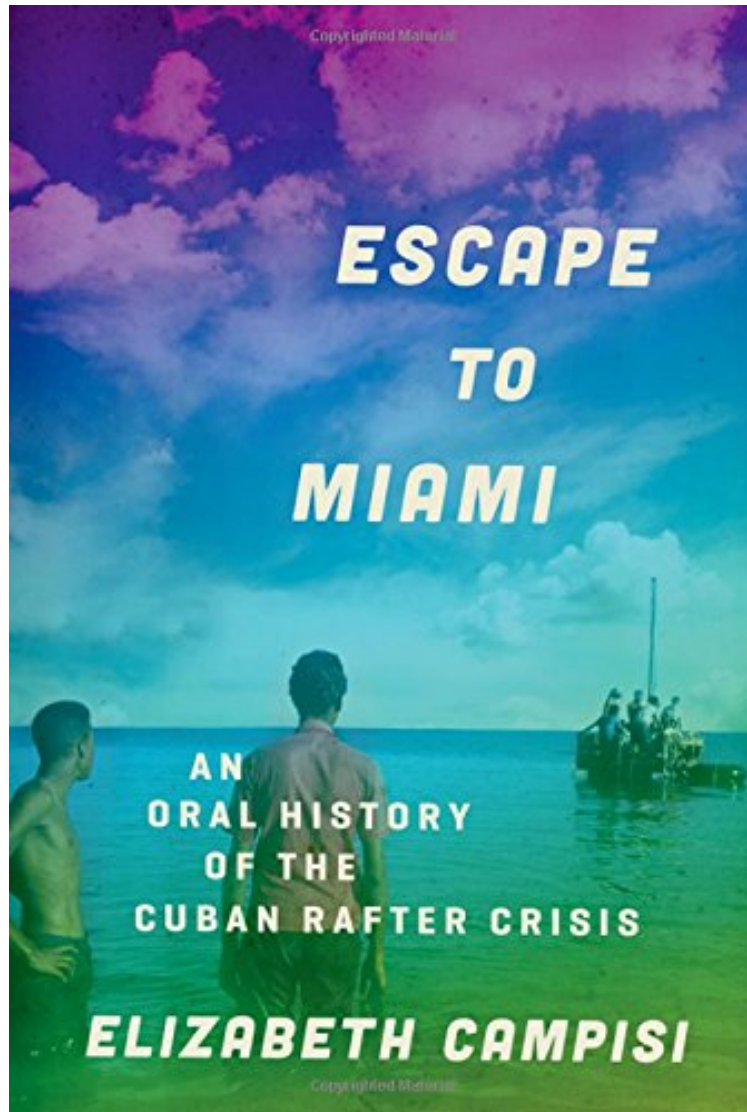


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Escape to Miami: An Oral History of the Cuban Rafter Crisis (Oxford Oral History Series)

Elizabeth Campisi

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Elizabeth Campisi : Escape to Miami: An Oral History of the Cuban Rafter Crisis (Oxford Oral History Series)
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...By Art Sansone An excellent, engaging read through personal stories that gives a political and social context for individuals that decided to leave their country on flimsy rafts in search of liberty in the US by way of Guantanamo and Panama. At times uplifting- how individuals cope with trauma through art and community, at times upsetting- how US policies added to human suffering. These stories offer an important reminder to us that Guantanamo is still open and the US will continue to need to address how we cope with refugees in search of liberty.

While the Naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba is well-known for its infamous prison camp, few people are aware of its prior use as an immigrant detention center for Haitian and Cuban refugees. Beginning in August 1994, the United States government declared that thousands of Cubans who had launched themselves into the Florida Straits on rickety rafts were "illegal refugees" and sent them to join over fifteen thousand Haitians already being held on Guantanamo after fleeing a violent coup in Haiti. *Escape to Miami* recounts the gripping stories of the rafters who were detained in Guantanamo during the 1994-1996 Cuban Rafter Crisis. After working in the camps for a year as an employee of the U.S. Justice Department, Elizabeth Campisi conducted life history interviews with twelve of the rafters, chronicling their departures from Cuba, their rafting trips, life on the base, and their initial experiences in Cuban Miami. Through these remarkable narratives, the book details the ways in which the rafters used creative expression, such as performance and artwork, to cope with the traumas they experienced in the camp. Campisi explores these coping mechanisms, showing that, when people work through individually-traumatic experiences as a group, the new meanings they create during that process can come together to change existing cultures or create new ones. Vivid and engaging, *Escape to Miami* gives voice to the untold stories of Guantanamo. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in policy, Latin American history, and human rights.

About the Author Elizabeth Campisi is Project Coordinator at the Center for Public Health Continuing Education, University at Albany, SUNY.