

without considering whether they are safe at home.

More than half of transgender youth contemplate suicide due to a lack of support from their family or community. Schools should be places where students can focus on learning, free from fear.

As a single mom of three, I rely on public schools to help my kids mature into thoughtful and confident citizens, and I oppose misguided policies that endanger LGBTQ+ Americans.

I urge all California schools to stand up for trans students and protect the safety of queer youth.

□ 1100

RENAMING FORT GORDON TO FORT EISENHOWER

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

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the formal renaming of Fort Gordon to Fort Eisenhower, a well-known name in history throughout the world.

Located in Augusta, Georgia, this military base has experienced a major transformation over the last 10 years and is widely considered a top-tier installation that will continue to grow, all while training and housing thousands of the best and brightest who serve our country.

As the home of the Eisenhower Medical Center, which provides top-notch healthcare services for our veterans and men and women in uniform, as well as the U.S. Army Cyber Command and the U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence, this renaming is a true representation of President Eisenhower's commitment to science and innovation and his love for the surrounding community that he so frequently visited for fellowship and sport.

A beloved visitor of Augusta, President Eisenhower's deep ties and admiration for the area were well known. My team and I worked side by side with local community members to ensure that if the base was to be renamed, its new name would reflect both the history of our community and the significance of the mission.

President Eisenhower made 45 trips to Augusta—5 before he became President, 29 while in office, and 11 after his first term—taking full advantage of all that our community has to offer, including the world-renowned Augusta National Golf Club, one of his favorite destinations.

President Eisenhower always found time for his faith, as well. At the Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church in Augusta, there is a pew known as the Eisenhower pew. It has a plaque on it where the former President would worship when he was in town.

With a name like Fort Eisenhower and the international renown that comes with it, as well as the critical missions housed there, this military base will endure from now on.

As President Eisenhower's granddaughter Susan Eisenhower stated at the renaming ceremony: "If Dwight Eisenhower were here today, he would be full of heartfelt appreciation for the focus and dedication this community has placed on serving our country and keeping it safe."

I couldn't agree more.

RELEASE OF CUBAN PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, two years ago, thousands of Cubans peacefully demonstrated for their basic rights, and their corrupt rulers responded with a brutal, indiscriminate crackdown.

Maykel Castillo Perez and Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara both helped forge the historic and resurgent pro-democracy movement on July 11. They have been imprisoned ever since. Maykel, a Latin Grammy-winning rapper, coauthored the song "Patria Y Vida," an anthem for the mass demonstrations. Luis Manuel, an Afro-Cuban visual artist, has fought passionately for free expression and against censorship.

Maykel disappeared from public view after being detained without a warrant on May 18, 2021, and a kangaroo court sentenced him to 9 years in prison. The U.N. reports Maykel remains in prison "solely for his prodemocracy activism," enduring inmate threats, solitary confinement, and denied family visits and medical attention. Yet he still rebels however he can. On the anniversary of the July 11 protests, he sewed his mouth shut and tattooed "Patria Y Vida" on his arm. Maykel told friends: "I have enough strength to keep bleeding . . . I prefer with great pride to descend in a coffin than to bow."

Luis Manuel's despicable treatment is compounded by the jarring legacy of anti-Black racism in Cuba. On July 11, he too was arrested after posting a video on his plans to join Cuba's mass democracy demonstration.

Like Maykel, he was tried behind closed doors and thrown in a maximum security prison. Due to abuse, bad medical care, and denial of food and water, Luis Manuel is suffering from extreme weight loss and severe medical issues.

I am grateful the Biden administration granted humanitarian parole to both Luis Manuel and Maykel, but for the Cuban regime, exiling these patriots isn't enough. Their very existence is a threat.

While these cases are egregious, thousands of peaceful prodemocracy protesters have been jailed, tortured, or killed. If we truly intend to live up to our Nation's values, we must work tirelessly to liberate those who continually sacrifice their freedom for others.

As co-chair of the Cuba Democracy Caucus, I proudly join forces with Free-

dom House and Amnesty International to demand justice for Maykel and Luis Manuel through the Defending Freedoms Project.

I intend to use my platform to ensure their unconditional release is a top priority in any discussion of Cuba policy.

I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me.

(Spanish translation of the statement made in English is as follows:)

Hoy me levanto para exigir la liberación inmediata de dos presos de conciencia cubanos. Maykel Castillo Pérez y Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara ayudaron a empezar el movimiento pro-democracia el once de julio.

Ellos están encarcelados desde ese día. Maykel, rapero y ganador del Grammy Latino, es coautor de la canción "Patria y Vida" que fue himno de las protestas.

Luis Manuel es un artista visual afrocubano que ha luchado duro por la libre expresión y contra la censura.

Maykel desapareció de la vista del público tras ser detenido sin orden judicial, y un tribunal irregular lo condenó a nueve años de prisión.

Según el informe de las Naciones Unidas, Maykel sigue encarcelado "únicamente por su activismo a favor de la democracia".

Sin embargo, todavía se manifiesta como puede. En el aniversario de las protestas, se cosió la boca y se tatuó "Patria Y Vida" en el brazo.

El trato despreciable recibido por Luis Manuel se ve agravado por el preocupante legado del racismo contra los Afrocubanos.

También fue arrestado luego de publicar un video sobre sus planes de unirse a manifestaciones masivas por la democracia en Cuba.

Al igual que Maykel, fue condenado y encarcelado atrás de una prisión de máxima seguridad. Luis Manuel a sufrido una pérdida extrema de peso y graves problemas médicos.

Agradezco que President Biden esté ofreciendo libertad humanitaria a Luis Manuel y Maykel, pero para la dictadura cubana exiliarlos no es suficiente. Su propia existencia es una amenaza.

Si queremos estar a la altura de los valores de nuestra nación, debemos trabajar todos los días para liberar a los que sacrifican por los demás. Como copresidenta del Caucus para la Democracia en Cuba, voy a luchar al lado de Freedom House y Amnistía Internacional para demandar justicia para Maykel y Luis Manuel.

Voy a hacer todo lo posible para abogar por su liberación incondicional.

Espero que mis colegas de ambos partidos se unan a mí.

I'd like to share more about these brave patriots, in their own words and those of people who know them well. The following is a letter written by Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara to the Miami Herald, entitled: 'Cuba's authorities have stolen my youth just for speaking my mind'. It was published July 10th of this year, two years after his arbitrary arrest.

I am an artist and a political prisoner in Cuba. I was arrested on July 11, 2021, on my way to a protest in which thousands of my compatriots rose up across the island to demand freedom.

I've been imprisoned ever since.

Last year, I was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of contempt and insult to national symbols, because I used the Cuban flag in a performance in August 2019. This is how the Cuban government views my art. I was tried, alongside my dear friend, the Grammy Award-winning rapper Maykel Castillo—known as El Osorbo—who is now serving a nine-year sentence for similar offenses. My imprisonment is a result of the Cuban authorities' systematic strategy to silence the voices of young people. They have been harassing me for years, arresting me 50 times between 2017 and 2021 and also through defamation, violation of privacy, threats and police beatings. But it wasn't until the historic protest of 2021 that the regime decided to lock me up for a longer period of time so I could no longer communicate with my people.

I'm imprisoned in Guanajay, a maximum-security penitentiary southwest of Havana. Many of my fellow prisoners are serving life sentences for murder. The authorities have separated me from other political prisoners. I share a cell with three others. I'm allowed to talk to other inmates in the hallway, but I'm only taken out to the yard when other prisoners are gone. I should be allowed to spend an hour outside every day, but I'm only let out occasionally at the whim of the guards.

I've lost weight because of the scarcity of food and poor quality of meals. I'm often afraid to eat because the food looks rotten. After I was sentenced in June 2022, the rules for visiting me changed. Now my family can only visit me once a month, instead of twice. No one else is allowed. Even my beloved uncle is banned because of his involvement in activism.

More than 1,800 Cubans, mostly young and Black, were arrested in the protests in 2021. Of these, 897 have been tried, and 777 remain in prison. Many are minors. Some have been sentenced to up to 30 years for sedition. But there's no evidence that the protest was premeditated. It started in a small town outside Havana, when a young boy posted a video on Facebook of people protesting power outages. Within hours, thousands of Cubans decided to take to the streets.

Since that day, hundreds of young Cubans have been trapped behind bars. Every day is the same. Violence is constant. Only one's body changes. Your hair falls out and your face ages prematurely from pain, frustration and sadness. Your friends leave the country. Lovers' caresses are long gone. The soundscape here is always the same. All you hear is the murmur of death slowly approaching. In these harsh conditions, human beings are stripped of their youth. They wander the four square meters of their cells with no sense of future.

I speak as a young man in today's Cuba. We are full of energy and confidence, determined to lend our talents to the quest for a truly democratic and free Cuba. The regime that has survived for 64 years on the Caribbean's largest island is once again trying to crush a generation, just as it crushed and erased those who preceded us.

Today every young Cuban is a political prisoner. A censored artist. An exile inside and outside Cuba. Even if you're an accomplice of the system, you will inevitably be crushed like the others, because to be young is to be daring and reckless, eager to bring change to the world. It means fighting for love, dreams and utopia. But these qualities are considered crimes in Cuba, and that condemns us all to martyrdom.

Today, as I approach the age of 35 behind bars, I reflect on the loss of youth under a dictatorial system. Forced to survive political violence, we all lose 90% of our physical and intellectual productivity. Only 10% is left for creative and life-affirming pursuits.

On behalf of the young Cubans locked up in the island's horrible prisons, I appeal to people of conscience around the world to support our struggle to liberate ourselves and our country. All we did was demand the right to choose our political future and to speak our minds.

No one should have to give up their youth for such a just cause.

Next, I'd like to share a story written by Jyllyssa Lopez and published January 6th, 2023 in Rolling Stone magazine detailing Maykel Osorbo's life and current detention. The article is titled "Two Years After 'Patria Y Vida.' Cuban Rapper Maykel Osorbo Remains in Jail."

Maybe it was the excitement of post-lockdown celebrations or the simple triumph of getting through the worst of the pandemic, but the energy felt different at the 22nd annual Latin Grammys back in November of 2021. Thousands of people, dressed in shimmering gowns and slick suits, had gathered at MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas for the awards ceremony. At the end of the night, when it was time for the anticipated Song of the Year category, the air turned electric as people waited to hear who might take home the trophy—maybe be a massive pop name like Camilo or Rauw Alejandro, who were both nominated and sitting in the audience.

Instead, the award went to "Patria Y Vida," a song that started out in a small studio in Miami and spiraled across the streets of Cuba in 2021. The title, which inverts the popular Fidel Castro-era slogan "patria o muerte," took on such force that it became a common chant during the unprecedented demonstrations that swept the island that summer. Despite its political impact, no one expected "Patria Y Vida" to win in Las Vegas, particularly because of how traditional the Latin Recording Academy can be. Five of the song's performers—Yotuel Romero, Descemer Bueno, Eliexer "El Funky" Márquez Duany, Alexander Delgado Hernández, and Randy Malcom Martínez—appeared onstage, shocked and tearful, to accept the award. But there was one artist notably absent: the rapper Maykel Osorbo.

At that precise moment, Osorbo was sitting in Kilo 5 Y Medio, a maximum-security prison in the rural, tobacco-rich region of Pinal del Río, Cuba, far from the glamour and glitterati of the awards show. By then, he'd been jailed for six months, after authorities detained him on accusations that included assault, resistance, public disorder, and "propagating the epidemic," all of which outside lawyers supporting him say are false charges. His family heard from him only sparingly, and they worried about his health, which had deteriorated since his arrest.

Since the late 2010s, Osorbo—whose real name is Maykel Castillo Pérez—had gained attention on the island as one of the most public figures of Movimiento San Isidro (MSI), a collective made up of dissident artists and intellectuals in Havana. He was also known for his bold, outspoken music, which caught the ear of Romero. Romero had begun working on "Patria Y Vida" in October of 2020, and he'd been collaborating with other artists who, like him, had moved to the U.S. from Cuba. Still, he felt the track—which was inspired by the political anthems of nueva trova legend Silvio Rodríguez—needed the voices of people still living on the island. He asked Osorbo to be part of the song,

aware that the music risked provoking the Cuban government; the lyrics call for freedom and mention several activists by name. Bus Osorbo wasn't afraid.

He and his close friends El Funky recorded verses in secret, sending them to Romero through WhatsApp. Over the next few months, they watched in awe as the song caught on in Cuba, becoming a rallying cry as unrest started brewing in the country. Frustrations had been mounting as Cubans faced food and supply shortages something many saw as a direct product of government mismanagement and the effects of the pandemic—though others, including Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel, pointed to the effects of the U.S. embargo. Additionally, there was a tightening of restrictions during lockdown that reflected the Cuban government's broader limits on civil liberties. Osorbo continued working with MSI, often using his platform to speak out and demand justice for people who'd been detained for expressing themselves. His rising popularity and outspokenness made him a frequent police target and, according to the humanitarian organization Prisoners Defenders, he was arrested and beaten multiple times before he was thrown in prison in May 2021.

Meanwhile, tensions in Cuba boiled over in July that year, resulting in rare nationwide protests. Many of them were set to the sound of "Patria Y Vida"—a sign that even if Osorbo was locked away, the messages he'd gotten out were still resonating with people.

After the Latin Grammys that November, there was a faint sense of hope: Perhaps such massive international attention would eventually mean Osorbo's release. In February 2022, the United Nations Group on Arbitrary Detention responded to a complaint, spearheaded by Prisoners Defenders, and determined that Osorbo had been "persecuted and arbitrarily detained for exercising his fundamental rights to freedom of opinion, expression, assembly, association and participation." They demanded his release, and Osorbo's friends organized to fight for him. El Funky, who moved to the U.S. in 2021, released music lambasting Cuban authorities for imprisoning artists, and Osorbo's partner, the activist Anamely Ramos, spoke out at demonstrations and rallied supporters on social media.

But in June 2022, a court in Havana made its final decision. Osorbo was sentenced to nine years in prison; artist Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, a close MSI associate, was sentenced to five. Javier Larrondo, the president of Prisoners Defenders, believes some of the recognition Osorbo got for his music did help. In addition to winning Song of the Year, "Patria Y Vida" also secured the award for Best Urban Song, making Osorbo a two-time Latin Grammy winner—and, perhaps, lightening his sentence. "Given the way crimes were fabricated the way they were for Maykel, if he'd been hidden in anonymity, he perhaps could have even had a 12- or 13-year sentence dropped on him," Larrondo says.

Still, the sentence was a painful one for him and those who'd been following Osorbo's case. Osorbo will turn 40 this August; he'll be almost 50 by the time he's released. People have continued to denounce his imprisonment: Last month on Christmas Eve, the Argentine-Venezuelan singer Ricardo Montaner called for his liberation. Others, like El Funky, want to make sure Osorbo isn't forgotten. "We're going to keep making music, keep speaking up, until Maykel is free," he says.

Maykel Osorbo grew up in Old Havana as an only child. When he was 10 years old, his mother left in the dead of the night, part of a swell of Cubans who left the island after the 1994 Maleconazo protests that led then-

president Fidel Castro to briefly allow citizens to leave the island voluntarily. Osorbo was largely on his own after that.

"Maykel had a hard childhood," says El Funky, who met Osorbo in the neighborhood as a kid. "He had to become a man at a really young age and went through really difficult things." They stayed friends throughout the years, and they always had a love of music in common. They both wanted to be performers, but El Funky had to put his career ambitions on hold in 2005, after his first child was born, to focus on opening a café with his father.

In 2013, Osorbo came knocking on his door. "He said, 'Compadre, you have talent, we've known each other for years. There are all these music festivals in Cuba with prizes. I have a studio where we can work without a problem,'" El Funky remembers. At first, El Funky told Osorbo that he was done with music, but Osorbo had a way of inspiring. Within a few months, they were releasing songs together and independently, building recognition as artists in the neighborhood. They rapped about life in Cuba, and invariably what they were releasing was political. "I've always said that anyone who writes songs about everyday realities in Cuba is talking about the situation in Cuba," he says. "So, without meaning to, we were making protest music."

Osorbo's work took on a radical urgency in 2018, when Cuba proposed Decree 349, a law that prohibited any artistic expression in both public and private spaces without approval by the government's Ministry of Culture. Authorities were also given the power to shut down artistic activity that they deemed as containing "sexist, vulgar or obscene language." Many artists and poets spoke out against the law, many of them eventually creating the MSI collective. Osorbo took on a central role alongside Otero, who was arrested dozens of times for staging demonstrations and art performances. Osorbo's music became more direct than ever, filled with lacerating critiques of the government. In late 2020, he teamed up with El Funky for "Diazcarao," a heated, blistering rap that directly took aim at president Diaz-Canel. El Funky believes that song is what started to rattle the government, just before "Patria Y Vida" exploded into the world.

Once they'd recorded their parts in "Patria Y Vida," Osorbo and El Funky decided to take a huge risk by shooting a few scenes for a music video Romero was planning. They worked with the video director Anyelo Troya, who pawned off one of his cameras to get better equipment for the shoot, and snuck into an abandoned building in the dead of night. The Cuban government had enforced lockdown curfews, and they'd all face fines and even jail time if they got caught. They had three friends stand watch the entire night, switching off so they could sleep, and featured Otero in the video as well. Once it was finished, the video made an impact quickly, garnering one million views within three days.

"People who know me and my work were like, 'Now you really went crazy.' I knew there was going to be a fallout," El Funky remembers. Ramos says that shortly after the song came out, she heard people starting to use the phrase 'patria y vida' casually on the street, and she noticed neighbors playing the song in public. She says that she was stunned by how much other Cubans were connecting to "Patria Y Vida," but she was concerned about Osorbo. "All of us knew when we saw the reaction it got that there were going to be consequences. We know the authorities weren't going to forgive something like that."

Cuba, at the time, had been ramping up arrests on artists in particular. A 2021 report

from the international NGO Freemuse, which has been documenting and researching incidents of censorship and suppressing freedom of expression, showed that Cuba's rappers are some of the most persecuted rap artists in the world. Prisoners Defenders outlined more than 120 "repressive police acts" committed against Osorbo between 2019 and 2021, including beatings and arbitrary detentions. In one incident, he was picked up by police when he was at a park with his two-year-old daughter, who was left alone after authorities took him away.

Clashes that intensified that April ultimately led to his arrest. According to Prisoners Defenders, Osorbo had been walking to MSI headquarters when he saw police harassing a woman on the street. He attempted to intervene, and police moved to arrest him instead, despite not having a reason. By then, Osorbo had become a beloved figure in town, and neighbors quickly jumped in and helped him escape. They surrounded police officers and screaming at them to let Osorbo go, showing the mass support he had from Cubans. (An image of Osorbo holding one handcuffed arm up in the air after evading arrest went viral.) Almost a month later, on May 18, authorities picked him up again, handcuffing him shirtless and without shoes on while he was at home. Like many of the previous arrests, this one was made without an arrest warrant or clear charges against him. He's been held ever since.

El Funky was detained at one point as well, but ultimately let go. "I'm not the type of person they were going to arrest," he says. "I've done stuff, don't get me wrong, and I'm a person who has a lot of support, but I don't have a personality like Maykel and Luis Manuel. These guys are leaders—natural leaders. When they thought of things, what they'd come up with was so ingenious that it was a danger to the state."

In addition to his work with Prisoners Defenders, Larrondo is a singer who's played the most renowned Venues in Spain and several other parts of the world. He's performed with the legendary Celia Cruz and sang on an album alongside artists such as Gloria Estefan and Alejandro Sanz. He understands the value of freedom of expression intimately. His interest in Osorbo's case came from his experiences both as a musician and a defender of human rights, and he's been working with the hope of finding organized, systematic ways for the artistic community to show solidarity with artists who are oppressed around the world.

"Patria Y Vida" was the main storyline at the 2021 Latin Grammys, and the song's two wins made headlines around the world. There was some inevitable controversy, with skeptical fans and musicians arguing that "Patria Y Vida" reflected a Western, anti-left political agenda and noting that the government organization USAID has used Cuba's hip-hop scene in the past as a way to infiltrate the Cuban government. (Some Cuban rappers Rolling Stone spoke to have countered that regardless of what the U.S. has done, Cuba's artists and hip-hop scenes have their own voice.) But more broadly, the Latin Recording Academy was applauded for swaying from its more risk-averse tendencies and recognizing a song with a strong social message.

And then, as the months passed, Osorbo's story largely faded from mainstream coverage—and, seemingly, from the Latin industry and Latin Grammy's consciousness. Osorbo, who remains behind bars, wasn't mentioned at the 2022 awards ceremony this past November, and El Funky says no one contacted him about other efforts to raise awareness. However, he has kept writing music about Osorbo and other political pris-

oners in Cuba, refusing to back down. Artists such as Romero have also spoken out; he's currently working on a documentary about "Patria Y Vida."

Larrondo believes that cases such as Osorbo's illustrate a violation of fundamental rights, and that limits on artistic expression—like other human-rights violations—require bigger, broader movements in response. "In the music industry, as well as in the sports industry, there isn't a systemic process to show solidarity with oppressed artists or athletes," he says. "I say this thinking of the Iranian case of the athlete sentenced to death. I haven't seen soccer players, or soccer clubs, express themselves against that sentencing in a big way, doing things like organized moments of silence at stadiums, the same way I haven't seen artists defending the freedom of Maykel Osorbo in a massive way."

He adds: "The fact that some artists have stood up for Maykel is good, but without some coordination or a major response from the collective art world to support a Latin Grammy winner, and a constant, permanent message—without that, you can't have that person set free from prison. Any artist in any regime could suffer things similar to Maykel."

Ramos worries constantly about Osorbo's medical condition in prison. She says he went through a critical period in which skin lesions and boils appeared on his skin, perhaps a result of contracting scabies or an infection in prison. Though he's since stabilized, she wonders if the symptoms could be a sign of cancer, and she believes the Cuban government is actively withholding medical attention—something it has been accused of doing with prisoners in the past. Beyond that, she says Osorbo's mood has dipped, especially after the holidays. "He's really not doing well, and he's been that way for a long time," she says. "Especially these days toward the end of the year, which is a tough time that you typically spend with family."

Despite all this, Osorbo recently managed to share an audio recording, which was posted on his social media accounts. It's a message of gratitude to his family, his friends, and above all, those who have supported him. "Those supporters have been there for me at all times, they have made me grow," Osorbo says. "They have made me leave behind who I was and they've made me who I am."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida will provide the Clerk a translation of her remarks.

HONORING COMMANDER JAMES CHRISTIAN DUNCAN

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

Mr. EZELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Commander James Christian Duncan of the 31st Combat Training Squadron of the United States Air Force.

Lieutenant Colonel Duncan joined the Air Force in 2003 and trained at Columbus Air Force Base where he finished with distinction, flying both the T-6 and the T-38.

He has a distinguished training career, training other pilots on both the F-15E and the F-35. Before the 31st was activated in April of 2021, Duncan served as commander of Detachment 1 of the 29th Training Systems Squadron.