

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks at a White House Event Celebrating Latin Music

October 13, 2009

Good evening. *Buenas noches*. Welcome to the White House. Tonight we are proud to host the third in a series of evenings celebrating the music that has helped define this Nation and helped define us as a people.

We began this tradition with jazz and country music. And tonight, as we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, we are honored to be joined by some of this country's most successful and innovative performers of Latin music.

I want to thank Marc Anthony, Gloria Estefan, Jose Feliciano, Pete Escovedo, Thalía, Tito El Bambino, Aventura, Los Lobos, and Sheila E. for performing tonight.

I also want to thank Jimmy Smits, Eva Longoria Parker, and George Lopez for joining us, and Maricel Presilla for serving as our guest chef and cooking us all this delicious food. Please give Maricel a big round of applause.

We have some other honored guests tonight: Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis; Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. I want to thank all the Members of Congress here tonight, including—especially the chairwoman of the Hispanic Caucus, Nydia Velázquez. Thank you for coming.

And finally I want to acknowledge somebody that we're all so proud of, our newest Justice of the Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor.

Like our own Latino community, Latin music is not easy to define. Styles like Cuban salsa, Mexican norteno, Puerto Rican reggaeton and Dominican bachata are as vibrant and unique as the places they come from. But although Latin music takes many forms, this spirit of diversity also unifies us. At this—at its heart are the West African rhythms brought by slaves in the Caribbean, the guitars first carried to the New World by Spanish conquistadors. It incorporates the accordions played by German immigrants, the flutes and drums used by indigenous peoples, and the beats born in cities like New York and Miami.

And even though it's constantly evolving and changing, Latin music speaks to us in a language we can all understand: about hope and joy, sorrow and pain, friendship and love. It moves us, and it tends to make us move a little bit ourselves. *[Laughter]*

In the end, what makes Latin music great is the same thing that's always made America great: the unique ability to celebrate our differences while creating something new; to realize that although we may come from different backgrounds and different cultures, what unites us will always be stronger than what divides us. In the words of Gloria Estefan who's here tonight, "The most beautiful things in this country have the flavor of other places."

And so to all of you who are watching this evening, either here or at home, please enjoy some truly global music from some of the most talented artists in the world. I can tell you that the White House West Wing and East Wing—and whatever other wings we have—have been looking forward to this evening for quite some time. Enjoy. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Jimmy Smits, Eva Longoria Parker, and George Lopez.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Latin music, White House celebration.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Anthony, Marc; Escovedo, Pete; Escovedo, Sheila; Estefan, Gloria; Feliciano Garcia, Jose Montserrate; Fines Nevares, Efrain "Tito El Bambino"; Lopez, George; Parker, Eva Longoria; Presilla, Maricel E.; Salazar, Kenneth L.; Smits, Jimmy; Sodi Miranda, Ariadna Thalia; Solis, Hilda L.; Sotomayor, Sonia; Velazquez, Nydia M.

Subjects: Arts : Latin music, White House celebration; Congress : Congressional Hispanic Caucus; Hispanic Heritage Month, National; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justice; Labor, Department of : Secretary.

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