

**Sheffield Cuba Solidarity Campaign Public Meeting
Monday 21 February 7.30pm, Simunye Café, 229 London Rd**

With Geraldine Lievesley, Manchester Met University, author of
The Cuban Revolution: Past, Present and Future Perspectives

Cuba: Empowering Civil Society?



The prize-winning 1993 film 'Strawberry and Chocolate' confronted homophobia and the exclusion of a gay identity from Cuban civil society. It wasn't made in Hollywood or Miami, but in Cuba, funded by the state film institute. It smashed box-office records all over Cuba.

Today, just as the EU states are restoring normal relations with Cuba, disrupted by the last US offensive in 2003, Condaleeza Rice and George Bush, custodians of the Guantánamo torture camp, have launched new attacks on 'tyranny' in Cuba. They paint a cold war picture of a totalitarian dictator oppressing a cowed and degraded people. Any visitor to Cuba knows this is rubbish, which is one reason the US government prosecutes its own citizens for visiting Cuba to see for themselves.

Civil society refers to active social and political organisations, often representing people with different identities based on gender, race, sexual orientation, religion; and to pluralistic cultural life more generally: music, art, film, literature, dance and so on. Tyrannies aren't supposed to tolerate such activity, so Bush's 2004 'Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba' masterplan to reconquer Cuba has a special section on 'Empowering Civil Society'. He pays academics and Miami-Cuban groups tens of millions of dollars to design blueprints for civil society in Cuba after its re-colonization! Of course, Cuba already has a very lively civil society that, paradoxically, has apparently become livelier during the severe economic crisis that has followed the collapse of the USSR, just when you would expect a tyranny to clamp down.

Sheffield-based Dr. Geraldine Lievesley has been studying and lecturing on Cuba for many years, and has just published *The Cuban Revolution: Past, Present and Future Perspectives*. Come and discuss with her the development of Cuba's civil society, its cultural and identity politics, and the explanations for the strengths and weaknesses of this aspect of life in revolutionary Cuba.

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