

CALL FOR SOLIDARITY BETWEEN WOMEN OF THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA TO DEFEND AND INCREASE REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND HEALTH CARE

US Women and Cuba Collaboration

On the Occasion of the March for Women's Lives Washington, DC April 25, 2004

Women in the US and globally are laboring for alternatives to violence, the end of poverty and discrimination, and an emphasis on human development that includes the right to health care, housing, education, and reproductive freedoms which provide the material conditions for full social, cultural, and political participation for all. The women of Cuba participate in this global labor, and as a result of the Cuban Revolution the people of Cuba have significantly realized a vision of human development that is a global model. The status of women in Cuba is impressive measured against the international standard of the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women. Women are the majority of Cuba's doctors, teachers, scientists, researchers, and they represent 47% of the labor force (FMC Report Beijing 2000). Discrimination on the basis of gender, race, and sexual orientation is outlawed in the Cuban Constitution. The government of Cuba was the first to ratify the United Nation's Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The enormous gains in the status of Cuban women as a result of the Cuban Revolution are not well known. Women across the world might benefit from knowledge, understanding, and strategic advice about building a nation that extends the definition of basic human rights to include rights to health care, housing, employment, education, and food.

Due to an information embargo by the US government that is supported by many media outlets, women in the US do not know about the reproductive rights and health advances for women and families in Cuba:

- There are no legal restrictions on abortions for women in Cuba except that they must be performed in a hospital by a medically certified doctor;
- Cuban women alone have the right to determine whether they wish to have or not have children
- If women choose to have children, access to free health care and pre-natal support have reduced Cuba's infant and maternal mortality levels to some of the lowest in the world;
- Sexuality in Cuba is considered a part of healthy human development and the National Center for Sexual Education offers age-appropriate programs throughout the country to achieve this goal;
- Cuba works toward a pro-active, prevention health care model that aims to reduce the need for abortion and an end to sexual and domestic violence against women, HIV/AIDS and homophobia;
- What is negatively impacting Cuban women's reproductive health are the specific cruelties to Cuban women and children that result directly from the US economic blockade.

WHO WE ARE: **US Women and Cuba Collaboration** actions aim to empower diverse women in the US and other parts of the world, to participate in and develop just and peaceful international relations, to deepen global women's solidarity, and to use a woman-to-woman citizen diplomacy model to craft methods to improve the lives of women in both countries. The ultimate goal of our strategic collaboration is to normalize relations between our sovereign nations and to build an inclusive and progressive global women's movement. The **US Women and Cuba Collaboration**, directed by a Coordinating Committee based in Seattle, WA, comprises demographically and geographically diverse US women and a growing network of more than thirty organizations representing women's rights, racial and economic justice, labor, Cuba solidarity, artists and media makers. We organize in solidarity with women throughout Cuba, primarily through the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), a grassroots NGO representing 85% of Cuban women and girls.

Collaboration Co-Chairs:

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