

# Mr. Gutierrez actively defends Cuba

by Ivan Santa-Cruz  
Staff Writer

How many times have you read about *this* demonstration or seen pictures of *that* Plo-tilla? Members of these demonstrations are often faceless, and the men and women in the pictures are often nameless. However, not all are completely anonymous.

History Teacher Orlando Gutierrez, now in his third year at Belen, is an active voice in the ever-turbulent political scene of the Cuban Exile community. What gives him the strength to stand firm in the middle of such a delicate, often stormy, and controversial battlefield? The answer: focus and direction. "I'm committed," Gutierrez says, "to Cuba as a nation."

Yet Gutierrez warns against a reliance on leaders, emphasizing instead look to oneself for strength. "I don't like to be called a leader...[Fidel Castro came to power because] the Cubans were waiting for a messiah,

but you can't trust in [political] messiah(s). You have to trust yourself."

And indeed, it is this self-trust that most sets Gutierrez apart. "I've never had an identity crisis. I've always known who I am, and where I came from, and where I'm going. I've always known I'm Cuban. And I've always known that I'd return."

Gutierrez was born in La

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Havana in 1965, and lived there until the age of five. He then moved to Miami, and was graduated from La Salle High School. He then went on to Florida International University, where he earned his bachelor's degrees in political science and communication. He is currently working for his master's degree in political science.

Gutierrez entered into the limelight two years ago, during a protest that ended in his arrest. Since then he has participated in numer-

ous demonstrations, both in and out of Miami. He is deeply involved with what he calls, "...a New Generation, both inside and outside of



by Luis Gonzalez

**Mr. Orlando Gutierrez, besides being a dedicated teacher, is also an involved Cuban social activist.**

Cuba, who are committed to building a democratic society."

What sets this generation apart from any other? "We're determined to ending violence," Gutierrez explains, "as a way of political change." Gutierrez offers Fidel Castro as the best example of this type of political reasoning, a reasoning that has been engrained into the Cuban people since their independence 93 years ago.

"Now is the moment..." Gutierrez claims. His organization, Directorio Revolucionario, is attacking what is the "worst weapon of oppression": ignorance. Their "Operación Boitel", named after a Cuban student leader that died during a hunger strike in prison, visits Latin American countries, educating the populace about the situation in Cuba. The redoubled efforts of the Exile community and the work of the different organizations that compose it are reason for hope, counsels Gutierrez. "I think now we can make a difference."