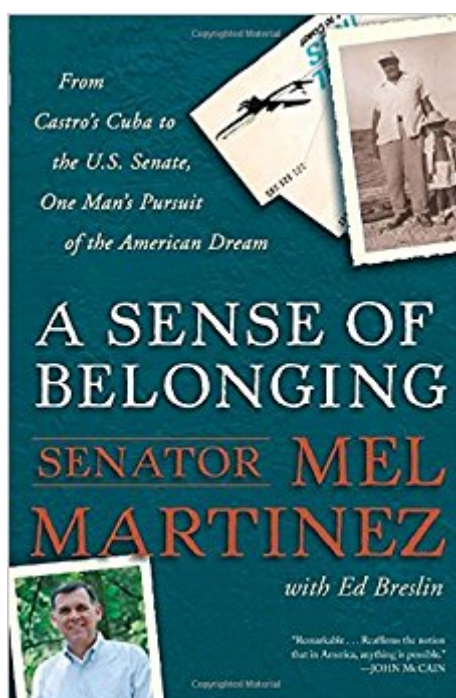


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# A Sense Of Belonging: From Castro's Cuba To The U.S. Senate, One Man's Pursuit Of The American Dream



## Synopsis

The remarkable story of how a teenager rescued from Castro's Cuba rose to become a United States senator. The swift and improbable rise of Mel Martinez to the top echelon of America's government began not with a political race but with a burst of gunfire. In April 1958, an eleven-year-old Martinez huddled on his bedroom floor while Cuban soldiers opened fire on insurgents outside his family's home in the town of Sagua la Grande. If political unrest made daily life disturbing and at times frightening, Fidel Castro's Communist Revolution nine months later was nothing short of devastating. When armed militiamen shouted violent threats at Martinez for wearing a medallion as a sign of his Catholic faith, his parents made a heartrending decision: their son would have to escape the Castro regime "alone. *A Sense of Belonging* is the riveting account of innocence lost, exile sustained by religious faith, and an immigrant's determination to overcome the barriers of language and culture in his adopted homeland. Though his story ends in the United States Capitol, Martinez has never forgotten the boy who experienced the loss of liberty under communism. *A Sense of Belonging* is a paean to the transformative power of the American dream.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Mel Martinez is a living embodiment of the American Dream. From his early days under the iron-fisted rule of Fidel Castro to his arrival in the United States at age fifteen, and now as a member of the U.S. Senate, Mel has demonstrated grit, resolve, and a commitment to fighting for the

fundamental rights of freedom and human dignity. This remarkable story not only gives a glimpse into the life of a great man, but also reaffirms the notion that in America, anything is possible. •â "John McCainâ œAn extraordinary and inspiring book, Mel Martinezâ ™s account is at once a memoir, a historical document, and a tribute to both his native homeland and his adopted country. Of the fourteen thousand stories that the children of the Pedro Pan airlift could tell, this is definitely one of the most exemplary. Senator Martinez reveals here, as he does in his public life, how the hyphen in â ^Cuban-Americanâ ™ is like gold refined in a blazing furnace. Years from nowâ “even centuries from now â “readers will surely marvel still at the history recorded in these pages.â •â "Carlos Eire, National Book Awardâ ”winning author of *Waiting for Snow in Havana*From the Hardcover edition.

MEL MARTINEZ is a United States senator from Florida.

Great read. Inspiring.

My husband lived his story in Cuba. Very accurate and well written.

I was interested in the story behind the "Peter Pan" children. I was disapointed by the writing there are some things in the book that I know could not have happened as described. Also his account of being "middle class" is not true. I am from Cuba. I can assure you Mr Martinez was wealthy. Overall the book lacked real substance. It had the sound of a politician behind it.

As an American born in NY in the 40's of Cuban parents who took us early in the 50's to be raised in Cuba, I cannot even describe how true these feelings that Senator Martinez writes in his book identify with me. As Americans we were in danger of imprisonment (even as children) in 62 and were put on a plane without our parents who although were USA citizens, the Castro regime would not permit them to leave. Along with us were babies handed over to strangers to get them to the USA. The only difference with this book and my life is that we (my brother and I) as Americans could not receive any USA benefits since we were not considered refugees in our own country. We actually hid from being separated by the foster home agencies. The rest of this similar story we lived alongside many other Cubans. This is a must read for those who could use a boost as to loving this country of opportunity as they should. People have no idea how lucky we are in this country until you live in another country where you have no rights! From the time that Senator Martinez and all of

us left Cuba to now, there has been no change. Thank you Senator Martinez for putting into words what many of us lived as we grew up (fast ) in the USA!

I had the privilege of meeting Mel Martinez two years ago. He was instrumental in getting my sister-in-law freed from prison in Vietnam.... although she was a U.S. citizen, and had done nothing more disruptive to the government of Vietnam than to openly speak about individual rights, she was arrested and languished in jail for fourteen months. Senator Martinez lead the effort to secure her freedom, lobbying the Vietnamese Ambassador, and convincing president Bush to make her release an issue to be resolved before the president would travel to Vietnam. When he spoke at her Homecoming in Orlando, he talked about how well he understood the difference between democratic and communist countries from personal experience. I was so impressed by this man's integrity and tenacity .... I can say with complete conviction: THERE is a true American! Read his book, and be reminded what it is that has made this a great country.

"A Sense of Belonging" is not your typical autobiography of a Washington insider, which is certainly refreshing. Senator Martinez's story is quite unique, and it is eye-opening to see how he got to be where he is. This touching memoir chronicles both his transition from Communist Cuba to the United States and his transition from a boy to a man. Mr. Martinez was forced to grow up very quickly and the details of his experience are remarkable. I don't necessarily agree with him on everything politically, but that is irrelevant where this book is concerned. With the exception of his feelings toward Castro's regime, Martinez is able to tell his story without delving into today's politics. This was a pleasure to read and I finished it in two sittings. Highly recommended for an easy weekend read.

His is such an inspirational story of strength and faith in God! I couldn't put it down...well worth the read.

There are certain political books that are interesting, and others that are not. This clearly falls beyond the latter category. This book is worth nothing more than the paper it's printed on, and barely that. As one of my Senators, I figured this book would be worth the read, but I wanted to sail myself to Cuba and request asylum from literary persecution by the end of it.

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