

Cuban Refugee Camp Newspaper Collection

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1980, especially during April and May, a large number of Cubans emigrated to the United States. The political and economic conditions within Cuba had created an overwhelming urge on the part of some Cubans to leave their country for the United States. The U.S. Government's response, which developed as the influx increased dramatically, was to open several army bases to house refugees. Fort Chafee (Arkansas), Eglin Airforce Base (Florida), Fort Indiantown Gap (Pennsylvania), and Camp Pendleton (California) had previously served refugees from Southeast Asia in 1975. When Cuban refugees arrived in 1980, all but Pendleton, which was replaced by Camp McCoy (Wisconsin), were turned into refugee resettlement centers again.

Soon after four bases were opened, the base commands, and later the State Department's Cuban-Haitian Refugee Taskforce, began the publication of newspapers intended to serve this exile group by acquainting them with life in the camps and in the United States, their future homeland. These publications have considerable value in documenting the lives and feelings of the Cuban refugees. According to several of the camp paper editors, these papers (which were written and edited partially by the Cubans themselves) are a more accurate portrayal of the conditions than that found in the local or national press. Historians and others can test this hypothesis easily by comparing two of the Wisconsin publications: *El Mercurio de McCoy* which was produced by the Cubans at Camp McCoy, and *Daily Status Report* which includes copies of articles from area and state newspapers. An equally authentic perspective on the arrival of Cuban refugees in central Wisconsin on the part of some local residents can be discerned from a satirical handbill in the Society's collections entitled "Cuban Shoot" and published by the "Society Helping Individual Taxpayers Own Nothing" (OCLC # 6748268).

The collection which is described below was developed at the suggestion of Susan J. Dorst and Gerald R. Eggleston, of the Society's Acquisitions Section, as a logical compliment to the Vietnamese and Cambodian refugee camp newspapers acquired in 1975 (described in "Vietnamese Refugee Camp Newspapers in Microform," *Newspaper and Gazette Report*, Volume 6, Number 3, pages 113-115). Acquisition of all titles was accomplished by telephoning the military installation housing refugees speaking with the editors of the publications. Each of the editors asked the same questions, why we wanted their publication and how we heard about it, and were pleased to have been contacted. The Cuban refugee newspaper collection on microfilm is complete as far as can be ascertained but the continued dispersal of refugees off the main bases to smaller facilities such as Wyalusing State Park in Wisconsin may have produced additional undiscovered titles. The continuing Cuban refugee community at Fort Chaffey has the potential to create titles in addition to *La Vida Nueva*.

Haitian refugees, fleeing the Duvalier regime's politics and the general economic conditions, entered the United States in 1980 along with the Cubans but were housed in prisons and parks in the Miami, Florida area. Despite intensive inquiries, no Haitian refugee camp titles could be located; a situation two experts believe may be related to the very low rate of literacy in Haiti as compared to Cuba.

James P. Danky

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

WHi	Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin
(d)	daily
(sm)	semi-monthly
(tw)	tri-weekly
(w)	weekly
[?]	information uncertain

LISTINGS

CAMPO LIBERTAD PERIODICO (d) 14 May-24 Sep. 1980.

Title varies: *Camp Libertad Periodico*.

Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

In Spanish and English.

WHi 14 May-24 Sep. 1980.

CHAFFEEGRAM (d) 14 May-23 Jul. 1980.

Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

In English.

WHi 4 May-25 Jun., 27 Jun.-23 Jul. 1980.

CROSS ROADS (w) 25 May 1978-1994[?].

Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

In English.

WHi 22 May-Aug 7 1980, 25 May, 15, 22 Jun., 6, 27 Jul., 3 Aug. 1984, Jan.-22 May, Aug.-Dec. 1986, 10 Jan.-Apr., 6 Jun.-22 Oct., 24 Oct.-3 Dec. 1987, 12 Mar.-7 Apr., 9 Apr.-Jun., Aug.-Dec. 1988, Feb.-Sep. 1992, Jan, Apr. May, Jun./Jul., Aug./Sep. 1992, Jan/Mar 1994.

DAILY STATUS REPORT (d) 23 May-1 Nov. 1980.

Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

In English.

WHi 23 May-19 Jun., 22 Jun.-1 Nov. 1980.

LA LIBERTAD (d) 20 May-10 Oct. 1980.

Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

In Spanish and English.

WHi 20-31 May, 3-5, 10-11, 16-18 Jun.; 21-31 Jul., 1-29 Aug., 1-26, 30 Sep.; 1, 3-6, 9-10 Oct. 1980.

McCOY CHRONICLE (sm) 2 Jun.-4 Jul. 1980.

Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

In English.

WHi 2 Jun.-4 Jul. 1980.

EL MERCURIO DE McCOY (d) 3 Jun.-29 Sep. 1980.

Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

In Spanish and English.

WHi 3 Jun.-29 Sep. 1980.

MINOR (tw) 13 Oct.-27 1980.

Titles varies: *The Daily Minor*

Fort McCoy, WI

In Spanish and English.

WHi 13-27 Oct. 1980.

NEWS RELEASE (United States Federal Emergency Management Agency. Federal Coordinating Office) (d) 7-21 July 1980.

Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

In English and Spanish.

WHi 4-7, 16, 21 Jul. 1980.

LA VIDA NUEVA (tw) 10 May-1 Nov. 1980.

Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

In Spanish and English.

WHi 10 May-1 Nov. 1980.