

# Families, plural

written by Leidys Maria Labrador Herrera

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**Recognizing the existence in Cuba of multiple family structures that break with the traditional model is among the most significant elements of the new Families Code being drafted**



Guaranteeing the same rights to all

families is essential to securing social justice. Photo: Ismael Batista

Recognizing the existence in Cuba of multiple family structures that break with the traditional model is among the most significant elements of the new Families Code, being drafted.

Accepting the plurality evident in Cuban society when it comes to this fundamental unit, allows for the inclusion and protection of families that break from the most traditional and conservative models, providing them rights and opportunities.

It also gives our law a profoundly inclusive character and opens the doors to the elimination of backward prejudices that no longer have a place in a just society like Cuba's.

The truth is, as renowned experts in diverse family matters have stated, that this is a code honoring the bonds of affection and love, on which families are truly built.

### THE FIRST STEPS...

The broad popular consultation before the referendum that approved the current Constitution was undoubtedly the first sign of the need for a Families Code more in line with the changes and growing diversity of Cuban families environment over time.

The controversies generated in the debate of articles such as the marriage between two people, instead of a man and a woman, showed there was a wide sector of the population struggling to have those unions recognized, another that knew little or nothing about it, and a third that still harbors backward ideas on that matter.

Finally, article 81 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba provides that "the State recognizes and protects the family, no matter how it is organized, as the basic

cell in society and it creates the conditions to guarantee that its purposes may be achieved as a whole. Families may be constituted legally or by common law, based on love and the equality of rights, obligation and opportunities for its members."

If we read this article carefully we can see some concepts that are now reflected in the bill of the new Families Code.

It can be said then that the bill embraces a principle of respect to plurality and lead us towards a more comprehensive vision of what we see as the fundamental unit of society.

## THE EYES OF LOVE

People say everything is possible when we look at it with the eyes of love. Therefore, during these months, with the support of experts and from within the homes and the communities, a broad popular consultation has been conducted, during which the draft code was widely accepted as the codes of affection.

Deconstructing patterns deeply rooted in the collective mentality is not an easy task, but the first step is to begin with respect and acceptance.

We must be aware that this is not at all about proving that the traditional family does not exist anymore. This structure is common, and will remain, without a doubt. The purpose is to understand there are other family structures, which also deserve protection.

A family can also be a single mother, or father, who raises their children alone. A family can be one in which the spouses are of the same sex. Or one composed only of grandparents and grandchildren because the parents are out of the picture. Ultimately, it is the space where affective ties are strong enough to allow for the construction of a unit in which all members have the same rights and opportunities.

As the Act states, "Different family structures, based on a relationship of affection,

are created among relatives, whatever the nature of the relationship, and between spouses or in common-law unions."

"The members of the families are bound to perform family and societal duties on the basis of love, affection, consideration, solidarity, fraternity, co-participation, protection, responsibility and mutual respect."

In other words, a family is not successful based on its structure or the number of members.

A family is a social structure that recognizes itself as such and takes on the duties and responsibilities it entails.

## THE "OTHER" FAMILIES

Given the real possibility (from the legal standpoint) of being recognized and supported in terms of rights, several families that do not fit the traditional structure have opened the doors to their lives, which usually remain close because they are usually the target of accusing looks who judge them because of their ignorance rather than truly discriminatory feelings.

It is not strange that people reject what they do not know or want to keep their eyes shut when facing something they consider taboo.

Nonetheless, both in popular consultation meetings, the mainstream media and social networks, new platforms have been opened to disseminate testimony to this reality, demonstrating that love and true feelings are capable of shattering barriers and that, many times, dreams and expectations are no different from those of traditional families.

Families in which there is only one parent, the spouses are of the same sex, or grandparents are in charge of raising the children, to present just a few examples, in no way produce a bad upbringing, or internal conflicts of greater complexity or

dysfunctionality.

If we let prejudice and established patterns condition our thinking, we will lose the wonderful opportunity to understand the world and therefore, to be a better part of it.

## WE DO NOT CHOOSE OUR FAMILIES, OR DO WE?

Many times, people say that we do not choose our family. It is what it is. If you like it or not, well, there is no choice.

Although it is not possible to change blood relation objectively speaking, this is a very relative statement when it comes to the subjective aspect of it.

Truth is that, beyond the family environment a person grows up in, everyone has the right to form their own family, with their own particularities. A family in which a human being can feel truly fulfilled and happy.

As varied as the family structures that surround us, or more, are the ideas that people have as to what they call a family.

Precisely, the first family right provided in the bill of the new Families Code is the opportunity to build one. Of course, the principles on which a family should be built are clearly stated in the new bill and they all have a central idea, dignity is the supreme value when it comes to the relationships within the family.

Hence, if the family we want, the one we dream about, the one that meets our expectations as human beings, is indeed chosen and built, there is no doubt it will always be our shelter and support.

## ALL FAMILIES, ALL MODELS

The bill of the new Families Code, if approved, will be an instrument of profound

scope that will be among the most advanced currently in force in our continent. And this says a lot about the path the Cuban society has taken.

Under the principle that love is the first condition a family needs to exist, the new Families Code has the merit of broadening the concepts of inclusion we have known so far, of putting a name to what we could not practically name one day, of moving forward toward the naturalization of family structures whose status in matter of rights have remained uncertain for years.

This document, of which any Cuban who has read it can speak at length, is a major qualitative leap towards one of the primary targets of our social system: to fight all types of discrimination.

This code is a mirror that truthfully reflects the families that exist in Cuba today.

Source: [Granma](#)

