

Miami is the largest city in one of the Sunbelt's fastest growing states, and, as this popular poster indicates, its special Latin connections have oriented Florida toward the south. In many ways, Florida's big cities complement one another: Miami is a financial hub; Jacksonville, an industrial center and seaport; Orlando, a magnet for tourists—Walt Disney World attracts some 21 million visitors annually.

Miami

In America's Sunbelt cities, alarm over the influx of immigrant Mexicans, Salvadorans, and other Hispanics is sharp and growing. The dismay was even greater in Miami 25 years ago, as tens of thousands of refugees began flocking there from Fidel Castro's Cuba. Today, the city fathers regard that "crisis" as a blessing in disguise. Not only did the Cubans pull themselves up from poverty, they turned their adopted city around. They helped make the honky-tonk tourist town, kin to Las Vegas and Atlantic City, into a cultural and commercial hub of the Americas: port of entry into the United States for Latin goods and people, and gateway to the south for U.S. banks and corporations seeking business in the vast markets of Latin America and the Caribbean. Here, Florida International University's Barry B. Levine describes his city's transformation during the last 25 years. And George Gilder, the author of *Wealth and Poverty* (1981), profiles some of the people who made it all happen.

THE CAPITAL OF LATIN AMERICA

by Barry B. Levine

Earlier in this century, Miami was the place that Northerners thought of when, in the depths of winter, they yearned desperately to "get away from it all." With its beaches and palm trees, it was a combination of resort and placid harbor for retirees and widows—and, less obviously, the not-so-placid haunt of assorted gamblers and mobsters. Of course, tourists still come to Miami, but most of them now speak Spanish and fly *north* to get there. And far from fleeing the hurly-burly, the new visitors are plunging into the middle of it.

Miami has transformed itself into a major commercial entrepôt, the economic crossroads of the lands to its south. In

1979, then President Jaime Roldos of Ecuador dubbed the city "the capital of Latin America." The exaggeration was only slight. Miami today serves the West Indies and Latin America much as Singapore serves the East Indies and Asia, facilitating the transnational movement of people, goods, and money. On a peninsula jutting 400 miles into the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, Miami is closer to Mexico City than to New York, closer to Caracas than to Chicago. It offers direct access by sea and air to the markets of Europe, by truck and train and plane to all of North America.

If Miami were an independent nation, its gross national product (excluding the extensive drug traffic) would total some \$23.5 billion, about the same as that of Chile. Hispanic in atmosphere and Yankee in efficiency, Spanish-speaking and Anglo-connected, Miami has, since 1970, become the focal point of a region that never before really had one.

Stepping Out

But the city has become something more than a place to do business. Miami has acquired the status of a vast, international plaza. In their distant colonies in the New World, as at home, the Spaniards always built cities around a central square. Spanish city planning acknowledged what Hegel considered basic to human nature: the need to "recognize and be recognized." Today, as Latin cities in the Americas have grown, as the world in general has "shrunk," the traditional plaza has declined in local importance. But the basic human desire to see and be seen remains as strong as ever.

During the 1970s, abetted by mass communications and air travel, Miami emerged as the place to *pasear*, to strut and promenade, to proclaim one's social status. And like the Plaza de Bolívar used to be in Bogotá and the Plaza Tapatío still is in Guadalajara, Miami was not just for the rich but for the growing middle and upper-middle classes as well. It became a place not only to visit, but—for numerous Latin businessmen, intellectuals, TV personalities, writers, and political exiles—a place to live and put down roots.

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Pictures that shaped Miami's image: bathing beauties of the 1920s, a postcard from the 1940s. Tourism is still strong—Miami is the nation's leading port for cruise ships—but has been eclipsed by new industries.

Nor has it become simply an enclave for Hispanics. Yes, the Cubans are predominant. There are distinct communities of Venezuelans (in the condominiums on Brickell Avenue) and of Puerto Ricans (in Wynwood). The Colombian presence is growing. But Miami is also home to many thousands of Creole-speaking Haitians (in Little Haiti), and English-speaking Jamaicans and other West Indians. More than one-half of the central city's inhabitants are foreign-born, a proportion that dwarfs that of San Antonio, Albuquerque, or Los Angeles. "The city is, at a rapid pace, becoming an international megalopolis," observed Frank Soler, former editor of *El Miami Herald* (circulation: 73,400), the Spanish-language edition of the *Miami Herald*. "Miami is Noah's Ark; it's as simple as that."



“Miami” is not a very precise term. To most visitors from the North, the name connotes Miami Beach. To most residents, it refers to the whole of metropolitan Dade County—Greater Miami, in other words, which encompasses 27 distinct municipalities and claims some 1.7 million inhabitants.

Miami Beach, North Miami, and North Miami Beach are populated largely by senior citizens, many of them Jewish, who have exchanged the discomforts of the cold, urban North for a balmy retirement with Atlantic breezes. The City of Miami embraces predominantly black neighborhoods (such as Overtown) and the large, 800-square-block Cuban settlement known as Little Havana, centered on Calle Ocho (Eighth Street). Kendall is white middle-class, Hialeah is largely Cuban, Opa-Locka is predominantly black. The City of Coral Gables is an affluent “bedroom” community that also hosts many of the multinational corporations that lately have moved to town, while Coconut Grove is home to artists, chic restaurants, and the trendy urban rich.

In each of these neighborhoods linger vestiges of a very different past—a synagogue, say, on the fringes of a black neighborhood, a Little Havana doughnut shop still frequented by white “redneck” truckers. And in each of these enclaves there intrude portents of a different future: a new Nicaraguan restaurant on Calle Ocho, a Haitian restaurant in Overtown. (One local joke has it that two new restaurants open in Miami for every revolution that occurs in Latin America.) In Miami Beach, the seven hot-meal centers operated by the Jewish Vocational Services now serve some 200 indigent Hispanics, who complain about having to eat kosher food.

It is difficult to call these changes harbingers of a “new” Miami because the city is barely old enough to have a recorded past. It is, for all practical purposes, a 20th-century city. And throughout its brief, checkered history, it has swung repeatedly between boom and bust. The weather—warm and sunny for the most part, savage at times during the hurricane season—has contributed to both conditions.

After Juan Ponce de León discovered Florida in 1513, Spanish soldiers and missionaries established several short-lived outposts in the area. The United States acquired Florida from Spain in 1819 but seemed to take no more interest in it than had the previous landlord. A lighthouse and a fort, infrequently occupied, were the federal government’s only contributions to Mi-

ami. As late as 1890, Dade County claimed only 861 inhabitants, most of them fishermen or small farmers.

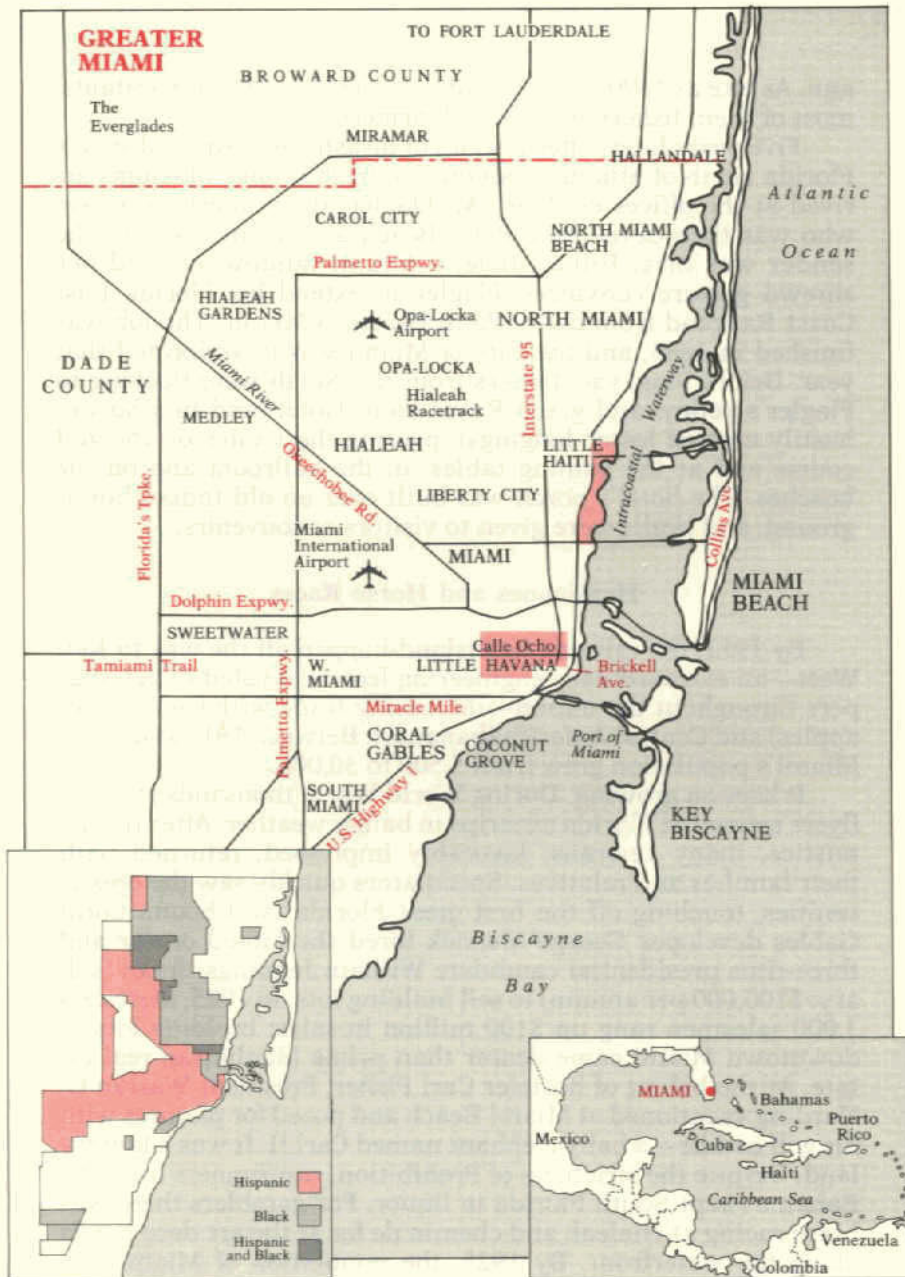
Five years later, after a series of disastrous frosts had struck Florida north of Miami, a bouquet of fresh orange blossoms arrived at the offices of Henry M. Flagler, the real-estate tycoon who was then developing Palm Beach as a winter resort. The sender was Mrs. Julia Tuttle, a Miami landowner, and her shrewd gesture convinced Flagler to extend his Florida East Coast Railroad from chilly Palm Beach to Miami. The job was finished in 1896, and the City of Miami was incorporated that year. Before long, vacationers from the North were flocking to Flagler's yellow and green Royal Palm Hotel (and to a host of hastily erected lesser lodgings), passing the winter on the golf course and at the gaming tables, in the ballroom and on the beaches. The hotel's porch was built over an old Indian burial ground, and skulls were given to visitors as souvenirs.

Hurricanes and Horse Races

By 1912, the railroad had island-hopped all the way to Key West—an extraordinary engineering feat celebrated in newspapers throughout the nation—increasing trade with Cuba (pineapples) and Central America (bananas). Between 1910 and 1920, Miami's population grew from 5,500 to 30,000.

It kept on growing. During World War I, thousands of Army flyers trained at Florida airstrips in balmy weather. After the Armistice, many veterans, favorably impressed, returned with their families and relatives. Speculators quickly saw the opportunities, touching off the first great Florida land boom. Coral Gables developer George Merrick hired the famed orator and three-time presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan (salary: \$100,000 per annum) to sell building lots. In 1925, Merrick's 3,000 salesmen rang up \$100 million in sales; building lots in downtown Miami came dearer than prime Manhattan real estate. At the behest of hosteler Carl Fisher, President Warren G. Harding vacationed at Miami Beach and posed for pictures with his golf caddie—a baby elephant named Carl II. It was a fantasy land. Despite the strictures of Prohibition, rumrunners from the Bahamas kept South Florida in liquor. For gamblers there was horse racing at Hialeah and chemin de fer at the art deco hotels along the waterfront. By 1925, the population of Miami had reached 111,000.

Then, in September 1926, a devastating hurricane lashed the Florida coast, killing 320 people, injuring another 6,300, and damaging 10,000 homes. Property values plummeted overnight.



Greater Miami is a "big flattened fan" squeezed between the sea and the Florida swamps. Except for Miami Beach and the business district near Brickell Avenue, it is a collage of heterogeneous neighborhoods.

A second killer storm in 1928 and the Wall Street stock market crash a year later made matters worse. By 1930, some of the transplanted Northerners were going home; Miami experienced its first drop in population.

The city made a slow comeback during the 1930s. As the nation edged toward World War II, tourists and winter residents were displaced by men in uniform. As had happened before, servicemen returned after the war with wives and children. By 1950, Dade County's population was close to half a million, and an Army Corps of Engineers flood control program had opened up thousands of acres to new development. Tract housing spread farther into the Everglades. Some 50,000 new people put down roots in Miami every year during the 1950s. The construction industry profited and nurtured a few related businesses, such as the manufacture of rattan furniture and aluminum window frames.

In Miami Beach, ostentatious new high-rise hotels—the Fountainebleau, Eden Roc, Sans Souci—rose beside older, art deco palaces from the 1930s. The hotel count grew to 382 by 1955. Arthur Godfrey broadcast the TV show that bore his name from the Kenilworth Hotel, where Jackie Gleason also staged his TV variety shows. The city later named streets after both stars. Feeding, lodging, and entertaining tourists generated most of Miami's jobs, and tourists came by the millions. A fledgling garment industry even sprang up to provide resort wear.

Enter Fidel

There was, of course, a darker side to all of this. Thanks to Miami's strategic location in the Caribbean, smuggling was becoming big business. There had long been a sizable number of Cubans in Miami; some were engaged in gunrunning, channeling arms to rebels in Cuba who hoped to topple the regime of dictator Fulgencio Batista. (The leader of those rebels, Fidel Castro, had lived in exile in Miami for a short time in 1956.) Miami's hotel casinos were firmly in the grip of organized crime. Sen. Estes Kefauver (D.-Tenn.) called tolerant Miami the "plunderground as well as the playground for America's most vicious criminals." When his Senate Crime Investigating Committee began looking into the matter in 1950, the casino managers promptly shut their doors and moved to the relative safety of Cuba, less than 200 miles away. Few suspected that the days of freewheeling Havana were numbered.

On January 1, 1959, the Cuban rebels triumphed, Batista fled to the Dominican Republic, and Fidel Castro took control,

soon describing himself as *el líder máximo*. In fits and starts during his first two years in power, Castro transformed Cuba into a communist state, a Cold War ally of the Soviet Union.

The Cuban revolution was as much a pivotal event in Miami's modern history as it was in Cuba's. As Castro consolidated his victory, nationalizing industry and confiscating private property, tens of thousands of Cubans fled their homeland. In January 1961, the Eisenhower administration severed diplomatic relations with Havana. The first refugees included disproportionate numbers of those who had the most to lose: doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, judges, bureaucrats, merchants, skilled workers. These were the "golden exiles." (However, nearly one-third of the early immigrants were clerical workers and salesmen; 20 percent were blue-collar workers.) At the time, CBS News' Eric Sevareid characterized the Cuban exodus as "the biggest brain drain the Western hemisphere has known."

The refugees arrived penniless in the midst of a U.S. economic recession compounded by unusually bad weather—the autumn of 1959 brought Miami 60 straight days of rain. As 100,000 Cuban exiles crowded into Dade County, job opportuni-



Saguercera (1981), a view of Calle Ocho by Haydee Scull, a popular Cuban-born artist who now lives in Miami.

ties grew scarcer and scarcer. Few of the new arrivals spoke English. But their plight was made easier by the belief that exile would be short. They stayed in South Florida—close to home—where the climate was familiar and where the various Cuban exile groups, several dozen of them, maintained their various headquarters and plotted Castro's overthrow.*

A New Havana

But Castro held on to power, and the Cuban influx continued. Air links between Cuba and the United States were cut after the Missile Crisis in October 1962, but three years later Castro agreed to an intermittent U.S.-sponsored airlift that, by 1973, reunited nearly 300,000 Cubans with their families on the U.S. mainland. Despite Washington's efforts to settle the immigrants elsewhere, Miami's Latin population continued to swell—to 299,000 in 1970, and to 580,000 a decade later. Then came the 1980 El Mariel–Key West sealift, which brought 125,000 more Cubans to the United States.† Most of them settled in Miami. Today, about 40 percent of the city's inhabitants are Hispanic. (Since 1980, new restrictions imposed by both Washington and Havana have slowed the human traffic from Cuba to a trickle.)

As they adjusted to life in a new land, the Cubans struggled to climb into the American middle class. It took no more than a decade. With aid from Washington, thousands of Cuban doctors were certified to practice in the United States. Lawyers, often after a stint as parking lot attendants or dishwashers, eventually found white-collar work once more in insurance, journalism, engineering. Entrepreneurs opened numerous car dealerships, construction firms, and low-wage textile and leather goods factories. Miami's Cuban population, meanwhile, was big enough to sustain a sizable class of Cuban grocers, clothiers, barbers, and other tradesmen. All told, Cubans now own and operate some 18,000 businesses in Dade County.

In the process of putting their lives back together, the Cuban émigrés made Miami a bicultural, bilingual city. In Little Havana, Cubans tried to re-create life back home, down to the

*In April 1961, an invasion force of 1,200 Cuban exiles sponsored by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) landed at Cuba's Bay of Pigs and met with defeat within three days. The survivors were later returned by Castro to the United States in exchange for \$53 million in food and medical supplies.

†Fidel Castro used the exodus as an occasion to expel "undesirables"—criminals, mental patients, political prisoners. Under a 1984 exchange pact with Havana, nearly 2,700 Marielitos were scheduled to be returned to Cuba, but Havana suspended the agreement after the U.S. government's Radio Marti began broadcasting to Cuba in May 1985. Most of the undesirables remain in federal, state, and local prisons, awaiting deportation.

cigar-chewing elders in the parks who huddle over games of dominoes. On radio and television, in newspapers and magazines, on the stage and in the streets, the Spanish language flows freely and vigorously. The city boasts two Spanish-language daily newspapers, *El Herald* and *Diario Las Américas* (circulation: 63,500), two (UHF) television stations, six radio stations, the weekly magazine *Réplica*, and numerous other publications. At Miami-area supermarkets, the produce aisles display *boniatos* (a kind of sweet potato), *yucas* (yucca), *malangas* (casava), and plantains. In some neighborhoods, victualers are pleased to offer a Hispanic cut of beef: sliced parallel to, rather than across, the bone. Hawkers, most of them drawn from the ranks of the Marielitos, thread their way among cars stalled in traffic selling flowers, fish, and limes.

In addition to salsa music, syrupy *café cubano*, and other sensual reminders of life back home, the Cubans brought their culture and institutions. Of pre-Castro Cuba's 126 townships, for example, 114 are represented by *municipios* in Miami—groups that sponsor dances and dinners, aid new arrivals from the old hometown, but mostly devote themselves to fund-raising for anti-Castro activities. Then there are numerous social clubs, church groups, and even country clubs. Cuban businessmen mingle freely with their Anglo counterparts at such downtown establishments as the Miami, City, and Bankers clubs, but few have been invited to join the area's upper-crust country clubs.

Aerosol Voodoo

Cuban tradition and American affluence are combined in many a Fiesta de Quince Años—lavish 15th-birthday parties for Cuban girls. Sometimes, a *quince* loan is needed to pay for the banquet hall, food, party dress, perhaps even a limousine. One Cuban custom that has not translated well in America is the practice of chaperoning young couples. "Requiring a chaperone is by no means an extinct practice," notes sociologist Lisandro Pérez of Florida International University, in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (1980), "but many, if not most, young women are allowed to go out on unchaperoned dates or, more frequently, on double dates. Abstaining from premarital physical intimacy continues to be the norm for women."

Family ties among Cubans remain, in some ways, even stronger than those of other Latin immigrants. About nine percent of all Cubans live in families where an *abuela* (grandmother) or other relative is present, compared to six percent of other Hispanics and four percent of all Americans. In other

WORKING THINGS OUT IN THE SCHOOLS

Recently, a young Cuban-American from out of town accepted a job in Miami. Worried about the local schools, like parents everywhere, he called a friend at the Dade County School Board for advice.

In Miami's Anglo suburbs, he was told, his two children would be eligible for special programs for the gifted and a wide array of extracurricular activities. In the city's older neighborhoods, the friend said, they would be educated in a bilingual environment that celebrated Miami's "wonderful diversity." He recommended buying or renting a house near Miami's Fairchild Elementary School, which was run by a "gringo" principal who respected bilingual education and Latin culture.

In many American communities, local public schools are the focus of racial and ethnic tension. The Dade County school system, with 224,280 students and a \$1 billion budget, is plagued by the same problems as other big city systems—low academic achievement among the children of the poor, crime, a dropout rate close to 30 percent. (Sixty percent of its graduates go on to college.) Its student body is 41 percent Hispanic, 33 percent black, 26 percent Anglo. Dade County's school system seems ripe for trouble. Yet somehow it has avoided wrenching racial conflict.

Dade County spared itself the pains of court-imposed school busing by beginning voluntary racial desegregation in 1960; today, only 6,000 children ride school buses to achieve integration. However, many blacks argue, Dade County also escaped real desegregation. Of its 252 schools, 25 are nearly all black and 84, mostly in the suburbs, are nearly all white. According to a 1983 *Miami Herald* poll, 42 percent of the city's blacks felt that schools were a "big problem," as did 41 percent of its non-Latin whites. Less than one-third of Miami's Cubans agreed.

One reason for the Cubans' relative satisfaction is that, after years of controversy, bilingual education now seems to be firmly entrenched in Miami. In July 1985, for example, the Dade County School Board, with only one Cuban member, rejected the superintendent of schools' proposed cutbacks in the \$20 million bilingual education budget by a surprisingly unanimous vote of 7 to 0.

There is a touch of irony in all of this. Many Cubans prefer to send their children to private schools: More than 12,000 Cuban youngsters attend Miami's parochial institutions. Yet the Catholic schools do *not* offer bilingual instruction. Many Latins clearly value the official recognition of Hispanic culture that bilingual education represents, but how much they actually rely on it to transmit their traditions is unclear.

Remember our young Cuban professional on his way to Miami? He moved his family to an Anglo suburb, where he felt his children would get the best public education available.

—B.L.

ways, Cuban assimilation is proceeding rapidly. Nationwide, about half of all Cuban women marry non-Hispanic men (though the proportion is lower in Little Havana); the divorce rate among Cubans virtually matches the U.S. national average (five divorces per 1,000 Americans annually).

The Cubans may divorce like Americans, but they worship like Latins. The Catholic Church, to which about 90 percent belong, retains a strong influence. In Little Havana, front-yard religious shrines are a common sight. January 6 is Los Tres Reyes Magos (Three Kings Day), the day when children receive their Christmas gifts and the occasion for a grand parade down Calle Ocho. A small number of Cubans practice Santería (worship of the saints), a faith that blends Cuban Catholicism and African cultism. More than two dozen stores in the Miami area sell Santería paraphernalia: herbs, beads, oils, and even magic potions in aerosol cans.

An Ethnic Cauldron

All of this can be a bit unsettling to older residents who remember a very different Miami. How deep their resentment sometimes goes may be gauged by the easy success of a 1980 Dade County referendum which bans the translation of county documents into Spanish. Large numbers of non-Hispanic whites have fled to Fort Lauderdale, Davie, and other rapidly growing areas of Broward County just to the north of Dade. ("Will the Last American to Leave Miami Please Bring the Flag"—so read a bumper sticker that appeared on many automobiles during the 1980 sealift.)

Maurice A. Ferre, the Puerto Rican-born mayor of the City of Miami since 1973 (and former businessman) who has emerged as Greater Miami's spokesman, aptly calls his city not a melting pot but a "boiling pot." On occasion, the pot boils over. Relations between blacks and Hispanics in Miami have long been especially antagonistic. Blacks feel, among other things, increasingly frozen out of a local labor market where bilingualism is often a job requirement.* Recent Hispanic immigrants also compete with blacks for unskilled jobs. Some 17 percent of Dade County's residents are black, clustered mostly in ghetto communities such as Overtown and Opa-Locka. In some neighborhoods, unemployment runs as high as 30 percent among adults, 50 percent among teen-agers.

*At least implicitly and often explicitly. Such requirements are being challenged. In 1984, for example, two Miami women were denied jobs as cleaning women in a downtown office building because they were unable to speak Spanish. They appealed to the Dade County Fair Housing and Employment Appeals Board, which ruled that the women had been discriminated against on the basis of national origin.



Greater Miami's senior citizens, some 255,000 strong, comprise nearly one-sixth of the city's population. Of late, well-to-do Hispanics have joined the Jews and other Northerners who made Miami a retirement haven.

The worst rioting in any of the nation's cities since the upheaval in Detroit in 1967 shook a black slum neighborhood of Miami—Liberty City—in 1980. The proximate cause was the acquittal by a white jury of five white Dade County police officers in the shooting death of a black insurance salesman and former Marine, Arthur McDuffie. (An added factor: the new lawlessness created by the Marielito influx.) Eighteen people were killed during the Liberty City riots. Violence came again in 1983 after a Hispanic police officer, Luis Alvarez, shot a black youth, Nevell Johnson, Jr., in an Overtown video arcade. By the time the rampage ended, another person was dead, 25 had been injured, and 45 had been arrested for looting.

Black-Hispanic friction surfaces repeatedly in Miami politics. Blacks voted overwhelmingly against the use of Spanish on the Dade County referendum. More recently, they were outraged when an alliance of Hispanic City of Miami commissioners, including Mayor Ferre, ousted Howard V. Gary, a popular black, from his job as city manager. The commissioners cited "a lack of communication" between Gary and his elected superiors. Black leaders immediately organized a drive to recall the mayor but failed to gain enough signatures.

Cuban mayors govern Hialeah, Sweetwater, and West Miami, and three Cubans are members of the state legislature in Tallahassee, but the Cuban influence in Miami politics is not yet

as great as might be expected. Only one Cuban sits on the eight-member Metro Dade County Commission and one on the seven-member Dade County Board of Education. The fact that Hispanics, many of whom are not U.S. citizens, constitute only about 24 percent of Dade County's electorate is one reason; divisions within the Cuban community are another. Nor have the Cubans been very successful so far in forging alliances with other groups. Mayor Ferre, a Puerto Rican, has repeatedly beat Cuban challengers with black votes.

On national political issues, the Cubans are relatively united. They are, by and large, conservative and staunchly anti-communist. During the summer of 1984, the city of West Miami severed ties with its "sister" city of León, in Sandinista-controlled Nicaragua. In 1980, about 90 percent of Dade County's Cubans voted for Ronald Reagan. Yet Miamians also tend to be realistic—and unpatronizing—about conditions south of the border. They view Latins without romantic notions; they see them not as humble peasants, noble savages, or mighty revolutionaries but as relatives or business associates or neighbors. In Miami, discussions of Latin affairs are about as concrete as they get.



Undeniably, the Cuban influx has made Miami a less attractive city in the eyes of many of its older, non-Hispanic residents. But it has made Miami far *more* attractive in the eyes of tens of millions of other Americans—Latin Americans outside the United States. By the end of the 1960s, the Cubans had achieved a kind of critical mass, imparting an authentic Hispanic flavor to Miami's economic and civic life. And that, it turned out, was all the city needed to flourish.

Pre-Castro Miami, as Florida International University president Gregory B. Wolfe has noted, "was essentially a deteriorating city—the Cuban displaced person, not the Protestant ethic, marked the beginning of the new tradition." Joaquin Blaya, a Chilean who is general manager of Channel 23, one of Miami's Spanish-language television stations, saw the transformation this way: "The world the Cubans created made it comfortable for other Latins. Many here think Miami is the best city in all of Latin America, the status capital of South America. If you're a Venezuelan or Colombian and you have not been to Miami, you're not 'in,' you don't belong."

During the 1970s, Greater Miami looked increasingly to the

south for its livelihood rather than to the north. It relied less and less on traveler's checks and Social Security checks, more and more on financial services and foreign investment, on freight handling and shipping. Nothing better tells the tale of Miami's transformation from a vacation resort to a unique Sunbelt metropolis than the fact that tourism now generates only about 10 percent of the city's jobs.

Commuting from Rio

Attracted by the Hispanic flavor of the city, Latin investors—as businessmen, as individuals—began pouring billions of dollars annually into Miami. Many bought second homes, or first condominiums, in the city, typically forgoing mortgages and paying cash. At one point, in 1980, nearly one-half of all property sold in the Miami area was being purchased by foreigners. Today, Miami claims some 100,000 non-Cuban Hispanic residents.

Atmosphere, of course, was not the only reason why Miami became the capital of Latin America during the 1970s. The telephone links between Miami and Latin America's major cities are better than those between any two Latin capitals. Air connections to all parts of the hemisphere are plentiful. There is poverty, but one does not have to see it; the plight of the poor does not assault the eyes almost everywhere one turns, as it does in Mexico City or Caracas. There is no threat of kidnapping or political violence. The government is friendly to businessmen; the threat of expropriation is nil. To entrepreneurs in Lima or Rio or Bogotá looking for a hospitable place to cache their wealth, Miami is attractive indeed.

Between 1978 and 1983, six local banks were taken over by foreign nationals—some of them with shady histories.* Miami is also home to 40 "Edge-Act" banks, out-of-state American banks restricted to conducting international business. It has more Edge-Act banks than any other city in the nation save New York (which has 42). The Miami institutions have prospered chiefly by collecting "flight capital"—deposits by nervous Latins seeking a safe haven for their wealth.

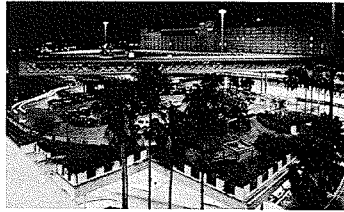
Miami's assets proved attractive to North Americans as well. By 1980, it was playing host to Ralston Purina International, Exxon Inter-America, G. D. Searle, and 100 other multi-

*While Florida requires bank owners to be "qualified by character, experience, and financial responsibility" for the job, screening by state regulators has at times been less than fastidious. For example, J. J. Gonzalez Gorrondona, owner of Miami's Caribank, became involved in a bitter legal battle with the government back home in Caracas over the lending practices of his Banco Comercial de Descuento, which has since been liquidated.

COMINGS AND GOINGS AT THE AIRPORT

The flat, grassy, 3,232-acre parcel of land at latitude 25°47'39" and longitude 80°17'16" was once an orange grove owned by the Seminole Fruit and Land Company.

Today the Seminole Company's land is the site of Miami International Airport (MIA), the 10th busiest passenger facility in the world. In the United States, only New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport handles more international travelers and cargo. Worldwide, only Kennedy and London's Heathrow Airport are served by more airlines than is MIA (79), and Miami offers more international flights than either of them.



For the United States, Miami International is the chief gateway to the 50 countries and dependencies of Latin America and the Caribbean. It serves the same function for Latin tourists, shoppers, and businessmen traveling to the United States.

Every week, 144 passenger flights leave for Mexico and Central America, 158 for South America, 430 for the Bahamas and the Caribbean. An equal number arrive from 74 cities south of the border, connecting with 1,983 flights to cities in Canada and the United States, 39 to European destinations. In 1983, some 7.1 million international travelers passed through MIA, nearly 19,000 every day. Three-

national corporations, each establishing a regional headquarters to direct marketing operations in Latin America and the Caribbean. They employed perhaps 3,000 managers, salesmen, and support personnel.

But one of the biggest games in town is financing trade with Latin America. Twenty-five local banks have now established international departments. Some 46 foreign banks—among them the Bank of Tokyo, the Banco de Londres y Sudamérica, and Lloyds Bank International, Ltd.—have opened Miami branches. Eight years ago, there were no foreign banks in the city. Now, Citicorp, Chase Manhattan, and other big American banks are also on the scene.

Luring these big fish to Miami is the city's vast international trade. Some 70,000 people, 10 percent of Miami's work force, are employed in this commerce. Through the Port of Miami, Miami International Airport, and other area terminals flow \$7.5 billion worth of Latin exports and imports—about 10 percent of all U.S. trade with the region. Most of Miami's "exports" are actually transshipped goods—turbines from West

quarters of these people hailed from South or Central America or the Caribbean islands.

Stand downstairs at the baggage claim areas for Varig, Avianca, or AeroMexico, and it will not be long before you see incoming passengers lifting suitcases—some so effortlessly that the bags seem empty—off the conveyor belt. Wait beside the ticket counters of Aviateca, Ecuatoriana, or Bahamasair, and you will see departing passengers shuffling forward in long lines, nudging forward with their feet cardboard cartons held together by strained sinews of packing tape. At the head of the line, someone will explain to an exasperated clerk that his carton, which may contain a home computer, a pneumatic drill, radiology equipment, is “personal” baggage and should not be shipped home as cargo.

But in many cases it will be. Follow the drill to Building 2200, the new international cargo clearinghouse, and witness the round-the-clock activity. Out goes the computer. Out to Latin America go \$2.1 billion worth of TV sets, pharmaceuticals, auto parts, machinery. In from the south come \$850 million worth of textiles, meat, fruits. Hundreds of millions of cut flowers—roses, carnations, pom-poms—are flown into Miami every year from Colombia, Peru, Honduras, Guatemala. Then there are goods from Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

All told, foreign trade flowing through MIA totaled \$3.79 billion in 1983, nearly equaling the entire gross national product of Panama. Add in the contributions of domestic airline traffic, airport payrolls, and the like, and MIA is a \$6 billion operation.

—B.L.

Germany, industrial chemicals from New Jersey, machine tools from Japan.

The Cubans are largely responsible for creating this booming business. Many refugees from Castro's Cuba wound up not in Florida but in Venezuela, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Central America—creating an instant network of far-flung émigré traders. They specialized first in familiar commodities, primarily sugar, tobacco, and lumber. Today, they trade in all manner of goods; the Greater Miami Yellow Pages contains 62 pages listing import and export firms. The Cubans have come to play the same middleman role in Latin America that the Chinese émigrés play in Southeast Asia, the same role that the Phoenecians played in the ancient Mediterranean. And like the Jews and Chinese and other groups specializing in commerce, the émigré Cubans have suffered their share of epithets. The Puerto Ricans call them *listo* (roughly, too clever by half); in Mexico, businessmen guard against *la jugada cubana* (Cuban tricks).

Latin tourism arrived with Latin business, and the two complemented one another from the outset. Beginning in the



Thousands of Haitians have journeyed the 700 perilous miles by sea to Florida. But, unlike refugees from Cuba, the Haitians have been denied political asylum. Of the 50,000 now in Miami, many are illegal aliens.

early 1970s, an influx of visiting foreigners helped pull Miami's hotel business out of a slump (brought on by the opening of Disney World in Orlando, far to the north, and by growing competition from tropical resorts in the Caribbean).

The well-to-do Latin American families did not come just for sun and fun. Instead, husbands might deposit money, buy real estate, or otherwise tend to business. Wives would shop for appliances, clothes, and toys, assisted in the better shops by bilingual attendants. Often a nanny was brought along to mind the children. In 1983, some 2.2 million foreign visitors entered Dade County, of whom 1.1 million hailed from Central or South America, 780,000 from the Caribbean islands. During their sojourns, according to the Miami Office of Tourism, the Latin Americans spent an average of \$1,000 apiece on merchandise—videocassette recorders, cameras, clothes—that they could not get or, because of high tariffs, could not afford at home.

Retailers from throughout Latin America began opening small branch stores in Miami to cater to their compatriots. Some merchants simply moved, lock, stock, and barrel, to Flor-

ida. By the late 1970s there were some 850 such *tiendas*, usually located on the second floor of downtown office buildings. Shoppers could now deal in a context, language, and even accent with which they felt familiar. Colombians recognized the shop logos of their friendly merchants from Bogotá. Argentine shopkeepers would sell to their neighbors from Buenos Aires—sometimes commuting 5,000 miles to their Miami branch stores. At these stores, the price of a calculator or color television would be arrived at after arduous haggling. Payment for the Canon AE-1 or the Fisher T-4010 had to be in cash, enabling the “upstairs entrepreneur” to keep taxes to a minimum.

Cocaine Cowboys

Inevitably, one of the biggest selling items in Miami has turned out to be the suitcase, for carrying extra booty. (Local lore had it that Venezuelans arrived with one empty suitcase to begin with; a second was filled with cash.) To finesse monetary restrictions or avoid customs levies back home, tourists would remove price tags on new purchases, soil clothes, scuff shoes, re-write invoices.

Medical care is another story; it is duty-free. A 1976 Florida International University study estimated that nonresident foreigners accounted for between seven and 10 percent of all services rendered by Dade County health care facilities. Mount Sinai Hospital, Cedars of Lebanon, the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute—all enjoyed the favor of wealthy Latin Americans eager to obtain specialized medical care unavailable at home. Such people used to go to New York. Today, ailing Mexicans go to Houston. Everyone else who can afford it goes to Miami. In September 1984, health officials from 19 member nations of the Pan American Health Organization met in Miami to discuss the possibility of somehow “formalizing” the city’s *de facto* role as Latin America’s premier medical center.

But tourism and trade are not the first things that come to most Americans’ minds when they think of Miami’s “Latin connection.” Narcotics are. And not without reason, for drug trafficking is probably Dade County’s number one industry. Even Mayor Ferre concedes that much of Miami’s prosperity is due to the free-floating cash of the area’s drug wholesalers.

Miami’s crime, like its big business, has an international flavor. In 1983, some 38 percent of Customs Bureau marijuana seizures and 45 percent of its cocaine seizures occurred in Miami. The street value of these drugs was estimated at roughly \$2.4 billion. If, as the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration be-

lieves, only one-tenth of all incoming drugs are seized, then Miami's drug industry grosses about \$24 billion annually.

So many drug-trade dollars funnel through the Miami branch of the Federal Reserve System that it does not need to issue any *new* currency and, in fact, exports bills to other Federal Reserve districts. It is not unheard of for a customer to walk into his bank with shopping bags or cardboard boxes filled with small bills. Rather than wait for tellers to count the cash by hand, he may settle for having the money weighed (one pound of one-dollar bills equals \$600). Some \$10 billion is "laundered" in Florida every year.

The narcotics traffic has had ugly consequences, of the sort chronicled in gruesome detail in the film *Scarface* or the TV series *Miami Vice*. Images of submachine gun toting "cocaine cowboys" from Colombia shooting it out in the streets of Miami are by now a cliché. Miami's already high rates of crime were increased when Fidel Castro emptied his jails and allowed many former convicts to join the exodus of Marielitos. Miami's murder rate in 1980 (32.7 per 100,000 population) and 1981 was the highest in the nation, and at one point the Dade County coroner had to rent a refrigeration truck to increase his morgue's capacity. Since the early 1980s, as many of the felons among the Marielitos have been weeded out, some semblance of normalcy has returned. The murder rate is still high, but by 1983 the *Herald* could note with wry satisfaction that "We're No. 3"—happily lagging behind Detroit and Gary in the homicide standings. In 1984, however, the city topped the list again.



A capital lives off its provinces. Miami depends on the economic health of Latin America and the Caribbean. When those 50 countries and dependencies thrive, so will Miami; when they do not, Miami will not either.

During the 1981–82 recession, from which many Latin nations have yet to extricate themselves, the number of foreign-owned second homes in Miami declined. Tourism fell. The Venezuelans, to whom retailers in Miami had once accorded the epithet *dame dos* (give me two), eventually squandered their nation's oil wealth. The bolivar is now worth one-third of what it was against the dollar a few years ago, and many sales representatives in Miami, paid in Venezuelan currency, have had to return to Caracas. The abrupt change in fortune was captured in



Miami's downtown business district. At left is Brickell Avenue, the city's Wall Street. Miami is now enjoying a major downtown building boom, with \$1 billion in new office space under construction.

the popular 1984 Venezuelan film *Adiós Miami*, a riches-to-rags comedy directed by Antonio Llerandi.

The region's economic future remains clouded by the huge debts that the Latin American nations incurred during the prosperous 1970s. Since the recession, many loans have been re-scheduled. But stretching out the payments also means prolonging the economic pain. Many Latin governments have already cut spending and raised taxes substantially, thereby reducing their citizens' standard of living. Miami is feeling the pinch in the form of a slump in banking and trade, reduced tourism, and a less frenetic real-estate market. For the moment, its economy is in a holding pattern.

And yet the mood today among Miami businessmen is less one of gloom than of caution. The hurricane of 1926 ruined Miami by devastating its chief economic assets: its beaches, its summer homes, its reputation as an idyllic resort where one could escape life's cares. Although it swept away a few *tiendas* and several corporate offices, the recession of the early 1980s left Miami's modern assets virtually intact. The city's geographic locale, its financial markets and service industries, its bicultural ambience, its lively cadre of Cuban traders—all of these remain.

Moreover, a few tentative signs of economic renewal have appeared. Latin tourists have begun to return to the city's hotels and shops. In September 1984, the National Institute on Aging estimated that, during the coming decade, one out of four retired Americans would relocate to Florida, most of them to the Miami area.* By October 1984, Venezuela, South Florida's largest trading partner, had worked out a deal with creditor banks on repayment of its enormous national debt. Aided by the strong dollar, Latin exporters are increasing their sales. During 1984, Latin America's economy as a whole registered modest expansion (2.6 percent) after two years of recession.

Fast-Forward Assimilation

Entrepreneurs continue to recognize the "Miami advantage." The dominant figure in Latin American magazine publishing, Venezuelan Armando De Armas of the De Armas *bloque*, has moved his printing operations to Mexico but still keeps his main editorial offices in Miami. Some 15 of his magazines are edited here, including *Vanidades*, *GeoMundo*, and *Harper's en español*. SIN, the Mexican-owned, Spanish-language TV network, coordinates its 51-city U.S. network from Miami's WLTW, Channel 23. Crooner José Luis Rodríguez (El Puma), a Venezuelan, runs his vast merchandising empire from Miami—one of many Latin singers now based in the city. "They come here," El Puma's press spokesman told the *Herald*, "mainly because they have a telephone they can use to communicate with anywhere in Latin America immediately."

It is still to Miami that the deposed and disaffected of Latin America repair, the ousted potentates and their retinues, the would-be revolutionaries. The first anti-Sandinista guerrillas, the so-called *contras*, were reportedly recruited in Miami. Scores of anti-Castro groups, such as Omega 7, still actively seek to overthrow *el líder máximo*. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the CIA maintain substantial field offices in what is now called "the new Casablanca." But Latin politics of a gentler sort is also played in Miami—as when Belisario Betancur, in his successful 1982 bid for the presidency of Colombia, made an important campaign stop in the city to woo rich *compadres*.

Still unchanged is the complex, often unacknowledged cultural and linguistic negotiations that routinely take place between individuals of all kinds in Miami. In a city where many

*Among the elderly moving to Florida are increasing numbers of elderly Hispanics, primarily from New York and New Jersey—some 14,000 in all between 1975 and 1980. In those same years, almost 24,000 senior citizens from Latin America also took up residence in Florida. Today, Social Security checks alone inject \$1.3 billion annually into Miami's economy.

Latins look like they shop at Brooks Brothers and many Anglos sport *guayaberas*, where physical appearance is often an unreliable cue, and where many people are bilingual, it is often difficult to decide in what language to address a stranger. Motives may complicate the matter: For example, does one wish to display pride in one's own tongue or pride in one's ability to speak another? All of this can make saying "Hello" rather laborious.

If bilingualism is for some Americans as much of a problem as monolingualism is for others, the fact remains that a new type of culture, and perhaps more than one new kind, is being created in Miami. It used to be said that there were two cultures in Miami, the Hispanic and the Anglo. That ignores not only Miami's 280,000 blacks but also the emergence of a culture of the hyphenates. In Miami there are Cuban-Americans as well as Cubans, Colombian-Americans as well as Colombians, Latinized-Anglos as well as plain old Anglos. Here, "Americanization" is not so much a process of "melting" as it is one of accommodating many pressures. Consider the contrary influences on the "Latin and American" teen-ager who needs to wear designer jeans to win her classmates' approval and skirts to satisfy her grandmother, who wants to meet the somatic weight requirements of both her *Tío Pepe* and her boyfriend Bob.

What is happening in Miami—does it represent anything qualitatively *new*? My own impression is that, in one sense, it does not. Rather, it is best understood as a "fast-forward" version of what has happened in the United States many times before, indeed has never ceased happening. It is the classic immigration experience, albeit telescoped in time and space. It is the opening of a kind of frontier.

Yet in another respect the Miami story heralds something new: a fundamental economic shift. Much has been made of the movement of capital and people from the North American "frostbelt" to the newer industries of California and the Southwest. Much has also been made of the shift of capitalism's fulcrum from the Atlantic Basin to the Pacific. Both points are well taken. But there has also been a shift to the markets of the south—of the Third World. Despite the setbacks of the past five years, these nations are sure to regain eventually their economic momentum. For a large part of the U.S. economy, the future lies not in Asia or Europe but in the Western hemisphere south of the Rio Grande and the Gulf of Mexico. Thanks to an accident of history—the Cuban Revolution—Miami has emerged as the capital of that world.

MAKING IT

The achievements of Cuban immigrants in the United States, like those of South Koreans, Vietnamese, and other relatively recent arrivals, are often celebrated by Americans who cheer the entrepreneurial spirit. Here, George Gilder tells how four Cubans climbed the economic ladder in Miami.

by George Gilder

As more and more Cubans crowded into Miami during the early 1960s, all statistical projections were dismal. Experts foresaw a prolonged siege of medical crises, economic stresses, and ethnic frictions; a teeming burden of "social disorders," needs for housing, welfare, and simple hygiene, an impossible load for the already afflicted social services of Miami.

Poring through the press coverage and political comment of the day, it is difficult to find any observers who saw this human flood as anything but a tribulation for southern Florida or a problem to be solved by saviors at the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

The Cubans' saviors, however, were already at hand. They would be saved by themselves: not chiefly by a trickle-down of grants from the government but by the upsurge of their own productive efforts. They would be saved by people like José Pínero, penniless on Eighth Street, having invested his last dollars in some secondhand records to peddle door to door; by Felipe Valls, washing dishes in a restaurant, living in a house with his pregnant wife, two children, and 12 other Cubans; by Amaury Betancourt—with a wife, six children, a mother-in-law, money running low—an unemployed lending officer looking for months for some clerical billet in a bank; by Ramon Oyarzun, once a doctor in Cuba, now hunched over a desk, processing paper in Mercy Hospital, living in a three-bedroom bungalow in Miami Beach with 15 other Cubans; by thousands of other men and women.

They were then unemployed, unpromising, and unsettled, living in accommodations comprehensively in violation of code, but they were already at work, seething with the spirit of enterprise, figuring out how to transfigure Southwest Eighth Street into Calle Ocho, the main drag of a new Little Havana. It would



The 1980 Mariel refugees are blamed for spreading lawlessness in Miami, but most lead productive lives. Among them is artist Victor Julio Gomez, whose paintings have been widely exhibited abroad.

soon become more effervescently thriving than its crushed prototype, soon would percolate with the forbidden commerce of the dying island to the south: the Cafe Bustano, the Refrescos Cawy, the Competidora and El Cuño cigarettes, the *guayaberas*, the Latin music pulsing from the storefronts, the pyramids of mangoes and tubers, gourds and plantains, the iced coconuts served with a straw, the new theaters showing the latest anti-Castro comedies.

José Pinero began creating new work within weeks after he began peddling the secondhand records on Eighth Street. For 30 days or so he saved up his profits from the album sales. Eventually he accumulated enough to rent and refurbish a small shop near the popular Tower Cinema for \$100 per month. He named his store Ultra, after the leading department store in downtown Havana, and began selling favorite Latin imports to the movie crowds and others on the street. In mid-1961, Amaury Betancourt, the elegant unemployed banker with six children, had found a job as a clerk at the Coconut Grove Bank. He noticed that although the bank was one of the three oldest in Miami, it lacked an international department. Within six months he became assistant vice-president, was allowed to stop punching a

time clock, and was assigned the challenge of forming an international division, in part to deal with a rising commerce with Latin America.

Meanwhile Felipe Valls's wife gave birth to a baby girl, adding to the burdens on Miami social services and lowering her family still deeper into the statistics of poverty per capita. Felipe quickly tired of his dishwasher work and found a job as a salesman in a restaurant supply company that was encountering a rise in the demand for restaurant goods in Little Havana. At the same time, still living in crowded quarters on Miami Beach, Dr. Oyarzun began studying to pass the Foreign Medical Board examinations, which would allow him to practice, in a limited way, in the United States.

Kissing the Mailman

This group of immigrants was making clear progress. But with their large families and mostly nonworking wives, their halting English and questionable skills, their congested housing and low-paying jobs—and with what the press called “shockingly low benefits” and small enlistments in Florida's welfare system—they constituted a further increment to the poverty problem that was then preoccupying Washington.

By 1964, however, some three years after their arrival, the immigrant families of our story were beginning to make significant contributions to the Miami economy. Ultra Records was thriving on Calle Ocho, and Pinero was planning to open another store in a new shopping center. Valls was growing restive as a salesman of restaurant equipment and was trying to persuade his boss to begin importing espresso machines from Spain, in order to accommodate the coffee thirst of the rapidly growing Cuban community. His boss, however, saw these devices as a troublesome specialty item. Valls thereupon borrowed some money from a friend (“at high interest,” he says) and began importing the espresso machines himself. He knew his market. Paying \$300 apiece and selling them for \$1,200, he soon was able to pay back his loan, hire a mechanic named Gomez to install and service the equipment, and rent a shop on North Miami Avenue for his new International Equipment Corporation.

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PROSPERITY . . . AND POVERTY

Cubans have made their mark in all walks of life in America—Desi Arnaz in Hollywood, Roberto C. Goizueta as head of the Coca-Cola Company, Alberto Salazar as a top marathon runner, Charles (Bebe) Rebozo as “first friend” to President Richard M. Nixon. Many others have achieved a more modest prosperity. But not all of the nearly one million Cubans in the United States have been so fortunate.

The 1980 U.S. Census (completed before the influx of impoverished Mariel refugees) showed that 11.7 percent of Cuban families in this country lived below the poverty line. The national poverty rate was then 9.6 percent. Some 16.8 percent of Cuban households were receiving public assistance, more than twice the national average. Among the poor were many high school dropouts and elderly Cubans who fled to the United States too late in life to build up sizable retirement nest eggs.

Overall, however, the new arrivals have come far. In 1980, Cuban households earned an average of \$19,487, only \$800 less than the national average. A few immigrant groups have fared better (notably Asian-Americans), but the Cubans’ performance compares favorably to that of Mexican-Americans (\$16,182), blacks (\$14,070), and Puerto Ricans (\$12,774).

Their relative affluence is explained in part by age. The median age of Cubans in America was nearly 38 in 1980, which meant that many were approaching their peak earning years. Among Puerto Ricans, by contrast, the median age was 22.

Yet hard work and persistence account for much of the Cubans’ success: They enter the job market in proportions greater than the national average, yet suffer relatively low unemployment. A majority of Cuban women (55.4 percent) hold jobs. Partly as a result, the birthrate among Cubans (16 per 1,000 population) falls just below the U.S. national average.

As a group, the Cubans are relatively well educated: 16 percent of those over 25 hold college degrees, and 21 percent are employed as doctors, lawyers, managers, or administrators. Yet assimilation is far from complete. Nearly half of the over-25 group lack high school diplomas; a 1980 survey showed that one-third of Miami Cubans spoke only Spanish at work. Outside the Cuban strongholds in Miami and the Union City–West New York area of New Jersey, where some 100,000 live, the story is different. Cubans in Illinois, Texas, and California are generally better educated, more fluent in English—and more prosperous.

The children of Miami and Union City seem destined to follow in the footsteps of their far-flung relatives in the United States—and of the Jews, Italians, and other successful immigrant groups that preceded them. Already, Florida Cubans between the ages of 25 and 34 enjoy a median family income of \$19,519, nearly \$850 more than their non-Hispanic white peers. And many young Cubans are abandoning their ethnic enclaves in search of economic opportunity.

With other loans and a low down payment, he also managed to move his family into the \$17,500 house in southwest Miami that they occupied until 1982.

At the same time, Dr. Oyarzun had managed to improve his English enough to pass his medical boards, though at first he assumed he had failed and was doomed to another year of paperwork and penury as a clerk at Mercy Hospital—another period of dependency in the crowded homes of friends and relatives. Although the other students already had been informed of their test scores, the mail truck had failed to stop at Oyarzun's place that morning and plunged the household into despair. When the postman returned later with the large brown envelope, he was ambushed with hugs and kisses from Mrs. Oyarzun.

A Half-Ton of Pan Cubano

José Pinero had yet to learn English, but his record business was expanding rapidly, and he opened new Ultra stores in two new shopping malls and began to import records from Latin America and the Caribbean. Amaury Betancourt had risen to the position of vice-president in charge of the rapidly growing international division of Coconut Grove, and Felipe Valls, after several years of supplying restaurants, had become a contractor and consultant, designing and building them. Following a long period of work in hospitals, Dr. Oyarzun had established himself in practice and was considering the possibility of buying out his American colleague.

During the 1970s, each of the immigrants in this story made important contributions to the triumph of the Cubans in Miami, one became a significant national business figure, and their children were moving rapidly into productive jobs in Dade County and across the country. Amaury Betancourt became president and chairman of one of Miami's 15 Cuban-owned banks, Totalbank. Under the name Americas Bank, it had begun in 1974 in a mobile bank trailer at the corner of Southwest 27th Avenue and Coral Way. Located between Little Havana and Coral Gables, the new trailer was well situated to accommodate the increasing movement of Cubans into the plusher parts of Miami, then unserved by Cuban institutions. Totalbank surged with the upsurge of its clientele. As of June 30, 1975, the deposits of Totalbank amounted to \$8,485,008, and the bank's staff numbered 17. By 1982, when Betancourt retired, the bank's assets were some \$120 million and growing at a pace of 12 percent a year, and it did business in branches throughout the city. It eschewed only the large cash deposits from "Colombia cowboys" that enriched

less scrupulous local institutions and that journalists hastily identify as the source of Miami's success.

José Pinero opened branches of Ultra Records in Central Shopping Plaza, Westchester Mall, Midway Mall, and Downtown Capital Mall to go with his original outlet on Calle Ocho. From a warehouse at 38th Place in Hialeah, moreover, Ultra imports records from throughout the Caribbean and Latin America and distributes them throughout the country. Dr. Oyarzun became one of the most prominent doctors in the city, the head of the League Against Cancer, and the owner of the medical building in which he first went into practice. In the early 1970s, Felipe Valls decided to plunge more deeply and directly into the restaurant and real estate fields. His restaurants were small sidewalk cafeterias, open 24 hours a day, serving small cups of *café cubano* and Cuban sandwiches. He would open one of these establishments, make it thrive, and then sell it to get a down payment on a more commodious place.

Valls's breakthrough came in 1971, when he purchased a large flower shop on Calle Ocho and turned it into Versailles, a large L-shaped gallery of mirrors and chandeliers, now the most popular Cuban restaurant in Miami. Valls estimates that the restaurant serves some 500 to 600 customers daily, and in a week consumes some 300 pounds of coffee, 500 pounds of rice, 400 pounds of beans, and more than half a ton of *pan cubano*.

Since 1971, Versailles has been joined in the neighborhood by four other ambitious Cuban restaurants, including La Carreta (The Sugar Cart) across the street, an equally large and successful, though somewhat cheaper and less comely, competitor for Versailles, specializing in Creole food. Valls is indulgent toward La Carreta, which flaunts its huge neon cartwheel sign across Calle Ocho. He knows that resourceful competition expands the market. And who could be a more resourceful competitor than the founder of Versailles? It is Valls himself who opened La Carreta and the other Versailles rivals nearby, and the market still grows to meet the rising supplies of good Cuban and Spanish-American food.



BACKGROUND BOOKS

MIAMI

For a city roughly the size of Phoenix or Cleveland, Miami seems to get an unusual amount of media attention.

Novelist Joan Didion and journalist T. D. Allman are at work on books dealing with North America's premier subtropical city; a weekly cops-and-robbers television series, *Miami Vice*, brings fleeting, vivid images of the city's yachts, lush palm trees, and splashy pastel architecture, as well as exotic mayhem, to some 12 million American households.

One useful antidote to all the money-and-glitter talk about Miami is the **Places Rated Almanac** (Rand McNally, 1981, cloth & paper; 1985, cloth & paper) by Richard Boyer and David Savageau, which ranks Miami's urban charms a mediocre 52nd among 329 U.S. cities. Another is Helen Muir's breezy **Miami, U.S.A.** (Holt, 1953; Banyan Tree, 1963).

Muir, a former newswoman, peppers her comprehensive, albeit partly outdated, history of the city with warnings to readers. The mosquitoes are outsized and voracious, she says, and the cockroaches have wings. The hot, sticky summers extend well into October.

How thousands of acres of South Florida muck and mangrove trees were transformed into valuable urban real estate is the subject of **Fifty Feet in Paradise** (Harcourt, 1984) by David Nolan. Miami owes its early blossoming to a colorful cast of con men, tycoons, dreamers, and thieves.

Yet, as Will Rogers once said of Carl Fisher, who bought a large chunk of Miami Beach for \$200,000 in 1912, "Had there been no Carl Fisher, Florida would be known today as the Turpentine State." (Turpentine is distilled from resins of the state's plentiful scrub pines.)

Novelist Gloria Jahoda's readable survey, **Florida: A History** (Norton, 1976), provides a statewide backdrop to Miami's growth. Fisher and his colleagues, she observes, had little help from the state government in Tallahassee. Until the court-ordered legislative reapportionment of 1972, the "pork choppers" of rural North Florida kept a firm grip on the state government.

The pork choppers controlled the pork barrel: During the 1930s, Jahoda says, "capacious roads were constructed from swamp to swamp" in northern Florida while Dade County had to settle for a few narrow thoroughfares.

Meanwhile, gangsters such as Samuel P. Cohen and Jules Levitt were moving into Miami, taking over legitimate gambling casinos. As Miami schoolteacher Arva Moore Parks recalls in her lavishly illustrated look at **'The Magic City,' Miami** (Continental Heritage, 1981), the new owners quickly branched out into illicit activities. Cohen and Levitt's S&G Syndicate controlled 200 illegal bookmakers in the city, not to mention a number of policemen and local elected officials.

The gambling and official corruption came to an abrupt end after Sen. Estes Kefauver (D.-Tenn.) held widely publicized hearings in 1950, but Miami's prosperity continued.

In 1953, some 200 miles away, a young Cuban lawyer named Fidel Castro led a tiny band of rebels in an attack on a military garrison at Santiago de Cuba. Castro hoped to strike a blow against the regime of dictator Fulgencio Batista.

Castro and his men were routed and took refuge in the Sierra Maestra mountains. A few years later, some

1,000 Fidelistas emerged from the hills and ousted Batista, taking power on New Year's Day 1959. In the aftermath of the revolution, writes Oxford historian Hugh Thomas in **Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom** (Harper, 1971), at least 5,000 Cubans, some of them Castro's former allies, were executed and another 40,000 imprisoned.

The imposition of communist rule ultimately drove hundreds of thousands of Cubans from their native land. The life they made for themselves in the United States is the subject of **The Cuban-American Experience: Culture, Images, and Perspectives** (Rowman & Allanheld, 1983) by geographers Thomas D. Boswell and James R. Curtis, of the University of Miami.

Their lively survey, touching on everything from Cuban cuisine to data on churchgoing and earnings, shows that the Cubans are not a homogenous group. Those who arrived in the United States earlier in the 20th century looked down upon the "Golden Exiles" who came during the early 1960s, who were in turn dismayed by the post-1965 Freedom Flight newcomers. Initially, all three groups looked askance at the Mariel refugees of 1980.

As a measure of the Cubans' assimilation, the authors note that Cuban youths generally speak Spanish at home, banter in "Spanglish" with their friends, and watch English-language movies and television.

Adaptation to American life is one of the subjects of **Cuban Americans: Masters of Survival** (Abt, 1982), José Llanes's evocative mixture of narrative history and the recollections of his fellow Cubans. Luis Lo-

sada, a university professor, hails television as "the immigrant's acculturation encyclopedia"; Omar Betancourt, a former social worker, worries about the young *Americocubanos*, the Cuban-American youths who, he fears, have adopted the worst of both cultures.

Of course, the Cubans are not the only ethnic group in Miami. In Miami Beach, Yiddish is heard almost as frequently as Spanish. **Dying in the Sun** (Charterhouse, 1974) by novelist Donn Pearce is a grim portrait of Florida's retirees. Many of Miami Beach's 87,000 permanent residents are elderly Jews, scraping by on Social Security and living in run-down rooming houses and hotels.

In **The Miami Riot of 1980: Crossing the Bounds** (Lexington, 1984), Bruce Porter and Marvin Dunn, of Brooklyn College and Florida International University, respectively, offer a bleak sketch of Miami's black community. Miami's black middle class is smaller than those of comparable Southern cities, they say, partly because the city's energetic Hispanics garner a large share of federal small business loans and other aid. Five years after the riot, they warn, black discontent still simmers.

Yet Miami has a history of snapping back from misfortune. Raymond A. Mohl, of Florida Atlantic University, likens its growing pains to those of other **Sunbelt Cities** (Univ. of Tex., 1983; edited by Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice). In Miami, the optimism is palpable, recalling the boosterism of the old West. Miami "boils and bubbles," one local newsman says, "making history faster than even South Florida ever saw before."

