

THREE

EXILES, IMMIGRANTS, AND TRANSNATIONALS: THE CUBAN COMMUNITIES OF THE UNITED STATES

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THE MAJORITY of the 1.3 million Cuban Americans presently in the United States arrived after 1959, when revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro assumed control of the Cuban government. Over the next forty years, more than one-tenth of Cuba's present-day population migrated to the United States, and thousands more migrated to other countries in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Europe. Unlike other migrations from the Americas, however, Cuban immigration to the United States is not merely a late-twentieth-century phenomenon. It is a pattern that was established several centuries earlier, the product of commercial ties and geographic proximity. Distinct Cuban communities in the United States were first noticed in the nineteenth century.

THE EARLY CUBAN COMMUNITIES

During the first half of the 1800s, Cuban merchants and businessmen conducted business and settled in the United States, in cities as diverse as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore. Many assumed U.S. citizenship, and even promoted the political goal of Cuba's annexation. It was also common during the nineteenth century for the *criollo* elites to send their children to boarding schools and colleges and universities in the United States rather than to Europe.

Prior to the 1860s, Cuban immigration was largely white and professional, and never totaled more than one thousand people.¹ A larger and more diverse migration occurred during the final decades of the nineteenth century as a result of the Ten Years' War (1868–1878.) The destruction of property and the

loss of traditional economic markets during the war, as well as the economic recession provoked by the drop in world-wide sugar prices in the following years, devastated Cuba's major industry and hence Cuban society. Political turmoil and high unemployment pushed thousands of Cubans of all races and social classes to the United States.

Concurrently, the growth of the cigar industry in the U.S. also lured Cubans to the United States, particularly to Florida, Louisiana, and New York. By 1895, distinct and fairly large Cuban communities existed in Key West, Tampa, and New Orleans. For example, one-third of Key West's population—some 5,000 people—were Cuban, mostly cigar workers employed in the more than one hundred factories on the key.² Interestingly, the first Cuban elected to public office in the United States was elected in the nineteenth century, not the late twentieth century as has been generally assumed: Carlos Manuel de Céspedes y Castillo, the son of the Cuban insurgent leader of the Ten Years' War, was elected mayor of Key West in 1876. In Florida, other Cuban cigar-making communities emerged in Martí City (Ocala) and Jacksonville. However, by 1900 Tampa and the neighboring Ybor City were the heart of the Cuban expatriate community. Tampa became the most important cigar-producing center in the United States thanks, in large part, to thousands of Cuban workers who had relocated to this area. All in all, more than 100,000 Cubans expatriated themselves over the second half of the nineteenth century, most of them to the United States.³ This U.S.-based population, particularly in Florida and New York, became the backbone of José Martí's popular nationalist movement of the 1880s, which led to the second—and ultimately successful—Cuban war of independence.⁴

Migration continued during the first half of the next century. Because of the close proximity of the two countries and the higher incomes across the Florida straits, it was not uncommon for some Cuban workers to spend at least part of their adult working lives in the United States. Records show that from 1921 to 1930, 16,000 Cubans immigrated to the United States, but these figures are probably an undercount. Migration decreased temporarily during the 1930s as a result of the Great Depression, as it did for most other immigrant groups: only 9,000 Cubans are registered to have immigrated to the United States during this decade. Migration expanded once again during the 1940s and 1950s. From 1941 to 1950, some 26,000 Cubans immigrated to the United States, followed by 79,000 in the next decade. They came from all different classes, motivated by a variety of concerns. Some came as political exiles, people victimized by the *gangsterismo* so prevalent in Cuban politics after 1930. Others came as sojourners, hoping to make a better living in the United States so that they and their families could eventually live more comfortable lives when they returned to the homeland. By the 1940s the working class held a precarious position in Cuban society. Low wages affected their purchasing power, and more

than half of workers had no disability or unemployment insurance. Colonialist economic policies discouraged industrialists and entrepreneurs from expanding or creating new enterprises that would have provided the unemployed and underemployed with new work opportunities.⁵ Whether they came for political or economic reasons, the majority of Cubans who migrated to the United States came with the intention of one day returning to their homeland. In addition to these expatriates, thousands more came temporarily to the United States to vacation, to study, to invest, or to transact business, all contributing to a growing Cuban presence in the United States.

The world these migrants and visitors entered was not completely foreign to them because of the intense cultural, economic, and political contacts between Cuba and the United States since 1898. By the 1950s, Pan American airlines scheduled as many as twenty-eight daily flights between Miami and Havana. Cubans were vast importers of U.S. consumer goods and cultural forms, from New York fashions to Hollywood movie features. Vacationing in Miami Beach or New York City was as popular for middle-class Cubans before the Castro revolution as vacationing in Havana was for middle-class Americans. The large American presence and financial investments on the island and the close commercial ties between both countries shaped the evolution of Cuban politics. It also influenced language, customs, and traditions.⁶ However, this familiarity with American culture and institutions did not guarantee that life for the exiles and immigrants would evolve smoothly in the United States, nor did it exempt them from discrimination, racial violence, and abuse in the workplace. Black and mulatto Cuban workers were particularly harassed, especially those who were involved in labor organizing, and there is evidence that many were intimidated into returning to the island.⁷

Cubans on opposite sides of the Florida straits maintained contact with each other in multiple ways, and those who lived in the United States strove to maintain a strong sense of *cubanidad*. They kept Cuban traditions alive through cultural pageants and celebrations; they published Spanish-language newspapers with news of the homeland; they wrote novels, plays, and poetry and composed music that spoke of their ties to both Cuba and the United States. Cigar workers, in particular, in both countries, supported one another's labor struggles. Remittances traveled easily across the border. Up until 1959, Cubans on the island and on the mainland were able to travel back and forth relatively freely, exchanging ideas, importing and exporting one another's goods, investing in one another's future. Like their nineteenth-century forebears, the Cubans on the mainland played an active role in the politics of their homeland, raising money for political causes and candidates.

Ironically, the revolutionary movement that produced the most expansive economic and political reform on the island also scared away the greatest num-

ber of people by its radicalism. Some of those who chose—or were forced—to leave Cuba after Castro took power were supporters of the U.S.-backed dictator, Fulgencio Batista. But many more were not: rather, they were the silent majority whose fear, apathy, resignation, or victimization had prevented them from assuming a more active role in the political affairs of their country. As in many colonial and authoritarian societies with a history of corruption, the population had long hoped that an idealistic politician would come along and initiate the necessary reforms to create a truly egalitarian society. During the 1950s, many cautiously hoped that Fidel Castro and his July 26th Movement would provide that leadership and restore José Martí's vision for Cuba: a vision that had been thwarted by U.S. military and political intervention in 1898. Thus, when Castro proved successful in ousting Batista from power, many Cubans were euphoric, but that enthusiasm slowly waned in the years that followed. It is unclear if Castro was a communist when he took power in 1959, or if he was compelled to become so because of aggressive U.S. diplomatic and economic policies. Whatever the case, many Cubans became disillusioned with the marxist orientation their nationalist revolution ultimately took. They believed that under Castro, Cuba remained a colony, only this time of the Soviet Union. Cubans who now came to the United States perceived themselves as "exiles" rather than immigrants: people who had been displaced by a government that became increasingly hostile to their basic beliefs about democratic government, commercial enterprise, and equal opportunity. Over one-tenth of Cuba's population ultimately chose to express their displeasure by emigrating.

Cuba's historic ties to the United States made it logical that most exiles would turn to their former American patrons for help, and until the mid-1970s, daily flights between Havana and Miami allowed Castro to export dissent. Arriving during the midst of the Cold War, the Cubans became powerful symbols for Americans of the clash between democracy and authoritarianism, between free enterprise and communism. Popular U.S. magazines like *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, and *Fortune* celebrated the refugees' courage, love of freedom, and entrepreneurial spirit. Laws were bent or broken to facilitate the Cubans' entrance into this country and their accommodation and naturalization. No other immigrant group in the second half of the twentieth century received as expansive a welcome as the Cubans.

THE MIGRATION BEGINS

Cuban migration to the United States in the Castro years occurred in distinct "waves." The first occurred from 1 January 1959 to 22 October 1962 and brought approximately 248,070 Cubans to the United States.⁸ The first people

to leave were those who were in some way connected to the old regime: political leaders, high government officials, and military officers of Fulgencio Batista's government. Associated with the corruption and abuses of the Batista years, these individuals were eager to leave Cuba since they faced retribution from a resentful population. Their only option was to emigrate until time healed political wounds or until a more sympathetic government was in place.

However, not all who left during this first wave were affiliated with the Batista government. Thousands became alienated by the social upheaval that followed Castro's rise to power.⁹ Cuban society underwent radical transformation in the 1960s. Agrarian and urban reform laws changed the character of ownership and production and placed most properties under the control of the state. The nationalization of U.S. properties on the island—a considerable investment ranging from sugars mills and factories to railroads and public utilities—angered the Eisenhower administration and led to a severing of diplomatic relations between the two countries and, eventually, an economic embargo. Fidel Castro correctly assumed that the United States would try to overthrow his government, and he proceeded to create a police state obsessed with weeding out any counterrevolutionary activity, real or imagined. Cubans who left their country during the 1960s described the country as a violent, even paranoid, state that denied basic civil liberties such as freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. It was a society where neighborhood watch committees (the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, or CDRs) monitored the population's every move. It was a society characterized by political indoctrination in schools, restrictions on religious observances, and mandatory "volunteer" labor. Shortages in basic food staples and consumer goods, brought on by the restructuring of the Cuban economy and later by the trade embargoes imposed by the United States and several other nations also affected Cubans across society.¹⁰

These and other factors proved to be the decisive points that forced many people to leave their country. For those who left Cuba, the general feeling was that their popular nationalist revolution had been betrayed in favor of a communist one. The migration out of Cuba followed a logical socioeconomic progression. Cubans of the elite classes were the first to leave, followed by member of the professional middle class. By 1962, Cubans of the working class also left: office and factory employees, artisans, and skilled and semi-skilled laborers.

Most Cubans who traveled to the U.S. did so under the assumption that they would soon return to their homeland. Because of the United States' long history of involvement in Cuban affairs, most exiles believed that it was merely a matter of time before the United States intervened to replace Castro. Only a few years earlier, the CIA had successfully arranged the overthrow of Jacobo

Arbenz Guzmán in Guatemala when the latter's socialist policies threatened U.S. corporate interests in that country. Exiles knew that Cuba was even more valuable to U.S. interests, and the Castro government's nationalization of U.S. properties guaranteed a more active response from the United States. Thus, during the early 1960s, most exiles came to the U.S. under the assumption that their stay was temporary.

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South Florida became the principal place of settlement for a variety of reasons. Flights between Havana and Miami were the most readily available. Since the first arrivals came primarily from the middle class, Miami was also a place with which they were familiar because they had either vacationed or conducted business there. There was also a fairly large Cuban community in south Florida by 1959—some 30,000—many of whom had migrated a generation or two earlier as exiles from other political regimes.¹¹ For homesick, snow-fearing Cubans, Florida's climate and topography were also important considerations; and, as an added incentive, the plane ride from Havana to Miami was a short one (fifty-five minutes) and inexpensive (approximately twenty-five dollars), making a return easy when conditions in Cuba changed. However, despite south Florida's many attractive features, Cubans ultimately settled wherever they found jobs, even if it meant relocating way up north in cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, or New York. Taking care of one's family was always the primary consideration. The Miami of the early 1960s was a small resort town that could hardly accommodate the thousands of Cubans who arrived each week. If the majority of Cubans eventually stayed in south Florida it was because, over time, they assisted in the area's economic transformation.

Acquiring permission to leave Cuba, as well as to travel to the United States, was a long, complicated affair. In order to leave their country legally, Cubans had to acquire an exit permit from one of the government ministries, which allowed the government to screen travelers before they left. Cubans had to fill out numerous forms and submit to lengthy interrogations. While the government wanted to rid the country of dissenters, they also wished to prevent a "brain-drain"; those with skills considered vital to the revolutionary society (particularly in the sciences) and who did not pose a security threat were prohibited from leaving. Those suspected of "crimes against the revolution" were also detained for appropriate punishment. Cubans who could not secure exit permits, or who feared for their safety, took refuge in foreign embassies or sailed clandestinely to the Florida Keys, often on homemade rafts. Those unable to get a seat on a plane to the United States also had the option of traveling to a third country—if they were fortunate enough to acquire the appropriate visas—and either stay in those countries or apply for immigrant visas at the U.S. embassy there. If they did not return within a certain period of time—in most cases, one year—their property was confiscated by the state.

The U.S. bureaucracy was somewhat easier to navigate. Visas to travel to the United States could be acquired at the U.S. Embassy in Havana or at the American consulate at Santiago, and officials there regularly granted over a thousand "tourist" visas each week to allow Cubans to come to the United States. Once in the U.S., the Cubans were granted "indefinite voluntary departure" or "parole" status. After the United States severed relations with Cuba in January 1961, U.S. officials inaugurated a procedure of "visa waivers," which could be obtained through the Swiss embassy in Havana. Airline tickets had to be purchased with U.S. currency, and if Cubans did not have U.S. dollars, which were increasingly scarce after 1961, they had to wait until friends or relatives in the U.S. assisted them in purchasing the tickets. Even after purchasing a ticket, there was a waiting list for seats on airlines. Once you secured a seat and got to the airport, members of the state police carefully inspected every piece of luggage and often submitted passengers to dehumanizing personal searches. After 1961, Cubans were not allowed to take more than five dollars out of the country and more than thirty pounds of luggage per person. In the most fortunate of cases, Cubans arrived in Miami and stayed with already-established relatives or friends who assisted them in finding housing and jobs and enrolling their children in school. Or they took a train or bus to cities where they knew people who could help them. Some of the more fortunate emigrés (usually the wealthier) had some money invested in U.S. banks before the revolution and were able to draw on these reserves. The majority of exiles, however, arrived at Miami International Airport with just a few U.S. dollars and with no clue as to what to do next.

During the first years of the migration, the Catholic Church was their major source of assistance. Since the majority of Cubans were at least nominally Roman Catholic, they logically turned to the Church in their time of need. The newly established Diocese of Miami created a social welfare agency to assist the Cubans, the Centro Hispano Católico.¹² Located in a remodeled wing of a parochial school in downtown Miami, the Centro provided housing and job referrals, English classes, a day nursery, educational programs for children, an outpatient and dental clinic, home visits to the sick, food, toiletries, used clothing, and small loans to cover miscellaneous expenses such as eyeglasses and dentures. By December 1961, the Diocese of Miami had spent over \$1.5 million in assisting the Cubans.¹³ Voluntary relief agencies (VOLAGS) such as the Catholic Relief Services, the International Rescue Committee, and the United HIAS Service, among many others, also assisted the arrivals from Cuba. By late 1960, representatives of these different VOLAGS met each plane coming from Havana to answer the Cubans' questions and to inform them on the resources available to help them.

By the end of 1960, almost forty thousand Cubans had arrived in the United States, and their numbers increased by one thousand to fifteen hundred per week.¹⁴ Residents of south Florida panicked, since they knew that their city could not accommodate such sudden population growth. Most jobs were in the low-paying service sector, and Cubans had to compete with a large pool of unemployed workers, mostly African American, as well as northerners that traveled south each winter in search of jobs in the resort economy. The public school system, one of the poorest in the country, was ill-equipped to deal with the hundreds of children who arrived in their classrooms each month.

Not surprisingly, the early arrivals from Cuba experienced radical downward mobility. Approximately 36 percent of Cubans of the first wave were professionals (e.g. doctors, lawyers, engineers, and educators) but were unable to practice their professions because they lacked English fluency or did not meet other state licensing requirements. They worked at whatever jobs they could get, in construction, maintenance, and service occupations. It was common to see doctors, lawyers, and teachers working as hospital orderlies, dishwashers, and janitors. Women often found jobs more easily than men because employers could pay them even lower wages. Women found jobs as seamstresses (many doing piecework at home), domestics, janitors, cooks, dishwashers, waitresses, cashiers, manicurists, and other unskilled or semiskilled labor that did not require experience or fluency in English and had limited contact with the general public. Some were fortunate to find employment in Miami's expanding garment industry. Others found jobs sorting fish in warehouses by the Miami River or as agricultural workers in the fruit and vegetable fields outside the city.

The Eisenhower administration left the task of accommodating the Cubans to local communities and charitable organizations. Like the exiles, the Eisenhower administration believed that it was only a matter of time before the Cubans returned to their homeland, and thus a comprehensive assistance program was not considered necessary. As early as March 1960, Eisenhower authorized the CIA to begin preparing an invasion of Cuba that would overthrow the Castro government and replace it with a coalition of leaders chosen directly by the United States. However, after many complaints from south Florida residents, who wanted the Cubans moved out of the area, the president finally released one million dollars from the contingency funds of the Mutual Security Act to assist in resettlement efforts. This act had tremendous significance, since in invoking the Mutual Security Act, Eisenhower officially recognized that Cuba was a communist state, and thus the Cuban exiles were refugees. The administration also established a "Cuban Refugee Emergency Center" in downtown Miami to coordinate the relief efforts of all the voluntary relief agencies and oversee a resettlement program. However, most of the

financial burden of the Cubans' accommodation continued to rest with the volunteer agencies.

154 It was not until the Kennedy administration that the federal government assumed a more assertive role in refugee relief efforts. Kennedy established a "Cuban Refugee Program" (CRP) under the umbrella of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW).¹⁵ The CRP provided funding for resettlement, monthly relief checks, health services, job training, adult educational opportunities, and surplus food distribution (e.g. canned meat, powdered eggs and milk, cheese, and oatmeal).¹⁶ The government also provided partial funding to the Dade County Public School System to help it accommodate the more than 3,500 Cuban refugee children who attended public schools by January 1961.

One major problem the Kennedy administration had to deal with was the over 14,000 children who arrived unaccompanied during this first wave. Many parents unable to leave Cuba sent their children ahead, hoping to be reunited with them at a later date. These parents feared the political indoctrination in the schools and the military draft, and so they took part in what is now known as Operation Peter Pan, an underground network that emerged on the island to send children to the United States.¹⁷ Over half of the children who arrived unaccompanied in Miami were between the ages of 13 and 17, and over two-thirds were boys. Many arrived in Miami with only an identification tag pinned to their clothes or a letter in their pocket requesting assistance; some arrived carrying infants and younger siblings. Bryan O. Walsh, a Catholic priest and director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau in Miami initially assumed responsibility for their care, finding lodging for the children in homes or dormitories around the city. However, the Kennedy administration assumed financial responsibility for the children, providing foster families and institutions with funding for their care.¹⁸

The Kennedy administration also became involved in a number of other projects to assist the exiles. Skills and talents remained untapped within the largely middle-class refugee community because the language barrier made it difficult to meet state licensing requirements. The Castro government also prohibited teachers and other professionals from bringing their diplomas or transcripts of university records to the United States, thus making it nearly impossible for potential employers to verify their educational training. Working with community groups, the administration funded programs to assist Cuban professionals to prepare for their state licensing boards or to retrain for other types of employment. Programs were established at local universities to assist doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other professionals in their efforts to become certified for practice in the United States.

A number of federally funded vocational training programs targeted the working class. One program in particular entitled "Aprenda y Supérese," or "Training for Independence," helped unskilled Cuban women become self-supporting. Women received intensive English-language instruction and training in any of a number of skills: hand-sewing, sewing-machine work, office machine operation, clerical work, nursing, domestic service, and even silk-screen art work. Women were later resettled to cities where jobs were available for them. Aprenda y Supérese was so successful that it became a model for the amended "Aid to Families with Dependent Children" (AFDC) program in 1968.¹⁹

Cuban migration to the United States continued even in the wake of the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961, when the United States unsuccessfully carried out CIA plans to overthrow the Castro government.²⁰ Migration continued until October 1962, when the Cuban Missile Crisis finally severed all air traffic between the two countries.²¹ In just three short years the city of Miami had undergone dramatic change as it accommodated over two hundred thousand "temporary visitors." While the government had resettled a few thousand Cubans out of south Florida, the majority preferred to remain in the area, even if it meant forfeiting any government assistance. They preferred to stay as close to the homeland as possible and within the more familiar and nurturing exile enclave.

Even though air traffic between the two countries ceased after the missile crisis, approximately 56,000 Cubans arrived in the United States from 22 October 1962 to 28 September 1965.²² The majority came via third countries, particularly Spain or Mexico, arriving with immigrant visas acquired at the U.S. embassies in those countries. During this period many Cubans also sailed clandestinely from Cuba, arriving on small boats, rafts, and even inner tubes. By 1963, approximately 4,000 men, women, and children successfully crossed the Florida Straits in such craft and either arrived at Key West or were rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard.²³ How many drowned, or were forced to return by Cuban authorities, is unknown.

THE FREEDOM FLIGHTS

Wishing to export even more dissenters, on 28 September 1965, Fidel Castro announced that Cubans with relatives in the United States who wished to leave the island would be permitted to do so. He designated the small fishing port of Camarioca as a possible gathering place and port of departure and he pledged "complete guarantees and facilities" to exiles returning to Cuba by their own means to get their families out.²⁴

Within days of Castro's announcement, hundreds of Cuban exiles sailed to Cuba, mostly on rented craft, to pick up their relatives. The Johnson administration was caught completely by surprise. While the administration agreed to assist all those who wanted to leave communist Cuba, the last thing it wanted was an uncontrolled migration. Johnson announced that the United States would accept more Cuban refugees, but the migration had to be monitored; the State Department was instructed to negotiate the terms of the migration with the Castro government through the Swiss Embassy in Havana. The crisis coincided with the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act that abolished the national quota system in favor of a seven-category preference system that stressed family reunification. Thus, under the terms of the new law, migration preference was given to those Cubans who already had immediate family in the United States. In a "memorandum of understanding" between the two countries, the U.S. agreed to send chartered planes to Varadero twice each day, transporting between 3,000 and 4,000 Cubans each month. Men of military age and political prisoners were prohibited from emigrating. The flights continued until April, when the Castro government once again prevented emigration to the United States. By this date, 3,048 flights had carried 297,318 refugees to the United States.²⁵

This "second wave" of Cuban refugees was distinct from the first in several ways. First, both the United States and Cuba were able to exert more control over this migration. The United States limited immigration to the immediate families of those Cubans already in the country, thereby upholding its new immigration laws, and the Cuban government protected its own interests by more thoroughly screening the emigrant pool and prohibiting the emigration of those with skills or military service vital to the regime. Secondly, the refugees differed from the earlier arrivals in socioeconomic status: the "second wave" was much more representative of Cuba's working class. During the first wave, 31 percent of the Cubans who arrived in the United States were professionals or managers. By 1970, only 12 percent were professionals or managers, and 57 percent were blue-collar, service, or agricultural workers.²⁶ Women were also overrepresented in this migration, as were the elderly: a consequence of the emigration restrictions placed on certain types of skilled labor and men of military age.

By the end of the freedom flights, the Cuban exile community was a fairly heterogeneous population. While the emigrés came predominantly from Havana province, Cuba's most populated region, all of Cuba's provinces were represented in the exile population (the westernmost provinces more so than the poorer eastern provinces.) Cubans of every social class and profession were represented in the population, as were its various ethnic and religious groups. For example, the majority of Cuba's Chinese and Jewish populations settled in the United States.²⁷

Of all the groups, however, blacks remained underrepresented. The 1953 Cuban census revealed that 27 percent of Cuba's population was black or of mixed race, and yet in 1970, less than 3 percent of the Cubans in the United States were black.²⁸ This underrepresentation was attributed to three factors. Since racial equality was one of the goals of the revolution, black Cubans were generally optimistic about the future. As the poorest and most discriminated segment of Cuban society, they also stood to gain the most from the revolution's social and economic policies and generally became enthusiastic supporters of the Castro government. Secondly, blacks feared emigrating to the United States due to its history of Jim Crow segregation, lynching, race riots, and other types of race-related violence. During the 1960s, the photographs and news stories coming out of the United States showed a society in violent confrontation over civil rights, and this frightened many Cubans considering emigration. Radio interviews with members of more radical groups such as the Black Panthers also reinforced the perception of the United States as a society hostile to equal opportunity. Third, since U.S. immigration policy gave preference to those with relatives already in the United States, this policy tended to benefit whites—the first to leave—rather than blacks.²⁹ Consequently, it was not until the Mariel boatlift of 1980 that a larger number of black Cubans emigrated to the United States (by the 1990 census, however, only sixteen percent of the Cuban exile population identified themselves as black, Chinese, or of another race). The small number that did choose to emigrate during the 1960s and 1970s were more likely to settle outside of Florida to escape the heightened racial tension in the South and the discrimination from their own white compatriots.³⁰

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By 1974, the Cuban Refugee Program had resettled 299,326 of the 461,373 Cubans who had registered with them. They were resettled around the country (as well as in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), but the areas to receive the largest percentages were New York (27.1), New Jersey (19.8), California (13.2), Puerto Rico (8.5), Illinois (7.5), and Louisiana (2.8).³¹ By the mid-1970s, the Cuban Refugee Program had spent over \$957 million in resettlement, relief, and other services, and a gradual phaseout of the program began.³²

The end of the "freedom flights" did not stall Cuban migration to the United States. Several thousand more Cubans immigrated to the United States over the next few years, mostly via third countries. Clandestine emigration continued even though Cubans risked their lives crossing the shark-infested waters of the Florida straits and risked imprisonment if caught leaving the country illegally. By September 1977, the total number of Cubans to arrive in the United States (since 1 January 1959) through legal and illegal channels reached 665,043.³³

THE MARIEL BOATLIFT

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In 1980, the Castro government once again allowed Cubans to emigrate to the United States. Echoing his actions fifteen years earlier, Castro announced in April that all who desired to leave Cuba were permitted to do so, and once again he invited Cuban exiles to sail to Cuba—this time to the port of Mariel—to pick up their relatives. One more time, thousands of exiles sailed across the Florida straits on yachts, sailboats, shrimp boats, and even freighters to pick up their relatives and any other compatriots who wished to leave the island. 124,776 Cubans arrived in the United States from April to October 1980, constituting the third official wave of post-Castro Cuban migration.³⁴ However, unlike the previous two waves, the U.S. government played no role in sponsoring the migration. This third wave of migration was highly controversial, its legacy still evident in immigration policy today, and national perceptions of the Cuban exile community were forever altered.

While this migration was the consequence of unilateral actions taken by Castro in 1980, it can be best understood in light of the series of events that took place a few years earlier. During the late 1970s, there was a general thawing in tensions between Cuba and the United States. In 1977, for the first time in almost twenty years, both countries established limited diplomatic representation through the creation of "interests sections" in Washington and Havana. A number of cultural exchanges followed this rapprochement, and hundreds of Americans and Cubans traveled to one another's countries for sports competitions, scientific conferences, artistic exhibitions, and other cultural exchanges. In a gesture of goodwill, the Castro government released over four thousand long-term political prisoners in the late 1970s and allowed them to emigrate with their families. In 1978, also for the first time, a few hundred Cuban exiles were allowed to return to their homeland to visit; the following year, over 100,000 exiles were allowed to return to their homeland to visit their families and friends.

These developments had profound consequences for Cuban society. For the first time in almost twenty years, Cubans on the island were able to have steady contact with Americans, and especially with their former compatriots, the people their government had long—and angrily—called "*los gusanos*" (the worms.) Through the visits of the Cuban exiles, Cubans on the island, especially those born and raised under the revolutionary system, became aware of different interpretations of history, politics, and international relations that challenged the standard interpretations promoted within their political system. They also became aware of the latest developments in American popular culture, through the records, books, magazines, and other consumer goods the exiles brought as gifts for their relatives and friends. These new perspec-

tives, whether ideological or cultural, aroused curiosity and challenged many Cubans' most basic beliefs about their society and about life in the United States. For those already resentful of Castro's communism, contact with the exiles only exacerbated their disaffection; for others, it provoked a serious reevaluation of what they held to be true.

These developments also coincided with one of Cuba's periods of economic austerity. Indeed, Castro's decision to allow Cuban exiles to visit their homeland was a move calculated to increase needed revenues. Each Cuban exile wishing to visit his family and friends had to spend thousands of dollars in inflated fares for air travel, hotel accommodations, and meals, whether they used them or not. However, Castro's plan ultimately backfired, since it contributed instead to the growing discontent on the island that was clearly demonstrated by the number of people who tried to leave the island illegally during this period. The number of people who successfully fled the country on homemade rafts increased, as did the number of people apprehended by the Cuban Coast Guard. Beginning in May 1979, Cubans also began smuggling themselves into Latin American embassies to request political asylum. By March 1980, close to thirty Cubans had crashed their vehicles through embassy gates and had taken refuge within the compounds. The "blue-jean revolution," as journalists called this phenomenon, was underway.

The tension climaxed on March 28, when a group of six Cubans stole a city bus and crashed through the gates of the Peruvian embassy. The Cuban guards stationed at the three entrances to the compound shot at the bus, and one of the guards was caught in the crossfire and killed. When the Peruvian ambassador refused to turn these gate-crashers over for criminal prosecution, the Castro government took action. On April 4, Castro pulled all Cuban guards from around the embassy compound, and sent in steamrollers to tear down the embassy gates. In a radio broadcast later that afternoon, Castro stated that his government would no longer risk the lives of its soldiers to protect "criminals."

As news of the event spread through the city of Havana, people left their homes and jobs to go to the embassy to observe. Realizing that they could freely walk into the embassy, many quietly entered the compound and requested asylum. Within 48 hours, approximately 10,800 men, women, and children were standing inside the Peruvian embassy.³⁵ On April 6, Cuban police finally put up barricades all around the perimeter of the embassy—and for several blocks around—and prohibited more people from entering. For days the fate of the 10,800 was uncertain. The Peruvian government announced that it was unable to accept all the Cubans as asylees and requested international assistance. While they waited to know their fate, conditions in the camp steadily worsened. The Cubans were so densely packed inside the lot that they

sat and slept on tree branches and roof tops. There was little food or water, and they had no protection from inclement weather. Cuban officials eventually sent in cartons of food, but never enough to feed all the people housed there, and this provoked fights among the tired and frightened residents. Portable toilets were eventually provided, but not before the lot became covered with mud, urine, and excrement. Thousands of onlookers gathered around the compound each day, some hoping to be allowed into the compound; others, as an act of support for the government. *Granma*, the official state newspaper, called the asylees "delinquents, social deviants, vagrants, and parasites," and blamed them for all the ills that plagued Cuban society.³⁶ Editorials in the Cuban press fueled the passions of loyal citizens. The Peruvian embassy became a symbol of everything that was wrong with their country, and many Cubans vented their anger against those who took refuge there. People taunted and insulted the refugees and threw stones and rotted food at them. The Cuban police participated in the harassment, beating those refugees on the outer periphery of the compound, unleashing their dogs on them, and blinding the refugees with reflector lights at night.

The 10,800 remained in the compound for two weeks until an emigration plan was negotiated. Peru agreed to take one thousand asylees, and Costa Rica, Spain, Ecuador, Argentina, Canada, France, and West Germany pledged to accept a total of 2,500.³⁷ The U.S. accepted a total of 6,200 refugees.

The airlift began on April 16. Under the terms of the negotiations, the refugees flew first to Costa Rica before continuing on to their final destination. This stopover, however, presented a new set of problems for Cuba. Journalists from around the world converged at the airport in San José to document the refugees' arrival. They filmed the refugees unboarding from their flights defiantly shouting "Freedom!" and "Down with Castro!" They showed poignant scenes of Cubans kissing the airport tarmac and tearfully embracing the relatives who had flown to Costa Rica to greet them. These simple yet powerful images ultimately did more harm to Castro's regime than any counterrevolutionary plot. After years of promoting an image abroad as the model socialist state, it became clear that Cuba was a society in turmoil. Despite the government's claims that these were the delinquents of Cuban society, the journalists' interviews showed that they were ordinary citizens who preferred exile to the repression and economic hardships in Cuba.

Angered by all the negative publicity, Castro abruptly suspended the flights to Costa Rica four days after they began. A few days later, Castro substituted a new plan to rid the island not only of the remaining asylees at the Peruvian embassy, but of thousands of other dissidents and troublemakers as well. On April 20, the government announced that all Cubans who wished to leave the island were permitted to do so, and urged them to call their relatives in the

United States to come pick them up. He declared the port of Mariel, located some twenty miles west of Havana, as the port of departure and instructed officials to quickly set up camps around the port to process the thousands of Cubans expected to leave.

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On hearing the news, hundreds of Cuban exiles in south Florida rushed to the nearest marina to rent any available boat to sail Mariel. By the end of the week, an estimated five hundred boats had arrived in Mariel, and hundreds of others followed over the next few weeks. Those that did not know how to sail found a large population of fishermen in Key West who were willing to transport any number of Cubans for the right fee. The U.S. Coast Guard, the INS, and other federal authorities tried to discourage the boats from sailing out to Cuba, warning them that their actions violated U.S. immigration laws. However, as in Camarioca, these warnings had little effect. Cuban exiles were not about to forfeit this chance to bring their relatives to the U.S.

Although most were aware that there were risks in sailing to Cuba, no amount of precaution prepared them to deal with the events they encountered at Mariel. As each boat arrived at the port, each ship captain presented a Cuban official with a list of relatives they wished to pick up. In most cases, they had to wait several days before they received any response from the government. As they waited for authorization to pick up their relatives, they ran out of fuel, food, and water, and they had to pay the outrageous prices the Cuban government charged for these services. When their relatives finally arrived at the port, Cuban officials informed the ship captains that they had to transport additional passengers—whomever the Cuban government told them to take. If they refused to cooperate they were detained and their ships confiscated. Each boat was packed full of passengers—the majority of them total strangers; many of the boats broke down at sea and had to be rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard. By the end of May, the Coast Guard had rescued thousands of people.³⁸

As in the previous Cuban migrations, a large and complex bureaucracy developed in south Florida to register and assist the new immigrants. The first arrivals were processed in Key West, but as the numbers increased, two other processing centers were opened. The refugees were questioned, photographed, fingerprinted, and given medical tests. Voluntary relief agencies provided the Cubans with medical care, food, clothing, and toiletries. While the Cubans waited to be processed and released to relatives or sponsors, they were housed in churches, recreation centers, armories, and even the Orange Bowl Stadium. Officials worked around the clock to register the Cubans and release them to their families or sponsors as quickly as possible. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), best known for managing crises caused by natural disasters, assumed responsibility for coordinating the relief efforts.

Finding sponsors became an especially difficult task during this third wave, however, since close to half of the Cubans had no friends or family in the United States. The government eventually had to build "tent cities" in parks and underneath expressways to house those who had little chance of immediate sponsorship. The federal government also opened up three additional camps to house the Cubans: Fort Chaffee, Arkansas; Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania; and Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. 62,541 Cubans, or almost half of the Mariel immigrants, waited for sponsorship in one of these camps; some stayed a few days, others remained for over a year.³⁹

As officials registered the Cubans, they heard disturbing tales. For years, international organizations such as Amnesty International had reported an increase in human-rights violations in Cuba, and the tales they heard in the registration centers verified these reports. INS officials heard, for example, that the Cuban government encouraged *actos de repudio* (acts of repudiation) against those who applied to leave the country, and gangs of people accosted them at home and in public places.⁴⁰ At the holding camps near Mariel they endured more insults. Many were not given food, and, before they could leave the country, they had to sign documents confessing that they were social deviants or had committed crimes against the state. With one signature, decent, hard-working citizens established fictional records as burglars, arsonists, murderers, rapists, and CIA agents: records which were later publicly displayed in a new museum—*el museo del pueblo combatiente*—to discredit those who had chosen to leave revolutionary Cuba. At the pier, officials forced them to board any available boat, but not before they took away all their personal belongings: money, suitcases, jewelry, wedding rings, and even their address books with the names and phone numbers of relatives living in the United States. By the time they arrived at Key West, they were sick or malnourished, frightened, and without any personal belongings or identification.

Over the weeks, it became clear that the Castro government was using the boatlift to rid the country of its "undesirables." Cuban police removed people from hospitals, jails, and other institutions and forced them to board the boats against their will. An estimated 1,500 of the new arrivals had serious mental illness or mental retardation. An estimated 1,600 had chronic medical problems such as drug and alcohol abuse or infectious diseases such as tuberculosis. Most distressing to U.S. officials, however, was the discovery that thousands of Mariel emigrants—26,000 by the end of the boatlift—had criminal records. Estimates varied, but of these 26,000, approximately 2,000 had committed serious felonies in Cuba, and most of these were sent directly to the correctional institutions in the United States to await deportation.⁴¹ The majority of the offenders, however, served time for lesser crimes. Under Cuba's *ley de peligrosidad* (the law of dangerousness), Cubans could be incarcerated for gambling, drug addiction,

homosexuality, prostitution, and buying or selling on the black market. A percentage of the "criminals" fell under this category and served terms ranging from a few months to a few years at a work farm. Others served time for political crimes as counterrevolutionaries or dissidents. Still others served time because they refused to conform to revolutionary norms; these included members of religious groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists (who discouraged military participation). Since the majority of "criminals" served time for crimes not recognized in the United States, they were not considered a threat to U.S. society and were released to sponsors.

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The Carter administration tried to communicate with the Castro government through diplomatic channels, requesting that they take back the hard-core felons; all notes went unanswered. Forcible deportation was ruled out because of a possible military confrontation with Cuba. The United States had no choice but to accommodate this prison population until the Castro government agreed to take them back. Throughout the 1980s, Cuban "entrants" who committed misdemeanors or felonies in the United States were handed over to federal custody upon completion of their jail terms to await the day when they could be deported to Cuba. By March 1986, federal authorities held close to 2,000 Cubans in the Atlanta federal penitentiary, and another 700 in prisons and detention centers around the country to await the day when deportation became possible. Detainees remained in U.S. prisons until after 1987, when the Castro finally agreed to take some of them back.

Unfortunately, the U.S. press focused an exaggerated amount of attention on the hard-core felons. While the latter constituted less than 2 percent of the total number of entrants, they commanded almost all of the media attention. Few journalists ever mentioned the fact that the overwhelming majority of Mariel Cubans had no criminal history and were hard-working citizens yearning for a better life. Instead, popular news magazines such as *Newsweek* and *Time*, as well as major newspapers such as the *New York Times*, focused on the disturbing details of Castro's plan to rid the island of its criminals and mentally ill. In August 1980, the *National Catholic Reporter* commented that the "bad press" was making it difficult to resettle the Cubans.⁴² As late as 1984, *U.S. News and World Report* reported on Castro's "crime bomb."⁴³ Unfortunately, the Cubans of Mariel suffered for this sensationalism.

Most Americans initially sympathized with the Cubans' plight, and they applauded the refugees' courage at the Peruvian embassy. Those sentiments changed, however, when it became clear that the United States was to play host again to thousands of Cuban refugees, this time during an economic recession when they could ill afford to do so. In just one month, over 80,000 Cubans entered the United States: more people than in any previous year of Cuban immigration.⁴⁴ The discovery of the criminal element, however,

proved the principal factor in turning public opinion against the boatlift. Never before, according to public opinion, had a neighboring country committed such an act of aggression against the United States. Americans resented that once again Castro was dictating U.S. immigration policy, and the Carter administration was criticized for its inability to control the situation. The Mariel crisis haunted Carter throughout the rest of the year and proved to be one of the factors that led to his electoral defeat later that year.

In reality, the Carter administration did try to protect U.S. interests. Carter was sensitive to the exiles' desire to be reunited with their family members but, understandably, wanted control over who came to the United States, and in what numbers. Administration officials contacted the Castro government, offering a compromise: the administration proposed a new series of airlifts similar to the "freedom flights" of the late 1960s, but which would last approximately twelve months. The Castro government rejected the offer; instead, the Carter administration was forced to rely on the Coast Guard as well as threats of penalties to deter exiles from rushing out to Mariel to pick up their relatives. The U.S. Coast Guard increased its patrol teams off the Florida coast and warned all captains on out-going vessels that those caught transporting Cubans illegally would be fined up to \$1,000 for each person brought to the United States and have their ships confiscated. While the warnings deterred some, others continued with their plans. Many were willing to pay any price to get their families out of Cuba. By the end of the summer, however, this stricter policy ultimately succeeded in reducing the flow from thirteen thousand a week to less than seven hundred.⁴⁵ The Cuban government finally closed the port of Mariel to further emigration on September 25, and the last boat arrived in Key West four days later. By this date, over 124,000 Cubans had made it to the United States.

Demographically, the Cubans of Mariel were different from the Cubans who arrived during the 1960's. The Mariel population was younger by about ten years (averaging thirty years of age), contained a higher percentage of blacks and people of mixed race (roughly twenty percent), and reflected a wider geographic distribution. Almost seventy percent were male.⁴⁶ Despite these differences, the Cubans of Mariel had much in common with the working-class Cubans who emigrated during the "freedom flights," especially in their occupational history. In education, they rated slightly higher, having completed more years of schooling than their earlier working-class compatriots.⁴⁷

The Mariel migration was most distinctive, however, in how it was perceived by the federal government and the larger U.S. society. Unlike the Cubans who immigrated from 1959 to 1973, the Cubans of Mariel were not considered legitimate refugees. The majority cited political reasons for their emigration, and administration officials commonly referred to them as

"refugees." But the Justice department determined that under the terms of the 1980 U.S. Refugee Act (which came into effect a month before the boatlift), the Cubans did not qualify for refugee status nor for the special assistance that that status entitled them to receive. This marked the first time since the Cold War began that the government denied refugee status to individuals leaving a communist state. Instead, the government categorized the Cubans with the rather ambiguous term "entrant: status pending," which was a political compromise: an undetermined status that allowed the United States to symbolically uphold its "open-door" policy, while appearing to take a harsher stand against "illegal" immigration. It was not until 1984 that the Cubans of Mariel were able to regularize their status.

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The Mariel Cubans became the most stigmatized group of immigrants in recent history. No articles or editorials praised their patriotism, their democratic spirit, or their "Horatio Alger" drive to succeed as they had the earlier arrivals from Cuba. Instead, they were described as troublemakers and opportunists who were taking the place of more worthy immigrants. Ironically, the reaction of the Cuban exile community paralleled that of the larger society. The older, more established Cuban exiles initially felt a moral responsibility to assist their compatriots, and they pooled their resources to help them adapt to the United States. By the end of April, the exile community of Dade County had raised over \$2 million to assist the Cubans in their immediate needs. Local businesses donated food and clothing, and exiles volunteered as sponsors and served as doctors, nurses, teachers, and translators in the temporary camps. However, currents of fear ran beneath these feelings of obligation. Many worried that the new immigrants, raised under an authoritarian socialist system, would never adapt to their new society. Like most Americans, they were scandalized by the news that Castro had released criminals into the boatlift population. Angered that their reputation as "golden immigrants" was now tarnished, the exiles took great care to distinguish themselves from the new immigrants. They coined a special term for the Cubans—*los marielitos*—that quickly became a pejorative in the community. As fear spread, exiles became reluctant to sponsor the Cubans and even to offer them jobs. This came as a surprise to the new immigrants, who did not expect such behavior from their compatriots.

Ethnic relations in south Florida deteriorated in the wake of the boatlift. During the summer of 1980, African Americans in nearby Liberty City rioted. While the riot was a response to a specific act of police brutality, it expressed the larger frustration in this community. For decades African Americans complained of having to compete with "foreigners" for jobs and political power, and the 1980s riot was the latest in a series of civil actions where citizens vented their rage against a system they felt had shut them out. In November 1980, in another demonstration of anti-Cuban sentiment, voters repealed the

Bilingual-Bicultural Ordinance (originally passed in 1973) and made it unlawful to use county funds "for the purpose of utilizing any language other than English, or promoting any culture other than that of the United States."⁴⁸ A popular bumper sticker sported on the cars of many non-Latinos read "Will the last American out of south Florida please bring the flag?" The television and film industry capitalized on the anger and resentment, portraying Cubans as drug dealers, pimps, and psychopaths. Nowhere were the stereotypes plainer than in Universal Studio's 1983 remake of *Scarface*, wherein the mobster made famous by James Cagney was now a *marielito* cocaine smuggler played by Al Pacino. To combat the negative images that now dominated the media, Miami Cubans founded the organization "Facts About Cuban Exiles" (FACE) in 1982. Like the NAACP, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and other minority rights groups, FACE's goal was to educate Americans about the exile community through conferences and publications, and to celebrate the Cubans' accomplishments.

Since 1980, south Floridians have lived with the knowledge that Castro could, at any moment, allow another large-scale migration. Rumors of another boatlift periodically circulated in Miami. In 1983, the federal government and state of Florida compiled a list of emergency procedures in case of such an event.⁴⁹ The *Miami Herald* regularly interviewed sociologists and political scientists for their "migration forecasts": analyses of social and economic conditions in Cuba which might foster another migration.

Despite the tremendous odds against them, the Cubans of Mariel made economic gains over the next decade and revealed the same entrepreneurial spirit as those who arrived earlier. By 1986, over one-fourth of the immigrants were self-employed. By 1990, only 5.6 percent were unemployed: a figure comparable to the rest of the nation.⁵⁰ The children of Mariel exhibited the most astounding success of all. Over 11,000 children enrolled in Dade County schools in the wake of the boatlift, and while none of them spoke English when they arrived, by 1987 only 8 percent required instruction in the bilingual education program known as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). In 1987, Cubans of Mariel presented the valedictory speeches at two Dade County high schools, and the proportion of students going on to college was comparable to that of emigrés who arrived earlier.⁵¹ Ten years after the boatlift, the term *marielito* had ceased to be pejorative.

THE ONGOING FOURTH WAVE OF CUBAN MIGRATION

In 1984, the Reagan administration and the Castro government signed a new immigration accord in which the United States agreed to accept up to 20,000

Cuban immigrants per year. In return, the Cuban government agreed to take back 2,746 criminal and mentally ill detainees of the Mariel boatlift. However, in May 1985 the Castro government suspended the accords in response to the Reagan administration's installation of *Radio Marti*, a radio network founded with the specific purpose of beaming news, music, and sports to the island, twenty-four hours a day, from an undisclosed location in the Florida Keys. By the time of the suspension, only 201 Mariel detainees had been returned to Cuba. It was not until 1987 that both governments once again reinstated the terms of the migration accords. But over the next decade both countries moved slowly on their ends of the agreement: Cuba stalled on taking back the detained felons, and the United States never accepted the total number of immigrants it had committed itself to accept.

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The number of Cubans who emigrated clandestinely on rafts and small boats increased dramatically during the 1990s as a result of the worsening economic conditions in Cuba. After the dismantling of the Soviet Union, Cuba could no longer rely on its former patron for the estimated \$6 billion in assistance that it received each year.⁵² The lack of external funding, together with a series of agricultural crises, caused even greater shortages in basic consumer goods. Limited efforts to restructure the economy meant that Cuba became increasingly dependent on tourism and remittances to keep its economy afloat. Cubans, desperate to improve their situation, took to the seas on homemade rafts. During 1990, the U.S. Coast Guard rescued 467 *balseros* (rafters), and the number doubled in the first six months of 1991 alone. In 1993, the Coast Guard picked up 3,656 *balseros*.⁵³ Cuban American pilots founded an organization called "Hermanos al Rescate" ("Brothers to the Rescue") to patrol the Florida straits by helicopter and assist the Coast Guard with the rescue missions.

The *balsero* crisis peaked during the summer of 1994. Rumor spread through island that, due to gasoline shortages, the Cuban Coast Guard was no longer patrolling the waters as vigilantly as it had in the past. Thousands took to the seas. Unlike other undocumented immigrants, Cubans caught entering the United States illegally were allowed to stay under the terms of the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act. Fearing another Mariel, the Clinton administration suspended this thirty-year policy: he announced that Cubans detained at sea would not be admitted to the United States and, instead, would be sent to the Guantánamo naval base until the Cuban government accepted them or the *balseros* received admittance to a third country, if that was their choice. The Clinton administration also tried to pressure the Castro government to restrict illegal emigration. U.S. officials announced that the sending of remittances to relatives on the island was prohibited, and charter air traffic from Miami to Cuba, available since 1979 to allow Cuban exiles the opportunity to visit their relatives

in Cuba, was now indefinitely postponed. Despite these reversals in policy, the *balseros* kept coming. During the last two weeks of August 1994, the U.S. Coast Guard picked up an average of 1,500 *balseros* each day.

168 ■ Finally, the U.S. was forced to go back to the negotiating table. Officials from both countries met in a series of meetings in New York, Washington, and Havana to iron out the details of another migration accord. Under the terms of the 1994 agreement, the United States committed itself to accept a *minimum* of 20,000 per year, and the Castro government agreed to intercept any *balseros* and to accept the Cubans detained at Guantánamo without reprisals. However, the majority of the Cubans at Guantánamo refused to return to Cuba, and few were able to find admittance into a third country. They chose to remain indefinitely at Guantánamo, hoping that the United States would eventually take pity and allow them to enter the country. The Clinton administration was determined to maintain its hard-line policy, but providing for the tens of thousands of camp residents cost U.S. taxpayers an estimated one million dollars a day. Finally, in 1995, the Clinton administration agreed to begin processing the camp residents for admittance into the United States.

The 1994 accords has not stopped illegal boat traffic to the United States or to other countries. Instead, for the first time, U.S. Coast Guard officials found evidence of smuggling operations involving Cubans. For years, law enforcement agencies have encountered such smuggling operations along the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada border involving immigrants from other countries, but never had they encountered such operations involving Cubans, primarily because the Cuban Adjustment Act and other immigration laws facilitated the Cubans' entrance. Under the new U.S. policy, however, those apprehended at sea are deported back to their country if an immigration official determines that their petitions for asylum are frivolous. The goal of smugglers, then, is to facilitate the Cubans' landing on U.S. territory, where, like other undocumented aliens, they can try to remain anonymous within ethnic enclaves. Those who decide to petition for asylum on U.S. soil are guaranteed a hearing, and since the process can drag on for years, it increases their chances of making a successful plea.

However, U.S. policy regarding the Cubans remains highly inconsistent, as was seen in the case of Elián González. This six-year-old boy was rescued at sea by the U.S. Coast Guard on Thanksgiving Day 1999, one of two survivors of an illegal expedition that claimed the lives of eleven defectors, including Elián's mother. Under the new policy, the young boy should have been deported back to Cuba and to the father and grandparents who wanted him back. In this particular case, the United States allowed the boy to stay to live with his relatives (a great-uncle and his family) in Miami, prompting a political tug-of-war between Cuba and the United States—and the families in each

country—over who had legitimate rights to care for the boy. Elián's relatives in Florida, as well as many in the Cuban exile community, claimed that he was entitled to a life in the United States given the fact that his mother had lost her life trying to reach this country. His father in Cuba, on the other hand, demanded his return based on his rights as the now custodial parent, and traveled to Washington, D.C., to make his appeal. Polls showed that most Americans supported his claim. Editorials and op-ed pieces in the U.S. press criticized the United States for its inconsistent immigration policies and for bowing to pressure from the conservative and vocal elements in the Cuban exile community.

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Finally, in April 2000, the INS stormed the house in Little Havana in a predawn raid, seized the six-year-old at gun point, and transported him to Washington, D.C., to await the legal resolution of his case with his father, Juan Manuel. In June, the Supreme Court denied the Miami relatives' claims to keep Elián in the United States, and the boy returned with his father to a hero's welcome in Cuba.

Cases such as this one proved yet again how politicized the immigration and asylum process has become, as have the many parties that have a claim in the policy making. Ironically, a custody case later that year, that in some ways mirrored the Elián case, failed to attract as much international attention. In this particular case, a five-year-old U.S.-born boy was taken to live in Havana, by his Cuban mother, against the wishes of the boy's American father.⁵⁴ Once again, two countries and two families clashed and revealed the limitations of immigration law as well as custodial and family law.

IDENTITY, ADAPTATION, AND THE "CUBAN SUCCESS STORY"

The Cubans are often portrayed as one of the most successful immigrant groups in the United States, at least in recent history. In a fairly short time, they have come to occupy leading positions in the key institutions of south Florida: in labor unions, universities, political parties, the news media, cultural organizations, as well as city governments. As early as 1980, they exhibited the highest income and educational levels of the three largest Latino groups—levels that were only slightly below the national average. 16.2 percent of Cubans had completed four or more years of college, compared to 4.9 and 5.6 percent of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, respectively; by 1990, 20.3 percent of Cubans had completed four or more years of college compared to 9.3 percent for the Latino population in general.⁵⁵ In 1980, Cubans earned a median family income of \$18,245, compared to \$14,765 and \$10,734 for Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, respectively; by 1989, Cuban American income stood at \$27,890,

compared to \$21,922 for Latinos in general (and slightly below the national average of \$28,905).⁵⁶

170 ■ Cubans did particularly well in Florida, especially the immigrant enclave of Miami. According to the 1990 census, 65 percent (657,786) of the Cuban-origin population (then counted at 1,043,932 or 4.2 percent of the Latino population of the United States) lived in the state of Florida, concentrated in the Miami metropolitan area. As early as 1980, Miami was home to the wealthiest Latino business community in the nation, a thriving economic enclave that absorbed each new wave of immigration from Cuba, as well as thousands from other countries in Latin America. By 1980, Cuban exiles in Dade County generated close to \$2.5 billion in income each year. 18,000 businesses were Cuban-owned, and 63 percent owned their own homes.⁵⁷ Over 44 percent of the nearly 500,000 Cubans living in greater Miami were either professionals, company managers, business owners, skilled craftsmen, or retail sales and clerical personnel. The figures improved with each year. In 1985, 19,700 businesses were Cuban-owned.⁵⁸ In 1987, the Department of Commerce's Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises counted 61,470 small, nonincorporated, Cuban-owned firms across the country generating \$5.5 billion in annual sales and employing 47,000 people.⁵⁹ These were notable accomplishments for a community of largely first generation immigrants.

The Cubans' success could be attributed to several factors. On the individual or family level, the structure of the Cuban family ensured success because it was built around economic cooperation.⁶⁰ Women had a high rate of participation in the labor force. As early as 1970, they constituted the largest proportionate group of working women in the United States.⁶¹ Many Cuban households also contained three generations, and the elderly contributed to the family's economic well-being directly, by salaries or Social Security benefits, or indirectly, by raising children and assuming household responsibilities. These factors, along with the Cubans' low fertility rates and high levels of school enrollment facilitated the family's comparatively quick economic integration.

On the broader community level, the Cubans created prosperous businesses, built with the skills and capital of the middle- to upper-class exiles that constituted the first wave of immigrants. Some of the wealthier Cubans were fortunate to have money invested in U.S. banks at the time of the revolution, and when they settled in Miami or other cities they invested that capital in new business ventures. The middle class did not have that type of capital, but they did have the skills and business "know-how" with which to create lucrative businesses. They identified the needs in the community and built businesses catering to those needs. While the major banks would not lend start-up money to Cuban entrepreneurs without collateral—which only the wealthier emigrés had—the smaller banks in the area (some Cuban- or Latin Ameri-

can-owned) lent applicants money on the basis of their "character."⁶² Cubans who had a solid history of entrepreneurship in Cuba, or who had strong personal references, usually qualified for these loans. By the late 1960s, Cuban entrepreneurs also had access to loans from the Small Business Administration (SBA). As their businesses expanded, these entrepreneurs hired more employees, almost always their fellow countrymen. Thus, south Florida became home to a thriving business community, which provided job opportunities for the new immigrants arriving each year, assisting their assimilation into the economic mainstream.⁶³

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The Cuban presence attracted domestic and international investments and helped convert Miami into a major production, trade, and commercial center linking North and South America. Many U.S. industries, particularly the garment and textile industries, relocated to south Florida to take advantage of the large, initially nonunion labor pool. By 1980, workers of "Spanish origin" (mostly Cuban women) constituted 83 percent of workers in the garment industry. By 1980, thirteen major banks and over one hundred multinational corporations had established regional offices in the Miami area, eager to take advantage of a large Cuban middle class adept at doing business with both the United States and Latin America. The Port of Miami replaced New Orleans as the chief port of trade with Latin America, and Miami International Airport became one of the busiest airports in the world.⁶⁴

As early as the 1960s, the national news media, specifically popular magazines such as *Life* and *Fortune*, circulated the myth of the "Cuban success story." While the community, as a whole, had fared well, and many individual Cubans had achieved spectacular success in the United States in a short period of time, the myth overlooked the fact that many Cubans did not share in the community's overall wealth. In 1980, 11.7 percent of Cuban families lived below the poverty level, and in 1993, 17 percent lived below the poverty level.⁶⁵ The myth of the Cuban success story overlooked most Cubans' successes in the United States being modest, certainly less spectacular than the rags-to-riches stories promoted by the popular media. Despite the presence of a large middle-to-upper class, and the comprehensive federal assistance pumped into the community, Cuban income still remained below the national average (albeit slightly), and there was a significant percentage of elderly poor.⁶⁶ The elderly, for example, were less likely to speak English, hold full-time, higher-paying employment, or receive adequate health care, especially if they lived alone.⁶⁷ Working-class Cubans, like other Americans, struggled for better wages, benefits, working conditions, as well as job security, particularly if they were women. Black Cubans experienced the most discrimination in the workplace. As late as 1990, their income lagged behind that of white Cubans by almost 40 percent.⁶⁸

But Cubans themselves internalized the myth of the Cuban success story and took pride in it. Aside from their anticommunism, it was the one feature they most promoted about themselves. To admit that not all who had come to the United States had done well was to give the Castro government ammunition against them. They felt they had to be symbols for their countrymen on the island of Cuba's political and economic alternatives.

Maintaining a sense of *cubanidad* in the United States was crucial to the first generation. They asked themselves whether Cuban culture could thrive in a society that celebrated ethnic pluralism and yet rewarded Anglo-conformity. Could one be both a Cuban exile and a U.S. citizen? Would their children be able to adapt to Cuban society once Castro was overthrown? These and other questions became increasingly important with each year, as the chances of returning to Cuba became increasingly remote.

To maintain a sense of *cubanidad* meant to preserve those customs, values, and traditions that they associated with being Cuban, and the exiles created literally hundreds of organizations to reinforce those values in exile. Maintaining a sense of *cubanidad* was easier in Miami and south Florida because it was home to the largest concentration of Cubans. The Cuban Refugee Program tried to resettle Cubans around the country, to ease the pressure on the local community, but the majority of exiles refused to move; many of those resettled eventually returned to live in south Florida. Census figures showed that in 1970, 299,217 Cubans lived in Dade County, but by 1980 the number had almost doubled to 581,030. In 1990, their numbers dropped somewhat to 563,979, or 29 percent of Dade County's total population.⁶⁹ Still, the only city with a larger Cuban population was Havana.

The symbolic heart of Cuban Miami is "Little Havana," a four-square-mile area southwest of the central business district. Here the Cubans renovated the old buildings and established their own businesses along the principal thoroughfares, especially Flagler Street and Southwest Eighth Street (Calle Ocho). The Cubans turned an economically depressed area into a lucrative commercial and residential district. But the majority of Cubans moved west and south into other residential areas, so that Cubans were dispersed throughout the entire city. Exiles joked—and took pride in the fact—that in many ways all of Miami was a Little Havana. The Cubans settled in neighboring cities in Dade County as well. The nearby city of Hialeah drew many Cubans; by 1970, Cubans comprised 42 percent of its population, and by 1980, 74 percent. The city of Sweetwater also grew with the Cuban migration, acquiring a Latino population of 81 percent by 1980.⁷⁰ It became the first city in south Florida (in the Castro era) to elect a Cuban-born mayor. Coral Gables and Miami Beach also attracted Cubans, especially those with higher incomes.

Reinforcing *cubanidad* became something of an obsession for the exiles, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. Life in exile made them nostalgic, even depressed, and they looked for ways to remember and celebrate the past, reinforce their feelings of nationalism, and assert their identity. Of particular concern to the exiles was the second generation: those who were born in the United States, or who came here as children, and knew little about Cuba or their heritage. To help parents educate their children on the essentials of *cubanidad*, schools and churches in Little Havana established after-school programs that offered courses on Cuban history, geography, and culture each day. Those who wanted a more intensive Cuban education could attend one of the dozens of small private schools that emerged in Miami and Hialeah, nicknamed *las escuelas cubanas* (the little Cuban schools). Several of Havana's best private schools also reopened in exile, including Belen Jesuit High School, Fidel Castro's alma mater, offering a consoling continuity.

Exile organizations sponsored lectures and seminars on Cuban history and culture and organized rallies, festivals, concerts, and parades to celebrate patriotic holidays such as *el veinte de mayo* (May 20) and *el diez de Octubre* (October 10). Cuban-owned book stores organized *peñas literarias* (literary circles) to discuss the works of Cuban authors. On the shores of Biscayne Bay, Cubans constructed a shrine to Cuba's patron saint, *la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*. They named parks, monuments, streets, and businesses after long-dead heroes of Cuba's wars of independence or their own heroes, such as the veterans of the Bay of Pigs invasion, as well as figures of the sports and entertainment world. Cubans produced a vital news media, consisting of hundreds of Spanish-language periodicals as well as dozens of radio and television stations, which kept the community informed on news from Cuba as well as domestic issues that were important to them.

In expressing their *cubanidad*, they asserted an identity that was political as well as cultural. As exiles, they perceived complete assimilation as a rejection of their heritage, as well as a denial of those forces that had compelled them to come to the United States. But in the long term, ironically, their *cubanidad* assisted them in their adaptation to the United States, since it psychologically empowered them to deal with life in exile and gave their hardships a larger meaning. Starting over was difficult for the first generation. Many had left behind rewarding careers, home, and property, as well as friends and family. They now had to begin again, in most cases at middle age (in 1980 the median age was 37.7 years; in 1994, 43 years),⁷¹ and they had to adapt to a new society and a new way of living. When life in the United States became overwhelming, these Cubans took some comfort in the fact that their struggles had a larger meaning.

As early as the 1970s there was evidence of a shift in self-perception in the exile community from that of "temporary visitor" to that of permanent resident. This shift was attributable, in part, to the termination of the "freedom flights," which forced many Cubans to come to terms with the reality of their situation. By the end of the decade, contact with the Cubans of Mariel along with the new travel opportunities to Cuba (the so-called family reunification trips) also contributed to this shift in self-perception. Many realized that the Cuba they remembered no longer existed and their future role in their homeland was uncertain. This increased contact with the "new" Cuba forced them to reanalyze their ties to the United States and to view it as home. This shift in consciousness was especially evident in the growing number seeking naturalization as well as their increased involvement in civic affairs. From 1971 to 1980, for example, Cubans accounted for twelve percent of total naturalizations in the United States, compared to six percent for Mexican immigrants, who constituted a much larger number of legal immigrants (178, 374 Cubans naturalized compared to 68,152 Mexicans).⁷²

By the 1990s there were several intersecting political generations in the Cuban community. They are defined not by age or time of entry into the United States, but rather by experience. The first generation—the exile generation—more clearly identifies with the homeland. They identify themselves as Cuban and choose Spanish as their principle language of communication, and they are more likely to engage in exile politics. The next generation—what some have called the "one-and-a half-generation"—were born in Cuba but came of age in the United States; they regard themselves as both Cuban and American, feel equally comfortable with both cultures and languages, and make both an integral part of their lives.

The so-called second generation, the first to be born in the United States, is very different. They feel a connection to Cuba because their parents and grandparents have encouraged that connection, but they are not as passionately committed to exile politics or as emotionally bound to Cuba as their elders. Nor could they be. Most of them have never visited Cuba except through photographs and through the memories of others. They have never lived through revolutionary change or been forced to seek refuge in another country. Statistics show that U.S.-born Cuban Americans are wealthier and better educated. While socioeconomic statistics for Cuban exiles are comparable to that of other Hispanics/Latinos, U.S.-born Cuban Americans fare better than even the "Anglo" population: 26.1 percent of second generation Cuban Americans were educated beyond the high school level as compared to 20.6 percent of "Anglos." Also, 36.9 percent of U.S.-born Cuban Americans had incomes above \$50,000 as compared to 18.1 percent of Anglos.⁷³ The Latino National Political Survey also revealed that U.S.-born Cuban Americans are more likely to iden-

tify themselves as "American" or with a pan-ethnic label such as "Hispanic" or "Latino."⁷⁴ Ironically, U.S.-Born Cubans are less likely to vote than their elders; although turnout in elections has reached over ninety percent, in some presidential elections only thirty percent of Cuban Americans under the age of twenty-five show up to vote, and only 50 to 60 percent of Cuban Americans between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four vote.⁷⁵ English is the language of choice in personal and business interactions outside the home, though 36.9 percent of U.S.-born Cuban Americans use both languages.⁷⁶

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Despite these obvious linguistic and cultural changes in the Cuban community, Spanish will always be as important as English in Dade County due to the continued migration from Cuba and other parts of Latin America, as well as the high volume of tourists from Spanish-speaking countries. But just as Cuban culture in Cuba has changed over the past forty years in response to changing socioeconomic and political realities of that country, Cuban culture on this side of the Florida straits has continually redefined itself as well. In many ways, there are multiple Cuban cultures.

Cuban immigration continues to influence U.S. popular culture, as well. Nowhere is this influence more evident than in the sport of baseball. Since 1911, when Rafael Almeida and Armando Marsans joined the Cincinnati Reds, Cuban players have played in major league baseball teams and set a number of records. In the pre-Castro era, Minnie Minoso, Camilo Pascual, Luis Tiant, and Tony Pérez, were just some of the Cuban names in the sport. More recently, José Canseco, Rey Ordoñez, Orlando "El Duque" Hernández, Livan Hernández, Alex González, and Omar Linares top the long roster of Cuban-born (some of them recent defectors to the United States) and Cuban American players.

Since the 1930s, Cuban music and dance have fascinated Americans. The *mambo* and *cha-cha-chá* were just two of the forms imported from Cuba prior to the revolution, and musicians such as Desi Arnaz, Beny More, and Machito found a welcoming audience in the United States. More recently, Americans have rediscovered Cuban music as seen in the popularity of musicians such as Los Van Van, Silvio Rodríguez, and the Buena Vista Social Club, each representing a very different musical style. Cuban American musicians have also attracted a great deal of attention including Paquito D'Rivera, Israel "Cachao" López, Albita, Willie Chirino, and especially Gloria Estefan, who was among the first of the Latino artists to "cross over" in the popular market.

Cuban exile writers such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Lydia Cabrera, Heberto Padilla, and Reinaldo Arenas have produced some of their best work outside their homeland. However, a new and distinctly Cuban American generation of writers and poets has demonstrated that ethnic or immigrant literature in this country is not solely an exercise in nostalgia or an exploration of

alienation. Pulitzer prize-winning Oscar Hijuelos, Achy Obejas, Virgil Suárez, Roberto G. Fernández, Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, Cristina García, Pablo Medina, and Elias Miguel Muñoz are just some of the Cuban-born or Cuban American writers and poets that have generated interest from mainstream publishing houses and academia. In journalism, the *Miami Herald's* Liz Balmaseda was recognized with a Pulitzer prize; in television, Cristina Saralegui has been called the "Cuban Oprah Winfrey" because of her syndicated talk show's impact in the United States and Latin America. In theater, Ivan Acosta, María Irene Fornés, Nilo Cruz, Luis Santeiro, and Eduardo Machado have staged their plays throughout the United States, Europe, and Latin America. In the visual arts, Ana Mendieta, Julio Larraz, and José Bedía are just three of the artists whose works form part of the collections of museums and private estates. In film, the late Nestor Almendros won the coveted Academy Award for cinematography. In acting, Andy García, Elizabeth Peña, Cameron Díaz, and Steven Bauer are among the more popular Cuban actors.

CUBAN EXILE AND CUBAN AMERICAN POLITICS

The political culture of the Cuban community evolved in response to events in both Cuba and the United States. Cubans engaged in both exile politics and ethnic politics: as exiles, they tried to shape the political reality in the homeland; as immigrant-citizens, they tried to shape their local environment. The line between the two often blurred.

During the 1960s, Cubans were almost exclusively concerned with overthrowing Castro and returning to the homeland, and they created hundreds of organizations dedicated to *la causa cubana*. As early as 1963, there were so many exile political organizations in south Florida that the Department of Justice was unable to keep track of all of them.⁷⁷ The majority of these organizations emerged in Miami, but others emerged wherever Cubans settled: in Union City, N.J., Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and San Juan. Most were propaganda organizations that tried to discredit the Castro government through a variety of measures: they organized conferences, marches, boycotts, and published reports on human rights abuses in Cuba, and they pressured Congress, the United Nations, and the OAS to enact more punitive policies towards the Castro government.

A small percentage of these organizations were paramilitary groups that launched attacks on Cuban property and on the property of countries that traded with Cuba. While these groups were the minority, they naturally commanded most of the media attention. These groups tried to present themselves as well-manned and well-armed, but in reality, most conducted opera-

tions with just a few dozen volunteers. Some of these groups received funding from the CIA and were used in a variety of covert operations against Castro, including the Bay of Pigs invasion, Operation Mongoose, and the "secret war" of the 1960s. A few others received funding from foreign governments, which then expected them to serve as mercenaries in their own covert operations. But most operated independently, relying on donations from sympathetic Americans to buy their boats and armaments. They trained in secret camps in the Florida Everglades and around the Caribbean, trying to avoid detection. On a number of occasions these paramilitary guerrillas infiltrated Cuba and bombed rail lines, shipping vessels, sugar refineries, and other centers of production, as well as cargo ships from the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc countries. Their logic was that if they destabilized the country, their countrymen would tire of the Castro government and rise up to overthrow him. They also hoped to turn Cuba into a liability for the Soviet Union and thereby undermine its control, in much the same way that the Irish Republican Army used bombings and other terrorist tactics to try to force Great Britain to relinquish its control of Northern Ireland

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At first, the U.S. Justice Department looked the other way. They realized these raids served a purpose within U.S. foreign policy: that is, they harassed the Cuban government, undermined their economy, and perhaps distracted Castro from exporting revolution by committing the military to domestic defense. It also gave Cuban exiles an outlet for their anger and frustration. By the late 1960s, however, the government had cracked down on these operations because they strained an already tense relationship with the Soviet Union, as well as with neighboring allies who feared an escalation of regional tensions. By the late 1960s, the U.S. government was also focusing most of its attention on Southeast Asia, and unseating Castro became less important. The Cuban paramilitary groups found themselves isolated, both by the U.S. government and, eventually, the exile community who increasingly doubted the wisdom of their strategies. In the 1970s only a handful of these paramilitary organizations continued to operate.

For most Cuban exiles, each passing year was a reminder that returning to Cuba permanently was unlikely, and so they focused their attention on improving their lives in the United States. This led to their growing naturalization rates and their involvement in local, state, and national politics. The Cubans demonstrated high voter turnouts in elections. By the Bicentennial celebrations of 1976, Cubans constituted 8 percent of registered voters in Dade County and had been elected to important offices in city and county governments. Seven years later they constituted 20 percent of registered voters in Dade County, and their voting participation exceeded that of the general population.⁷⁸

There were indications that they were developing an *ethnic* identity as well, as seen in their growing membership in pan-Latino organizations such as LULAC, as well as in the creation of groups such as the Cuban National Planning Council, the Spanish American League Against Discrimination (SALAD), and the National Coalition of Cuban Americans, which focused on domestic concerns such as voting rights, employment, housing, education, and health. All signs seemed to indicate that the Cubans had unpacked their bags and settled into their new society, and, as mentioned earlier, U.S.-born Cuban Americans were even more likely to identify with the United States.

The exile generation never completely abandoned their war against Castro, but they did alter their tactics in ways that reflected their growing accommodation to the United States. They continued to try to influence Cuban affairs, but more and more they did so by working within the U.S. political system rather than independently of it. By the 1980s, Cubans registered largely as Republicans and voted Republican more consistently than any other ethnic group. Their loyalty to the Republican party had less to do with domestic policy issues, however, than with their foreign policy agenda. Even though the Cubans were indebted to Democratic administrations for a liberal immigration policy, and even though they supported traditionally "Democratic" issues such as workers' rights and a woman's right to choose, they nevertheless overwhelmingly gave their support to the Republican Party—at least during the 1980s—because the latter was perceived to be more anticommunist. However, the Republican Party realized that it could not take the Cuban vote for granted. On the local and state level, Cubans voted as readily for Democrats as for Republicans, taking into account not only the candidates' views on Cuba, but their positions on health care and education and other domestic issues that affected their day-to-day lives. Even Republican presidential candidates could not always rely on the Cuban vote. The Cubans voted for Reagan by over 90 percent in 1980 and 1984, but failed to give the Republicans that edge in 1996 because of the party's support of revoking welfare benefits for legal immigrants and the Republicans' support of the English-only amendment. Back in 1992, only 20 percent of Cubans in Florida voted for Bill Clinton; but four years later almost as many Cubans voted for Clinton as for the Republican candidate, Bob Dole.⁷⁹

Exile politics were never monolithic either. Within the general sphere of anti-Castroism, the Cubans exhibited a broad range of political perspectives, which is one of the reasons why no one single organization ever emerged in this community that represented the interests of the population as whole. The most influential of the "hard-line" organizations is the Cuban American National Foundation, founded in 1981 by a group of wealthy Cuban American businessmen with the goal of shaping a more "realistic" foreign policy toward

Cuba. CANF created a bipartisan political-action committee, the "Free Cuba PAC," that donated to the campaigns of politicians who favored tougher sanctions against Cuba. As a result of CANF's intensive lobbying, Congress passed a number of laws that tried to pressure the Castro government into enacting democratic reforms. These included the bills to create *Radio Martí* and *Televisión Martí*, as well as the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton bill that further tightened the economic embargo on Cuba by eliminating loopholes in the existing laws and sanctioning foreign corporations that conducted business in Cuba.

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Hard-liners in the community believe that a political accommodation of the Cuban government is an endorsement of Castro communism. They cannot understand why a Cuban exile would choose to negotiate with the individuals who have tortured, imprisoned, and executed tens of thousands of their compatriots. They prefer to see Castro pushed out of power—by a coup organized by their countrymen on the island rather than a U.S.-backed invasion—and they favor all measures, including the trade embargo, that will create the political climate necessary for such an event. Some of those who espouse these hard-line views are opposed to the sending of remittances to the island, which, they argue, help to maintain Castro's power; and they even object to any artist or musician from Cuba exhibiting or playing in a Miami venue unless they publicly denounce the Castro government.

But just as the Cuban American community is diverse socioeconomically, they are ideologically diverse as well. Cuban exiles differ in their visions of a post-Castro Cuba, and they disagree about the tactics they consider legitimate in the war against Castro. Some Cubans even favor abandoning the "war" completely, arguing for the reestablishment of full diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba. A handful of organizations have emerged over the past four decades to lobby for this cause, arguing that dialogue and forgiveness are always preferable to conflict. One of the most influential organizations to lobby for this cause is the Cuban Committee for Democracy, with offices in Washington, D.C. As with other issues, there are generational differences: U.S.-born Cubans are more likely to favor dialogue and to oppose the censorship of those who articulate opposing views.⁸⁰

A CONCLUDING NOTE

Those who read about the Cuban exile and Cuban American population frequently want to know what will happen once there is a political shift in Cuba toward democratic reform and free-market capitalism, if this indeed ever happens once Fidel Castro no longer rules Cuba. Will the U.S. Cubans return en

masse to their homeland or will most of them stay in their adopted home? It is difficult to predict what will happen. Despite the attempts to neatly categorize the Cubans (e.g., that they are wealthy, politically conservative, and that they refuse to assimilate), the truth is their population has always been diverse. To assume that a population of over one million people all think and act the same is, of course, absurd.

However, one can outline some *possible* scenarios. As happens in most countries undergoing structural change, no matter how positive those changes in the long term, migration is usually an initial response to any political or economic shift. In the case that there is democratic reform and an expansion of capitalism in a post-Castro Cuba, it is very likely that the United States will once again have to deal with an increase in boat traffic from the island, as people try to leave behind the political and economic instability created by such a transition. Cubans on the island may wish to take advantage of this instability, and perhaps the liberalized travel and migration policies, to come to the United States, legally and illegally, as students, tourists, and immigrants.

It is also likely that some U.S. Cubans will return to their homeland, but perhaps not in the numbers that some might expect. Surveys conducted over the past thirty years have demonstrated that Cuban exiles have established ties to the United States in spite of their original intentions. They have established careers and businesses here, bought homes, and adopted the language and citizenship of the country that gave them refuge. They have raised families here. Many who arrived in the early 1960s are now grandparents and great-grandparents, and these new generations in their family are more American than Cuban. Returning to Cuba, then, would mean uprooting themselves a second time and once again leaving behind family, friends, and home. Few will be willing to do this.

Those who will choose to return to Cuba will more likely be the more recent arrivals, who have yet to establish ties to their host country, as well as the disaffected, who never felt quite comfortable here. Some elderly may also wish to return to Cuba to spend their last days in their country of origin. A more likely scenario, however, will be that Cubans in the United States will travel back and forth between the two countries for business as well as for pleasure, in much the same way that their forebears did in pre-Castro Cuba. Many Cuban exiles would like to play a role in Cuba's "reconstruction," helping to create economic enterprises and investing in businesses that will assist their homeland in becoming truly independent. This is what many Americans of Polish, Czech, and other Eastern European descent have done in the decade following the Velvet Revolution and the dismantling of the Warsaw pact countries. And it is a very likely scenario among the Cubans. Whatever ultimately happens, a Cuban presence in the United States is guaranteed, as has been the case for the past two centuries.