cuba!

By Janine Solanki

For 61 years, the Cuban people have endured a vicious blockade by the United States, intended to bring down the Cuban Revolution and to bring Cuba back under the domination of U.S. imperialism. The U.S. government didn't anticipate that the Cuban people are prepared to defend their revolution and advance it, despite the enormous challenges imposed by the blockade. One of Cuba's many achievements is developing one of the best healthcare systems in the world that has resulted in the Cuban people having one of the highest life expectancies in the world!

Former U.S. President Trump took a

Car Caravans demand Lift the U.S. Blockade of Cuba!

Around the world, Cuba solidarity activists are campaigning in defense of Cuba for an end to the U.S. blockade. While Trump took advantage of the already difficult situation of the pandemic to tighten the blockade on Cuba, solidarity activists found new ways to continue protesting the blockade. During the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, Cuban American Carlos Lazo and his group



On January 29th, Vancouver Cuba solidarity activists joined the first Car Caravan of 2023, with 12 vehicles and 25 participants that drove through the streets of Vancouver. The caravan of cars was decorated with Cuban flags and banners denouncing the U.S. blockade on the people of Cuba and received many honks of support from other drivers and thumbs-ups from pedestrians!

Twitter Storms take Cuba solidarity online!

February 23 marked the International Day of Action Against Foreign Military Bases, and to mark this day, the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) called for a Twitter Storm and social media campaign, promoting the hashtags #ReturnGuantanamoCubaNow and #DevuelvanGuantanamoYa!

While today the U.S. has over 800 foreign military bases worldwide, their first and oldest foreign military base is in Guantánamo, Cuba, which has been occupied by the U.S. against the will of the Cuban people for 120 years. Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver took on the campaign with a virtual storm of posts demanding the U.S. return Guantánamo to Cuba now!

Puentes de Amor (Bridges of Love) began Car Caravans against the U.S. blockade on Cuba in Miami, U.S. The idea quickly spread throughout the U.S., Canada, Cuba and the world, and now on the last Sunday of every month, caravans worldwide join in unity to call for an immediate end to the U.S. blockade on Cuba.

In Vancouver, Canada, Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver and other sponsoring organizations come together for the monthly Car Caravan.

**Get Involved with VCSC!**  
**778.882.5223 | vancubasolidarity@gmail.com**  
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On February 26, a snowstorm prevented Cuba solidarity activists from safely holding a planned Car Caravan in Vancouver, so Cuba supporters turned to social media platforms for another world-wide Twitter Storm in protest of the U.S. blockade on Cuba! This Twitter Storm was called by the Latin American and Caribbean Continental Network of Solidarity with Cuba, which was joined by Vancouver through posts, tweets and stories in support of Cuba.

Another online platform to support Cuba is webinars, such as the January 28 webinar titled "To Dream with Open Eyes," commemorating the 170th anniversary of the birth of José Martí, Cuban independence leader, poet, writer and visionary. The event was organized by the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC) and member groups Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba and Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver joined to participate and share greetings from Vancouver to the network.

Cuba solidarity in the belly of the beast

For Vancouver activists in the Cuba solidarity movement, supporting U.S. initiatives against the U.S. blockade is vital, taking the fight to what José Martí called the "belly of the beast". Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba and Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver have been active organizers in the International U.S.-Cuba Normalization Committee Coalition. The committee has held many online webinars and three conferences, and the next conference is coming up in New York City on March 11-12, 2023. See how you can join the conference online or in person at <http://us-cubanormalizationconference.org>

Vancouver Cuba solidarity activists will be launching a new postcard campaign at the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference, addressed to U.S. President Biden and demanding that he remove Cuba from the U.S. State Department's "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list.

There is always an upcoming event in solidarity with Cuba to join in Vancouver! Find out about the next event at [www.vancubasolidarity.com](http://www.vancubasolidarity.com) or follow Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba on Twitter and Facebook @VanCubaSolidarity, and on Instagram @vancuba\_vcsc

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of the Che Guevara Brigade, a volunteer work brigade from Canada that travels Cuba, was in Cuba and had the opportunity to attend the Annual National Days Against Homophobia and Transphobia organized by CENESEX. Basically, these are days of action that include cultural and educational events. What we call here a Pride Parade, in Cuba they call it a Conga against homophobia and transphobia. It's a beautiful march full of music, full of colours, full of dancing, really a day full of Cuban diversity taking over the beautiful streets of Havana. The new families code builds on all this colourful dynamism of Cuban society to further expands the rights of all Cuban people and families.

Always Forward

The new families code is a great victory for the Cuban revolution. It advances not only the human rights of the Cuban people but also advances Cuba in its socialist path to advance and progress its revolution to a higher stage of human and social development.

This article is based on a talk given by Azza Rojbi at the May 2022 Webinar "Cuba's New Families Code," organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)

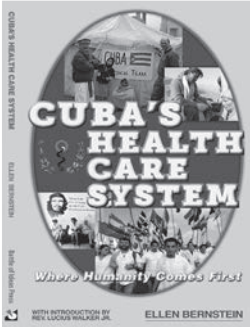
Battle of Ideas Press

**CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**  
**WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST**

BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

*"The unflinching dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."*

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003. She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.



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