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Toronto Forum on Cuba Newsletter

June 23, 2014

Volume #52

Issue #3

Toronto: Mariela Castro Espín Welcome!



Photo courtesy of Albino Moldes

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Mariela Castro Espín arrived in Toronto at noon on Sunday, June 22. Fresh, friendly, and smiling, ready to help with the celebrations of the fight for Pride rights, of National Aboriginal Day, of whatever is worth celebrating when there is a victory for a just cause! She is a tireless activist and leader in the fight to bring full equality to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Queer (LGBTQ) persons. As Director of the Cuban Center for Sexual Education (CENESEX), she helps with the organization of educational sessions all across Cuba, while learning in the process how to advance the cause of the LGBTI's (the Cuban abbreviation). A member of the Cuban National Assembly of People's Power (its Parliament); she has been a staunch advocate and initiator of changes to the Labour Code in Cuba and and has worked non-stop for the great progress in this area.

A sad moment—and a reminder to us all of the unjust and the criminal blockade of the United States imposed against Cuba and its extra-territorial tentacles—is that, while Mariela Castro Espín holds a diplomatic passport, she was denied the VIP privileges afforded to diplomats entering Canada! What a shame! But of course, that inappropriate Canadian gesture did not take away one iota of her energy and of her ever present smile and openness. An accomplished diplomat, Mariela remained above this shameful slight. Wow!

Blessed be Cuba for the presence of Mariela Castro in Toronto! From the moment of her arrival at the airport terminal, we encountered an attentive and sympathetic leader who has come to discuss the ways she has been working to advance the cause of the Cuban Socialist Revolution, including the defense of the anti-terrorist Cuban Five political prisoners of the United States—of whom three are still unjustly and illegally held behind the bars of the empire's dungeons—and to share her experiences as a new generation of leaders born out of the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro Ruz.

The small welcoming committee, initiated by Toronto Forum on Cuba, and members of the First Nations community and friends of Cuba, was certainly not as large as the merits of her valor, courage, patience and her smile full of optimism of a fruitful visit!

The first public meeting at which she spoke, a few hours later, held at the United Steelworkers Hall, sponsored by the Communist Party of Canada, People's Voice, Rainbow Sea of Red Open Collective with Cuba (RSoROCC), and the Queer Commission, was also endorsed by the undersigned organization. On this beautiful Saturday afternoon Mariela Castro, in her presentation to a full house of activists, union leaders, social justice activists and certainly members of the

LGBT community, easily walked us through the situation of the LGBTI persons in Cuba, past and present. She reminded everyone of how colonial Spain massacred not only the ones who fought against colonialism and for independence of Cuba but "massacred en masse Black Cubans slaves for being homosexual". She pointed out that, after the victory of the Cuban Revolution in the late 1960's and the early 1970's, Military Units to Aid Production (UMAP by its acronym in Spanish for Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción) were set up just for homosexuals. Mariela stated that it had been a wrong policy, established for the purpose of fighting the backward and machismo attitude in the society, a policy that was based on a lack of scientific knowledge and a proper and just approach to the issue at that time anywhere in the world.

Mariela Castro, the outspoken defender of LGBT rights in Cuba and the region called for unity, mobilization, education—in particular amongst community activists—in the struggle for equality for all and against injustice.

To be brief, I felt in the words of Mariela Castro Ruz, the pain of the Black slave, Hatuey, who was killed at the stake for his rebelliousness against Spanish colonialism, as well as the bravery of Antonio Maceo—the Bronze Titan—and the love of Jose Marti and his vision that "homeland is humanity". She is a representative of the new generation of leaders who have been born after the Cuban Revolution, who appreciate the achievements made, are ready to face the shortcomings, and who tirelessly fight against injustice anywhere and anytime. That is why her closing words referenced the unjust plight of the Cuban Five and led the audience to chants of "Free the Cuban Five", some of the recent heroes of Cuba's long struggle for independence and justice. This reflects the Cuban practice of recognizing those to whom it owes its existence. For example, the 6th regional conference of the ILGALAC, held last month in Varadero, Cuba, called in its closing resolution for the "freeing of Cuban anti-terrorists unjustly sentenced in the United States."

As Fidel Castro has stated, "when an energetic and resolute people cry, Injustice trembles!" and Mariela Castro Espin undoubtedly is one who is carrying the banner of revolutionary socialist Cuba for a world without wars of aggression and injustice. As a champion of the struggle for LGBT and women's rights, not only in Cuba but on a world scale, she commented, "Skeptics say, 'Oh, she is the daughter of the Cuban president Raul Castro and that is why nothing happens to her'". But the many who have benefitted from the efforts of Mariela and her colleagues and the optimists who struggle for better world take energy and are recharged when they encounter this indefatigable leader in her quest for justice, armed only with an ever present smiling face and a heart full of love!

After all is said and done, she is also the daughter of Vilma Espin—the founder of the Cuban Federation of Women; and she carries the banner that her mother had raised in her teens in a quest for social justice and women's rights. Mariela is born out of the Cuban Revolution of 1959; and her generation—like the Cuban Five, contemporary heroes of the fight against U.S. terrorism—are showing that they join their predecessors as Cuban torch bearers in the pursuit of the concepts that "Homeland is humanity" and "Justice delayed is justice denied".

If you missed it on Sunday; you certainly do not want to miss this one:

Mariela Castro Espin to attend WorldPride Human Rights Conference

Mariela Castro Espin, Director of the Cuban National Centre for Sexual Education (CENESEX) and Deputy in the Cuban National Assembly, will be speaking at the WorldPride Human Rights Conference, Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, University of Toronto, June 25-27.

Mariela is scheduled to speak on Friday, June 27 between 1:30 and 3:00 pm, University College, Room 161. Her presentation is entitled LGBTI Human Rights in Cuba: Reflections from 24 Years at CENESEX. On the same panel, Manuel Vasques Seljido, also with CENESEX, will address the issue of LGBTI rights in Latin America.

We certainly hope that she will also be invited to the National Aboriginal Day Celebration on Wednesday. Please, make sure to check our calendar of events for her speaking engagement updates.

Viva Equal Rights for All Races and Genders of Humanity!
Viva the Cuban Revolution!
Free the Cuban Five!
Vilma Espin Presente!

Take care and have a nice day.

Brotherly,
Morteza Gorgzadeh for
Toronto Forum on Cuba
torontoforumoncuba@rogers.com (<mailto:torontoforumoncuba@rogers.com>)
www.torontoforumoncuba.com (<http://www.torontoforumoncuba.com/>)

***** **CALENDAR OF EVENTS** (<http://torontoforumoncuba.weebly.com/calendar-of-events.html>) *****

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Reverend Luis Barrios
Co-Director of Pastors for Peace
SATURDAY, JULY 5TH, 2014
7:30 PM
COLLEGE ST. UNITED CHURCH
MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM
452 COLLEGE STREET (NORTH-WEST CORNER OF BATHURST ST.)



On Saturday, July 5th, our U.S. friends from IFCO Pastors for Peace will visit Toronto as part of the annual Cuba Caravan. Each year the Cuba Caravan travels across Canada and the US collecting goods and/or donations to be delivered to Cuba in defiance of the

illegal U.S. blockade. For Cuba, the Caravan is an important effort to end the blockade against the island, which causes shortages of food, medicine and other important supplies for eleven million people. It is an immoral policy that uses hunger and disease as political weapons.



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Reverend Luis Barrios
Co-Director of Pastors for Peace
SUNDAY, JULY 6TH, 2014
1:00 PM
SAN LORENZO CHURCH
22 WENDERLY DRIVE, TORONTO



On Sunday, July 6th, our U.S. friends from IFCO Pastors for Peace will visit Toronto as part of the annual Cuba Caravan. Each year the Cuba Caravan travels across Canada and the US collecting goods and/or donations to be delivered to Cuba in defiance of the illegal U.S. blockade.

For Cuba, the Caravan is an important effort to end the blockade against the island, which causes shortages of food, medicine and other important supplies for eleven million people. It is an immoral policy that uses hunger and disease as political weapons.



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Toronto Forum on Cuba - www.torontoforumoncuba.com

(<http://www.torontoforumoncuba.com/activities/ifco-pastors-for-peace-in-toronto-july-6th-2014>)

CELEBRATE Cuba's Rebellion Day

Saturday
July 26th
6:30pm
to
12:00am
United
Steelworkers Hall
25 Cecil St.
(one block southeast of College and Spadina)



Dedicated to
Nelson Mandela
&
The Cuban Five

FREE ADMISSION

On July 26th, 1953 a group of brave young Cubans, led by Fidel Castro, attacked the Moncada and the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes garrisons, symbols of the tyranny and occupation of Cuba under the US puppet regime of Batista. Although the attack was militarily defeated, it raised the banner of struggle, which would lead to the victory of the Cuban Revolution on Jan. 1st, 1959.

We celebrate this year's July 26th as a tribute to **Nelson Mandela**, the icon of the struggle against the racist Apartheid regime, as well as the heroic anti-terrorist **Cuban Five** political prisoners of the empire, who selflessly fought alongside their African brothers and sisters as part of Cuba's internationalist brigades that numbered some 425,000.

There will be a cultural tribute honouring **Gabriel García Márquez, Juan Formell and Luis Carbonell**, who help us understand the significance of the July 26th rebellion, a movement under the leadership of Fidel Castro Ruz, the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, which has acted upon José Martí's concept that "Homeland is Humanity", Patria es Humanidad!

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL EVENT

HONOURED SPEAKER
Francisca Rivero Rodríguez
Consul of Cuba in Toronto

DOCUMENTARY SHOWING OF
"Mandela and Fidel"

SPECIAL PRESENTATION
Keith Ellis: Tribute to Gabriel García Márquez, Juan Formell & Luis Carbonell

CULTURAL SEGMENT
Indigenous Ceremony and Dance
FRITH NOLAN
Live African/Caribbean music
Live Cuban music

HOMEMADE HALAL FOOD
and much more...

ORGANIZED BY: Toronto Forum on Cuba - www.torontoforumoncuba.com, torontoforumoncuba@rogers.com and La Asociación de Cubanos JUAN GUALBERTO GÓMEZ - cubanosjg.blogspot.com, asociacionjg@gmail.com

(<http://www.torontoforumoncuba.com/activities/july-26th-celebration-july-26-2014>)

LINKS / ENLACES (/links.html)

- National Committee to Free the Cuban Five (<http://www.freethefive.org/>)
- Int'l Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five (<http://www.thecuban5.org/wordpress/index.php>)
- Antiterroristas (<http://www.antiterroristas.cu/>)
- Canadian Network on Cuba (<http://www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/>)
- Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network (<http://lacsnet.weebly.com/>)
- Embassy of Cuba in Canada (<http://www.cubadiplomatica.cu/canada/EN/Home.aspx>)
- Asociación de Cubanos JUAN GUALBERTO GÓMEZ (<http://cubanosjg.blogspot.ca/>)

[more / más... \(/links.html\)](#)

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 - Previous Newsletters / Boletines Anteriores (<http://torontoforumoncuba.weebly.c>)
 - YouTube Channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/toron>)

MULTIMEDIA

- Video

- THE CUBAN FIVE / LOS CINCO**
- News / Noticias (<http://torontoforumoncuba.weeb five-news.html>)
 - Solidarity with the Cuban Five / Solidaridad con Los Cinco (<http://torontoforumoncuba.weeb with-the-cuban-five.html>)
 - Legal documents / Documentos Legales (<http://torontoforumoncuba.weeb documentation.html>)
 - Messages from the Cuban Five / Mensajes de Los Cinco (<http://torontoforumoncuba.weeb from-the-cuban-five.html>)
 - Write to the Cuban Five / Escriba a Los Cinco (<http://torontoforumoncuba.weeb to-the-cuban-five.html>)

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