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Subjects Amendments

The Truth-O-Meter Says:



Says his parents "came to America following Fidel Castro's takeover" of Cuba.

Marco Rubio on Friday, October 21st, 2011 in a biography on his U.S. Senate website

Sen. Marco Rubio said his parents 'came to America following Fidel Castro's takeover' of Cuba

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio sold his American success story as he stumped across Florida two years ago.

His parents left Havana in 1959, he told a Panhandle audience, in search of a better life.

He told a [Tampa Bay TV](#) station, a [Fox Business](#) host and Sean Hannity on [Fox News](#) that his parents came from Cuba at the end of the 1950s — when dictator Fulgencio Batista fled Fidel Castro's revolution. ["In 1959," he told Fox 13 and Fox Business. "In '58, '59," he told Fox News.](#)

By Oct. 21, 2011, the biography on his [U.S. Senate website](#) still declared his parents "came to America following Fidel Castro's takeover."

But [interviews](#), [documents](#) and [news articles](#) in September and October raised doubts.

PolitiFact Florida wanted to know: Did Rubio's parents come to America "following Fidel Castro's takeover"?

Doubt

An Oct. 19, 2011, story by the [St. Petersburg Times](#) said naturalization records showed Rubio's parents, [Mario](#) and [Oriales](#), became U.S. residents in May 1956.

[At that time](#), Castro lived in Mexico after a failed 1953 attack on army barracks in Santiago de Cuba. Cubans lived under the dictatorship of Batista, who had seized power as he ran for reelection in 1952. [The nation](#), which enjoyed high literacy, a strong educational system — even the world's fifth-highest number of TVs per capita — found itself ruled by decree.

In May 1956, the Rubio family would fly to the United States. Castro returned to mount his revolution in December. More than two years would pass before Batista fled on Jan. 1, 1959.

In 2006, Rubio, the young soon-to-be speaker of the Florida House, would [recount the takeover](#): "In January of 1959, a thug named Fidel Castro took power in Cuba, and countless Cubans were forced to flee."

To many, he seemed to count his own family among them.

And in 2009 and 2010, he told reporters dates that made that possible. News stories called the lawmaker, himself born in the United States in 1971, the son of "exiles from Castro's Cuba." Some used a specific date: 1959.

Story shift

In September 2011, Rubio chatted with [Miami Herald](#) reporter Marc Caputo for [a story about his upcoming autobiography](#). They talked about Rubio's parents' immigration from Cuba. Caputo, later [recounting his notes](#), said Rubio "struggled to recall the year ... and said it was in '57 or '58 or '59."

"When asked pointedly: Was it before the revolution? Rubio said it was before the revolution,"



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Biography

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Highly regarded for his principled, energetic and idea-driven leadership, Marco Rubio was elected to the United States Senate in 2010 to represent the State of Florida.

In 1971, Marco was born in Miami to Cuban-born parents who came to America following Fidel Castro's takeover.

When he was eight years old, Rubio and his family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada where his father worked as a

A screen grab of Marco Rubio's Senate website.

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About this statement:

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Caputo wrote in an Oct. 20 blog post.

Caputo included the detail in his September story, saying Rubio was, "the son of Cuban immigrants who left Cuba just before the 1959 revolution."

When we searched for news references to Rubio's parents, we found the new account differed from dozens of articles about Rubio's past, his own TV interviews, and his official [campaign](#) and [Senate](#) bios.

And Rubio's bio didn't change.

After the *Times* and the *Washington Post* wrote about the discrepancy, Rubio [released a statement](#).

"The dates I have given regarding my family's history have always been based on my parents' recollections of events that occurred over 55 years ago and which were relayed to me by them more than two decades after they happened," he wrote on Oct. 20. "I was not made aware of the exact dates until very recently."

Asked about Rubio's official bio the next day, spokesman Alex Conant confirmed, "the dates were wrong."

"We just recently became aware of it, and it just hadn't been updated," he said. (The site updated the evening of Oct. 21, 2011 to say: "Marco was born in Miami in 1971 to Cuban exiles who first arrived in the United States in 1956.")

Rubio learned the full story talking with his mom, Conant said, and looking at his parents' passports. (His father died in September 2010.)

Instead of fleeing Castro's Cuba, the Rubios came to the United States for "economic opportunity," Conant said.

Our ruling

Several times during his race for U.S. Senate, Rubio told reporters and voters his parents left Cuba in 1959, suggesting they had fled Castro's rule. In his campaign bio, and later in his official Senate biography, he said his parents "came to America following Fidel Castro's takeover."

Even after he stumbled over dates with a *Miami Herald* reporter and acknowledged his parents left before the revolution, his official Web bio stayed the same. After two news organizations reported his parents moved to the United States in 1956, his spokesman acknowledged that the bio was wrong. It was updated to say, "Marco was born in Miami in 1971 to Cuban exiles who first arrived in the United States in 1956." That puts everyone in agreement: The original statement is false.

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