



Emilio Estefan
Producer, Songwriter
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Emilio Estefan: Thank you very much. What a big day and what a big week to have this lunch for the moment that we live. But before I start, I want to thank Ocean Gardens [sounds like] for sponsoring this event and AT&T, because otherwise he's going to kill me, he told me like 15 times, that he should not pay for lunch. And Freddie, thank you so much for buying all the books. You're broke now. I appreciate that.

I'm not really a good speaker. I'm just a producer that makes music, and when I talk, I talk from my heart. And I feel that this is so important, you've been doing this for so many years, because I feel that a leadership is something that we needed for so many years for people to know that we are together, and we are going to lead definitely a fight. And somebody asked me, what is a leader? I remember when President Obama came to my house, a lot of people were thinking, why are you bring [indiscernible] he's Democrat and he's a Republican, [indiscernible]. To me, what's important is I'm not a Democrat or a Republican. I'm just a Latino that likes to talk to any president that comes to the White House to mention how important we are in the United States and what a contribution we make to this country, and I think that was important for me.

Even I produced so many events in the White House, all the way from Argentina, Spain, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and everything, I felt proud. Every moment I was there, I was proud that I was listening to Latin music in the White House and it was important for me.

I was 11 years old when I listened to my mom and dad talking in Cuba, and I heard them say we're going to be [indiscernible] to come to this country. And I made a decision to leave Cuba. I told my mom, "I want to leave." And she says, "If you leave, maybe

I'm never going to see you again." So, I became a man when I was 11 years old and it made me definitely grow up in an incredible way. Including, you know, when I hugged my mom, she said, "I'm not doing this for me. I'm doing this for you. You have to live in a free country." And definitely, I made the right choice.

Why I made the right choice? I remember when I got to Spain, I had my mom, I left for Spain, I was crying on the plane going all the way from Havana to Spain, and I remember when I got there, I held my dad, my dad came with me, and I told my dad, "I don't know if I made the right decision. Maybe we'll never see our family again." But I knew I was the last chance to get my family out of Cuba. And I remember it was the first time I felt cold, because you know in Cuba is of course tropic and there was always like a hot climate. And I remember I was crying and crying, and what I remember 45 years later, I came from Prague in a private plane with Gloria, my daughter, and I started walking in the corridor and I told Gloria, "I need to stop for a minute." She said, "Why?" I said, "This is the same hall that I walked with my dad 45 years ago." And when I walked down, it was an incredible emotion. When I saw that I was leaving and I accomplished one of my dreams, I saw my daughter smiling, I knew I made the right decision coming to the United States.

I feel Latinos make such contributions to this country which we should be so proud. So proud. Even with what's happening in Arizona, we don't have to be afraid. We don't need to be ashamed. I still -- when I'm in a hotel and somebody knocks on the door and I tell them, "I'm going to leave in 45 minutes," and they tell me, "I don't speak Spanish, sir." "I'm speaking English with you now. What are you talking about?" I feel because we have an accent or you have a last name that is Latino, you shouldn't be afraid and you should be proud, very proud, because we definitely make a great contribution to this country including who could've said that Jose Hernandez was an astronaut that played my music in the space, *Mi Tierra*. They could have said that 25 years ago and said, "Don't put a Latino driving a rocket, maybe he'd land in another place." And who could've said we'd have Bob Menendez who's in the Senate defending also every single day the Latino voice? Or who could've said we have Rosie Rios signing the \$100 bills now? I mean, the makes us very proud.

What I'm saying to you, even AT&T where the chairman is a de la Vega and you have McDonald's that is headed by a Cuban guy and you have AARP and like so many companies, the chairmen of all these companies are Latinos and these are moments of pride, and I feel that it's something that we need to tell to the world. I think what's happening in Arizona, definitely it's protecting Latinos in a different way. Why? Because everything you see is related to being criminals, and we do a lot of -- and we don't make a contribution to this country, and I feel that's certainly wrong. I think we have to suppose [sounds like] what we accomplish, we have to realize we live in the best country in the whole world, and you know, I think it's time to show the world what we accomplish. I think what happened in Arizona definitely pushed a wrong button, because for many years I've been talking to everybody, explaining to people, there's no difference between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans and Colombians and Cubans. We're all the same. We're a big family.

You know, going to [indiscernible] I remember the first time I saw the Grammy telecast in my house, I said, "Oh my God, I hope one day I will be able to attend the Grammy ceremony." And then afterwards, maybe three years later, I was sitting on the first row, nominated for a Grammy. And then, for many years I've been there in the ceremony, and I said, "My God, definitely your dreams can come true." I mean, so many things happened in my life that I have to be blessed, and it's important to find what we accomplish, it's important to have the pride to be Latinos. That kid that came to this country looking for freedom, I accomplished that. I never came looking for any opportunities, but you know, we come to work, and we definitely come to work, and a lot of us accomplish that.

I want to thank you so much for coming to this incredible lunch. And be sure that companies like Budweiser and AT&T keep doing this because we need you guys to make sure that we are promoting our culture. And it's a moment of pride. It's a moment that -- who could've said that a kid that was a refugee got the president of the United States in my house or could've had this incredible award today. I think my mama is going to be very proud. So, thank you very much. Thank you.

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