



# Media Reality ✓ Check

A Regular Report on Major News Stories Distorted or Ignored □ [www.mediaresearch.org](http://www.mediaresearch.org)

Sounding Like Cuban Propagandists, U.S. Journalists Praised "Great Success" of Castro's Red Regime

## Decades of Cheering Castro's Communism

As news organizations update their obituaries of ailing Cuban dictator Fidel Castro, it's worth recalling how many liberal journalists have fallen under Castro's spell over the years, sounding like paid Cuban government propagandists as they touted the "great success stories" of Castro's decades of communist rule.

For some in the media, it was love at first sight. Back on January 18, 1959, *New York Times* reporter Herbert L. Matthews exulted in Castro's seizure of Cuba: "Everybody here seems agreed that Dr. Castro is one of the most extraordinary figures ever to appear on the Latin-American scene. He is by any standards a man of destiny."

After decades of poverty and repression, the media's enthusiasm remained. Then-NBC reporter Maria Shriver let Castro himself lead her on a tour of Havana. "The level of public services was remarkable: free education, medicine and heavily-subsidized housing," Shriver marveled on the February 28, 1988 *Today*. In the same broadcast, reporter Ed Rabel dismissed worries about Cuba's "government intrusion" in citizen's lives: "On a sunny day in a park in the old city of Havana, it is difficult to see anything sinister."

ABC's Peter Jennings trumpeted "the revolution's great success stories." On his April 3, 1989 *World News Tonight*, Jennings touted how "medical care was once for the privileged few. Today it is available to every Cuban, and it is free. Some of Cuba's health care is world class....Health and education are the revolution's great success stories."

Katie Couric was just as upbeat on NBC's *Today* on Feb. 13, 1992: "Considered one of the most charismatic leaders of the 20th century....Castro traveled the country cultivating his image and his revolution delivered. Campaigns stamped out illiteracy and even today, Cuba has one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world."

On the September 4, 1994 *CBS Evening News*, reporter Giselle Fernandez found Castro's Cuba "a beacon of success for much of Latin America and the Third World."

For decades, Cuba's health care and education systems were touted as great achievements of the revolution....Some say the [U.S.] trade ban has never given Cuba a chance to see whether or not Castro's socialism might work."

CNN's Lucia Newman even praised Castro's one-party "elections." On the January 11, 1998 *The World Today*, Newman extolled: "No dubious campaign spending here, no mud slinging....[It's] a system President Castro boasts is the most democratic and cleanest in the world."

### Touting a Dictator's Hallucinations

"There's a good chance that Fidel Castro, who marks his 78th birthday today, could keep going for another 40 years, the Cuban leader's personal physician says....Cuban officials say the same revolutionary zeal that has driven nearly five decades of socialism can overcome the ravages of time."

— *USA Today's Eric Sabo, August 13, 2004.*

On April 8, 2000, during the custody battle over Elian Gonzalez, *Newsweek's* Eleanor Clift claimed on *The McLaughlin Group*: "To be a poor child in Cuba may in many instances be better than being a poor child in Miami." After immigration agents seized Elian on April 22, 2000, CBS's Dan Rather assured viewers: "There is no question that Castro feels a very deep and abiding connection to

those Cubans who are still in Cuba."

In a May 13, 2002 special, *Live from Havana*, CNN's Kate Snow, now with ABC, repeated the standard talking point about the greatness of communist medicine: "Everyone has access and the concept of paying is completely foreign." ABC's Barbara Walters offered her own prime time tribute five months later. "For Castro, freedom starts with education. And if literacy alone were the yardstick, Cuba would rank as one of the freest nations on Earth," Walters oozed on the October 11, 2002 *20/20*.

When the Cuban people are finally free to speak about Castro's decades of dictatorship, how will they rate the U.S. media's coverage? Did our free press speak truth to power, or were they instead cheerleaders for Castro's communist revolution? — *Rich Noyes*

**L. Brent Bozell III**, Publisher; **Brent Baker, Rich Noyes, Tim Graham**, Editors; **Geoffrey Dickens, Brian Boyd, Brad Wilmouth, Megan McCormack, Mike Rule** and **Scott Whitlock**, Media Analysts; **Michelle Humphrey**, Research Associate; **Michael Chapman**, Director of Communications. Sign up for daily *CyberAlerts* at [www.mrc.org](http://www.mrc.org).