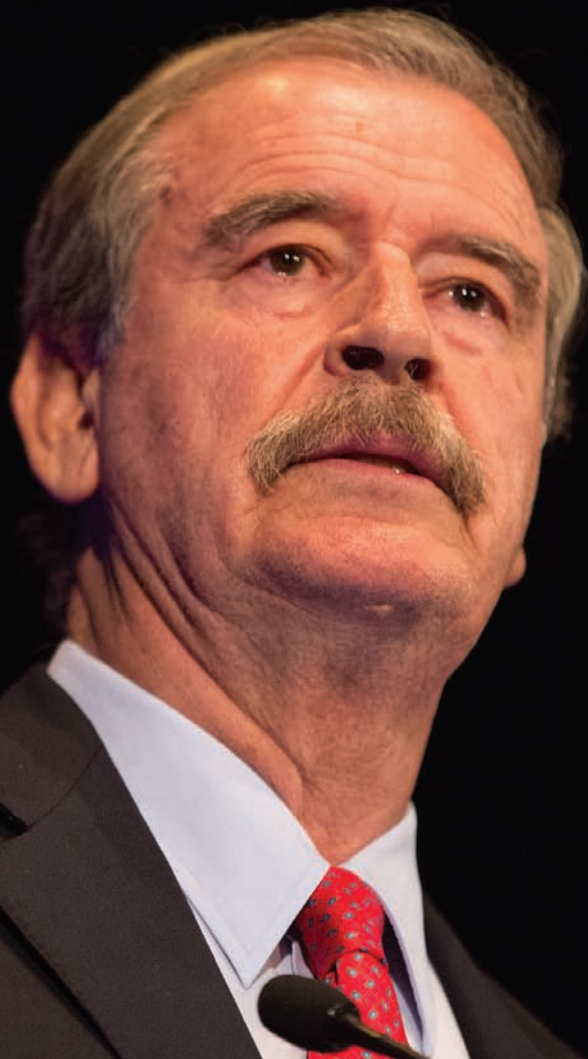


THE
MILTON
FRIEDMAN
PRIZE FOR
ADVANCING LIBERTY



Vicente Fox

Muchas gracias, buenas noches, good night. Bon appétit. And let me start by recognizing the Pedros, Robertos, and others who are here waiting on our tables. Many of them, like those back there in the kitchen, will become successful entrepreneurs. This city really would collapse without their contribution. So to them, my respect, my appreciation, my love. They are my heroes.

Same as my grandfather, Joe Fox, born in Cincinnati, Ohio, who migrated to Mexico in 1895 looking for his American dream. So migration is a two-way street. Fortunately he didn't find any walls. To them, to my paisanos, who have been offended, I tell them, like Santa Teresa, todo pasa. All things pass. Let nothing perturb you, nothing frighten you. God does not change. Patience achieves everything.

If our ass is kicked out of here, by our old friend and partner, don't worry. We will look for other friends and partners. We are a great nation. Freedom is the queen of all values. Even over the rule of law. God created all men free, and equal. So free that we can offend Him, we can go against Him, and He

respects our freedom. Freedom, in the mind of the Founding Fathers, was also the land of the free, the land of equal opportunities to all. Freedom was their main dream. That's what Cato is doing—extremely marvelous contributions worldwide to places where freedom is not respected. Freedom, according to Milton Friedman, freedom of trade, not wars. The freedom of the market economy. What a contrast with what is being proposed to this nation. Building walls is not for freedom. It comes from fear and isolation.

We should be building bridges instead of walls. And by the way, bridges we will gladly pay for.

Giving the red button of the atomic bomb to a short-fused person is dangerous. This can kill. This can assassinate freedom and democracy.

The United States, the champion of freedom, the champion of free markets, the champion of trading, cannot abandon its responsibilities. The space will immediately be taken by others. That is what they are willing to let happen if this nation isolates itself behind walls. Compassionate, intelligent leaders are building the world we will see in the next 10 years. And this is the task. This is what leaders are for. This is compassion,

commitment, and passion—sharing this great love with eight billion people. It's a gift from God to all of us. Nobody can own it. Not even by building walls or borders.

It's no joke. The presidential chair of the United States must be occupied by that kind of leadership. Compassion, firmness, and leadership, like we saw with Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Kennedy, Reagan—descendants of immigrants, all of them. Migrants, their families. And together with migrants, with your families, with your migrant heritage, this great nation was built to lead the world and to keep it in peace and harmony and to work shoulder to shoulder with everybody else. This is a great nation. It already is. This is a successful economy. It already is. And this nation has taken out of poverty millions and millions and millions of families by investing, by creating jobs, by trading, by bringing in ideas, management, technology. This is the United States we know. This is the United States we love. This is the United States we want to stay partners with.

Let me then say that the United States is not only great, but we have a great future together. We do have a common challenge from the east. They are growing pretty fast based in part on human talent, technology, and education. And it's forecasted by some that the shift will happen from the West to the East. We must ask ourselves: That new leadership, if it happens, will operate under what values? Under what beliefs? And what kind of leadership would they exercise?

We must address ourselves to these questions, which can be solved today. North America is the largest economic region in the world. We are three partners, and the three of us contribute. Mexico is not the little guy in the backyard. We buy from this nation close to a billion U.S. dollars a day. This means over ten million jobs for U.S. citizens. Trading is a win-win situation. Isolating is a lose-lose situation.

We must make sure that NAFTA does more for our three economies. We need General Motors to be competitive, we need the Ford Motor Company, the Chryslers, the Googles, the Microsofts, we need them competitive. And the three nations have created this North American Free Trade Agreement. And they have survived thanks to nourishing themselves with the competitiveness of each of the three national economies. It would be pretty difficult to be on your own.

So, the firm values of liberty, freedom, and democracy are shared today throughout the world. We do have our excep-

tions, and all those exceptions have failed. As Venezuela is failing today. Venezuela will kick out Presidente Maduro, because he has destroyed the economy, he has destroyed liberty and democracy in that nation. Those young kids, like Leopoldo Lopez and others, will accomplish what they are working for. And they will do it because of their belief in democracy.

Latin America is ready to keep building a future. Latin America is working together with this great, leading nation, and we, in this 21st century, will show that the lack of democracy and freedom in the 20th century—that the Latin American nations in the hands of dictators, in the hands of messianic leaders like the Evitas and the Peróns, like the Kirchners—proved to us that that's not the way to go.

Fortunately we got rid of the dictators, and today we lead by democracy. And we will stay there, but we need to build together that world in harmony, that world in peace. That world that only in those circumstances can have every citizen do their very best. It's only in freedom, it's only in democracy, where we perform at our very best.

And finally, a word about the future.

Mexico today is the strongest manufacturing cluster in the world, larger than all the rest of Latin America together. We have a very strong economy. We are moving toward a knowledge economy. We want to stay being that solid partner, that solid friend, of this great nation. This is our future. This is what we stand by, and this is what we believe.

So, be very wise, America, wake up. We in Latin America have experience on the bad side of the 20th century. So we have the capacity to see the genius of those candidates. We have the capacity to see when somebody is talking soft but has authoritarian genius inside. Believe me that I am not just here looking for recognition. I am here because I am highly worried that if what has been proposed happens, things will get very tough. You do what is in your hands to correct, to improve. It's not good to go against Wall Street. It's the best, the very best mechanism that the free-market economy has developed to share profits, to allocate resources. Sixty million families are shareholders in this nation. You cannot just destroy their futures in trying to build your own candidacy.

Please, I hope God illuminates this nation because we are very, very, very worried outside. And thank you for inviting me to this great dinner. Thanks to Cato and all the people it has worked with to extend freedom and democracy throughout the world. Let's keep building and not destroying. Gracias. ■

“We should be building bridges instead of walls.”