

The Elian Gonzalez affair—a case study in hypocrisy

Robert S. Rodvik
12 January 2000

The following article was submitted to the World Socialist Web Site by a reader. The WSWs encourages readers to submit articles and essays for publication on our site. Where appropriate, we reserve the right to put forward our own viewpoint.

In a country known around the world for having the best government money can buy, hypocrisy comes naturally. In fact, so ingrained is US hypocrisy that Amnesty International has stated that the "land of the free" is the world's leading hypocrite nation, and there is little in the historic record one can find to dispel that analysis. The case of six-year-old Elian Gonzalez is a case study of hypocrisy in motion. Like the never ending surge of the sea it simply cascades from one tidal wave of lies, distortions and hyperbolic rhetoric to another. Time to dispel the myths of US "concern" for Elian and lay a few truths on top of the table.

Let us begin the analysis of US "concern" for little Elian by using a hypothetical case. Let us imagine that in a parallel occurrence an Iranian father decided to kidnap his mixed-nationality child (as Elian's mother did) and take that child to Iran where it would get a proper Muslim education, rather than the raising of the baby to rampant commercialism, as would occur if it were left to the mercy of a US upbringing. In this hypothetical case, the American mother would be screaming "kidnap" and the State Department would declare that it could do little since it has no sway in Iran. The mother, if wealthy enough, would hire a group of mercenaries to "re-kidnap" the child from its father in Iran and Hollywood would come to the rescue to demonstrate that US "family values" are far more important than sinister Muslim Iranian values.

You don't care for the hypothesis? Okay, let us take a few other actual case examples to demonstrate the reality of the politicizing of little Elian and of the neo-Nazi gang that want to exploit the child's presence in Florida. Take, for example, the case of Chinese-born Lei Yu Del Gallo, wife of US citizen Rinaldo Del Gallo.

Recently married at the time, the couple took a romantic trip to Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada in 1998. When they made the trip back, immigration officials in the US told Lei Yu that she could not re-enter the country since by leaving it, even for the day, she had surrendered her claim for permanent residence in the US. Lei Yu lives in a refugee centre at Fort Erie, Ontario, while her husband Rinaldo lives alone in the couple's home in Pennsylvania. So much for "family values"—unless there is a political agenda to be had.

One could also examine the manner in which Mexican nationals

attempting to gain access to the US—in the same manner as Elian's mother, without the kidnapping factor—are routinely captured, brutalized or killed outright, the survivors sent back to Mexico. Mexico's deputy minister for immigration recently told the UNHCR's commissioner for human rights, Mary Robinson, that Mexicans die daily while attempting to cross the 2,000-mile border that divides the two nations, putting the figure this year at 306. Some died from the perilous route taken to avoid the increased militarization of the border under Operation Gatekeeper, while others were shot outright and killed.

In San Diego county in November 1990, 14-year-old Eduardo Garcia Zamores was running back toward the Mexican border to escape the upholders of US "family values" when the good police shot him with hollow-point bullets and left his body hanging on the fence severely wounded. In late September of the same year, 17-year-old Victor Mandujano, also attempting to escape the border cops was pulled off the fence he was trying to scale and shot point-blank in the chest.

In the period from May 1988 to May 1989 there were 380 reported cases of human and civil rights violations by the INS, the Border Patrol, police, and other immigration authorities that were filed by human rights advocates on behalf of the victims.

In June 1990 the US Court of Appeals granted the INS far-ranging powers to jail children alleged to be deportable. Boys and girls as young as three years of age have been separated from their parents and detained in the miserable conditions that are typically found in the US concentration camps for immigrants not worthy of Elian's attention.

When the US-trained death squads were running rampant through El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980s, only 2 percent of Guatemalan and 3 percent of asylum applicants were granted refugee status. The others—tens of thousands—were sent back to be killed or tortured by the US-supported military death squads. At the same time, 84 percent of Nicaraguans seeking refugee status were granted asylum since they were deemed to be fleeing the "terror" of Sandinista rule—clearly demonstrating the political nature of US "family values."

In the spirit of "privatizing" everything short of breathing in the US, the INS contracted with the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) to open a prison in Laredo, Texas, especially to detain children. Under their prison rules, a child standing too close to the barred, steel-enforced window is punished with three days solitary confinement (*Z Magazine*, November 1990, p. 40).

Children at the Laredo prison are strip searched after each visit with a lawyer and the only refugee lawyer in Laredo, Patrick Hughes, had three of his minor clients suffer nervous breakdowns in prison. The remedy was to take them to a local hospital, sedate them, and return them to prison. Their first mistake was in not being Cuban "escapees," which has great political value in the "land of the free."

The same Nazi-Fascists that are keeping Elian from his father in Cuba, Rep. Dan Burton and Sen. Jesse Helms, are also personally responsible for the so-called "Cuban Democracy Act" which further tightened the economic embargo against Cuba—essentially a collective punishment legislation which is classified in international law as being a crime against humanity. While Elian is lavished with gifts and rewards of all flavor simply for being a political pawn, the remaining millions in Cuba are to be punished merely for existing.

Helms, a true Nazi, had a close association with US-trained Salvadoran death squad leader Roberto D'Aubuisson, and championed his case in Washington at every occasion. He is a great pal of torturer and mass murderer Augusto Pinochet and was close to Haiti's top thug, Raoul Cedras. Burton, another Nazi clone, has taken money from lobbyists representing such brutal, repressive governments as Zaire, Guatemala and Turkey. Helms and his wife are also slumlords, owning five buildings that often don't have heat in them (*The Nation*, April 7, 1997). These are the people who want Elian kept from his "communist" father so he won't grow up with the "wrong" values.

The Helms-Burton legislation violates the United Nations Charter and the Geneva Conventions and is directly responsible for untold deaths and suffering in Cuba—against the very people that are so gratuitously favored if they flee their US-enacted misery and make it to the shores of their oppressors. Cuba's health care system, free to all Cubans and once the envy of all Latin Americans, has been hit especially hard by the Helms-Burton legislation. With US pharmaceutical giants buying up medical companies in Europe and elsewhere, Cuba has been increasingly kept from obtaining needed supplies and equipment since even US subsidiaries are disallowed from trading with Cuba. Among the dozens of reports in my possession that reflect the reality of this Nazi-legislation is one titled: "Children die as US trade ban stifles Cuba" (*Guardian Weekly*, March 16, 1997). Author Victoria Brittain makes the following points:

* Health and nutrition standards have been devastated by the recent tightening of the 37-year-old US embargo, which includes food imports.... Cubans' daily intake of calories dropped by a third between 1989 and 1993, the American Association for World Health reports. There is widespread suffering and many needless deaths.

* A humanitarian catastrophe has been averted, the report says, only by the high priority the Cuban government has given to health spending, despite a steadily worsening economic environment.

* Child cancer sufferers are some of the most distressing victims of the embargo, which bans Cuba from buying nearly half of the new world-class drugs in a market dominated by US manufacturers.

In a case where the Cuban government was able to buy a water

purification system from a European firm, they would discover in this age of globalization that the filters themselves were made in the US and thus prohibited from sale. The entire system is therefore rendered useless. As Alexander Cockburn pointed out, "Deaths in Cuba from diseases such as diarrhea, associated with unsafe drinking water, have been rising since 1992" (*The Nation*, November 7, 1994, p. 521). Cuba, by the way, took in some 10,000 child victims of Chernobyl's radioactive implosion and have cared for them in Cuba—cost free—for years. By way of comparison, we should note that some 40 million Americans in the richest nation on Earth have no health care whatsoever.

American sanctions on Iraq have led to the deaths of more than half a million children under age five, according to UNICEF. Add the needless deaths of Cuban children due to US sanctions and any possible claim that the American government can make about the "superiority" of the US "way of life" is the moral equivalent of Adolf Hitler claiming the need to massacre Jews and leftists was necessary to protect the German way of life. In my opinion, US leaders are simply Nazis in beliefs and Nazis in their actions.

There is nothing more disgusting than immoral hypocrites posing as "moralists." It is time to disassemble the Statue of liberty with her faded motto: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses"—NOT—and take that tired cliché about the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and tell it like it really is. The wall may have come down in Germany but it has been erected on the Mexican-US border. Worthless platitudes about the "land of the free" are just that—worthless. Unless, of course, you happen to have shares in IBM or have all the advantage that a six-year-old can bring to the political arena of US hate, that which Elian's neo-Nazi friends in Miami's Little Havana will teach him if left to absorb US "values."

Anyone wanting to learn what kind of "values" little Elian will learn if left to the anti-Castro neo-Nazi gang in Florida only has to read a couple of Human Rights Watch reports: *Dangerous Dialogue*, and *Dangerous Dialogue Revisited*. Therein you will discover that anyone even talking about a detente with Cuba is either beaten within an inch of his or her life or murdered outright. Great values to be learned in the world's leading hypocrite nation.



To contact the WWSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wwsws.org/contact