

# In Cuba, National Assembly of People's Power truly represents the people

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SLL photo

Havana - The first thing you notice coming from the U.S. to the beautiful island of

Cuba is how chill the people are. They hang out late into the night, chatting, playing dominoes, listening to music, or just watching the sights.

The second thing you notice is that government officials do not fear the people they represent. It is truly a government by the people and for the people.

Unlike U.S. government officials who do not mix among the people, Lis Cuesta Peraza, wife of Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, and National Assembly Deputy Mariela Castro Espín marched among the people in the Conga Against Homophobia and Transphobia without any security detail.

When we visited the Capitol in Havana on May 12, there were no armed guards surrounding the building where the National Assembly of People's Power meets. At the entrance were two guards who waved our delegation of LGBTQ+ activists from the U.S. right in. We were escorted through the building by Sergio Martínez, a deputy of the assembly, who met with us and explained the Cuban political process.

The National Assembly has 470 elected deputies. They do not receive a salary for their service and are not allowed to get campaign funding. They are also subject to recall by the people of their districts at any time. Therefore they cannot be bought, and they cannot betray the districts they are there to represent.

Deputies must maintain their jobs in their chosen professions. What a contrast with U.S. Congress members and other elected officials who are owned and controlled by corporate lobbyists and dark money!

At the Capitol, the president, vice president, and secretary of the assembly, the presidents of the commissions, and their staff work throughout the year. But most elected deputies work in their communities and meet in Havana two times per year. If needed, the president can call a special meeting to discuss urgent matters.

At the end of May 2023, a special session will be held to discuss and approve the

Social Communications legislation, to protect the Cuban people from the constant misinformation war waged by the United States.

The U.S. government hopes this misinformation war may work on Cuban youth because they know it hasn't worked on older Cubans, who remember what the country was like under Washington's thumb before the revolution - where children died of hunger and other curable diseases, people lived in shacks, and the majority of the population was illiterate.

But even the Cuban youth, especially those in the Union of Communist Youth and Federation of University Students, continue to defend their revolution and their homeland. "Although we are grateful for the solidarity the world has shown us, we can't wait for anyone to defend our revolution; we have to continue to build our revolution and a better Cuba today," asserted a young woman leader of the federation.

## **Elections in Cuba**

When it comes to the electoral process in Cuba, you immediately notice that lies and misinformation are also propagandized to the people in the U.S. regarding "corrupt" elections in Cuba.

There is only one political party, the Communist Party of Cuba. But anyone can run for office. Candidates are selected by the community they live and work in. Each neighborhood gives from 2-8 nominations for delegates that are well-known and respected by their community, so capitalist-style campaigns are not allowed or necessary. They represent their neighborhoods in the Municipal Assembly.

From these, the candidates for the National Assembly are selected. Fifty percent of the candidates go through this process. The other 50% of the nominated candidates come from the mass organizations of civil society, where one will find the Federation

of Cuban Women, Committees for Defense of the Revolution, Cuban Workers' Central, and others.

All the nominations then go to the National Candidacy Commission, where they are thoroughly vetted. There is no requirement that a candidate be a member of the Communist Party, although many are. This totally debunks the U.S. government's assertion that Cuba's Communist Party selects the legislature.

U.S. capitalist politicians can never understand integrity, honesty, or service to the people because they are put into power to serve the needs and wants of the ruling class.

The National Candidacy Commission proposes a final list of candidates, which go back to the Municipal Assemblies for approval, and finally to the general elections. Anywhere in this process, Cubans can reject a candidate but must provide evidence as to why they believe the candidate is unable to serve.

Currently, 55% of the National Assembly delegates are women. Some 73% of people voted in the last election. Compare that to the U.S., where just over half of the voting population participated in the 2020 general election.

After the National Assembly is seated, the deputies elect the president, vice president, and secretary of the parliament, and also the president and vice president of the Republic and members of the Council of State.

By law, a member of parliament carries the vote and the issues from their community, meeting with their constituency once a month. The work of a member of the National Assembly is one of service with no pay. They live in their communities and may be called upon to respond to a neighbor constituent in the middle of the night after a long day at their job. They are required by law and by duty to respond promptly. The people have the right to request the removal of any elected official.

The role of the Communist Party is to develop the guidelines for the development of a socialist society. The Party's mandate is to meet the needs of the majority of Cubans, to have social justice for all, and to ensure that every Cuban can express and participate in the development of the type of society Cubans want.

Contrary to the stated role of "representatives" in the U.S., the reality for people here is no social justice, homelessness, no medical care, hunger, and state-sanctioned violence.

## **Legislative process**

For legislation to become law, it must be approved by the National Assembly. In the case of laws that affect the entire population, the people must vote for them.

The Council of State meets between the two annual sessions. Twenty-one deputies are elected by the National Assembly to serve on the council. Their charge is to serve the legislature by organizing and gathering information on issues brought by their constituents or mass organizations.

Legislation is prepared by a group of experts who develop a draft proposal. Then it goes to the respective sectors for input – for instance, farmers will have input in any legislation that affects farmers. Anyone who has an interest in the topic can request inclusion in the discussion and development.

After the National Assembly approves major new legislation, it may go to a referendum for the people to vote yes or no. Such was the case of the Families Code, passed in Cuba last year, a law that is far ahead of any country, especially the United States, as it relates to families and the LGBTQ+ community. (A future article on the Families Code will explore this further.)

The interest of the Cuban people is paramount for the National Assembly. Imagine if we in the U.S. could truly have leaders that make our interests more important than

the interests of Big Oil, Big Pharma, or Big Banks. Imagine our representatives working towards the development of a better life for all people in the U.S.

These scoundrels, our so-called “representatives,” know nothing about sacrifice, service, or commitment. They will never willingly give up their millionaire donors, their mansions, and their paid expensive vacations.

Only a socialist revolution in the U.S. will wrench power from them and give it back to the people where it belongs.

### **Impact of U.S. economic blockade**

Deputy Sergio Martínez ended our meeting as most of the people we met ended their meetings – with a discussion on how the longest sanctions imposed on any country have impacted and continue to impact the people of Cuba. He spoke of its impact on energy production, agriculture, and medicine.

“The Biden administration has not been friendly and in fact has been more harmful with misinformation, the blockade, and now putting Cuba on the list of state sponsors of terrorism,” Martínez explained.

When we visited the Denunciation Memorial in Havana, I was disgusted by the gall of the U.S. imperialist government in having a list of so-called “state sponsors of terrorism.” This same U.S. government has rained torture, rape, and murder on Cuba, all over the world, and upon its own citizens. Calling anyone else a terrorist is simply hypocrisy at the greatest level.

A recent meeting of Latin American countries voted against the exclusion of Cuba and demanded an end to the blockade, as well as taking Cuba off the terrorist list.

“We cannot wait for the U.S. to end the blockade. We have to develop our country with it still in place. Sovereignty is a right we will not renounce no matter what or at

any cost," the humble, revolutionary servant of the Cuban people stated.

