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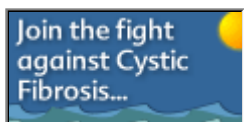
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News

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South Florida census disputed

Report: Cubans, other Hispanics undercounted

BY TIM HENDERSON
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Were there more Cubans and Nicaraguans in Miami-Dade and Broward counties than the U.S. Census Bureau counted last year?

A university study released today suggests that there may be tens of thousands more in Miami-Dade. Some South Florida observers believe that even that is a conservative estimate.

They point to immigration figures estimating that up to 30,000 Cubans may have come to the United States every year since the mid-1990s.

"If so many are immigrating, how come the total is so relatively stagnant?" asked John Logan, director of the Univer
sity of Albany's Mumford Institute.

In its study, the institute estimates that Miami-Dade has 20,000 more Cubans than the census found, for a total of

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30,000 more Cubans than the census found, for a total of about 680,000.

That's based on the belief that a certain number of Cubans chose not to identify themselves as such, despite a clear check box on the census form, Logan said.

Nicaraguans and other smaller Hispanic groups may also have been undercounted partly because the census questionnaires were worded less clearly in 2000 than in 1990, Logan said.

A further Herald analysis of Mumford's numbers shows that, if the center is correct, Cubans retain a majority of about 52 percent in Miami's Little Havana.

Census 2000 numbers showed that Cubans had declined to about 48 percent of Little Havana residents.

Logan said some Cubans, along with Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, did not identify themselves by those nationalities in the census. His evidence: In more intensive surveys, some people born in Cuba, or who had a Cuban-born parent, chose not to identify themselves as Cuban.

Logan, as well as other scholars and community leaders, said a recent wave of immigration must have significantly increased Miami-Dade's Cuban population.

The institute estimates that Broward County has about 3,000 more Cubans than the census found, for a total of about 53,000, and about 1,900 more Nicaraguans, for a total of 5,800. About 22,000 Dominicans were missed in both counties, the center estimated.

Lisandro Perez of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University agreed that a recent wave of immigration has increased Miami-Dade's Cuban population. He estimates it at more than 700,000.

"The post-1995 migration from Cuba has been bringing considerable numbers of Cubans here," Perez said. "And not only do you have people coming from Cuba, but you also have a process of concentration as people who have lived somewhere else come back. It's only going to accelerate because you have a large cohort of the population nearing retirement age, and they're going to retire here."

Hialeah Mayor Raul Martinez said that despite an apparently successful publicity campaign to encourage census participation, many Cubans and other Hispanics were missed.

"In Hialeah, there were a lot of people in extra rooms, and they were not counting those," Martinez said. "My feeling is people were sending in the forms but they weren't counting everybody. They were sending something in so they wouldn't have to get an enumerator knocking on their doors

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later."

Miami-Dade County itself estimated there were 770,000 Cubans in Miami-Dade in 1999, based partly on a State Department agreement to issue at least 20,000 Cuban visas annually, said Oliver Kerr of the Miami-Dade Planning Department.

However, it now appears that only about 15,000 visas were actually issued each year, Kerr said. Also, the pre-census estimates may have underestimated Cuban movement from Miami-Dade to Broward County, he said.



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