



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on November 30, 2016

## Americans of Cuban Ancestry Know Castro Was a Brutal Dictator

Had the election for president been decided by only Americans of Cuban ancestry, Donald Trump would have won in a landslide. As it was, the support of the Cuban community in Florida is credited with winning that state's 29 electoral votes for Trump.



Speaking at a large Trump rally in West Dade County, shortly before the election, Frank de Varona was blunt:

The Democratic Party has injured, at every opportunity, the cause of Cuba's freedom and the return of self-government. We remember the Mariel exodus that took place under the Carter administration [when Fidel Castro released from prison many actual criminals to make their way to the United States as "refugees"], a Democrat. Elian Gonzalez, the son of a Cuban immigrant who drowned bringing her son to freedom, was returned to Castro's Cuba under a Clinton White House.

This year, it was the Obama policy (fully supported by Democrat presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton) of reopening diplomatic relations with Castro's Cuba that increased the percentage of the Cubans to vote Republican. "And now," Varona told the rally, held a few days before the November 8 election, "Obama legitimizes the totalitarian government in Cuba in the eyes of the world and provides economic assistance, investment, and tourism in exchange for nothing."

While the mainstream American media glosses over the brutality of the Castro dictatorship, and many world leaders follow suit, the Americans of Cuban ancestry concentrated in south Florida are very clear what they think of the now dead Fidel Castro.

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The intensity of that feeling was evident on Sunday, when San Francisco 49er quarterback Colin Kaepernick took the field to play the Miami Dolphins to a chorus of boos. The boos turned to cheers when Kaepernick was stopped on the last play of the game, two yards short of the goal line, by Dolphins linebacker Kiko Alonso. Alonso's father experienced first-hand the brutal dictatorship of Fidel Castro before he made it to the United States and freedom. He called Castro a "ruthless killer."

President-elect Donald Trump has signaled that he will overturn the normalized relations established by President Obama. Trump's soon to be chief of staff Reince Priebus told reporters that Trump expects action from Raul Castro, Fidel's brother, on "repression, open markets, freedom of religion and political prisoners."

He certainly will have the full backing in this by two of his strongest primary opponents — Senator Ted Cruz of Texas and Senator Marco Rubio of Florida — both of whom are the sons of Cuban immigrants.

Cruz said Sunday that Obama's actions have only strengthened the dictatorship in Cuba. The facts appear to support Cruz's assertion. Since the opening of relations by Obama, political arrests have totaled 9,215 in the first 10 months of 2016, compared with 8,616 such arrests in the year before.



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“Raul is the dictator now,” Cruz explained, challenging the view that brother Raul is somehow less brutal than his brother was. “You know, I asked my dad at dinner last night, well, what do you think happens now that Fidel is dead? And he shrugged and said Raul’s been in charge for years [since Fidel’s failing health], that this is — the system has gotten stronger.”

Cruz charged that Obama has “funneled billions of dollars to Raul Castro,” but he still hopes to visit a “free Cuba.” But that time has not yet come, Cruz added. “This ought to be a moment where Cubans are dancing in the street [in Cuba, like they are in Florida] because they’re being liberated, but instead — listen, if you dance in the street, you’re going to be thrown in jail. Cuba is not a free society.”

Rubio expressed hope that Trump will demand more from Cuba than Obama did. “He [Trump] has made very clear that he felt that the moves President Obama has made toward Cuba were wrong and that he would examine them and change the ones that needed to be changed,” Rubio said on CNN’s *State of the Union* program with Dana Bash. “I think that’s very promising.” Rubio added that Trump has “good people” advising him on the issue, and said, “I certainly have confidence that he’s going to do the right thing when it comes to Cuba.”

Rubio added, “I’m a little more confident in him doing this than I would have been in Hillary Clinton doing it, which I’m sure she would not have.”

Writing in his book *Against All Hope*, Armando Valladares recounted his 22 years in Castro’s prisons — simply for opposing the imposition of communism in the country. Valladares’ book is full of stories of the horrors of Castro’s prisons, recalling the prison food included dead rats and cow intestines filled with feces.

A few years ago, I spoke with a woman who is now a proud U.S. citizen, but was a little girl in Cuba when Castro seized control. She told me that she can vividly recall the day that soldiers came to their home and seized all their guns. After they left, her father told them that they were going to try to leave Cuba because things were “about to get really bad in Cuba.” He understood that Castro wanted their guns so there would be less chance of domestic resistance.

In 1961, Cubans who had escaped to Florida made an effort to invade and regain their country. The “soldiers” in the assault were not professional soldiers, but rather average, everyday Cubans who wanted freedom returned to the island. Promised air support by the Kennedy administration, the Cuban freedom fighters were betrayed when President Kennedy reneged, leading to the killing or capture of the small invasion force. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was also supposed to send radio signals into Cuba to alert the anti-Castro forces still there, but they never did.

Among those captured and imprisoned was 17-year-old Frank de Varona. Now in his seventies, Varona told *The New American* why Cubans felt so intensely against Fidel Castro. “For nearly 50 years the tyrant Fidel Castro and his brother Raul Castro almost brought nuclear war between America and the Soviet Union. Cuba was a mortal enemy of America and brought in tons of drugs, spies to damage our national security, and intelligence agents to steal from Medicare and Medicaid.”

Inside Cuba, “Castro maintained an iron grip over the people of Cuba and kept close ties with the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivian, Iran, and other Islamic radical regimes in the Middle East. The regime also inspired communist anti-American leaders throughout Latin America and other parts of the world.”

In short, “Castro presided over the longest and most brutal regime in the Western Hemisphere. During this time, approximately 17,000 children, women, and men were executed; over 300,000 were



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incarcerated; 100,000 died at sea or were devoured by sharks when trying to escape; and over two million refugees left the island prison.”

Yet, Varona now sees hope after the presidential election. “While Cuba remains an oppressive totalitarian island, it is my hope that our new President Donald J. Trump reverse the series of illegal and shameful unilateral concessions with no quid pro quo or nothing in return. Our President-elect Trump has promised that his administration will do everything possible to ensure that the Cuban people can finally begin their journey toward prosperity and liberty. One can only hope that with God’s help one day soon Cuba will be a free, democratic, and sovereign nation.”

Photo is of Cubans celebrating the death of Fidel Castro



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