



Ninety Miles: Cuban Journeys in the Age of Castro

Ian Michael James

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A brilliant musician. A young woman in love. A determined free-thinker who risked everything for his cause. This compelling book tells the stories of the personal journeys and struggles of three Cubans and how their lives have been shaped by Fidel Castro's influence over nearly half a century. It begins in 1959 with the triumph of the Cuban revolution, a euphoric event that sets the stage for dramatic changes in the years to come. Their experiences come alive in a narrative filled with childhood pranks, secret plots, and wrenching family decisions.

Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo was a rebel commander who fought on the side of Castro's forces during the revolution, then later turned against the government and spent twenty-two years in Cuban prisons. Once free and living in Miami, he began a controversial effort to seek changes in Cuba through dialogue with Castro. He later surprised his family and friends by deciding to move back to Cuba in an attempt to start a new opposition movement.

Paquito D'Rivera was just a boy when Castro and his rebels rolled into Havana. His career as a saxophonist and clarinetist prospered in the years that followed, but seeking greater personal freedom, he eventually defected. Separated from his family, he settled in New York City. It took him many painful years to be reunited with his son. While Paquito has achieved stardom in the jazz world, he also longs at times for the island he left behind.

Nancy Lledes was a child of the revolution, born in the early years of Castro's rule and taught to respect the socialist system. Her parents believed in those ideals, and while Nancy was growing up she never imagined leaving Cuba. But she fell in love with a man who opposed the system. And for him, she abandoned her homeland and left behind all that she knew.

Together, these three tell a remarkable story in a unique age filled with upheaval, sharp divisions, and yet, hope. Spanning nearly five decades of life in Cuba and in exile, this wide-ranging history is also an intimately personal narrative.

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