

## **Elian Gonzales -- Coming to America**

So much has been written and said about the plight of 6-year old Elian Gonzalez that it is hard to imagine what else one could constructively contribute. Nonetheless, I'd like to try. There are some critical facts that I feel need additional focus.

The first is that Elian's mother died in the act of bringing him to this country. Whether she was simply following the dictates of an infatuation, as Elian's paternal relatives claim, is unimportant. The fact is that she desired a life different from what she had in Cuba and was unwilling to leave her son behind. Such is the three hundred year-old story of innumerable immigrants, the ancestors of many of us, who sought, at great danger and for whatever reasons, to come to America. It was the desire for freedom, and it continues today. Her search and sacrifice has to count for something.

I doubt few, if any, of those in our government who hold Elian's fate in their hands have ever been to Cuba. Well, I have. The fact is that Cuba has the most oppressive regime I have ever personally witnessed, and I experienced many on my travels in communist Europe back in the "bad old days." Make no mistake about it. Cuba is ruled by an absolute dictator who once sought to unleash nuclear holocaust upon the world just to protect his regime and wreck revenge upon the United States, as those who lived through the October Fall of 1961 well remember. I, for one, could never order the forceful return of child not yet beyond the age of reason to such a place.

But what about the rights of the father? A very appropriate question. The last fact to note is that the Cubans who fled Castro, and their descendants, have today in large part realized the American Dream. Surely the Cuban-American community, as a humanitarian gesture, could afford to subsidize visits of Elian's father to his son of any reasonable length and frequency. Perhaps, with the muting of passions over time, Elian's American relatives may well agree that he one day return with his father should the boy clearly desire to do so. However, it has been reported that father will not come to the United States because he does not want to be involved in the "political attention." To me, that statement speaks volumes, both about the man and the regime in Cuba. What parent would not travel to the ends of the earth, in the face of any and all obstacles, and suffer whatever political consequences may accrue, to see their child?

In the meantime, let Elian stay in this land his mother sought to bring him, until that moment when he is prepared to decide whether to go back, by himself or with his father, to what will hopefully someday be a Free Cuba.

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