

Miami Cubans

Cuban-Americans started arriving in Miami in 1960 as a result of the Communist revolution that swept away the young republic. After a war of independence against Spain that took almost a century, and after more than four centuries of Spanish rule, Cuba became an independent nation in 1902.

By 1959 Cuba was a prosperous nation with a free market economy and a rich cultural legacy. Since its inception, however, the nation had been struggling to consolidate a democratic form of government.

The Cuban communist revolution brought with it a program of radical change. Its plans included the dismantling of all three branches of government, the educational, cultural, and social institutions that had been established based on the principles of freedom and democracy, and the economic system conceived on the right to private property and free trade.

Consequently, by 1962 more than 100,000 Cubans had fled to Miami, including 75% of the teachers (Provenzo, 1983)¹, many doctors, lawyers, businessmen and other professionals who represented Cuba's best. Entire families were fleeing the country. Parents who were not allowed to leave sent their children alone.

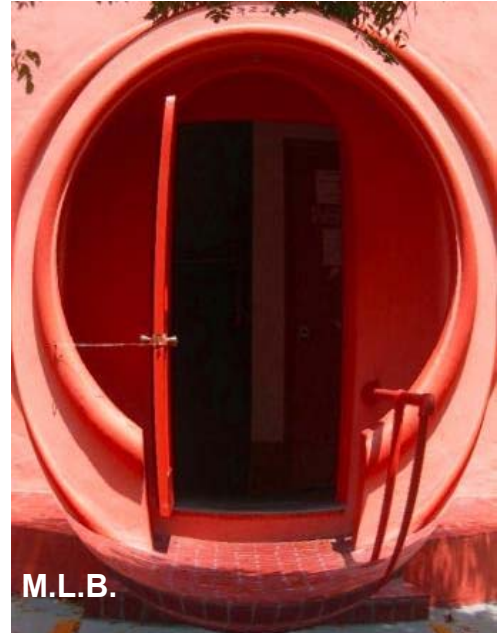
In time, through subsequent waves of refugees from Cuba in 1973, in 1980, 1994 and still today, these periodic waves of refugees brought Cubans to Miami from very diverse backgrounds who built an enclave that is a veritable and impressive cross section of Cuban society.

It has been observed that one of the most important cultural traits Cubans brought with them is their entrepreneurial spirit. And it seems that in spite of the Cuban government's efforts to eradicate it, it has remained for more than 40 years of totalitarian socialism, one of the most salient and magnificent features of the exodus at all times. Moreover, the contributions Cubans have made to our community include a robust artistic tradition and a strong sense of family.

It is the entrepreneurial spirit in all its manifestations of hard work, creativity, and independence that appears to have been the underlying cause for the Cuban-American success story.

Their success story is another reminder of the benefits of liberty, democracy and free trade. They are the same principles that have allowed others in the U.S. and in other parts of the world to be free and prosper.

¹ Eugene F. Provenzo, et al., "Exiled Teachers and the Cuban Revolution, Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos, Vol. 3, #1 Winter, 1983, pp. 1-15.



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Digital photograph

2004