

Metro

You Don't Have to Live Like a Refugee

With his stunning *Logbook From Guantánamo*, Marcus Ambrose soars to new literary heights

by Steven Almond

In the 35 years since Fidel Castro came to power, the Cuban community in exile has produced a substantial body of literature, ranging from grim prison diaries to ribald accounts of the island before the revolution. These works, in turn, have helped further a struggle that is by now second nature to *el exilio* — the reclamation of a homeland surrendered to tyranny.

To this noble cast of authors, critics can now add the name Marcus Ambrose, who has written a work of stunning immediacy entitled, simply, *Logbook From Guantánamo*. The Miami lawyer, activist, journalist, and three-time candidate for circuit court judge wrote *Logbook* from a unique perspective: that of the only American ever held in captivity at the refugee camps in Guantánamo Bay.

On Halloween Ambrose, host of the week-night program *Cuban Coffee con Marcus Ambrose* on WRHC-AM (1550), traveled to the naval base with a group of journalists, hoping to drum up support for his newly formed group, Guantánamo NO!, and to air a segment of his radio show live from the camps. Instead, he was taken prisoner by the United States military, accused of attempting to incite a riot, held incommunicado, and denied medical care that nearly left him dead. *Logbook* is his account of that grueling, 72-hour imprisonment.

Ambrose was eventually returned to the States. But his anguished and at times illegible scribbles serve as an unprecedented indictment of Castro's Cuba and Clinton's America. The narrative should be of special interest, Ambrose says, to those Americans who still cling to the notion that the scourge of fascism exists only overseas.

The excerpts have been edited slightly for space; brief explanatory notes have been added in brackets where necessary.

Monday, Oct. 31

12:30 p.m.: Arrived. Await ferry, briefing. Press house (cots in small room w/phone and small shared bathroom). Leave personal belongings.

3:00: Arrive Camp "Kilo." Kilo has 41 hunger strikers; water only, began prior

cial spokesman to the press. Adjunct to commander called me a motherfucker.

9:30: Taken by vehicle and boat to Bachelor Officer's Quarters — I feared for my life.

10:00: Armed guard in my room at all times. Didn't sleep well because guard had radio walkie-talkie, light, and his cable TV.

Tuesday, Nov. 1

6:00 a.m.: I got out of bed. Didn't feel well. Argued with guard over no opportunity for phone call. Another guard came and demanded money, credit card for room! Started to get sick; chest pain, nausea, dizzy, dry heaving, chills.

6:30: Demanded ambulance for possible heart attack. Made repeatedly over and over

J.K. Yearick

