Contemporary Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Lesson

[Title] The Coat of Different Colors
[Use] April 23, 2011

Fidel Castro does not wear a coat of many colors. His favorite apparel over the years as dictator of Cuba is army fatigues. But, like Joseph in our Sabbath school lesson for this week, Castro has colors that leak out of a painful past. It has shaped his colorful history as one of the longest ruling Communist leaders in history (1959-2008).

In retirement Fidel writes a weekly newspaper column called Reflections. This last week he commented on the need for a new generation of leaders in Cuba.

"HAVANA (AP) — A new generation of leaders must act decisively and without hesitation to correct the errors of the past and lead the island once those who fought in the 1959 revolution are gone, Fidel Castro said in a column published Monday.

"Nearing the close of a critical Communist Party summit called to chart the course of the island’s socialist system and right its flagging economy, the aging revolutionary leader praised delegates to the gathering… 'The new generation is being called upon to rectify and change without hesitation all that should be rectified and changed,' Castro wrote. ‘There is no margin for error,’ he added."1

But five decades of rule have left a trail of errors. Not all are political.

"Anti-Castro activist and poet Jorge Valls was on record stating that Castro never knew how to love, and that ‘Fidel tried a respectable marriage, which failed; he tried respectable politics, which failed’.

Fidel had a tough beginning. “His mother, Lina Ruz González, was a household servant. Ángel Castro [Fidel’s father] was married to another woman, María Luisa Argota, until Fidel was 15, and thus Fidel as a child had to deal both with his illegitimacy and the challenge of being raised in various foster homes away from his father's house.

"Castro has two brothers, Ramón and Raúl, and four sisters, Angelita, Juanita, Enma, and Agustina, all of whom were born out of wedlock. He also has two half siblings, Lidia and Pedro Emilio who were raised by Ángel Castro’s first wife. Fidel was not baptized until he was 8, also very uncommon, bringing embarrassment and ridicule from other children. Ángel Castro finally dissolved his first marriage when Fidel was 15 and married Fidel’s mother. Castro was formally recognized by his father when he was 17, when his surname was legally changed to Castro from Ruz, his mother’s name.

His sister Juanita Castro has been living in the United States since the early 1960s. When she went into exile, she said 'I cannot longer remain indifferent to what is happening in my country. My brothers Fidel and Raúl have made it an enormous prison surrounded by water. The people are nailed to a cross of torment imposed by international Communism.'2

Joseph, in Scripture, faced some of the same family mess as Castro. Family systems make a huge impact on our lives. Yet, as we see in this son of Jacob, we do not need to be imprisoned because of our past. The Bible does not hide the mistakes of Abraham’s family. We can learn from them. For people intent on reaching the heavenly kingdom, a robe of many colors won’t cut it. Neither will army fatigues. Not even a new generation can correct the errors of the past. We need something (Someone) outside our broken family systems.

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1. USA Today
2. Wikipedia

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