

Spanish Prime Minister gives inspiring speech at USC during historic state visit

Prime Minister of Spain Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón meets with USC Dornsife dean and faculty during a visit to USC where he gives a President's Distinguished Lecture to an enthusiastic audience.

By Susan Bell | October 2, 2018

CALIFORNIA CULTURAL AND HISTORIC TIES with Spain stretch back almost 500 years to the Spanish colonization of Nueva California in the 16th century. So, last week's visit to the Golden State by Prime Minister of Spain Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón — the first by a sitting Spanish head of government — was a historic occasion. This was especially true for Trojans, as Sánchez, fresh from his address to the United Nations Assembly earlier in the week and a meeting with California Governor Jerry Brown, made time to visit USC on Sept. 28 to deliver a President's Distinguished Lecture.

Sánchez' inspiring speech moved the packed crowd of students, faculty and alumni in Bovard Auditorium on USC's University Park Campus to a standing ovation.

"A powerful voice for the powerless"

Michael Felix, president of the USC Alumni Association, introduced Sánchez, noting that while we live in times of great political debate worldwide, listening to different points of view is at the heart of USC's mission.

Describing Sánchez' visit to USC as "a homecoming," Felix said the Spanish prime minister is "a good and long-standing friend of the university" as well as "a powerful voice for the powerless."

Prime Minister Sánchez, who is secretary-general of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, was sworn into office on June 2, 2018. Although he has led Spain for only four



Prime Minister of Spain Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón speaks to USC students, faculty and alumni during his historic visit to California.
Photo by Steve Cohn

months, he has already made headlines worldwide after appointing a cabinet that is nearly two-thirds female.

Sánchez reminded students that they are "the change makers and the leaders of [their] own time." He urged them to avoid complacency by getting involved, telling them they have a responsibility to act in service of the common good.

"Above all, do not take injustice as something acceptable," he said. "Never let anyone take away your desire to shape and change the world and seek to better it."

Noting that if previous generations had not questioned and pushed back, we would not enjoy the freedom, prosperity and technological and medical advances that we do today, Sánchez told students not to allow themselves to be intimidated by the challenges their generation faces.

"You will be the generation that will cure

horrible diseases," he said. "You will code an artificial intelligence that has human values. You will slow down global warming. You will stop indiscriminate violence against women, and you will eradicate poverty."

A free and democratic society

Sánchez said that despite great historical struggles, including a bloody civil war followed by a brutal dictatorship that condemned thousands of Spaniards to death and exile, Spain eventually found its way to a free and democratic society. The country was one of the first to legalize gay marriage and pass a comprehensive law against violence against women.

"Dear friends," he said, "today I am proud to show you a Spain ... that even in the worst of the economic crisis did not get carried away by a message of hatred and division," he said.

An economist, Sánchez also expressed his belief that wealth disparity must be addressed to ensure democracy continues. "An unequal society is a divided and fragile society. We have learned that liberal democracy needs to help channel the wealth that it creates."

Noting Spain's presence in California for almost five centuries, he paid tribute to Los Angeles for its vibrant language and culture.

"This great state and this great city represents, in my view, all the best of this great country, the United States," he said. "What gives me so much hope, is that we meet here today after 400 years, with so many of the same shared goals and values."

President Kersti Kaljulaid speaks to USC students at Town and Gown

The Estonian President spoke about her country's digital future to the USC community.



Kersti Kaljulaid *Photo courtesy of Estonian Foreign Ministry via Wikimedia Commons*

By Catharine Malzahn | October 3, 2018

KERSTI KALJULAI, ESTONIA'S YOUNGEST and first female president, spoke at USC on Wednesday about Estonia's shift to a digital society. The country has turned to digital platforms that allow Estonians to pay taxes online and send encrypted emails.

"Two percent of GDP is saved simply from signing electronically," President Kaljulaid said. "99 percent of Estonia's transactions are done online."

During her term as president, she has done a significant amount of work to make Estonia one of the leading countries in the digital world. Estonia's digital identification system has revolutionized the way people live.

"When a baby is born, the baby's health

is put into the e-health platform and the baby's digital ID is formed. You can register for kindergarten queues, name the baby, and more right from the maternity ward," Kaljulaid explained.

She also stressed the importance of women having access to social services, especially if they are raising children and do not have the time or ability to access these services in a traditional sense. However, convenience is not the only major focus for this system; Kaljulaid also emphasized security. In Estonia, data is regulated. The country has created a legal space, and citizens' data belongs to them.

"It's a human right to be safe," Kaljulaid said. "Digital is always safer than paper. With digital platforms, you always know

who read your profile. Do you know who read your paper medical file?"

International relations student Elizabeth Shepherd attended the lecture and agreed with Kaljulaid's shift to a more digital society within Estonia.

"I think it could work because the size of her country is small so it would be easy to test it out," Shepherd said. However, she does not see the United States being able to incorporate these changes, at least right now. "The transition would prove to be unsuccessful in the end."

Above all, Kaljulaid said she believes that digital platforms provide more access to job opportunities.

"Digital makes the job market more equal and more accessible," she said.