



## **Here is what you need to know about Castro's successor**

Andrea Torres

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**HAVANA** - Miguel Diaz-Canel, a disciplined Marxist and former university professor, is Raul Castro's successor.

Here what you need to know about the 57-year-old leader:

### **Born after the Cuban revolution**

He was born in the province of Villa Clara, and earned an electrical engineering degree from the Universidad Central Marta Abreu de Las Villas in 1982.

After completing his three years of obligatory military service in the Revolutionary Armed Forces' anti-aircraft missile unit, Diaz-Canel returned to Santa Clara and joined the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas, a governmental organization founded in 1962.

### **Image is radically different from Fidel Castro**

Ramon Silveiro, an LGBTQ activist in Santa Clara, told Reuters the father of two was among the political leaders who supported the cultural activities of the El Club Menjunje, a haven for LGBTQ bohemians in Santa Clara. He was known for his long hair and riding his bicycle, The Guardian reported.

After a year of working for the Communist Party in Villa Clara, he served as a provincial committee party leader until he was named first secretary of the province of Holguin in 2003. He divorced his first wife and later wed Lis Cuesta Peraza.

### **Raul Castro's hand-picked loyalist**

In 2009, Raul Castro ordered him to move from Holguin to Havana to become his higher education minister. As the president, Castro entrusts him with his market-oriented reforms.

There were concerns among Cubans in Miami about a leaked video in which Diaz-Canel accused diplomats from the U.S., Britain, Germany, Spain and Norway of "subversive activity" and said the final objective of the U.S. was to "destroy the revolution."

Juan Hidalgo, a CATO Institute analyst, said Diaz-Canel is just warming the seat for Castro's 52-year-old son, Alejandro Castro Espin, a colonel in the interior ministry who was not nominated to the National Assembly, according to Newsweek. Hidalgo is among the experts who believe Castro Espin is protecting his father and will take over in 2021.

Lincoln Diaz-Balart, a former Republican representative from Florida, believes the transition is of little significance and referred to Diaz-Canel as a "servant" of the Castros, while comparing him to Osvaldo Dorticos, a loyal Fidel Castro follower who served as Cuban president from 1959 until 1976.