

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at a Cinco de Mayo Celebration

May 3, 2012

Hola, hola! Gracias y bienvenidos. I am honored to welcome you to Cinco de Mayo at the White House. Even though it's only *tres de Mayo*. We just like to get the fiesta started early around here. [*Laughter*]

It is a pleasure to be joined by so many Latinos and Latinas and those who wish they were Latino and Latina. [*Laughter*] I knew you wouldn't miss an opportunity for great music and dancing at the White House, especially with the outstanding Ballet Folklórico from Georgetown University. Give them a big round of applause.

Our great friend Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan and his lovely wife Veronica are here. I'm honored to welcome Hispanic Americans serving at every level of my administration, including Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis. I want to recognize Charlie Gonzalez, chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. As all of you know, Charlie's birthday is on Cinco de Mayo, so don't forget to wish him a *feliz cumpleaños*.

Finally, thank you to the White House Hispanic Summit steering committee for your hard work to engage thousands of Latino leaders across the country this year. Good job. Your work demonstrates that this celebration is all about pride in the heritage and contributions of Hispanics in all aspects of American life.

Cinco de Mayo marks a singular moment in Mexican history. Exactly 150 years ago, General Zaragoza and his ragtag band of patriots made a brave stand against the invading forces of a world-renowned European army. Sounds familiar. And the story goes that after these heroic citizens and soldiers beat the odds and turned back the invaders, General Zaragoza found time to sit down and write a brief note to the war minister. He celebrated the glory of the national army, noting that they never turned their backs. And today we honor their valor.

When the news of the Mexican victory at Puebla reached this house, this country was in the midst of its own struggles. But soon after, the U.S. lent assistance to help Mexico definitively expel the French from their land. And ever since, the United States and Mexico have lived intersecting and overlapping histories. Our two countries share the ties of history and *familia* and values and commerce and culture. And today, we are more united than ever in friendship and in common purpose.

Right now there are more than 50 million Americans of Latino descent, one sixth of our population. You're our neighbors, our coworkers, our family, our friends. You're starting businesses. You're teaching in classrooms. You're defending this country. You're driving America forward.

And for our part, we know that securing our future depends on making sure that all Americans have the opportunity to reach their potential. And that's why we've worked hard over the last 3½ years to create jobs, to make sure you get the care you need when you get sick, to make college affordable for everybody, to ensure that no matter where you are, where you come from, what you look like, what your last name is—even if it's Obama—[*laughter*—]you can make it if you try.

These are victories for Latinos, but they're, more importantly, victories for America. We could not have come this far without you. Of course, there is still plenty of unfinished business, including fixing our broken immigration system. And it is long past the time that we unleash the promise of all our young people and make the "DREAM Act" a reality.

A lot of you remember, over a year ago, we brought the "DREAM Act" to a vote in Congress, thanks to the hard work of many of you. And it passed the House and a majority of votes in the Senate. Unfortunately, we had some on the other side of the aisle that got together and blocked it. But we didn't come this far just to let partisan politics stand in our way.

So we're going to keep fighting for this commonsense reform—not just because hundreds of thousands of talented young students depend on it, but because ultimately, America depends on it. "No" is not an option. I want to sign the "DREAM Act" into law. I've got the pens all ready. I'm willing to work with anybody who is serious to get this done and to achieve bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform that solves this challenge once and for all.

It's worth remembering, America is and always will be a nation of immigrants. We are richer because of the men and women and children who have come to our shores and joined our union. So as we mark Cinco de Mayo, on both sides of the border, we pay tribute to our shared heritage and our future partnership.

We honor what brings us together. We are mothers and fathers of a great generation, and we're going to keep on making sure that our sons and daughters have every opportunity to realize the American Dream. That's what drives me every day. That's what I know drives a lot of you. And I look forward for us making future progress together.

So with that, let's party. Let's have a good time. *Feliz Cinco de Mayo.*

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:12 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S. Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana and his wife Pilar Veronica Valencia Fedora.

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