

The Lesbians and Allies Project (L&A Project) is a collaboration between women of the US and Cuba sponsored by the US Women and Cuba Collaboration, and we are hosting our first US community forum on Thursday, May 26, in New York City alongside LASA (the Latin American Studies Association Conference).

We would like to acknowledge that we will be hosting two amazing lesbian women from Cuba for the first time on US soil. Isel Calzadilla Acosta, from Santiago de Cuba, is founder of “Las Isabelas,” the first lesbian organization in Cuba. Ms. Calzadilla consults with CENESEX (Cuban National Center for Sexual Education). Teresa de Jesus Fernandez, from Havana, is Senior Specialist in the CENESEX editorial department. Ms. de Jesus Fernandez is also their National Coordinator of the network of lesbian and bisexual women belonging to the Social Community of Networks. She has powerfully addressed her personal experiences and struggles in the documentary “Mujeres entre el cielo y la tierra” (“Women Between Heaven and Earth”), a must-see documentary. These women are true warriors in the lesbian rights struggle.

Building alliances and a solid LGBT interactive relationship between our two countries is an honor that we are proud of. On September 4th 2014, World Sexual Health Day, a US Women and Cuba Collaboration delegation of 11 women from Seattle, WA, arrived in Santa Clara, Cuba for the first conference of the “Lesbians and Allies Project Between the United States and Cuba.” This event took place in Santa Clara for several reasons. In addition to being the capital of the Villa Clara province and located in almost the geographical center of the Cuba, it is also a historical center as the site of the last battle in the Cuban Revolution in 1958 and it features a mausoleum where Che Guevara was laid to rest. But the key reason for the choice of Santa Clara was because it is home to the historic cultural center “El Mejunje.” For more than 20 years the Mejunje has been a meeting place and safe haven to the LGBT population throughout the country.

The L&A project was conceived in May 2012 when the US Women and Cuba Collaboration delegation met with “Las Isabelas,” a group of lesbians from Santiago de Cuba, and a decision was made to build a movement that would explore ways that lesbian women and allies from the two countries could learn from and support one another.

Please join us at our event on Thursday, May 26, and follow our website for updates on the work we are committed to do. Also like us on Facebook!

www.womenandcuba.org

<https://www.facebook.com/womenandcuba>