

Ambassador Costos' Remarks
Independence Day Celebration
June 27, 2015



Señores y señoras - ¡bienvenidos a nuestra celebración del día de la independencia!

Two hundred and thirty-nine years ago, America's founders declared the birth of a new nation. They did so based on a revolutionary set of ideas: that we are all created equal; that we are free to govern ourselves; and that each of us is entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

And it is on Independence Day, our nation's birthday, that we think deeply about what it means to be American. We reflect on our responsibility to live up to the legacy of freedom our forefathers set out for us. And we take a moment to appreciate our ability to worship, to speak our minds, and to seek opportunity, without fear or oppression.

It is a day when we salute those who continue to ensure that our freedoms are not only cherished and protected at home, but find purchase in the darkest corners of a world still vulnerable to tyranny and intolerance. Above all, it is a day to salute those whose sacrifice renews the promise of our proud nation. To the members of the U.S. military here among us tonight, we thank you for your service, your patriotism, and your selfless commitment to the values that make our country truly great.

Independence Day is also a celebration of our nation's diversity. Of our foundational truth that it is not your family's origins, your last name, or your religion that defines you as American – but instead an abiding belief in a set of ideals.

Today I am particularly proud to be an American because yesterday we took another step towards perfecting our union when the United States Supreme Court reaffirmed one of our most basic ideals; that all Americans are equal under the law. The right to marry is a fundamental right for the first time in American history. As President Obama said, yesterday's court decision is the consequence of the countless small acts of courage of those who stood up, who came out and families who loved their children no matter what. Together we slowly made an entire country realize that love is love. Ten years ago Spain took that same step and today we are proud to join you.

But it is not enough to reflect on our successes. This celebration is also a call to continue our commitment to protecting hard fought advances toward equality and justice, while continuing to reach for those ideals.

The United States is not free of serious challenges; we often fall short of our founders' exacting vision...but it is in our determination to recognize our failings, grow, and find a better path that the true source of the United States' strength as a nation can be found.

It helps immeasurably to have barriers shattered in the most public way, as President Obama has achieved when he became the first African American to sit in the White House, twice. Our upcoming election offers the chance to set a new milestone, with a woman and a Hispanic American atop the list of current favorites to lead our nation.

At other times, it is the less obvious changes that move us closer to living up to our promise. 2015 marks the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act – a landmark civil rights law that seeks to ensure that discrimination and lack of accommodation does not block the path of opportunity for millions of our citizens. It does not take much to improve access for the many. For example, you'll note we have included closed captioning on the big screens tonight to ensure the hearing impaired are equally able to enjoy our ceremony.

Finally, this year we pay tribute to New York City – let's hear it for New York!! What better way to celebrate the richness of our nation than to showcase one of the world's most multicultural and emblematic places.

Like Madrid, New York is a world class destination, and the ties between these two vibrant capitals – in business, tourism, culture, and gastronomy – run deep. This evening, we celebrate the best of both by coming together under the Castilian sky in this beautiful historic venue, to the sounds of Broadway and the beats of one of New York City's hottest DJs.

Many people have contributed to helping make tonight happen. Michael and I, Kris and Denise, and our entire Embassy would like to thank the City of Madrid, Conde Duque, and all of our partners who helped make this event so spectacular. We are also honored that many distinguished friends and dignitaries, from the Spanish government, the armed forces, the business community, and civil society, could be here with us this evening. Tonight we are celebrating the work that we do together every day to advance common goals in promoting trade and investment, job creation, security and defense, travel and tourism, entrepreneurship, a better outlook for our future leaders, and so much more. The ties between us have never been stronger.

Let me emphasize that I could not be more proud to celebrate America's birthday here in Spain, a country that was among the first to recognize our nation's independence, and with whom the United States has long enjoyed a deep and abiding partnership. The Spaniards and Americans standing behind me this evening represent the multiple facets of our work together in support of shared goals.

Because of this bond, I find it particularly moving to see our flags presented together tonight - our countries' colors held aloft by men and women who represent the thousands of Spanish and American troops standing shoulder to shoulder across the globe, protecting our common values. Let me just say that America is grateful to have a partner, ally, and friend like Spain.

May God Bless America, and Viva España!

Retire the colors!