

# Candidate Feels Force of Anti-Castro Voters

By CLIFFORD KRAUSS Special to The New York Times

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## The 1992 Campaign

### Candidate Feels Force of Anti-Castro Voters

By CLIFFORD KRAUSS

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MIAMI, Oct. 29 — Every morning before she gets out of bed to campaign for Congress, Magda Montiel Davis says she calms her nerves by tucking her knees into her chest to assume the fetal position.

It is not stage fright that troubles Ms. Montiel Davis, the Democratic challenger to Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Republican identified with

anti-Castro politics. It is the occasional bomb threat phoned into her law office, the reports in the Spanish-language media calling her a "Castrista," and the shouts of "Comunista" by hecklers as she campaigns around Little Havana.

The attacks, Ms. Montiel Davis says, are hurtful to someone who left Havana with her family for Miami at age 8. Now an immigration lawyer, Ms. Montiel Davis is seen as a heretic by

many fellow Cuban-Americans because she is campaigning to loosen the embargo on Cuba to permit a more ample exchange of food, medicine, travel and telephone service. She has also come under fire because her husband, Ira Kurzban, has represented Cuban clients, including the Castro Government's central bank, in American courts.

"Even if I don't win, I'll have won," she said as she toured the middle class

Cuban-American community of Westchester Wednesday night. "This campaign has shown me I have guts."

She says she is as anti-Castro as anyone but argues that a freer exchange between the two countries would flood Cuba with the kind of liberal ideas that would help destabilize the Castro regime.

Ms. Montiel Davis is given only a slim chance of winning, but her campaign has appealed to women who like her advocacy of abortion rights, voters who are impatient with anti-Castro politics in Miami and a minority of mostly younger Cuban-Americans who

are tired of abiding by a political orthodoxy born out of the Bay of Pigs.

"Aren't you tired of being manipulated?" Ms. Montiel Davis says in Spanish in a television commercial. "Have the courage to vote for a change."

The newly redrawn 18th District is 43 percent Hispanic, and the party breakdown favors Republicans over Democrats 51 percent to 39 percent. Strategists for Ms. Montiel Davis say they must win 20 percent of the Hispanic vote and carry everyone else overwhelmingly.

Ms. Ros-Lehtinen, who was elected in special election in 1989 and took 60

percent of the vote in 1990, appears little worried. She is running a traditional campaign, visiting stores and community centers and promising to fight crime, protect social security and destabilize Fidel Castro.

"We must press our efforts to isolate Castro and bring down Communism so Cuba can be free," she told a senior citizens luncheon.

The Congresswoman does not criticize her opponent directly in public appearances, but in an interview she commented: "She can answer to the Cuban-American community. They'll send her a strong message on Tuesday."

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