



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on March 2, 2020

Cuban-Americans in Florida Bash Sanders for Praising Castro

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Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who was considered to be the frontrunner in the race to win the Democratic Party's presidential nomination until former Vice President Joe Biden won the South Carolina primary on February 29, is coming under fire in the Miami area for his comments praising Castro's communist Cuba.

Breitbart reported on March 1 that "caravans" of Cuban-Americans rallied in support of President Donald Trump on February 29 after Sanders made a statement defending Cuban dictator Fidel Castro's policies. The report observed:

Photos and videos emerged on social media in Miami featuring long lines of cars and trucks flying Cuban and American flags and honking their horns. Others wore MAGA hats and waved Trump 2020 flags to show their support of the president....

The vehicles featured signs and painted slogans such as "Viva Trump," "Free Cuba, "Cambio es ya" (Change is Now), and "Abajo La Dictadura" (Down with Dictatorships).

In a *60 Minutes* interview on February 23, Sanders said, "We're very opposed to the authoritarian nature of Cuba but, you know, it's unfair to simply say everything is bad. You know? When Fidel Castro came into office, you know what he did? He had a massive literacy program. Is that a bad thing? Even though Fidel Castro did it?"

Politico reported that Sanders "also infamously praised the Cuban revolution as 'profound,' saying it provided the country's people with 'free health care, free education, and free housing.'"

The *Politico* report also observed in addition to Cuban exiles and their offspring, Miami is now home to many Venezuelan exiles, "whose country descended into poverty under Havana-backed dictator Nicolás Maduro." The report noted that these Venezuelan exiles have "increasingly found common cause with anti-communist Cubans."

VOA News observed that Cuban American leaders from both political parties, including Senators Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), have criticized Sanders for his perceived indifference to widespread repression in Cuba. VOA cited a description of life in Cuba from Human Rights Watch, which noted that thousands of people there have been "incarcerated in abysmal prisons" and "entire generations" have been denied basic political freedoms.

A Fox News report quoted Raquel Robaina, a Cuban immigrant born in Havana in 1960, who said, "I am



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a Cuban Democrat. I watched the interview with Bernie Sanders. I am not a supporter of his to begin with but that put the nail in the coffin for me. There is nothing good with the Castro regime.”

“[Sanders] stated literacy as his example of something good,” Robaina continued. “Literacy is education. Who cares if someone can read at a high level if all they’re reading is propaganda and lies and they have no freedom of thought — that is not education. That is indoctrination. Moderate Democrats, we do not agree at all with Bernie Sanders’s line of thinking.”

Following the communist revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power in Cuba on January 1, 1959, large numbers of Cubans fled the country, most of them going to Miami. By 1980, Cuban exiles made up over half of the population in the city. These Cuban-Americans represent an important voting bloc in Florida, a key swing state that often determines the winner in presidential elections.

Photo: AP Images

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com.

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