

Frank J. Bolaños, Member

SUBJECT: PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN FROM THE HURTFUL & INSULTING DISTORTIONS OF THE BOOK "VAMOS A CUBA" BY REMOVING THESE BOOKS FROM ALL OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES

COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, EFFICIENCY AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The selection of books in our school libraries is as important as the adoption of a textbook in a classroom, as delineated in School Board Rule 6Gx13- 6A-1.26, including standards that make it the responsibility of the district to "provide materials that are free of bias, stereotypes, distortions, and prejudices, and information that "represents the many religious, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups in our society and reflect their contributions to the heritage and culture of our civilization." The book in question clearly does not meet this standard.

Thanks to the vigilance and concern of involved parents, we have become aware that copies of "*Vamos a Cuba*" published by Heinemann Library and carried in 34 of our libraries (according to the administration) includes content and pictures that erroneously depict life in Cuba. This book is hurtful and insulting to both our Cuban-American community and those Cubans still living on the island under oppressive conditions.

These are just a few of the book's passages, its distortions and the reality that Cubans in exile have lived and those in Cuba are still subjected to:

- **Book's distortion:** "The people of Cuba eat, work and study like you", page 5.
Reality: Nothing could be further from the truth. The people of Cuba survive without civil liberties and due process under the law and receive 10 to 20 year prison sentences for simply writing a document or voicing an opinion contrary to the party line. People are told where to work. They lose their job if they do not follow the dictates of the communist party. Children are indoctrinated and forced to chant Castro's greatness in class.
- **Book's distortion:** "White rice is the most common food in Cuba. Black beans are eaten. Arroz con Pollo is another favorite dish", page 12.
Reality: Food is rationed; people stand in line for hours to ask for their measly ration only to be told they ran out. Children stop receiving their milk ration at age six.
- **Book's distortion:** The major celebration in Cuba is 'Carnaval.' It is celebrated on July 26th", page 26.
Reality: The annual commemoration of July 26th is the symbolic observation of the rise to power of Castro's communist, totalitarian regime. It is a day of mourning for most Cubans. Cubans celebrate the 20th of May and the 28th of January, to celebrate their independence from Spain and the birth of Jose Marti, Cuba's greatest national hero.
- **Book's distortion:** "The celebrations in Cuba are a mix of African and Catholic roots", page 27.
Reality: Historically, Castro's regime has prohibited or chastised those that engage in religious practices, including the Catholic Church and other organized forms of religion. Religious leaders, including Jehovah's Witnesses have been imprisoned. A famous cry while facing Castro's firing squad was "Viva Cristo el Rey" (long live Christ the King).

ACTION PROPOSED BY
MR. FRANK J. BOLAÑOS:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida:

1. Suspend School Board Rule 6Gx13- 6A-1.26 and
2. Direct the Superintendent to immediately remove the book "Vamos a Cuba" from all Miami-Dade County public school libraries and
3. Direct the Superintendent to provide a report on the circumstances relating to the acquisition of this book by the district, specifically how it was selected and how long it has been in circulation.