

Dear friends,

Last night I was able to share a few minutes with Cuban blogger Yoani Sanchez. She is like a ray of sunlight that illuminates our country. Let's us pray for her and her family at this time so that she can continue on her quest. Also, I encourage all Pedro Pan to support human rights in Cuba through the dissemination of information in and out of Cuba with the new technologies. As she mentioned last night, even a re-tweeting of one of the independent messages by Cuban bloggers (not government controlled) from Cuba, helps! Any flash drive, cell phone, used computer, helps! Let's do it!!

Please pay attention to the information on this Newsletter as it is very extensive. We are proud to present our Pedro Pan brother Miguel San Juan, new CEO of Catholic Charities in Atlanta. The article by Jonathan, George's youngest grandson is really wonderful! We have elections on April 13th, and our Swearing In Ceremony on May 3rd (don't miss this party!!). Also, the Matecumbers are very excited with the upcoming June 8th Brunch, don't forget to send your pictures if you are Camp Matecumbe Alumni!!
Love,

Carmencita Romanach

***The official Pedro Pan Newsletter of Operation Pedro Pan
Group Inc.***

OPERATION PEDRO PAN GROUP, INC. (OPPG)

A National Charitable Organization

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April 3, 2013

Pedro Pan News



OPPG's Historic Committee booklet: The History of Operation Pedro Pan was presented to Cuban blogger Yoani Sanchez by Carmencita Romanach, OPPG's President

during "An evening with Yoani Sanchez" at the Coral Gables Country Club on April 2nd., 2013.

Yoani will now have the opportunity to read the real story of Operation Pedro Pan and not the distorted Cuban version of it.



Miguel R. San Juan

Catholic Charities Helped Boy, Now CEO, As Refugee

STEPHEN O'KANE, Staff Writer

Published on The Georgia Bulletin: March 28, 2013

The Newspaper of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta

ATLANTA—Catholic Charities Atlanta staff are known for their compassion toward people facing adversity.

Miguel San Juan, the new chief executive of CCA, is no exception, and he also experienced it in his own life story, which is a testament to the crucial work of the organization.

“I am honored to be here,” San Juan, 62, said, as he began his new work March 1. “This organization is very close to me.”

San Juan experienced the care and compassion of Catholic Charities firsthand in the early 1960s as he and his older sister, Alina, arrived in the United States as refugees from Cuba. His parents sent their young children here for their protection from the tumultuous political environment in Cuba at that time. They were part of what is now called “Operation Pedro Pan,” Cuban parents quietly sending minor children to the United States, where they were met and sheltered by Catholic Welfare (Catholic Charities) in Miami.

In 1959, Fidel Castro had taken over in Cuba following a revolution that unseated president Fulgencio Batista. Many parents began to fear indoctrination by the new

regime and were worried the Cuban government would eventually take away their parental authority. They began sending their children out of the country out of fear for their safety. Between December 1960 and October 1962, about 14,000 children came to the U.S.

While some had relatives here, many did not, so organizations rallied to aid the lone youngsters in their transition to a new life. Catholic Charities helped to place children in foster families in more than 100 cities. They were not adopted because the effort was aimed to preserve the parents' rights and strive for families eventually to be reunited. San Juan still remembers the volunteers that greeted the children when they arrived at the Miami airport. He was 11 and his sister, 13.

They had no relatives, they did not speak the language, and they were not sure if they would ever see their parents again. But one thing they could understand was that the people who took them in obviously cared for their well being, both physically and spiritually.

They were initially taken to a camp about an hour north of Miami where they stayed for about four months before being placed with a foster family. The attention they received at the camp is something for which San Juan is very grateful, but it did not make the pain of his separation from his parents any easier.

He remembers sneaking out of his room nearly every night and walking to where his sister stayed, as the boys and girls were separated in the camp, and crying under her window.

"It was during one of those times when a nun saw me and as she was escorting me back to my apartment, she took a rosary out of her pocket and gave it to me and said, 'Mary will be with you.' I pray that rosary to this day," he said.

The pains of transition were a difficult burden to bear, but San Juan and his sister were happy when they were eventually placed with a loving Catholic foster family.

"Again with the help of Catholic Charities, we were sent to a foster home in the state of Washington, in a town called Mabton," he recalled. "We lived with a very loving and caring family."

It was a great blessing for San Juan that he was able to live with a family that encouraged the faith his parents gave him. Having a strong faith was his "anchor" during the difficult times as a youngster, especially since he was unsure he would ever see his parents again, he said. But even that was something with which Catholic Charities helped.

"Through the good offices of Catholic Charities, once my parents were able to leave Cuba and came to the United States through Mexico, they were instrumental in our reunification," he said.

San Juan admires the strength of his parents for making such a difficult decision, and he often wonders if he and his wife would be able to do the same thing for their children if the need arose.

“I am extremely fortunate. To this day, I, and my sister likewise, admire the guts and the faith that my parents had in order to make what has got to be a very difficult decision for any parent,” he said.

Since the San Juan siblings had no family living in the U.S. at the time of their arrival, they became very familiar with Catholic Charities and its means of aiding newcomers and refugees.

“We experienced the full range of the services and the good will that was extended to us every step of the way,” from the camp to the foster home, San Juan said. He recognizes the many blessings that were shown to him and his sister during their childhood and brings that same compassion to his new position at CCA.

Since his arrival in the United States, San Juan has taken nothing for granted. Always seeking to advance his education and looking for opportunities to work, he has built an impressive resume of achievements and has worked in various positions over the past few decades.

“When I think back to my arrival ... I had no idea what was before me,” he said, adding that he never would have guessed all the opportunities he has been given, working and serving in the United States. “We have become part of this country.”

“We struggled. There were difficult times. But little by little we started becoming more and more self-sufficient,” he said.

San Juan recently moved to Atlanta from Houston, Texas, where he served as managing director of Globalinvest Ventures and Capital, a business consulting firm. Before that, he served as senior vice president for business development where he had a leadership role in a \$32 million fundraising campaign known as Opportunity Houston. He helped build a campaign and program model, which allowed the Houston region to proactively market itself for jobs and investment.

San Juan lives in Roswell with his wife, Lucia Navarro, an anchor on CNN Español’s morning show Café CNN, and their three sons.

As he begins his new position, he is encouraged by his own story but also by the decades of service the organization has provided to those in need. His personal interaction with Catholic Charities, coupled with his extensive business and fundraising experience, will help him in this new position, he said. He looks forward to becoming partners with the parishes and the people of the Archdiocese of Atlanta and working together to provide whatever assistance they can.

“Part of what Catholic Charities does is to make people self-sufficient and give them hope. In our case, you have the perfect example of what some assistance up front meant to us and how we have come full circle,” said San Juan.

“I feel very comfortable being here because I can relate, having been a refugee myself and knowing what an immigrant goes through,” he said. “We’re trying to do the best we can to make those individuals and those families whole and self-sufficient.”

The following article was a class assignment written by Jonathan Mathew Pardo. He is 19 and a sophomore at Loyola University in Chicago, majoring in History and Secondary Education. Perhaps more relevant to all Pedro Pan, he is the youngest grandson of our beloved "George" and Peggy Guarch and the son of Lynn and Felix Pardo. Enjoy!!

Roots

by Jonathan Matthew Pardo

My cultural upbringing, heritage, and benevolence can all be explained through a metal, three-pieced kitchen amenity found in almost every Cuban-American household. This kitchen appliance is: the pride of every Cuban's kitchen, the traditional introduction of our culture to a foreigner, the center of the universe around which our conversations revolve, and its aroma-- a magnetic force capable of drawing even the deepest sleeper to the breakfast table. This five to seven-inch metallic super-force has been the medium through which conversations about my heritage have taken place. Questions about the Castro brothers, their effect on the island, what it was like before, and whether or not it will ever be again have all been pondered over the product of this mechanism.

It is called a Cuban coffee maker, and it makes the cultural phenomenon of *Cafe Cubano*. Cuban coffee is a type of espresso, extremely strong, which compliments breakfast, lunch, dinner, and everything in between. In schools in Miami, you will often see a maintenance employee or a secretary poke his or her head into a classroom to offer a teacher "*un cafecito*." Every time a *prima*, cousin, comes over, the offer, "*Oye, tu quieres cafe?*" spouts naturally from the homeowner's mouth. We dip our *tostada Cubana* in it during breakfast, have it after lunch to wake ourselves up, and again after dinner to keep ourselves lively for our company. When a Cuban leaves Miami, venturing to a non-Hispanic city, contact with a Cuban friend or relative is often made over the centerfold of *cafe*. It is a beautiful gesture that insinuates, "you are home, I know you."

One of the things about this cultural joy that makes it extremely expressive of Cuban culture is where you can, and cannot, find it. In Miami, *Cafe Cubano* is everywhere. In Cuban restaurants, at storefront windows, in homes, schools, supermarkets (Anglo and Hispanic in nature), even in movie theaters. In other cities in the United States, you need to know where to look. In Chicago it can be found in Hispanic neighborhoods-- even west just three blocks up Devon, there is a

small Hispanic supermarket where I buy my own Cafe Bustelo (the brand that all the Cubans use). And where can it not be found? Ironically, and sadly, in Cuba.

If you have a friend with dual-citizenship from a European, Central or South American country, or basically anywhere but the United States, there is a possibility that they have visited the tropical island my family once called home. If they have indeed visited, odds are they enjoyed a *cafecito*, maybe at a bar that has a statue of Ernest Hemingway doing the same while pouring over a moleskin containing the prologue to the next masterpiece he was creating in the forties.

Your friend, the tourist, may come back and tell you about the natural beauty of the island, the friendliness of the locals, the splendors of the food, and the authenticity of the culture. Your friend, the tourist, knows no more about current Cuba than the person whose knowledge stretches only to the superficial fact that Cuba is ninety miles from the Florida Keys. Your friend, the tourist, knows not of the slums, that were once not slums, just a block from the main strip that their hotel concierge was forced to tell them to frequent. Your friend, the tourist, never met the locals in their own homes, decrepit and failing, lacking in some cases even the basics of a structure as four standing walls. Your friend, the tourist, enjoyed the traditional Cuban food rationed for tourists and tourists alone, never to be enjoyed by the average Cuban who has now been reduced to a peasant, like that of a feudal society outdated by centennials and evolution of thought. Your friend, the tourist, has been duped by the Castro regime into believing that traditional Cuban culture is still existent in daily life in Cuba. Your friend, the tourist, does not know that what once was Cuban culture is now just a memory that citizens dream of when they think about the days before the revolution, and the exile that ensued, tearing their loved ones from them forever and leaving them trapped in the hollow shell of what was once home.

The facade that your hypothetical friend was exposed to is what keeps this stagnant country alive economically. Tourism is Cuba's main source of capital, and the only industry that the government actually maintains. The true nature of current Cuba is poverty, oppression, and stagnation. Teachers who fail to teach the falsified "glory of the Revolution" are fired. Doctors are sent to countries like Venezuela in order to receive economic aid from their tyrannical government.

Citizens are restricted from the Internet, or even regular phone calls to the United States. Government workers found to have been using government resources, such as the internet, to educate themselves in order to provide for their family (something made nearly impossible by the government), are either terminated, imprisoned, or have that privilege revoked. Places of worship have been closed, people are no longer allowed to assemble, and the CDR (Committee for the

Defense of the Revolution) has agents placed in all neighborhoods, ready to rat out any potential dissenter of the Castros. Dissenters, which is a title that could include someone who merely expresses dissatisfaction with the country in any fashion, are imprisoned, if not killed. In the initial days of the Revolution, public firing squads took the lives of innocents who simply spoke their mind. Others disappeared in the night to never be seen again, abducted by the CDR's secret police.

Still, Cuban youth is being brainwashed into believing that this tyrant, Fidel Castro, and his cronies, Che Guevara, a ruthless, inhuman mercenary, and Raul Castro, Fidel's very own brother and hand-puppet, are grand liberators who saved the country. No one dares speak about the democratic constitution that Cuba abided by, the free-market, overall prosperity, human rights, one of the highest literacy levels in the world, and booming industry that existed prior to Castro's rise to power. If they do, their lives, and the lives of their families, are placed in mortal danger. In Miami, the Cuban Exile community, which I am direct product of, is often made fun of for the passion with which it screams out in defiance of the Castro regime. Despite the jokes, it is anything but a laughing matter. Many of the first generation of exiles saw their families abducted or killed, their businesses taken over and shut down by the government, their homes repossessed because the government decided that what they worked for their entire lives wasn't what they needed. The community I was born and raised in, and am connected to by blood and spirit, is the product of oppression. My community once existed as its own nation, has instead relocated to another, and reestablished itself in the United States, trying desperately to preserve the lifestyle it once knew.

This is what makes *Cafe Cubano* more than just a burst of energy, or a sweetener to your morning bread. This is why when I make Cuban Coffee for my friends in Chicago with the maker that once belonged to my mother, it is more than just a treat. This is why the aroma of savory sweet coffee beans is even more than just nostalgic. When someone asks me if I'd like *un cafecito*, they are really asking me, "Would you like to remember with me, what once was? Would you like to journey to what you never knew, but have heard so much about? Would you like to preserve what your parents, and their parents, spent their entire lives recreating? Would you like to keep Cuba alive?" This is why every time I go home to Miami, the first place you will find me, is behind a small, steaming cup of sweet brown heritage, eyes closed, savoring every sip.

OPERATION
PEDRO PAN GROUP, INC.



Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc. Swearing-In Ceremony & Dinner Dance



**Friday, May 3, 2013
8:00 to 12:00 p.m.**

**La Jolla Ballroom
301 Alcazar Ave, Coral Gables, FL**

**Donation: \$45.00 p/person
Includes: Dinner, Music**

**DJ Son y Salsa/Angel Canete
Parking Fee Included**

Doors will be Open at 8:00 PM
members@pedropan.org

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Please cut-out this section & mail with your check by April 20, 2013
**Please make check payable to: Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc. & mail to: c/o
Carmen Romanach,
11352 NW 65th St., Doral, FL 33178
Email: members@pedropan.org**

NAME(s) _____

email _____

Save the Date

Attention all Matecumberos!!!

Saturday

June 8th, 2013

Camp Matecumbe Brunch

We are pleased to announce that we will be holding
our June
monthly breakfast at Camp Matecumbe

If you were a former Camp Matecumbe resident, please
send us your scanned
picture of the 60s and we will prepare a button for you

Or

If you wish, you can bring your picture to our next
Breakfast,

April 13th and we will scan it for you.

Don't leave it for the last minute, bring or send your
pictures now

and you will have a beautiful memento to remember that
day.

Montana Pedro Pan

On the 50th anniversary of their exodus ,
the Helena, Montana Pedro Pan will
be reunited at Brondel Hall
on June 13 to 16, 2013

For more information on this reunion, go to their website:

www.brondelreunion2013.com

They are still looking for some of the alumni from both
St. Joseph Orphanage or
Brondel Hall.

We posted the names of the missing Pedro Pan
under "looking for Pedro Pan" Section below.

Let's help this group to have a wonderful reunion,
if you have any information please share with them.

Looking for Pedro Pan

1- Arturo Napoles is looking for fellow Pedro Pan, Alejandro F. Valdes Jimenez, that was with him at Alton Catholic Children's Home.

2- The Montana Pedro Pan group wants to locate the following Pedro Pan: Crescendio A Alvarez, Carlos Amaro, Jose Andraca, Eduardo, Eddie Ceijas, Ricardo Fuentes, Ricardo Martinez, Jose Martines, Alberto Perez Blanco, Darlene Enriquez Radley, Ricardo Salazar, Juan Carlos Villareal, Enrique Calas, Bernardo Duelo Verdeja, Ricardo A. Fuentes Arias, Miguel A. Gonzalez Montoro, Aida Gutierrez, Paco Gutierrez, Reinaldo Lambert Gutierrez, Caridad Lima Zerquera, Leonal M. Lima Zerquera, Jorge Luis Martinez Camejo, Maria A. Martinez Camejo y Ernesto D. Sanchez Montoyo.

If you have any information please send it to: members@pedropan.org

Future Events Calendar:

Saturday, April 13, 2013 at 10 AM - Election Breakfast

Place: Las Vegas Restaurant, 11500 NW 41st. St., Doral, FI

Friday, May 3, 2013 at 8:00 PM - Swearing Inn Ceremony

Place: La Jolla Ballroom, 301 Alcazar Ave., Coral Gables, FI

Saturday, June 8, 2013 at 10 AM - Camp Matecumbe Brunch

Place: Camp Matecumbe, 13841 SW 120 St., Miami, FI

Saturday, July 20, 2013 at 10 AM- Breakfast

Place: Las Vegas Restaurant, 11500 NW 41st. St., Doral, FI

Saturday, August 17, 2013 at 10 AM- Breakfast

Place: Las Vegas Restaurant, 11500 NW 41st. St., Doral, FI

Saturday, September 21, 2013 at 10 AM-Breakfast

Place: Las Vegas Restaurant, 11500 NW 41st. St., Doral, FI

Saturday, October 19, 2013 at 10 AM-Breakfast

Place: Las Vegas Restaurant, 11500 NW 41st. St., Doral, FI

Saturday, November, 2013 - Annual Thanksgiving Gala

Place: TBA

Saturday, December 21st, 2013 at 10 AM- Christmas Breakfast

Place: Las Vegas Restaurant, 11500 NW 41st. St., Doral, FI

Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc

A National Charitable Organization of the former Children of Pedro Pan

161 Madeira Avenue, Suite 61 Coral Gables, FL. 33134 - (305) 554-7196

members@pedropan.org

www.pedropan.org

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