

The Lessons of Venezuela

by Gary Fouse



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I am a huge fan of Spanish language music. One of the reasons for that is what I consider a serious decline in the quality of American music, which I won't go into. One of my favorite Latin artists is Marco Antonio Solis of Mexico. Last night, I happened to catch a video of him performing at the annual music festival in Viña del Mar, Chile this week. The festival of Viña del Mar is the largest and most famous such festival in Latin America. While performing, Solis spoke between songs of the Latin American countries, from which people were watching the festival on television. He then added Venezuela, *"Nuestro amado Venezuela, hoy mas que nunca."* (Our beloved Venezuela, today more than ever.)

One cannot help but feel sadness and pity for the people of Venezuela in light of what has happened there in recent years, and which came to a head this past week when the government of Nicolas Maduro, the successor to Hugo Chavez, closed the country's borders with Brazil and Colombia to block

international convoys of food and medicine to the people who are badly undernourished. Venezuelan National Guard troops actually [opened fire](#) and killed protesters at border crossings as well as other towns where protests broke out. In one poignant [scene](#), a protester spoke to a group of female National Guard soldiers, imploring them to do the right thing and join the protesters. One woman was seen weeping as others hung their heads. Meanwhile, gangs of thugs, called "[colectivos](#)" ride around on motorcycles, armed with guns and clubs, their faces covered, terrorizing those who would oppose the regime.

Venezuela, with its vast oil supplies, should be one of the wealthiest countries in the Western hemisphere. Instead, socialism and the dictatorship needed to implement it have reduced the country to the point where it is not only an economic basket case with an undernourished population, but an international pariah as well. As we write, Maduro is clinging to power after the National Assembly voted to recognize Juan Guaidó as the legitimate president. The country is on the brink of civil war.

Meanwhile, in the US, the Democrat party is in the process of being taken over by radical young leftists who are calling for a massive shift to socialism, seemingly oblivious to the failed example playing out before their eyes in Venezuela, not to mention Cuba, Nicaragua, North Korea, and the old Soviet Union.

There is one other aspect of this story that must never be forgotten.  Ever since the late dictator Chavez took power, a trail has been blazed by Hollywood A-listers, who have traipsed down to Caracas to lend their moral support to the socialist regime. After the death of Chavez, these same personalities have continued to visit and give their support to Maduro. The list includes Danny Glover, Sean Penn, Harry Belafonte, Michael Moore and Oliver Stone. It didn't matter

that Chavez and Maduro were arresting political opponents and shutting down newspapers. It didn't matter that the country's small Jewish population was being singled out for persecution by the government over its perceived support for Israel while the government was supporting the Palestinians. It didn't matter that Venezuela was allowing radical Islamic forces to gain a foothold on its territory. It didn't matter that people were being reduced to eating out of garbage cans. It didn't matter that Venezuela had reverted to being a dictatorship after so many years of progress towards democracy in Latin America. The Glovers, the Penns, the Moores, the Stones, and the Belafontes never wavered in their support of this odious regime that was thumbing its nose at our own country. The photographs of these fools posing with Chavez and later Maduro are readily