



Finding Manana: A Memoir of a Cuban Exodus

Mirta Ojito

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Finding Ma?ana is a vibrant, moving memoir of one family's life in Cuba and their wrenching departure. Mirta Ojito was born in Havana and raised there until the unprecedented events of the Mariel boatlift brought her to Miami, one teenager among more than a hundred thousand fellow refugees. Now a reporter for **The New York Times**, Ojito goes back to reckon with her past and to find the people who set this exodus in motion and brought her to her new home. She tells their stories and hers in superb and poignant detail--chronicling both individual lives and a major historical event. Growing up, Ojito was eager to excel and fit in, but her parents'--and eventually her own--incomplete devotion to the revolution held her back. As a schoolgirl, she yearned to join Castro's Young Pioneers, but as a teenager in the 1970s, when she understood the darker side of the Cuban revolution and learned more about life in el norte from relatives living abroad, she began to wonder if she and her parents would be safer and happier elsewhere. By the time Castro announced that he was opening Cuba's borders for those who wanted to leave, she was ready to go; her parents were more than ready: They had been waiting for this opportunity since they married, twenty years before.

Finding Ma?ana gives us Ojito's own story, with all of the determination and intelligence--and the will to confront darkness--that carried her through the boatlift and made her a prizewinning journalist. Putting her reporting skills to work on the events closest to her heart, she finds the boatlift's key players twenty-five years later, from the exiles who negotiated with Castro to the Vietnam vet on whose boat, Ma?ana, she finally crossed the treacherous Florida Strait. **Finding Ma?ana** is the engrossing and enduring story of a family caught in the midst of the tumultuous politics of the twentieth century.

Finding Manana: A Memoir of a Cuban Exodus Details

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From Reader Review Finding Manana: A Memoir of a Cuban Exodus for online ebook

Hai Quan says

This is one of the worst books I have read. It is full of lies, half truths, exaggerations, self-grandiosity, self-importance, false ideology to cover up base desires, shameless display of the crudest animal instinct toward food, clothing and other finer things in life AND WORST OF ALL, SHAMELESS display HER BLATANT DISREGARD of her and her family's civic duty TOWARD THE SOCIETY THAT NURTURED HER AND HER FAMILY

The amazing thing about this book is it is so full of lies, almost in every pages! Rarely one can find a book with so much lies, half truths and contradictions! It also is full of paranoia thoughts. The readers were REPEATEDLY forewarned of a lot of calamities the evil dictator Fidel Castro will bring down upon the hapless victims, her family was one, but there was no climax, no calamity ever fall down her family or any other Cubans other than the law breakers, the anti-revolutionary elements. In fact, there were many incidences in her memoir where the anti-revolutionary attitudes were displayed in broad day light by her family and other Cubans, were known by everybody around, but they were ignored, tolerated by neighbors and government officials! No secret service agent ever visit them, no knock at the door and no one - at least from her book - ever was led away in the middle of the night, disappeared forever!

THE AUTHOR IS SO DISHONEST. SHE LIES WITH A STRAIGHT FACE. EVERY ASPECT OF THIS MEMOIR IS THE VERY OPPOSITE OF THE TRUTH.

LIE NUMBER ONE. The motive of her family immigration to the US was not ideological as she wanted the readers to believe. She wished to cloak her desire to flee Cuba to the US with a respectable and noble purpose of a family who left their fatherland because they disagreed with Castro's political ideology, while in fact, they were just simply wanted to seek a greener pasture in dollar and cent

Certainly, political dissent persons are more RESPECTABLE than mere beggars. As a university professor, no less, how could she presented herself with the world as merely a lowly food and clothing seeker, never mind she has had so much food to stuff into her mouth and fine clothing to wear in her (former) Cuba homeland, according to her writing. (Source: Her description of her birthday's dress and menu, plus the story about a whole hog (without hogwash) her clever father has managed to drag home against state's regulation, under the nose of the authority)

If only she knew she was far from being as honorable and famous as that Soviet writer Solzhenitsyn, a true political dissenter (He has never salivated copiously at the sight and smell of American delicacies like the Ojitos)

LIE NUMBER TWO. The motive of the boat owner that brought her family, among other Cubans, to her HEAVEN, the US OF A was indisputably to make money. However, Ojito, without any shame, without even a small trace of honesty, lured the readers into her made-believe yarn that reeked of bogus nobility. It was full of hogwash, the story of a guy who had to borrow a lot of money to buy and repair a boat to use it as his abode and as a tool to make a living, then SUDDENLY overwhelmed with selfless compassion, offered his boat to ferry a bunch of (worthless*) Cubans across the ocean to unite with their equally (worthless*) relatives who were living in Florida, a trip that faced with tremendous risk, for merely the pitiful expenses! Full of sh....., if you want to know the truth.

(* this assessment is based on the opinion of Micheal More in his "DOWNSIDE THIS")

Understandingly, she was very vague about this financial arrangement , trying to imply the boat owner a good Samaritan .The readers know better, it smells fishy, very fishy.We will never know the truth , but however clever her weaving was, under the circumstance surrounding this affair, it was extremely unlikely that the boat owner got nothing for his badly needed service.Just the cost of oil and gasoline ? Come on, Ojito, just exactly how much you and your worthless Cuban compatriots paid this guy ?The readers need to know.Oil and gasoline my foot .Shameless liar!

Once she has lied, she has to weave more fantasy fabric to cover more fantastic imagination.So after many years after the trip,SUDDENLY she found the urge to seek the fantastic captain to say thank to him (hence the title of her memoir) because according to her,she forgot to say, or failed to express her profound gratitude to that saint of a man ! More white lies !

Another very upsetting thing was the extreme arrogance displayed by this guy, the owner of Manana, Ojito's Mayflower. This redneck pushed or shoved (or did some violent act toward) the gun of a "savage" (my term), the Cuban soldier upon his embark into the dock, so severely that injured the poor "little savage". Do you know the author reaction ? She didn't flinch . Ain't said none, despite it was so outrageous ! The poor "savage" ain't do none , he was just happen to be where he was, doing the duty of a soldier , watching the coming on his country 's soil of foreign boats, a perfect normal duty of any soldier.He didn't have any threatening behavior or any behavior at all for that mater ,toward this redneck, and the next thing he knew, he was down the ground bleeding.The white devils ! Why are most of them so arrogant ? They never want to acknowledge that their race has never been superior in all aspects comparing to any other race.History is indisputable proof.In war alone, they have never been the victor for very long.All their conquered races were eventually risen up , threw off the white men's yoke and kicked 'em ass big time.Almost all of their military conquests were temporary in duration.In the end , all of their robbery ended up as failures.They , the Spaniard, the Brit, the French , the American among others white devil empires eventually had to relinquish almost all of their colonies with few rare exceptions.

It is hard to believe a person of her intelligence failed to realize that the American pirate of this modern time are the same as the Spaniard of yesteryear.

Professor Ojito, you are a despicable traitor of not only your fatherland, but of all other heroic people of former white devil's colonies. I spit on you.

LIE NUMBER THREE :We will never know the truth about the fates of all her characters once they landed in that heaven on earth ,the U S of A, because her description of them were sketchy .But from what I could glean from her writing, the possible truth, if there is such a concept, could make one wept.For me, I really wanted to cry , albeit with disgust !

After all that scheming, risking one's life, one's family, one's limbs to flee the Cuban hell hole, then to ended up as miserable, lonely, jobless and spiritless exiles in that " paradise " as some of her heroes and heroins were (she was the exception) , was rather anti-climax .

She was the exception alright, but not her father as she wanted the reader to believe.She lied.The female scoundrel . The old man was perfectly fine while he was in that miserable Cuban hell hole. He had a job, doing some driving to sell some merchandise. Unexplainably , in one incidence, he hit a tree with his closed fist , being so frustrated with the delay of his petition to migrate to his cherished heaven.Readers are hard pressed to comprehend his outburst.As for me, it made me sick to see this despicable thirst of materialism.

So what he was doing in his PARADISE now that he , after much hard struggle, managed to climb into it ?Being a good ward of the state, a respected welfare recipient ?.No , according to his daughter, the English Lit Professor , he was driving the (other welfare recipients ?) to the clinics and back, thank to his experience

as driver.! Of course the Professor conveniently forgot to mention her father was collecting public assistance and at the same time, was moonlighting for some pocket money, never mind it was illegal to do so.I can be wrong, but I bet all my money (not much though) to it.DRIVING SOME WELFARE RECIPIENTS- WHO HAD VERY LITTLE DOUGH - TO THE CLINICS AND BACK WAS A FULL TIME JOB? Or was it for free ? If it was, then he must have collecting public monetary assistance ! How honorable !

Professor Ojito, use this platform to refute my injurious and false accusation ! Supply me and the readers of this platform the evidence to the contrary.A letter from DSHS and income tax return forms of the related period.We want to know the truth.

TO ADD THE INSULT TO THE INJURY, let examine the glorious lives of several of her heroes .What was the name of that guy who risked his life and that of his buddies ,who drove the bus owned by Cuban government to CRASH THROUGH THE BARRIER at the US embassy in order to gain asylum ? And another guy who rode a motorcycle to do the similar thing ? What were they ended up doing in their PARADISE ? If my memory does not failed me,(I hate to dig through that smelly pile of trash again to find the exact info) they were leading a colorless, spiritless and DOGONE IT , PENNILESS existence in their glorious paradise !What pity !

A bunch of worthless Cubans , actually thousands of them, together with their family members, including children , had to endure endless day and night inside the US embassy's compound without any life 's necessity to seek "political" asylum. What had became of them ? No doubt some of them end up as millionaires , but most of them, the bulk of them , uneducated, dumb , illiterate ,dreamers,losers,dimwits, shameless low lives, and a whole bunch of convicts released from Cuban jails, what had became of them ? How sad, some of them failed miserably in their cherished paradise, some unfortunately ended up living in extreme destitute in Spain.

I have sympathy for these folks. At least they never try to glorify their normal act of seeking a better lives , never mind what their definition of "better " was and never mind what price they had to pay.But to cloak her base desire of more and better food ,clothing and housing by a bogus, fake political aspiration is just downright despicable, especially she had to denounce a nice guy like Castro. Nice ? you might protest. Fine, here the truth: Under Castro's socialist hell hole, the good professor COULD HAVE STAYED IN CUBA, BECAME JUST THE SAME ENGLISH LIT PROFESSOR (my projecture according to her narrative), her father could have stayed also,and avoid the indignity of making line in the DSHS office and moonlighting as a driver, but retain his previous salesman job.What more, according to her narrative, under evil regime of that big ,bad guy Castro, her family was in the possession, in reality if not in "paper" , a rather decent abode with all basic amenities , with little monthly cost , courtesy from the evil socialism of that big, bad guy Castro.They had even managed to buy a much cherished and long anticipated Television after much saving and belt tightening .So what ? , all good things in life required hard work and perversion , but at least your dignity is intact, not tattered as when you make line in that (OMG) DSHS office.

And Fidel , the evil Fidel,at least from her book, is such a nice guy !!! After I finish reading her trashy memoir , I am really like him ! Perhaps it will disappointed Mirta Ojito, but I can not help it ! Her description of Fidel give the reader a fine impression of Castro regardless of her intention of trying to portray him as Satan !

First of all, Castro is an idealistic man, a fine leader.He fiercely loves his fatherland, Cuba by the way.He

loves national independence, hates corruption (Batista, whom he chased away after (Batista) amassed over one hundred million dollars , to whom - amazing enough Ojito family love ! that is in itself says a lot about Ojito family and their "ideology " namely cargoism .But it is too early to go into right now. I will come back to this later.

For now, Castro is really a great guy ! I do not know about you, but I will entrust my family to him if situation arise requiring it. MIND YOU my opinion is based solely on her description and her narration and not from any previous knowledge about the great man other than several articles in newspapers . I really think he is a grand patriot and a great Cuban leader.If Ojito purpose in writing her memoir is to demonize Castro, she had failed miserably !

Let face it , the guy is so down to earth (from her book),he was so tolerant even with people who had plotted to overthrow him by armed forces (one example was Bernado Benes to whom he agreed to meet to discuss the release of political prisoners, resulting in over 5000 of them , some had participated in the Bay of Pigs fiasco , released and permitted to go to the US !.

He is leading such an austere life style (the carpet at his "palace" were worn thinly , he wore a rumpled military jacket, amassed no millions dollars,own no villa !) We can find this last virtue found in Castro in some of great men in history, Ho chi Minh and Gandhi for example.

The other amazing thing about Ojito is self-grandiosity. In he memoir, she has reported an incidence where as a reporter for a major US newspaper,she had an interview with Fidel. She reported holding this great man "LIMP" hand, and feel victoriously facing her former adversary in an "equal" (my word,not Ojito} duel (also my word,not her)

Equal my foot !!!

Victory my foot !

"Limp" you say ? "LIMP" eh ? Miss, did you know that that " limp" hand has directed by the greatest mind , the most courageous heart, belong to one of the most patriotic men in Cuban history.It has held machine guns, together with comrades,against big odds,overthrew the very corrupted Batista (to whom you, your father and mother love and wishfully hoped he was still in power because you would have had a chance to climb an greased poll to get "gifts" in its top!)

I am telling you : she has no shame !

The following is a review I wrote for a book written by Micheal Moore entitled DOWNSIZE THIS! I am including this review here because it is closely related to my review for FINDING MANANA by Mirta Ojito

While I agree with most of his main points, being a Viet-nameese (Hey the world ! this is the correct form, not Vietnamese ! Why we gave the American a superior power to do everything for us, including Americanize our country name and hence our people name , for the life of me, I do not understand !) I am most interested in Chapter 23 : THOSE KEYSTONE CUBANS.

I am even so enthralled after I had severely criticized Mirta Ojito 's memoir FINDING MA~NANA , to know that I was right all along ! According to Micheal Moore, those Miami Cubans were exactly what Moore had reported in his book : Wimps, half-ass "liberators" with many hare-brain schemes , all ended with disastrous results, most notably THE BAY OF PIGS fiasco, thugs who ran narcotic rings, criminals who participated in the infamous break-in that brought down Nixon, murderers responsible for bombings (in Miami of all places !), hired guns willing to commit any crime for money (Iran-Contra) and even people

with some involvement with the Kennedy assassination !

Moore strongest opinion about the Miami Cubans , being "WIMPS" is most interesting ! I can not do justice to you , readers, unless I quote the following passage found in page 179:

".....For starters,when you don't like the oppressors in your country, YOU STAY THERE AND TRY TO OVERTHROW HIM. This can be done by force (American Revolution,French Revolution) or through peaceful mean (Gandhi in India or Mandela in South Africa). BUT YOU DON'T JUST TURN TAILS AND RUN LIKE THESE CUBANS ,

Imagine if the American colonists had all run to Canada- and then insisted the Canadian had a RESPONSIBILITY to overthrow the British down in the States.....Mandela went to prison,not to Libya or London....."

(all capital letters are mine,except" RESPONSIBILITY ")

These were exactly the people Mirta Ojito kept crowing about in her memoir.It is easy to understand : she and her family were and is a part of this despicable crowd !

In my review of Ojito book, I have only briefly mentioned that she was lying in almost every pages .Reading this chapter, readers can see how a liar she was.Well, she was not exactly lying , she has just conveniently NOT MENTIONED how bad were those Miami Cubans mentioned above, including the notorious Cuban dictator, much corrupted Batista (1) to whom she had highly praised and liked !

Another big lie from Ojito memoir is she has deviously ignored the well known fact about the shameful , numerous , and extreme dirty plots to assassinate Castro . Planed and executed by , you have guess it correctly , various evil US administrations (I don't know if I need to use the word "evil" preceding U S administrations.Even without this adjective, people in the whole world knew, from their observation, that all of them, the right hand of the elusive and secretive MAFIA BOSSES, are evil).Amazingly Castro survived all these attempts on his life. Actually, it was not amazing at all, because Castro knew too well his fate once he submitted his country sovereignty to the U S, his life will be cut short if he did not like what they do to his country and his people, like the fate of the Diem brothers of South Viet-nam. Castro has chosen to stand tall and survived !

Well Ojito has chosen to be spineless , and surviving too , right ? (Actually she is not just surviving, perhaps she is very prosperous) Sure, but giving all the knowledge cited above, do you really want to follow Ojito steps if you know the different between being respected and despised by your fellow countrymen (and countrywomen (?!))

For more details on the dirty plots on Castro life, please read the above mentioned chapter of DOWNSIZE THIS !

Ojito, freedom seeker, successful journalist, "political" exile, college professor, and a BIG LIAR , hiding a huge mountain in broad daylight and almost successful until Micheal Moore !

For those who do not know about the Viet-Nam war and its aftermath , let me tell you : I can see exactly myself in those despicable Miami's Cubans.Yep, I was the collaborator (or at least,one of millions of apathetic ,otherwise happy slaves)of the American masters who invaded my beloved motherland under the phony purpose of fighting communism and after all the Viet-nameese lap dogs "TONG TONG" ----were murdered (the Diem brothers) , fired ,went into exile by the order of their masters,or ran with tails between their legs(Thieu, Ky) together with their American masters who did likewise ---like a moron, I ran with them to the US !

Luckily , I recognized it now , a little too late thought , the crime I had committed against my motherland , not unlike the Miami's Cubans.Reading the above mentioned chapter have put more salt into my newly opened old wound.

However, I am happy, because the pain and sorrow for my past actions and non actions is the first step toward healing , recovering and changing my life direction toward the right path, the path that my ancestors, who were much admired,much heroic, much resilient, never kow tow to foreign barbarians had lived and fought

I strongly recommend this book to anyone , but specially to many third world country people who were or are the victims of colonialism , Viet-nameese included.

FOOTNOTE : (1) " Fulgencio Batista ran the country ruthlessly in the process accumulating a personal fortune of three hundred million dollars "

THE NIGHT WATCH, by David Atlee Phillips.Atheneum Publisher, NY, condensed by READER DIGEST , page 51(less)

See you later,dear readers, and fellow book reviewers, my sincere thanks for all of you having enough patient to read to this (temporary) end.

Rebecca Marie says

I'D GIVE THIS BOOK FIVE HUNDRED STARS IF I COULD

Holly Porter says

I just finished reading this book but highly reccomend it. The writing is done well without a lot of fluff. Perhaps the best aspect of the book is the education about events that tooks place in Cuba before I was even born.

It starts a bit slow and it takes some time to really get into it as the characters develop a bit slow, but stick with it you will not be disapointed.

Vilo says

Fascinating memoir of growing up in Cuba and participating in the Mariel boatlift. The author researched more than her own story, also telling how Mariel came about and the fates of some others who were involved. There is an audiobook in Spanish called El Manana.

Purlewe says

The story of the Marielitas by one of the thousands who came over, grew up, and became a journalist. Finding Mañana is the stories of people who were involved in the creation of the exodus from Cuba known as the Mariel boatlift. I found the journalistic style a bit dry, but I realize that as a journalist it was perhaps easiest to keep her distance and report the facts. It is a very comprehensive piece, outlining the key players who helped start the process all the way thru to where they were over 20 yrs later. A good way to grasp the entanglements on both the Cuban and American sides of this issue.

Gustine says

There was so, so much I didn't know about Cuba. Considering that the country is only ninety miles away and intricately tied in many historically significant ways to the U.S., this book really should be required reading in our schools.

As a thirteen-year-old in 1980 I had vaguely heard of a lot of boats full of Cubans heading for Florida, but I never understood the significance of this in the context of Cuba's history, nor did I fully grasp the complexity behind more recent stories of individual Cubans such as Elian Gonzalez, the 6-year old forcibly removed from the closet by rifle-toting federal agents.

This is the type of memoir that is not merely concerned with the author's life but also expertly weaves in a wealth of relevant nonfiction—in this case the Mariel boatlift of 1980, the history of Cuba, the plight—and successes—of Cuban immigrants in Florida, and the anguish and torment of families forcibly separated by politics.

This Pulitzer-prize-winning author excels at placing individual stories in historical context while simultaneously bringing the characters fully to life.

EXCERPT:

"Listening attentively from her perch under a mango tree was Mercedes Alvarez, a twenty-two-year-old nurse who was five months pregnant and had her three small children—aged five, two, and one—with her.... It took the family about an hour to find a place where they felt they could squeeze into the crowd and spend the night. Mercedes held tightly to her children's hands, fearing to lose them in the multitude. When they cried for milk, she gave them pieces of the crumbled cake and rocked them to sleep one after the other. Surrounded by their tiny bodies, she began to think of the consequences of what she had done.... It occurred to her that this might be a trap, that the government might send them all to jail. She was calmed somewhat by the realization that if anything happened to her, the government would still provide for her children's health care and education. This paradox—that the same government she was trying to flee was also the one that she knew would take care of her children—made her question why she really wanted to leave her country....

Day and night, government-controlled radio stations droned over loudspeakers, urging the refugees to return to their homes, since Peru couldn't do anything for them; they had to trust the Cuban government. Some people stuffed cigarette butts in their ears to drown out the noise. Portable bathrooms were installed around the perimeter of the compound, but some refugees refused to use them for fear they would not be allowed to get back inside the grounds, preferring to relieve themselves in plain sight of other refugees. The garden soon became a fetid cauldron where it was difficult to walk and impossible to lie down....

Around the fifth day, Mercedes moved inside the embassy and had her first bite of food.... The Cuban government distributed food, handing boxes of yellow rice with pork or ribs and sometimes even fish and rice and beans over the fence—but not nearly enough for everyone. The Peruvian embassy didn't have the resources or the personnel to prepare food for so many people. Sometimes rations for 2,500 were doled out to a crowd of almost 11,000 people. Fights erupted, and mothers bore the marks of their desperation: bleeding arms from the scratches produced by the spiky ends of the fence as they extended their hands over it to try to grab food for their children. The number of rations was kept low intentionally to create chaos, to demonstrate to the world that the people inside the embassy were dangerous.”

Deb says

This is a great history lesson. Riveting.

Megan Blood says

3.5 stars. Her writing is beautiful, and she does a fabulous job of drawing you in. I loved all the different perspectives of people involved in the Mariel situation. What turned me off was the ending--she waxes political and disparages all the arguments against uncontrolled immigration. If the people in Miami aren't okay with accepting every single Cuban who wants to leave Cuba, they must be racist. I'm all for immigration, but I'm also for order. Otherwise people will end up in terrible conditions like the ones in 'Tent City' where many of the Mariel refugees ended up.

A great read, if you can stomach the politics at the end.

Diana says

I LOVED this book. Cuba fascinates me, and this memoir gave such a vivid depiction of daily life in Cuba during childhood. She alternates chapters-- one about her life and her family and their exodus from Cuba with the Mariel boat lift in the early 80's, and then another that gives the historical and political context surrounding the boat lift and its aftermath. I thought it was beautiful to read and a fascinating story.

Peggy says

More journalism than memoir, Ojita forfeits the emotional side of her experience for a painstakingly accurate description of the Mariel Boatlift. The historical facts behind the 1980 mass emigration from Cuba to

Southern Florida are fascinating, but Ojito's objectivity make for a dry story. She reveals only a thin layer of what was surely a deeply emotional experience for her and her family. As a teenager who did not speak English, she left everything she knew, and everything her family owned, for a risky and potentially disastrous escape from Cuba to the United States, but doesn't fully reveal her emotional reaction. For a truly heartfelt and powerful memoir of the Cuban immigrant experience, read *Waiting for Snow in Havana*, by Carlos Eire, who was sent as a child from Havana to Miami to escape the 1962 Cuban Revolution.

Augusto Venegas says

Mirta Ojito takes her own story and mixes it in with others, such as Hector Sanyustiz, the man that crashed a bus thru the Peruvian embassy in 1980 under fire by Cuban guards. During one of his tantrums when Peru refused to turn over the escaped exiles, Castro removed his Cuban guards and within a day over 10,000 folks poured into the embassy. Castro eventually allowed the port of Mariel to be opened up to anybody who wanted to pick up their loved ones (plus a few criminals and mental cases that he threw in), at the end over 125,000 Cubans leaving before he decided to shut down Mariel. Mirta Ojito provides insight into what life was like growing up in a family indifferent to Castro in 1970s Cuba. The book is full of accounts of the oppression, sometimes subtle, of those that do not support Castro's dictatorial regime. Mirta narrates in detail her use as an agricultural child laborer while in her early teens. Evidence of the political apartheid system in Cuba comes to Mirta as a child when she accidentally gets hold of a copy of her school record; where several of her teachers hold against her going to church, her parents' irreverence to support Castro's political activities, and their regular communication with kin in the U.S. The surveillance by the neighborhood Committees for the Defense of the Revolution is evident when her father gets stopped with a bag of potatoes illegally obtained in the black market. Ojito eventually gets to the part when they receive the paperwork to leave Cuba and are processed thru chaotic conditions in Mariel. I found the book easy to read, enjoyable, and descriptive of life by a typical family in Castro's Cuba. As a matter of fact, this book by Ojito is recommended in my own book about *Memories from the Land of the Intolerant Tyrant* (available from Blue Note Books) as one of the best describing life in Cuba.

Gianna says

Life was not always easy for the current New York Times journalist, in fact in this memoir she goes into the depth of her family's struggle removing themselves from Cuba at the peak of its communist take over. She speaks of the hot summers where she played in the streets with her friends, her first television set her father saved up for, rice pudding her mother made, all the clothing she wore was made from her mother's hands, and what it really was like to have to go through the rigorous mistreatment from school officials due to her parent's political views. To be kind. I do not think this book was of good quality. At most times the narrative was quite dry and repetitive, which didn't seem to pick up until they left Cuba. Although, I did learn more about Cuba than previously, so something good did come from reading.

Ryann says

I would recommend this book to anyone who would like to learn more about Castro's Cuba, refugees, or who isn't sure how they feel about immigration. It was amazing. 8/1/07

Read again for book club and didn't find it as great as the first time, but I do think it was an informative and interesting nonfiction read for those who want to know more about Cuba.

Jodie Toohey says

Mirta's story was fascinating and well-told, but her story didn't fill the entire book. Instead, the author filled the book with stories about historical events surrounding Cuban politics as well as other stories. I skipped these parts.

The first alternative chapters were stories told from political figure perspectives and I just couldn't get into them. They seemed distant, boring, and devoid of emotion to me; well written and valuable in their own right, but not what I was looking for after I read Mirta's chapters. Some other chapters, I believe, were told from ordinary citizens', like Mirta's, perspective and were likely quite interesting, but I was so engrossed in Mirta's story and her voice, wanting to find out what happened to her and if she was able to get to the U.S. that I skipped those chapters as well.

Parts of the book I did read, Mirta's story, were intriguing, tension-filled, and had me turning pages, anxious to see what happened. Most of it was told well from Mirta's perspective and were consistent. I greatly enjoyed Mirta's story, but because of having to flip pages to find where it picked back up, the pace was off and it reduced the ease of reading. I love the title and the dual of meaning of Manana meaning tomorrow in Spanish and it being the boat the author took to Florida.

LeaAnn Carzola-Reiley says

This was very well written! I know a good amount about Cuba but I knew very little about the Mariel boat lift other than when it happened. This was written in a way that makes you feel like you are with the author and the other people involved. I have already recommended this to many people including members of my extended Cuban-American family.
