

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 121

Honoring Yoani Sánchez, a courageous blogger and activist for freedom
in Cuba.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 15, 2013

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself and Mr. SIRES) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

RESOLUTION

Honoring Yoani Sánchez, a courageous blogger and activist
for freedom in Cuba.

Whereas Yoani Sánchez has become a prominent voice
through social media for millions of Cubans who reject
the oppression of the Castro regime;

Whereas Yoani Maria Sánchez Cordero was born in Havana,
Cuba, on September 4, 1975, and went on to major in
Spanish Literature at the Pedagogical Institute before
completing a degree in Hispanic Philology at the Univer-
sity of Havana in 2000;

Whereas while working at Editorial Gente Nueva, Sánchez
came to the realization that, like many Cubans, the
wages she earned legally were not enough to support her

family and highly qualified individuals were unable to find sufficient work;

Whereas disenchanted and seeking greater economic opportunities, she moved to Switzerland in 2002 but returned to Cuba in the summer of 2004, discovering her passion for computer science;

Whereas in 2004, Sánchez and a group of like-minded compatriots founded Consenso, a magazine of reflection and debate, and three years later she worked as a web master, columnist, and editor for the website Desde Cuba;

Whereas in April 2007, Sánchez created the blog known as “Generation Y”, which started as an outlet for self-expression but has since found an audience with 500,000 people around the world;

Whereas through her weekly blog posts, tweets, and Facebook updates, Sánchez has provided an unfiltered glimpse into the realities of day-to-day life in Cuba;

Whereas the Castro regime has branded Sánchez as a dissident and, since March 2008, blocked access to her blog from within Cuba, where mobile phones, flash drives, and used laptop computers have become lifelines of communication given economic and government barriers to the Internet;

Whereas Sánchez refused to be silenced and continued to write with the help of friends and volunteer collaborators abroad, who post her entries in solidarity and have translated Generation Y into 20 languages;

Whereas in 2009, she became the first blogger to ever interview United States President Barack Obama, who applauded her efforts to “empower fellow Cubans to express themselves through the use of technology”;

Whereas Sánchez is the recipient of numerous honors and awards for her activism, including the Ortega y Gasset Award for Digital Journalism in 2008, being named one of Time magazine’s 100 Most Influential People in the World in the “Heroes and Pioneers” category for 2008, the Maria Moore Cabot Prize from Columbia University in 2009 for coverage of Latin America, and the International Woman of Courage Award from then Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in 2011;

Whereas Sánchez attempted to travel outside of Cuba on 20 occasions, often at the invitation of universities and book fairs to honor her with awards, but was repeatedly denied the required exit visa;

Whereas in January 2013, the Cuban Government lifted travel restrictions for citizens and issued Sánchez a passport, allowing her to embark on an 80-day international tour, including Brazil, the Czech Republic, Spain, Mexico, and the United States, to share her experiences living under the Castro regime firsthand;

Whereas on her first United States visit, she will meet with Members of Congress in Washington, DC;

Whereas Sánchez intends to return to Havana, where she lives with her husband Reinaldo and their 20-year-old son Teo, and dreams of starting an independent news outlet, saying, “Life has taught me that the wall comes tumbling down only when you push it”; and

Whereas despite violent attacks and protests from Castro supporters and leftists, Sánchez has vowed to never stop writing until the people of Cuba are able to express their views freely, saying, “We Cubans don’t deserve what we are living through. I think Cubans deserve to be citizens

of the 21st century, in all senses, to test the challenges of modernity.”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) honors Yoani Sánchez, a courageous blogger
3 and activist for freedom in Cuba, for her ongoing ef-
4 forts to challenge political, economic, and social op-
5 pression by the Castro regime;

6 (2) joins Sánchez and her fellow activists in
7 looking forward to the day when all Cubans can
8 freely express themselves in public without fear of
9 reprisal; and

10 (3) supports the first amendment rights of all
11 people in the United States, and commends those in-
12 dividuals who have dedicated their lives to protecting
13 and strengthening these rights in the face of adver-
14 sity.

○