

"Youth of Cuba, of Latin America, the future is in your hands, guys!" he said before singing *No creo en el gujas* (I Don't Believe in Never), which calls for hope against all odds. He turned the rocker *Suenos* (Dreams), about a kidnapping victim who longs for home, into a quiet ballad, telling the audience "this song is for everyone who is imprisoned unjustly and seeks liberty!"

"Juanes is so brave," said Gabriela, 14, who went to the show with her sister, mother and grandmother. "He didn't have to come here and confront all of those people who were against him. He did it because he wanted to sing for us. For Cuba."

Many Cubans in Miami watched with conflicted feelings.

"This is supposed to be a concert for peace, but there is no peace without political discourse or democracy in Cuba," said paralegal Blanca Meneses, who lives in the Doral area. "But I feel for the people in Cuba, because, obviously, they are enjoying this from a musical perspective. The truth is, I thought nothing good could come of this concert. But I did think that when Juanes and Bosé were singing 'Libertad, libertad,' that was a positive message to the people of Cuba."

[From the Miami Herald, Sept. 21, 2009]

A DAY AFTER JUANES' SHOW, EMOTIONS IN MIAMI STILL MIXED

(By Jordan Levin)

When Fabio Diaz settled in with 15 members of his extended Cuban family to watch Colombian singer Juanes' historic concert in Havana on television Sunday, he—and the rest of his clan—had mixed feelings. Diaz, who is 35 and came to Miami at 19, thought the event should have been staged in an intermediary location between the island and Miami, as a bridge between the two sides. And he wanted Juanes to speak out directly about freedom in Cuba.

But as he and his family watched the show, which aired live from Havana on three Miami Spanish-language television stations—itsself an unprecedented event—Diaz said his feelings overpowered his doubts. "What I loved was seeing so much of the Cuban people—and I feel completely Cuban—all together for a celebration and not for something political," Diaz says.

Much of Cuban and Latino Miami witnessed that celebration via their television and computer screens. Univision's Channel 23 in Miami drew 220,000 viewers for their five-hour long broadcast, and 140,000 in the U.S. and Puerto Rico watched on the network's website. Telemundo's afternoon-long coverage on its Channel 51 in Miami drew triple their normal viewership, and more than 600,000 visits to their website which streamed the show—more than four times the usual web traffic for that time period.

Emotions in Miami were mixed about the show, which drew hundreds of thousands of people to pack Havana's Plaza de la Revolution on Sunday for performances by 15 artists from six countries. (Spanish singer Miguel Bosé announced from the stage that the audience was 1.15 million).

A protest by exile group which brought a small steamroller to Calle Ocho to run over Juanes' CD's, sparked a counter demonstration that led to physical clashes between the two sides.

Some callers to radio talk shows were happy that, as one woman put it, "young Cubans had the chance to feel happy for one day" while others felt that the joyful image on television was far from Cuban reality. And some exiles remained disenchanting and angry that the show did not directly address problems and repression in Cuba.

"It's not about foreign musicians singing in Cuba," said Esperanza Brigante. "A real

concert for peace should start by denouncing the human rights violations that plague the island . . . because we all know this is a political show."

But there was a strong, often emotional response at seeing the sea of young Cuban faces, and a sense that the concert signaled a turning point in exile attitudes towards Cuba. "I was very moved," said Ana Maria Perez Castro, 38, who came from the island in 1979. She watched the entire concert at home with her 16-year-old son.

Castro said she cried during the performance of Cucu Diamantes, a Cuban-American singer with the U.S.-based group Yerbabuena. "She's also Cuban and she left, and to see her going back and performing for her people in her country was very emotional," Castro said. "I could totally connect to the message to break that barrier, that fear which is what keeps all this old mentality intact."

Juanes, who was traveling Monday and could not be reached, was optimistic that the show had achieved his goal of helping to bring people together.

"Today the hearts of everyone here have changed. Cuba cannot be the same after this event," the multi-Grammy winning rock star told The Herald from Havana Sunday evening. "This event reaffirmed the necessity for all of us to unite. . . . The government of the U.S. has to change and Cuba has to change too. But this show of love and peace and affection is so important for both sides."

Juanes has said hopes to stage the next Paz Sin Fronteras concert on the U.S.-Mexico border between Ciudad Juarez, where violent clashes between drug gangs and authorities have made the most violent city in the world, and El Paso, Texas.

That the Havana concert was allowed to take place at all, with so many people allowed to come together freely in the largest non-governmental gathering since the Pope visited Cuba in 1998, was itself indicative that Cuba was changing, said Fernand Amandi, executive vice-president of Bendixen & Associates, a public opinion research firm which specializes in the Cuban-American community.

"More than anything [the concert] underscores the fact that Cuba and relations with Cuba are undergoing a dramatic transformation that is irreversible," Amandi said. "At the end of the day it is simply a concert . . . But you're beginning to see a loosening of the very rigid, very totalitarian Cuba . . . while it is still totalitarian, the government is probably beginning to recognize that it cannot survive in the future by further isolating itself."

Another change, said Amandi, was an increased acceptance of differing points of view in the exile community, and frustration with the strife that often seems to dominate discussion of Cuba. On radio talkshows people were critical of the media focus on the raucous clash between anti and pro concert demonstrators in Little Havana. Many more Cuban-Americans "that have never agreed with the hardline stance are no longer afraid to speak up," Amandi said.

On the island, Cuba's best-known blogger, Yoani Sánchez, gave an insider's view of the concert in frequent posts on her website, www.desdecuba.com, and her Facebook page. She also uploaded a video of the concert on YouTube—"from the people's point of view" which shows she is wearing an olive green T-shirt with the Generation Y logo.

"I didn't go dressed in white to the concert for peace, but I opted for the color of freedom, which is the color each of us chooses to wear," she said. "The color each one of us chooses—that's the color that I like."

To Diaz, what finally mattered most was that the concert brought the world a glimpse

of Cuba and its hopes to him and to the world. "We could tell that Juanes' goal really was to bring a moment of happiness to the people," he said. "And I think he did this. And I think the world should see 1,150,000 Cubans there who hope for change, for peace, for understanding of dialogue, and that history has to take another direction."

REFORM NEEDED AT UNITED NATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, Ambassador Susan Rice, our Permanent Representative to the United Nations, has emphasized that the U.S. is "taking a new approach" to the U.N. as part of its broader "new era of engagement." Instead of protecting the investment of our tax dollars, instead of conditioning our contributions on real reform, the U.S. has adopted a strategy of "money now, maybe reform later."

At the U.N. General Assembly as it begins its new session this week, there is perhaps no better time to evaluate the effectiveness thus far of this so-called "new approach."

Well, let's see what has resulted. In March, the U.S. sent an observer to participate in the U.N.'s so-called Human Rights Council, which is dominated by dictatorships like China, Cuba and Saudi Arabia, and is notoriously anti-Israel.

Despite U.S. engagement, the Council stayed true to form. What did they do? Overwhelmingly passed five separate resolutions condemning Israel, passing no resolutions condemning human rights violations by the regimes in Iran and Syria, Sudan, Cuba, Zimbabwe or many other dictatorships.

True to form, the Council-appointed panel recently released a report accusing Israel of "war crimes" and "possibly, crimes against humanity" for defending its citizens against rocket and mortar fire from Islamic militants in Gaza.

When it comes to the Council's biases and backwardness, there is no end in sight. There is no change in sight. Yet, the U.S. silently nods and sends millions of our taxpayer dollars, with no questions asked.

There is also UNRWA, the United Nations Relief Works Agency, the U.N.'s discredited, biased agency for Palestinian refugees. This year alone, we have given UNRWA a record of \$260 million. In return, UNRWA continues to compromise its strictly humanitarian mandate by engaging in propaganda against Israel and in favor of Hamas. In fact, UNRWA's head says she doesn't even consider Hamas to be a Foreign Terrorist Organization, and her predecessor even admitted that members of Hamas were on the payroll of UNRWA, saying "I don't see that as a crime."

Deputy Secretary of State Jacob Lew testified before our Foreign Affairs Committee in May, and he said

UNRWA's activities received "the highest level of scrutiny" by the State Department. But we don't even require UNRWA to vet its employees and aid recipients through the U.S. watch lists.

Turning to the U.N. General Assembly, Madam Speaker, it remains silent in the face of intense repression and violent attacks by the Iranian regime against peaceful demonstrators. Yet, in late June, it moved swiftly to condemn and isolate the constitutional democratic government of Honduras for acting in accordance with and in protection of the rule of law.

As for the leadership of the new session of the General Assembly, it's a "who's who" of the world's worst regimes. The President? The former foreign minister of Libya. One of the vice-presidents? From Sudan. A vice chair of the legal committee? Iran. But the U.S. has said nothing as such rogue regimes were selected for leadership positions at the U.N.

Administration officials have said, "The U.N. is essential to our efforts to galvanize concerted actions that make Americans safer and more secure." Libya, Sudan, Iran? Are you feeling secure now?

One of the greatest threats to the security of our Nation and an existential threat to our ally Israel comes from the Iranian regime and its nuclear program. This week, for the first time, a President of the United States will chair a meeting of the U.N. Security Council and will have a golden opportunity to raise the threat of Iran on the world stage. The Council will even be holding a special summit on the general issue of nuclear nonproliferation.

Yet the actions of specific countries such as Iran will be ignored. The U.S. will not use its presidency of the Council this month to push for increased sanctions on Iran or any other regime that pursues nuclear capabilities or sponsors violent extremist groups.

The International Atomic Energy Agency continues to provide nuclear technical assistance to Iran and Syria, and the U.S. remains silent.

The U.N. Development Program is accused of misusing funds in Zimbabwe, in Afghanistan and in North Korea, to name a few, and the U.S. continues to provide them with hundreds of millions of dollars every year in funding. No strings attached.

Madam Speaker, enough is enough. Let's put U.S. taxpayer dollars to work for the American people, and not for the U.N., where the inmates run the asylum.

EXCLUDING AMERICANS FROM HEALTH CARE BASED ON GEOGRAPHY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAN) for 1 minute.

Mr. SABLAN. Madam Speaker, I have been explaining the issue of

health care reform in the United States territories. Here is the problem:

Reform is sorely needed for the American citizens living in the territories, but the bills currently before this House deny us that reform. Under these bills, we will be required to purchase health insurance, but we will not be eligible for the affordability credits that help pay for it, even though more than 40 percent of those in the Northern Mariana Islands live below the poverty level.

CHIP programs will be brought to an end, but without an exchange or public option in the territories, thousands of children will lose coverage. Our Medicaid program will remain criminally underfunded.

Madam Speaker, for health insurance reform to exclude some Americans simply because of geography is wrong. It is discriminatory. And until it is remedied, my colleagues should know this "reform" leaves behind many of those who need it the very most.

A NEW PLAN NEEDED IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, 8 years ago, in the wake of the worst terrorist attack that we have ever faced in America's history, the United States sent troops to Afghanistan. These troops were sent to accomplish a difficult mission, but an achievable mission, and despite the gains that have been made to date, our mission has not been properly resourced and executed.

As such, 8 years later, the fight rages on and terrorists are still plotting to hijack our planes, blow up our bridges, wreak havoc on our cities, and murder innocent people. So the threat has not changed. Afghanistan remains a crucial theater in the war against terrorism and extremists who seek to destroy our way of life, and it deserves our utmost attention and adequate resources.

To his credit, President Obama recognizes that the war in Afghanistan does need these greater resources, but some within his administration and party are advocating a "small footprint" strategy, calling for a reduction in the number of U.S. troops on the ground and a sole focus on al Qaeda only, instead of on the Taliban-led insurgent coalition.

But a "small footprint" strategy did not work in Iraq. What did work was a robust counterinsurgency strategy backed by the surge of American troops. In fact, it was this strong presence of American soldiers in Iraq that encouraged Iraqis to come forward with valuable intelligence, which in turn led to more effective targeting of al Qaeda and other insurgent groups.

My colleagues, this can be done in Afghanistan, but it also must include support from our European allies and other freedom-loving countries who desire to rid the world of terrorism.

General McChrystal, the U.S. Commander in Afghanistan, is advocating an expanded military effort within a new counterinsurgency strategy that focuses on protecting Afghans from the intimidation tactics of the Taliban through a troop surge.

General McChrystal is a highly capable and accomplished officer with extensive counterinsurgency experience. Yesterday he warned that we need more forces within the next year and that without them, our mission in Afghanistan will "likely result in failure."

When it comes to military strategy, we should listen to those who know firsthand what the situation on the ground is in Afghanistan. But, my colleagues, we must also look at the political infrastructure of Afghanistan and be sure its political leaders are representing the best interests of the Afghan people and that political corruption is eliminated.

It is clear that the Afghan military needs our help—and our numbers. But currently there are only 173,000 men in the Afghan army and police. Compare that with Iraq. In that country, which is smaller and less populated, there are over 600,000 Iraqi army and police. Clearly we need to train more Afghan military personnel.

Unfortunately, though, for the past 8 years Afghanistan has not been a properly resourced war. The new strategy proposed by General McChrystal and General David Petraeus is focused on expanding and improving Afghan forces with better training and embedded advisers and forming a true partnership and trust between Afghan units and American units, with the end goal of growing the Afghan army and police to the point where U.S. troops could be reduced dramatically.

But before we put more American troops in Afghanistan, we need a more deliberate plan with the Afghan military that includes participation by our allies and adequate support from the Afghan people and legitimate political leaders.

The reality of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan is that it would take another 2 years to expand Afghanistan's forces to around 300,000 personnel. Experts suggest at least 360,000 Afghan troops and police are needed to adequately fight the counterinsurgency and to effectively police the country's 33 million inhabitants. This is the key to our success.

One thing we must not forget is that a withdrawal at this critical juncture would destabilize Pakistan, an ally in a region of instability and a country in possession of nuclear weapons.

So, my colleagues, we need a new strategy that can work, but this new strategy can work only if we ask for patience from the American people and the knowledge that a mission of this magnitude and importance is not going to be won overnight or from afar. The sacrifices we make overseas now will prevent another 9/11-style attack here at home in the future.