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“On the Occasion of Civil Disobedience for the Return of Elian to Cuba”

I am speaking and acting today for the immediate return of Elian Gonzalez to his father, his friends, and his motherland. I am here today **as** a mother. I am a mother who lost custody of her children over 25 years ago because of the bigotry and injustice embedded in U.S. laws.

I was declared an unfit mother simply because I loved another woman, because I am a lesbian. My children were taken away from me because my life challenges the control and ownership of women and children in this country.

There are those now in this country who would declare Elian’s father an unfit father. Why? Because he wants to live and raise his children in a country where children are not considered property. Where a child’s right to a free education and to free health care are considered more important than the possession of a few plastic toys. A country that values life more than ownership.

There is much talk of family values in this country. Lip service is paid to the needs of families—in a country where children go hungry every night, go homeless every night.

As someone who has traveled to Cuba, I saw with my own eyes that what the Cubans say is true: “There are many hungry and illiterate children in the world but none of them is in Cuba.”

What would I have given as a mother 25 years ago—what would I give now!—to live with my children in such a land—where neither I nor my children were considered property!

What I can give is this action today—Regresa Elian!

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