

Dear friends,

This past month of June I had the privilege to visit Wichita, Kansas to be with the Wichita Pedro Pan during their 50th Year Anniversary Reunion. My trip was a personal one....I had never been in the Mid West before and I decided that this was the best opportunity for me to do so. Little did I know what awaited me on this trip.....five very intensive days where I was able to share with them their visit to Mariana Home, the Act of Appreciation at Eberly Farm, visits to Bishop Carroll High School and St. Joseph's elementary school, dinner with the Madonna girls, Roasted Pig Dinner at Julian and Linda's home, Mass at St. Joseph Catholic Church and a visit to the gravesite of beloved Father Robert Kocour, the "father" of the Wichita Pedro Pan!

It was a very emotional experience for me as I was able to witness first-hand the cohesiveness and love that this special group of Pedro Pan share.....Amidst the laughter, the jokes, and the tears what was most obvious to me was the Love.....

While in Wichita it came to mind that we Pedro Pan are all ONE and all UNIQUE at the same time....and I wanted to share this feeling with you all. Our story is repeated throughout over 40 states of the Union where we were sent during our Exodus.... it is a story of love, and also a story of the courage of our parents, the resilience of the Pedro Pan kids and the generosity of the Catholic Church and the American people....

Don't miss the wonderful article about Operation Pedro Pan written by Yale professor, brilliant author, fellow Pedro Pan and OPPG Trustee, Carlos Eire. Carlos made a great job of setting the record straight about the history of Operation Pedro Pan....

Please note that we have several new announcements in this Newsletter.

Our Breakfast is next Saturday, July 16th at La Casona.....our breakfasts are our monthly family reunions where everyone is welcome!! Join us if you are in town....

Love,

Carmencita Romanach

## OPERATION PEDRO PAN GROUP, INC. (OPPG)

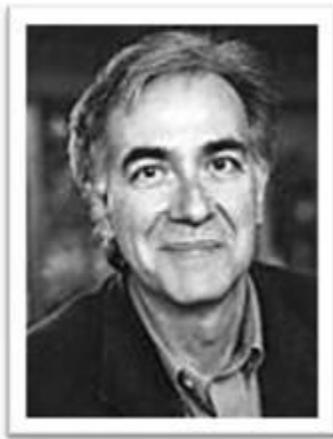
A National Charitable Organization

[www.pedropan.org](http://www.pedropan.org)

<http://www.facebook.com/OPPGI>

*July 07, 2011*

### *Pedro Pan News*



*Carlos Eire*

Imagine how you'd feel if you were once rescued from a soul-crushing totalitarian regime –not unlike that of the Third Reich – and you then you spent the rest of your life contending with accounts that portray your rescuers as evil, and your escape as a crime against humanity.

Welcome to the world of the Pedro Pan airlift children.

Recently, a new documentary from Cuba has been making the rounds in a few American cities, as part of a cultural exchange program between Castrolandia and the United States: “Operation Peter Pan: Flying Back to Cuba.” The latest venue for this film was Los Angeles.

I haven't seen this film because I live in the boondocks, but it has already caused me lots of grief.

This documentary deals with the airlift that brought over 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban children to the United States between December 1960 and October 1962, a chapter in Cuban and American history that has never attracted much attention, but has always been of great interest to the Orwellian Ministry of Truth in Havana, whose business it is to rewrite history. Estela Bravo, the film's director, lives in Cuba and has dedicated her career, much like Leni Riefenstahl, to ensuring that the exploits of a mad despot look really good on screen.

Since I was one of those 14,000 children who are the subject of Bravo's film, I've been following its American tour in the press, on the internet, and in email reports.

The most disturbing account I've seen thus far was published in the *New York Daily News* on Sunday, April 10th 2011, and is currently featured in the web site for [High Point Media](#), the American distributor of Bravo's film.<sup>1</sup> Albor Ruiz, the author, distorts the history of the airlift along the very same lines as the Castro regime has been doing for years, so, being a professional historian, all I can assume is that this twisted history must come straight from the film, or from some of the other Castroite-directed accounts that pollute library shelves and the internet.

I can't comment on the film, since I haven't seen it. But I must contest the Ruiz review and its warped take on our history, which is now being used to advertise the film.

First, our exodus must be set into context. The final tally of 14,000 is just the tip of the iceberg. When the airlift ceased in October 1962, because Fidel Castro suddenly refused to let any of his subjects leave *his* island, the number of children lined up to take part in this airlift stood around 80,000. Add the thousands of others who left without their parents, but not as part of the airlift, and the total figure of instant orphans easily surpasses 100,000. At that time Cuba had a population of only six million. Do the math, and hold your breath. The numbers speak for themselves: a huge percentage of Cuban parents were not just willing, but eager, to get their kids off the island.

You have to ask yourself why.

Castrolandia's Ministry of Truth – and Albor Ruiz of *The New York Post* – would have you believe that our airlift was concocted by the government of the United States as a nefarious Cold War scheme, the objective of which is never clear. As their version has it, the evil Yanquis tricked Cuban parents into “falsely” thinking that their parental rights were about to be revoked by the state.

Total nonsense. The reason our parents sent us here was not due to any rumor spread by Americans and their agents, but because of what we were experiencing already. The Castroite Revolution demanded total devotion from all of us children, our parents be damned. Once the state took over all of the schools, we were held hostage by it every day, indoctrinated until our brains could take no more, forced into “Revolutionary” errands, jammed into agricultural labor camps, dressed in Pioneer uniforms, forced to march in lockstep and chant slogans, warned never, ever to attend religious services, and, at the age of eighteen, drafted in the armed forces. Some of us were even being sent to the Soviet Union or its satellites behind the Iron Curtain. Our parents had no say in any of this. Worst of all, we were constantly admonished to report on anyone in our family who dared to criticize these arrangements.

The facts speak for themselves, and can be verified through empirical research. Our parents were already losing us and they a real tough choice to make: do we let Castrolandia steal our kids or do we send them somewhere else where the state won't claim their mind and soul?

Logic comes into play too. Why would the U.S. government orphan so many children and fund their upkeep, but make no effort to publicize their plight? It makes no sense. Our exodus was a nearly invisible event, of which most of the world remained woefully ignorant. Check it out: I dare you to find more than a handful of news reports about the airlift from the early 1960's.

Second, the long-term separation of the children and parents was caused by the Castro regime, not the United States. The plan every Pedro Pan family had was to reunite immediately in the United States, with the hopes of one day returning to a free Cuba. As soon as we arrived in the U.S., our parents were granted entry visas by the State Department. Unfortunately, though their American visas came quickly, the Castro regime not only refused to grant our parents exit permits at a reasonable pace, it actually put obstacles in their path and harassed them. Many fathers, especially, were not allowed to leave at all. Then the final blow came in October 1962. Although thousands of us still had parents in Cuba, the Castro regime closed the door and refused them the right to leave. Those who tried to find some way out through an embassy – such as my mother – were often denied the right to leave, repeatedly. No amount of pleading from anyone changed Castrolandia's policy, until late in 1965, when President Lyndon Johnson's administration paid a high ransom and the Freedom Flights began to deliver our parents here very slowly, as if from a dripping faucet. By then, most of us had

already spent what seemed like an eternity without our fathers and mothers. And some parents never made it out at all, like my father.

Third, one must ask: if the Cuban authorities had any real concern for us children, and saw the airlift as an evil American scheme, why did they allow us to leave and then prevent our parents from joining us? And why did the Cuban authorities harass us and our families at the Havana airport, with strip searches and an interminable wait in a soundproof glass enclosure known as “the fishbowl”?

I had a chance to put these questions to someone who was very high up in the Castro regime at that time, Carlos Franqui, a close associate of Fidel Castro and editor of his regime’s propaganda rag, *Revolución*. Like so many of the Maximum Leader’s cronies, Franqui was eventually purged and banished into exile. Shortly before his death, he came to lecture here at Yale, where I teach. At dinner, when I quizzed Franqui, he had a brutally simple answer to the questions above. “We loved it,” he said, smiling, “because anything that would destroy the bourgeois family was good for us.”

Franqui’s sarcastic confession can be taken at face value because of one more undeniable fact: the instant that all exits from Castrolandia were blocked in October 1962, Fidel’s goons arrested all those who were running the airlift in Havana, and imprisoned them for two decades. So, you see, the Cuban authorities knew exactly what was going on and who was responsible, but had refused to stop it on purpose. Only when the usefulness of the family-wrecking airlift was derailed by the fallout from the Missile Crisis did they decide to act; and then, hypocritically, they punished those brave souls for their great service to the so-called Revolution.

And ever since they shut down the airlift and trapped our parents, this corrupt regime has been trying to whitewash its guilt and portray our parents as morons and our rescue as sheer Yanqui devilry.

Lord have mercy.

Only utter desperation can make a parent to let go of a child, especially in circumstances where there is no guarantee that they will ever see that child again. Our parents made a heroic decision. Please do not let anyone trick you into thinking that they were easily or needlessly fooled, or that anyone else but Fidel Castro and his henchmen bear the blame for the suffering we all endured. Also, do not let anyone trick you into thinking that most of us Pedro Pan kids see ourselves

as victims. Most of us are immensely grateful to those who rescued us from slavery.

<sup>1</sup><http://highpointmediagroup.posterous.com/new-documentary-operation-peter-pan-flying-ba>

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## **WICHITA PEDRO PAN**



The Wichita Pedro Pan celebrated a very successful 50th year Reunion on June 23rd to 26th, 2011....

The Mariana Home for boys was visited by them on June 23rd. It was an emotional and joyful occasion that brought

them from all over the US.....and took them to the front page of their local news!!!  
See link to the articles published below.

During the Public Act of Appreciation at Eberly Farm on June 24th, 2011 the Wichita Pedro Pan paid tribute to all the persons responsible

for their coming to the U.S. and their stay at Wichita, Kansas.

Special thanks to the organizers of this event: Leonardo Viota and Lazaro San Martin

Please click on the following two links for newspaper coverage of this event:

<http://www.kansas.com/2011/06/24/1906168/1960s-child-refugees-revisit-wichita.html>

[http://gray.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?expire=&title=Cuban+Refugees+Reunite+After+50+Years&urlID=455471382&action=cpt&partnerID=406889&cid=124515629&fb=Y&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.kake.com%2Ffindit%2Ffridayheadlines%2FCuban\\_Refugees\\_Reunite\\_After\\_50\\_Years\\_124515629.html](http://gray.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?expire=&title=Cuban+Refugees+Reunite+After+50+Years&urlID=455471382&action=cpt&partnerID=406889&cid=124515629&fb=Y&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.kake.com%2Ffindit%2Ffridayheadlines%2FCuban_Refugees_Reunite_After_50_Years_124515629.html)

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## **HOLOCAUST MUSEUM OF SW FLORIDA**

### **OPPG PRESENTATION**

On Thursday, July 28th, 2011

10 a.m.

The History of Operation Pedro Pan

Holocaust Museum of SW Florida in Naples, Fl

4760 Tamiami Trail N # 7

Naples, Fl 34103-3065

Presenters: Carmen Valdivia and Guillermo Paz

For more information contact: Amy Snyder

Phone: 239 263 9200

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**OPERATION PEDRO PAN PRESENTATION**

Guest Speaker: CARMEN VALDIVIA

SUNDAY, JULIO 10, 2011

COLEGIO DE BELEN

500 SW 127 AVE

12:00-5:00 PM

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**NO GREATER LOVE: OPERATION PEDRO PAN**

Take a few minutes to read the article published in the July 2011 edition of the St. Anthony Messenger in

Cincinnati, Ohio. The article was written by Maria de Lourdes Ruiz Scaperlanda.

It is worth reading! A beautiful article about Operation Pedro Pan.....

Here is the link:

<http://www.americancatholic.org/samo/Feature.aspx?articleid=37&IssueID=26>

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Remember Monsignor Walsh.....Write your stories about him!



June 19, 1930-December 20, 2001

**Project: Stories about Msgr. Bryan O. Walsh**

As a Tribute to Msgr. Bryan O. Walsh in the tenth Anniversary of his passing this year we want to gather a collection of short stories about him to publish them in booklet form, our website and face book account, etc..

Guidelines for the Project:

1. Article's length: two pages, 200- 500 words approximately.
2. Stories can be either when you were a Pedro Pan child or when you met Msgr. Walsh as an adult.
3. Theme: A story of an interaction with Msgr. Walsh (we want to have as many aspects of Msgr. Walsh's personality so it shows all these aspects: as a father figure, as a disciplinarian, as a very intelligent person, as a loving and caring man, as an administrator, as a priest, as a mediator, or as many other aspects as are possible)

4. Persons that met Msgr. Walsh and are not Pedro Pan can also submit their stories.

5. Stories can be submitted by email to: [members@pedropan.org](mailto:members@pedropan.org)

and/or mail to: Operation Pedro Pan Group Inc.,

11352 NW 65th St., Doral, Fl 33178

6. Deadline to submit stories: July 31st., 2011.

We want to gather as many stories as we can about Msgr. Walsh as a Tribute to him. Don't worry if you are not a "professional writer"....we want stories from the heart...that is what we are looking for. We will edit the story if necessary and will send it to the author for authorizing the final product of his/her story before publishing it.

We will accept any Poems you have written about Msgr. Walsh or any stories in English or Spanish.

**THERE IS STILL TIME TO SUBMIT YOUR STORY.....DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY.....**

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## **Atlanta Pedro Pan**

The group meets every month at the Atlanta Cuban Club, 5797 New Peachtree Rd., Atlanta, Georgia.

The next Reunion will be on July 10th, 2011.

All Pedro Pan and their children are welcome to come....

Lunch at 1 p.m., \$9 (requires RSVP)

PP Reunion at 2 p.m.

RSVP Emy Botet at [ebotet@yahoo.com/404](mailto:ebotet@yahoo.com/404) 775 0440

If you are visiting Atlanta.....just drop by and meet this fun group of Pedro Pan that live in Atlanta.

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## **THE RED UMBRELLA**

Christina Diaz Gonzalez will be at the following locations and times to talk to FIU students about The Red Umbrella.

All Pedro Pan are welcome to attend.....

### **MAIDIQUE CAMPUS:**

**Place: FIU Ballrooms, 11200 SW 8th St., Miami, Fl**

**Date: Wednesday, September 7th, 2011.**

**Time: noon**

### **BISCAYNE CAMPUS:**

**Place: Wolfe University Center Auditorium, 3000 NW 151 St., North Miami, Fl**

**Date: Thursday, September 8th, 2011.**

**Time: 2 p.m.**

Christina send us the following interview she did while vacationing at Grand Cayman this past week. She is definitively a wonderful and tireless Pedro Pan Ambassador for all of us....and shares our story everywhere she goes....

Here is the link to the Grand Cayman Islands interview:

<http://www.cayman27.com.ky/news/item/10437>

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**CALIFORNIA PEDRO PAN**

We have received the following announcement from the Cuban Kids from the 60s.  
This is their 6th annual Reunion at

Hacienda San Francisco and it is a must for any Pedro Pan on the area. It is a wonderful whole day event for all the family!!!

**Dear Pedro Pan Brothers and Sisters:**

**Save the Date Saturday September 24, 2011**

**Spend the day with**

***Cuban Kids from the 60's Exodus - Pedro Pan of California.***

**Join us for our 6th annual reunion at**



**Hacienda Don Francisco**

**Details to follow in the coming weeks!**

**Save the Date Saturday September 24, 2011**



*Until we meet again!*

*The Cuban Kids Working Group*

[CubanKid60Exodus@aol.com](mailto:CubanKid60Exodus@aol.com)

[www.cubankids1960.com](http://www.cubankids1960.com)

[Pedro Pan of California | Facebook](#)

**ALBUQUERQUE PEDRO PAN**

The Albuquerque Pedro Pan are planning a Reunion for 2012!!!!!!

They want to find all Pedro Pan who went to Albuquerque.....

Contact us at [members@pedropan.org](mailto:members@pedropan.org)

or Ernesto Perez at: [gallo46@bellsouth.net](mailto:gallo46@bellsouth.net)

**MAY 18, 19, 20 2012**

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**SAVE THE DATE**

Please save the date.....November 18th to 20th, 2011 at the Miami Beach Resort and Spa in Miami Beach, Fl.

This year we are celebrating the Closure of our 50th Year Anniversary ..... For those of you that came last year.....we are planning this year to be even more special and we have many activities for you.....

All the Events will be recorded for posterity....Don't miss this opportunity!!!!

Stay tuned for more details coming soon.....

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**Looking for Pedro Pan**

ATTENTION:

Liliana Rodriguez is looking for four Cuban girls that stayed in Seaton Villa, Wilmington, Delaware around September 1961.

Pedro Pan that went to St. Vincennes Orphanage in Lansing, Michigan want to find all Pedro Pan that went there for a Reunion at the end of Summer. If you went to this orphanage please send us your personal information so that you can be included it in this Reunion.

Send your information or comments to: [members@pedropan.org](mailto:members@pedropan.org)

Last month Guillermo Seoane was looking for some Pedro Pan that went to Evansville, Indiana. The very same day the Newsletter was out he had already received news from 2 of them.....and a third person that he was not looking for wrote to say she had also been in a foster home in Indiana....We are very happy to announce this "finding" of long lost friends.....it is always a happy occasion for us to help!

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**Saturday, July 16 at 10 AM - Breakfast**

Place: La Casona Restaurant, Miami

**Thursday, July 28 at 10 AM- OPP Presentation**

Place: Holocaust Museum, Naples, Fl

**Saturday, August 20 at 10 AM - Breakfast**

Place: La Casona Restaurant, Miami

**Saturday, September 17 at 10 AM - Breakfast**

Place: La Casona Restaurant, Miami

**Saturday, October 15 at 10 AM - Breakfast**

Place: La Casona Restaurant, Miami

**Friday, November 18, Conference-History of Operation Pedro Pan/Fiesta Cubana Cocktail Party.**

Place: Miami Beach Resort and Spa, Miami Beach, Fl

**Saturday, November 19 - Thanksgiving Dinner-Dance**

Place: Miami Beach Resort and Spa, Miami Beach, Fl

**Sunday, November 20 - Thanksgiving Mass**

Place: Miami Beach Resort

**Saturday, December 17 at 10 AM - Breakfast**

**Place: La Casona Restaurant, Miami**

**Tuesday, December 20, at 7 PM- Memorial Mass for Msgr. Bryan O. Walsh**

**Place: St. Dominick Catholic Church, Miami**

**Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc**

**A National Charitable Organization of the former Children of Pedro Pan**

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