

## March against homophobia in Havana



*Demonstration with rainbow flags on Saturday in Havana (Source: [Transcuba](#))*

Hundreds of people took to the streets in Havana on Saturday against homophobia and transphobia. Under the slogan "For all families: love is the law," the traditional march of the sex education institute Cenesex to conga rhythms celebrated the passage of the new family law last September. Participants carried signs such as "I am LGBT+ and Christian" and shouted slogans such as "Socialism Yes, Homophobia No."

The colorful demonstration was led by Cenesex leader Mariela Castro, daughter of former President Raúl Castro, who has spent decades advocating for the rights of sexual minorities in Cuba. "It's the conga of pride. We Cubans are very into partying, conga and fun - this is how we express our diversity," said co-organizer Diana Pena.

66.8 percent of eligible voters last fall voted to approve a new family law (Código de las familias) that introduced same-sex marriage, adoption rights for same-sex couples and surrogate motherhood. In addition, the new "Código" has expanded protections against domestic violence, as well as the rights of children, elderly and impaired. The island has since had some of the world's most progressive legislation in the field. The bill faced strong opposition from churches and evangelical groups.

In the six months since the new family law took effect, 745 same-sex marriages have been performed, including 462 between men and 283 between women, according to Cenesex data.

Homosexuality was long a taboo subject in socialist Cuba. In the 1960s, sexual minorities were stigmatized, and gays and lesbians were to be "cured" of their inclination through physical labor. Starting in the 1980s, this attitude began to change. The cult film "Fresa y cholate" from 1994 provided the topic with a broad audience for the first time. According to a representative survey commissioned by the Center for Women's Studies (CEM) in 2016,

77 percent agreed that same-sex couples should have equal rights - in 1988, only 23 percent of respondents in the same survey shared this view.

Since 2008, gender reassignment surgeries have been free for trans people in Cuba. In 2010, the late revolutionary leader Fidel Castro publicly apologized for the previous treatment of LGBT people, calling it a "great injustice."

The new family law "settled the historic debt" of the revolutionary process with the LGBT community, Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel expressed after its passage last year. ([Cubaheute](#))