

Fidel castro: early life



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Analise and Discus the Influences and events of significance in Fidel Castro's early life that lead to his abandoning mainstream politics and becoming the leader of the Cuban revolution. FIDEL CASTRO Fidel Castro was born to quite wealthy parents, attended exclusive religious schools for the wealthy, and eventually studied law at university. How is it that a man of this privileged upbringing, became the leader of a socialist revolution in Cuba, brought the world to the brink of destruction, and ultimately became one of the most famous political leaders in the history of Latin America. The answer can only be found by closely analyzing Castro's history, his political development and the significant events and influences in his life that brought him to abandon mainstream politics and become the revolutionary that he was. In this assignment I will be analyzing the significant stages and factors of Castro's early life that helped to create the revolutionary that he became. I will be looking at Castro's upbringing in Biran; his first small acts of rebellion and his rebellious nature; his experiences and education while studying at university; and his frustration with the Batista coup of 1952. " A man is not entirely the master of his own destiny. A man is also the child of circumstances, of difficulties, of struggle. Problems gradually sculpt him like a lathe sculpts a piece of metal. A man is not born a revolutionary, I'd venture to say. " (Fidel Castro) Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz was born on August 13, 1926 on a sugar plantation in the remote province of Biran in the east of Cuba. His father Angel Castro came from an poor peasant family in Spain. At the end of The Second War Of Independence Angel immigrated to Cuba. He eventually made a small fortune by using his natural management skills working in the sugar industry. Angel was a strong and very hard working man. Fidel's experiences while growing up in Biran played an important role in his early

upbringing. If he had of been born in an upper-class neighborhood playing with the children of wealthy citizens, he would not have become the person he is today. As it was, Castro was the only boy from an affluent family in the whole of Biran. His peers were all the sons of peasants who worked on the farms. He talked to, ate with and often lived with people of the most humble origins. He had no sense of superiority that may have resulted from the financial and social standing of his family. " I remember the illiterate unemployed men who would stand in line near the cane fields, with nobody to bring them a drop of water, or breakfast, or lunch, or give them shelter, or transport. " (Fidel Castro) The area surrounding his father's land was dominated by sugar mills owned by the infamous U. S owned ' United Fruit Company'. It was on this land that the injustices of the working conditions of the poor became most apparent to him. It may well be that he was already beginning to realize as he did later in life that because the company that owned the many sugar mills was based overseas, the owners and managers of the company had little or no interest or thought for their workers in Cuba. His father, however, worked beside his employees everyday observing their lives and circumstances. He was far more compassionate and thoughtful of the men under who worked for him than were the large US companies. Castro's thoughts on the lack of concern for workers demonstrated by the US companies likely became one of the driving forces in his mind when he sought to Nationalize foreign owned land at the conclusion of the Cuban Revolution. Castro has a history of rebelling against authority as a young boy. This rebelliousness would continue throughout his life. His father was a strict authoritarian occasionally becoming quite violent. It is likely that Castro's rebellious nature found its roots in rebelling against his father's

authoritarianism. As early as his primary school years, the young Castro was also very disdainful of the authority around school life. He referred to the physical punishment he and many other students often received as a type of "torture". An example of Castro's disdain for the unjust use of authority occurred in his 5th grade when he attacked the vice principal at a boarding school he was attending. Castro had found himself on the 'wrong side' of the vice principal when he had got into a fight with a teenage boy whom the principal favored. In the days following the fight Castro was hit twice, without warning and for no apparent reason by the principal. On the third occasion Castro lashed out, jumping on and attacking the vice principal who had a hard time fighting the primary student off. In 1945, Castro began studying Law at The University Of Havana. He quickly became involved in the University's dominant and often quite violent political scene. Castro would spend hours debating and listening to his peers becoming very politically aware. He read of works by Marx, Lennon, Engel, and Jose Marti, (a leader of the Cuban independence movement). These authors had an enormous influence on his political development. He began to question the political economy of capitalism and became what he described as a 'Utopian Communist'. "I began to have serious doubts, began to increasingly question the system, because I'd lived on a large estate, a latifundio, and I remember things and dreamed about solutions, like so many other utopians in the world." (Fidel Castro) In 1948 Castro traveled to Bogota in Columbia for a political conference of Latin American students. The students had planned to use the occasion to distribute pamphlets protesting the United States dominance of the western hemisphere. A few days after the conference began Jorge Eliecer Gaitan a very popular political leader was

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assassinated, sparking massive riots in the streets. The Havana students, caught up in the chaos, picked up rifles and wandered the streets distributing anti-United States material and stirring a revolt. Castro was pursued by the Columbian authorities for his role in the riots, but took refuge within the Cuban Embassy later flying back to Havana. At the uprising in Bogota, Castro witnessed, first hand, the power of a spontaneous uprising. The Bogota incident played a significant role in the development of his ideas of a how a 'revolution of the people' could take place. In 1947 Castro joined the Partido Ortodoxo (orthodox party), which had been newly formed by Eduardo Chibas. Chibas was a very charismatic, emotional figure whom he greatly admired and considered to be his mentor. The Partido Ortodoxo publicly exposed corruption amongst the Government, under the then president Ramon Grau San Martin. The party aimed to: install a strong sense of national identity among Cubans, establish Cuban economic independence and freedom from the United States, and to dismantle the power of the elite over politics. Castro was greatly influenced by the ideas and the morals upheld by Chibas and the Partido Ortodoxo. When Chibas shot himself in 1951, Castro seemed to take it upon himself to continue the political battle against corruption that Chibas had begun. After the death of Chibas Castro planned to run for congress staging a long and hard fought campaign. Castro and many Ortodoxos had been expecting to win the elections, when, on March 10, 1952, Falancio Batista, overthrew the constitutional government canceling the election. Castro was infuriated by the coup, concluding that armed revolution was the only way to achieve his and the Party's social and political reforms. " From that moment on I had a clear idea of the struggle ahead and of the fundamental revolutionary ideas behind it". (Fidel Castro)

Batista had promised elections the following year but Castro knew then that nothing was going to change. " the frustration and disillusionment were going to be repeated all over again". (Fidel Castro) For Castro mainstream politics had failed him. He broke away from the Partido Ortodoxo to marshal legal argument to formally charge Batista with violating the constitution of 1940. His petition, entitled Zarpazo, was however denied by the Court of Constitutional Guarantees and he was not permitted a hearing. As a result, Castro began meeting with a group of young men to plan a military revolt in order to spark a nation-wide revolution against Batista. On July 26, 1953 Castro and 135 supporters lead a failed attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago De Cuba, symbolizing the beginning of the Revolution. On the 1 January 1959 after 6 long years of constant struggle, Fidel Castro walked victoriously into Havana. Castro went on to spend an astonishing 47 controversial years in power. He lead the world to the brink of destruction, survived 638 attempts to take his life, held out against 45 years of US trade embargo and even entered the Guinness Book of Records for the longest speech at the UN - he managed 7 hours and 10 minutes at the 1986 Communist Party Congress in Havana. The last 27 years of Castro's life, his history, his experiences, his influences, observations, and political development all lead up to this point. Born into privileged lifestyle his life experiences gradually shaped and moulded him into the man that he became. He was not born a revolutionary rather he was a man who saw the injustices around him and chose the path of revolution to bring about the equality he believed in. Yesterday, the 20th February 2008, Castro announced that due to his failing health he would not be standing for the next term of presidency.