



# CUBAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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## TYRANNY IS TYRANNY— WITHOUT QUALIFICATION

Sen. Bernie Sanders stoked controversy and criticism over his recent remarks praising the “massive literacy program” implemented when “Castro came into office.”

The senator’s comments are inaccurate and devoid of crucial context. The Cuban American Bar Association is happy to provide the background and context that the statements lack.

It is intellectually dishonest to isolate one purported social policy in praise of a dictatorship that has jailed and murdered political dissidents, that denies Cubans their basic human rights, that has stripped the Cuban people of their democratic rights, that has imposed brutal poverty on its people, that has forced tens of thousands to flee its tyrannical grip. Tyranny is tyranny — without qualification. Moreover, this poses the obvious question: what is the social value of a purported “literacy program” if the Cuban government censors what the Cuban people can read, write and say; when it impedes their ability to associate and organize; and when it totally strips them of their economic, cultural, and political freedom?

Further, the “massive” literacy program that has been referenced was not an educational program implemented to augment Cuba’s education system and literacy rate. Rather, the program was one of political indoctrination—it was entirely politically motivated and otherwise censored, preying upon a vulnerable population of mostly undereducated farmers and laborers with the calculated intent of indoctrinating them and consolidating political power. This was not a social welfare program for the benefit of the Cuban people, in order to assist them in advancing themselves economically or otherwise. It was a political machination of a communist dictatorship that was imposing its doctrinaire ideology on the whole of the Cuban people.

Finally, Fidel Castro did not “come into office.” He was never an elected president or leader of Cuba. He was a dictator. He took office by way of force, without the benefit of free and independent elections. And Castro continued to hold office by force without the benefit of true and independent elections, for the next nearly 60 years.

We hope that these short comments provide some context surrounding the mischaracterizations recently made in the media by others about this topic. And we hope going forward that the Cuban government’s history of continued repression against its people will be thoughtfully considered before any further praise of its repressive and coercive programs. The Cuban Regime does not need a pat on the back for politically motivated programming that happened nearly 60 years ago—the Cuban people, however, need allies today in their fight for basic human rights, truth and the freedom to exercise their inalienable rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Frances De La Guardia'.

Frances G. De La Guardia  
President