

A book against the blockade of knowledge: ‘Love is the law: Cuba’s queer rights revolution’

written by Francisco Rodríguez Cruz
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From left to right: Francisco Rodríguez Cruz (vice president of

the Cuban Journalists' Union); Cheryl LaBash (co-chair of the National Network on Cuba); and Gregory Williams (editor of "Love is the law). Photo: Facebook profile of Francisco Rodríguez Cruz

The following text was presented by Francisco Rodríguez Cruz on July 29 at the ICAP (Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos / Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples) House of Friendship, in Havana, Cuba, with the participation of the Venceremos Brigade and LGBTIQ+ activists from the United States, along with members of the community networks linked to Cenesex (Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual / National Center for Sex Education), among other invited individuals.

This event was the Cuban launch of the book published in the U.S. by Struggle-La Lucha, "Love is the law: Cuba's queer rights revolution." Rodríguez Cruz is the vice president of the Cuban Union of Journalists (UPEC) and a gay activist. He is better known as "Paquito el de Cuba."

One of the biggest surprises and disappointments I have experienced when representing Cuba in international forums on LGBTIQ+ rights, or simply in my daily contact with supportive friends from other countries visiting Cuba, is the widespread ignorance, sometimes almost total, of all our most recent struggles and achievements in this area.

The smear campaign about homophobia and transphobia in the Cuban Revolution continues to be the prevailing opinion in the major transnational media, reinforced time and again by the permanent decontextualization by the counterrevolutionary press financed from abroad of the problems we still have, of course, in this cultural battle to overcome prejudice and stigma, discrimination and injustice based on

people's sexual orientation and gender identity.

And precisely in a world where misinformation about Cuba is systematic and where advances in LGBTIQ+ rights on the island are ignored or distorted, the book "Love is the law: Cuba's queer rights revolution" stands as a beacon of truth and solidarity, seeking to shed light on an induced and far from innocent darkness against our country.

Published by Struggle-La Lucha and presented at the [Urban Reads bookstore](#) in Baltimore — a space that has bravely resisted attacks by neo-Nazi groups — this work documents the democratic and revolutionary process that led to the approval in Cuba almost three years ago of the new Families Code, a pioneering legal framework that expands rights for women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and especially the LGBTIQ+ community.

This book not only documents the legal content of the Code, but also contextualizes its emergence from a Marxist, anti-colonial, and deeply humanist perspective. Readers will find testimonies from Cuban activists, historical analyses, excerpts from speeches, including those by Mariela Castro, director of Cenesex, and a rich reflection on how Cuban socialism has created conditions for the sustained expansion of rights, in contrast to the regressive offensive underway in the United States.

Because the U.S. blockade against Cuba is not only economic, it is also a cultural and political blockade that seeks to silence the achievements of the Revolution. While in the United States and much of the world, a narrative is promoted that caricatures Cuba as a country lagging in human rights, the reality is radically different. As the book points out, Cuba has built, through a process of popular democracy, one of the most advanced legal systems in terms of LGBTIQ+ rights, surpassing even many capitalist nations.

The book highlights a key point that is often forgotten: the processual and dialectical nature of the Cuban Revolution. Instead of clinging to dogma, the socialist process in Cuba has demonstrated, through the new Families Code, its ability to learn, rectify, and move forward. The fact that the Cuban government actively promotes LGBTIQ+ rights — through Cenesex, public health policies, legislation, and political representation — challenges all the stereotypes constructed by the Western media.

I should add here that this is not just about the renewal of family law, which is the focus of this important title. Following the approval of the Families Code, Cuba has incorporated approaches to protection and guarantees for LGBTIQ+ people into other updated regulations or those that have emerged as a development of the 2019 Constitution.

The Penal Code; public health regulations, including those relating to assisted reproduction and surrogacy; the extension of maternity and paternity rights; and just a few days ago, the approval of the new Code on Children, Adolescents, and Youth, together with the Civil Registry Law; complete what we can safely say is one of the most comprehensive and revolutionary legal systems in the world in terms of LGBTIQ+ rights, and one that will surely continue to develop.

But let us return to our book, which we hope will soon be available in Spanish from a Cuban publisher, also to contribute to the education of our citizens, who are in great need of it on these issues.

Because in these dangerous times of colonization of thought, historical obfuscation, and traps for de-ideologization, we can also learn a lot from the analysis of transgender communist Leslie Feinberg, who in her/zir essay “Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba” (2009) [included in “Love is the law”] contextualizes the Cuban LGBTIQ+ struggle within our history of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist resistance. Feinberg highlights how, unlike the United States — where the Stonewall rebellion (1969) was a response to police brutality and marginalization — Cuba has managed

to integrate the demands of diverse sexualities into a socialist project that prioritizes collective justice.

Another of the book's major contributions is to debunk the myth that Cuba has historically been homophobic and unevolved. While the early years of the Revolution were marked by prejudices inherited from Spanish colonialism and U.S. neocolonial influence, as well as the mistakes inherent in an armed national liberation process that reinforced the symbolism of a rebellious and exclusively heterosexual masculinity, the Cuban women's movement — led by the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) — paved the way with the first Family Code in 1975, a milestone that guaranteed equal pay, reproductive rights, and child protection decades before the United States.

As part of the counterinsurgency analysis presented in the book, passages that have been used to unfairly attack Cuba are put into a more balanced perspective. It compares, for example, how in the 1980s, in the face of the AIDS epidemic, Cuba implemented public health policies that provided free medical care and housing to people with HIV, in contrast to the deliberate neglect of the Reagan administration. The creation of the National Center for Sex Education (Cenesex) in 1988, later directed by Mariela Castro Espín, consolidated a state model of active promotion of LGBTIQ+ rights, including free gender affirmation surgery since 2008.

The book also details the 2019 constitutional process, and highlights Article 42 of the current Constitution, which prohibits all discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the subsequent referendum on the Family Code (2022), approved with 66.85% of the vote, after 79,000 popular assemblies and 6.5 million participants in the consultations.

This code, as we already know, legalized same-sex marriage, recognized the wide diversity of existing families (same-sex parents, multi-parent families, families with grandparents as caregivers, etc.), guaranteed adoption for all family types and non-

profit surrogacy, introduced progressive autonomy for children and adolescents in decisions about their bodies, and strengthened protection against domestic and gender-based violence.

At a time when the international fascist movement — led by figures such as Donald Trump — is attacking LGBTIQ+ rights and public services, the book underscores the importance of learning from Cuba. While trans rights are being cut and teachers are being persecuted in the United States, Cuba has already moved forward with policies such as extending maternity leave to 15 months in 2024, and has just banned corrective surgery for intersex infants, established by law the right to comprehensive sexuality education and freedom of expression and respect for identity from childhood, adolescence, and youth, as well as the possibility for trans people to change their identity documents without the need for genital reassignment surgery.

The context cannot be forgotten: All this is happening under the brutal conditions of the economic, political, and cultural blockade imposed by the United States for more than six decades. A blockade that not only suffocates the country economically, but also imposes an information and symbolic siege. As one of the trans activists interviewed in the book points out, the shortage of hormones is not due to a lack of political will, but to the restrictions imposed by the blockade, aggravated by the absurd inclusion of Cuba on the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Meanwhile, the United States is experiencing a reactionary legislative wave, with anti-trans laws, book bans, restrictions on abortion, and the criminalization of critical thinking in schools. The comparison is inevitable for the authors, who honestly highlight this contrast. While in Cuba, millions of people are consulted to expand rights, in the U.S., rights are being eliminated by judicial decrees signed by unelected judges who respond to corporate and fundamentalist interests.

Of particular relevance is the fact that this work denounces the hypocrisy of the U.S.

government, which includes Cuba on its spurious list of State Sponsors of Terrorism while financing wars and supporting genocide in Palestine. In contrast, it is recognized that Cuba exports solidarity: doctors, education, and a model of social justice that inspires the world.

“Love is the Law” is not just a book; it is an act of resistance. It recovers the legacy of Feinberg and [Bob McCubbin](#) — whose Marxist analysis of LGBTIQ+ oppression is fundamental — and updates it for a new generation. In the words of editor Gregory Williams: “Stonewall means struggle, and Cuba shows us that another world is possible.”

This text is also a tool for decolonizing knowledge about Cuba, inspiring struggles in countries subjected to neoliberalism, and strengthening international solidarity against imperialism.

“Love is the law” is, therefore, much more than a legal or historical testimony. It is a tool for queer internationalism. An invitation to look south, toward socialist processes and anti-colonial resistance, to learn, be inspired, and build bridges. Because if this book teaches us anything, it is that the struggle for LGBTIQ+ rights cannot be separated from class struggle, feminism, anti-racism, and anti-capitalism.

In the words of editor Gregory E. Williams during the launch: “We must oppose those who seek to erase history. There is an alternative to capitalist oppression. With socialist revolution, people can move forward continuously instead of always being on the defensive.”

That is why we need this book, because it is a living memory of a revolution that continues to march forward. Because it dismantles the myths of imperialist propaganda. Because it reminds us that there are alternatives. As Feinberg wrote: “Trans and queer liberation is linked to the liberation of all oppressed people.” This book is another step on that path.

This book — I repeat — is urgent. Not only because the reactionary offensive is advancing in countries like the United States, but also because, from the imperialist centers, a distorted narrative of the Cuban Revolution has historically been promoted, particularly regarding the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. There is a silence — or worse, a lie — that hides the fact that Cuba has been, in recent decades, a remarkable example of how a socialist process can expand sexual and gender rights from a logic of social justice, structural equity, and real democratic participation.

That silence must be broken. And works like this achieve that.

Thank you very much.

