

## **Mullin The Burden of a Violent History**

By Jim Mullin  
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April 1976: Severely injured WQBA news director Emilio Milian is assisted after a car bomb exploded beneath him

As the Elian Gonzalez media juggernaut began approaching warp speed over the past few weeks, some in Miami's Cuban-American community expressed displeasure with the portrait of them being painted by the press. The muffled grumbling became explicit on April 7 during Ted Koppel's Nightline "town meeting," beamed to the nation from Florida International University.

A panelist on that program, the University of Miami's Juan Carlos Espinosa, took off the gloves: "I think we really need to be careful that we don't continue to engage in Cuban-exile bashing, which is something I've been hearing a lot in the media coverage about Miami."

Similar sentiments have been voiced by countless others, from exile leaders to local politicians to Cuban-American celebrities. And it's true that The Elian Show isn't playing so well in Peoria, or Pinecrest for that matter. You know you've got image problems when the staid New York Times editorializes with evident concern that it appears "as if South Florida's Cuban Americans believe in mob rule."

Phrases like "mob rule" evoke frightening images of violence, which in turn sends Miami's damage-control specialists rushing to the microphones and insisting to the world that the Cuban-exile community is peace-loving, law-abiding, and (with emphasis now) nonviolent. Miami Mayor Joe Carollo in particular has been tireless in promoting that

message. "Miami has been a peaceful, nonviolent community," he stressed to CNN last week. The historical record, however, clearly contradicts those assertions.

Lawless violence and intimidation have been hallmarks of el exilio for more than 30 years. Given that fact, it's not only understandable many people would be deeply worried, it's prudent to be worried. Of course it goes without saying that the majority of Cuban Americans in Miami do not sanction violence, but its long tradition within the exile community cannot be ignored and cannot simply be wished away.

The following list of violent incidents I compiled from a variety of databases and news sources (a few come from personal experience). It is incomplete, especially in Miami's trademark category of bomb threats. Nor does it include dozens of acts of violence and murder committed by Cuban exiles in other U.S. cities and at least sixteen foreign countries. But completeness isn't the point. The point is to face the truth, no matter how difficult that may be. If Miami's Cuban exiles confront this shameful past -- and resolutely disavow it -- they will go a long way toward easing their neighbors' anxiety about a peaceful future.

1968 From MacArthur Causeway, pediatrician Orlando Bosch fires bazooka at a Polish freighter. (City of Miami later declares "Orlando Bosch Day." Federal agents will jail him in 1988.)

1972 Julio Iglesias, performing at a local nightclub, says he wouldn't mind "singing in front of Cubans." Audience erupts in anger. Singer requires police escort. Most radio stations drop Iglesias from playlists. One that doesn't, Radio Alegre, receives bomb threats.

1974 Exile leader José Elias de la Torriente murdered in his Coral Gables home after failing to carry out a planned invasion of Cuba.

1974 Bomb blast guts the office of Spanish-language magazine Replica.

1974 Several small Cuban businesses, citing threats, stop selling Replica.

1974 Three bombs explode near a Spanish-language radio station.

1974 Hector Diaz Limonta and Arturo Rodriguez Vives murdered in internecine exile power struggles.

1975 Luciano Nieves murdered after advocating peaceful coexistence with Cuba.

1975 Another bomb damages Replica's office.

1976 Rolando Masferrer and Ramon Donestevez murdered in internecine exile power struggles.

1976 Car bomb blows off legs of WQBA-AM news director Emilio Milian after he publicly condemns exile violence.

1977 Juan José Peruyero murdered in internecine exile power struggles.

1979 Cuban film Memories of Underdevelopment interrupted by gunfire and physical violence instigated by two exile groups.

1979 Bomb discovered at Padron Cigars, whose owner helped negotiate release of 3600 Cuban political prisoners.

1979 Bomb explodes at Padron Cigars.

1980 Another bomb explodes at Padron Cigars.

1980 Powerful anti-personnel bomb discovered at American Airways Charter, which arranges flights to Cuba.

1981 Bomb explodes at Mexican Consulate on Brickell Avenue in protest of relations with Cuba.

1981 Replica's office again damaged by a bomb.

1982 Two outlets of Hispania Interamericana, which ships medicine to Cuba, attacked by gunfire.

1982 Bomb explodes at Venezuelan Consulate in downtown Miami in protest of relations with Cuba.

1982 Bomb discovered at Nicaraguan Consulate.

1982 Miami Mayor Maurice Ferre defends \$10,000 grant to exile commando group Alpha 66 by noting that the organization "has never been accused of terrorist activities inside the United States."

1983 Another bomb discovered at Replica.

1983 Another bomb explodes at Padron Cigars.

1983 Bomb explodes at Paradise International, which arranges travel to Cuba.

1983 Bomb explodes at Little Havana office of Continental National Bank, one of whose executives, Bernardo Benes, helped negotiate release of 3600 Cuban political prisoners.

1983 Miami City Commissioner Demetrio Perez seeks to honor exile terrorist Juan Felipe de la Cruz, accidentally killed while assembling a bomb. (Perez is now a member of

the Miami-Dade County Public School Board and owner of the Lincoln-Martí private school where Elian Gonzalez is enrolled.)

1983 Gunfire shatters windows of three Little Havana businesses linked to Cuba.

1986 South Florida Peace Coalition members physically attacked in downtown Miami while demonstrating against Nicaraguan contra war.

1987 Bomb explodes at Cuba Envios, which ships packages to Cuba.

1987 Bomb explodes at Almacen El Español, which ships packages to Cuba.

1987 Bomb explodes at Cubanacan, which ships packages to Cuba.

1987 Car belonging to Bay of Pigs veteran is firebombed.

1987 Bomb explodes at Machi Viajes a Cuba, which arranges travel to Cuba.

1987 Bomb explodes outside Va Cuba, which ships packages to Cuba.

1988 Bomb explodes at Miami Cuba, which ships medical supplies to Cuba.

1988 Bomb threat against Iberia Airlines in protest of Spain's relations with Cuba.

1988 Bomb explodes outside Cuban Museum of Art and Culture after auction of paintings by Cuban artists.

1988 Bomb explodes outside home of Maria Cristina Herrera, organizer of a conference on U.S.-Cuba relations.

1988 Bomb threat against WQBA-AM after commentator denounces Herrera bombing.

1988 Bomb threat at local office of Immigration and Naturalization Service in protest of terrorist Orlando Bosch being jailed.

1988 Bomb explodes near home of Griselda Hidalgo, advocate of unrestricted travel to Cuba.

1988 Bomb damages Bele Cuba Express, which ships packages to Cuba.

1989 Another bomb discovered at Almacen El Español, which ships packages to Cuba.

1989 Two bombs explode at Marazul Charters, which arranges travel to Cuba.

1990 Another, more powerful, bomb explodes outside the Cuban Museum of Art and Culture.

1991 Using crowbars and hammers, exile crowd rips out and urinates on Calle Ocho "Walk of Fame" star of Mexican actress Veronica Castro, who had visited Cuba.

1992 Union Radio employee beaten and station vandalized by exiles looking for Francisco Aruca, who advocates an end to U.S. embargo.

1992 Cuban American National Foundation mounts campaign against the Miami Herald, whose executives then receive death threats and whose newsracks are defaced and smeared with feces.

1992 Americas Watch releases report stating that hard-line Miami exiles have created an environment in which "moderation can be a dangerous position."

1993 Inflamed by Radio Mambí commentator Armando Perez-Roura, Cuban exiles physically assault demonstrators lawfully protesting against U.S. embargo. Two police officers injured, sixteen arrests made. Miami City Commissioner Miriam Alonso then seeks to silence anti-embargo demonstrators: "We have to look at the legalities of whether the City of Miami can prevent them from expressing themselves."

1994 Human Rights Watch/Americas Group issues report stating that Miami exiles do not tolerate dissident opinions, that Spanish-language radio promotes aggression, and that local government leaders refuse to denounce acts of intimidation.

1994 Two firebombs explode at Replica magazine's office.

1994 Bomb threat to law office of Magda Montiel Davis following her videotaped exchange with Fidel Castro.

1996 Music promoter receives threatening calls, cancels local appearance of Cuba's La Orquesta Aragon.

1996 Patrons attending concert by Cuban jazz pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba physically assaulted by 200 exile protesters. Transportation for exiles arranged by Dade County Commissioner Javier Souto.

1996 Firebomb explodes at Little Havana's Centro Vasco restaurant preceding concert by Cuban singer Rosita Fornes.

1996 Firebomb explodes at Marazul Charters, which arranges travel to Cuba.

1996 Arson committed at Tu Familia Shipping, which ships packages to Cuba.

1997 Bomb threats, death threats received by radio station WRTO-FM following its short-lived decision to include in its playlist songs by Cuban musicians.

1998 Bomb threat empties concert hall at MIDEM music conference during performance by 91-year-old Cuban musician Compay Segundo.

1998 Bomb threat received by Amnesia nightclub in Miami Beach preceding performance by Cuban musician Orlando "Maraca" Valle.

1998 Firebomb explodes at Amnesia nightclub preceding performance by Cuban singer Manolín.

1999 Violent protest at Miami Arena performance of Cuban band Los Van Van leaves one person injured, eleven arrested.

1999 Bomb threat received by Seville Hotel in Miami Beach preceding performance by Cuban singer Rosita Fornes. Hotel cancels concert.

January 26, 2000 Outside Miami Beach home of Sister Jeanne O'Laughlin, protester displays sign reading, "Stop the deaths at sea. Repeal the Cuban Adjustment Act," then is physically assaulted by nearby exile crowd before police come to rescue.

April 11, 2000 Outside home of Elian Gonzalez's Miami relatives, radio talk show host Scot Piasant of Portland, Oregon, displays T-shirt reading, "Send the boy home" and "A father's rights," then is physically assaulted by nearby exile crowd before police come to rescue.

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