

Disheartening and infuriating—the two emotions that currently weigh heavily on my mind, especially after seeing the unsettling images coming in this week.

North Carolina continues to grapple with the aftermath of a natural disaster. It's disheartening to see recovery efforts moving so slowly in a country as advanced and rich as ours.

And then there's Cuba, struggling under the weight of a man-made disaster thanks to a communist regime that has been in power for 65 years. Its crumbling power grid often leads to blackouts, and this past weekend saw one of the worst outages in years, leaving nearly the entire island in darkness. Some areas over five days without electricity as of this post. That is infuriating.

There is a certain level of acceptance when it comes to natural disasters; they are often beyond our control, as we know. But the ongoing suffering in Cuba, though, is so much harder to swallow because it's rooted in human choices. That decades-long storm has rendered the island unrecognizable.

You might wonder why this strikes a chord with me, considering I left the island when I was barely seven. If you want some context, check this post I wrote a while back – 12/1/2016.

I still feel a strong connection to my birthplace. My history and roots are a huge part of who I am. I suppose Cuban blood does not forget.

I end today's post with an excerpt from a guest post my friend Barbie contributed to this blog a few years ago. She had a way of expressing herself that resonated deeply:

> "So, instead of getting angry over something I have no control over, I choose to be grateful. I refuse to give power to those who shattered my world once upon a time. I am grateful for having been given the opportunity to live freely in the U.S. Many have

died trying to reach these shores. I am grateful for being given the privilege of becoming an American citizen. My roots may have been seeded in Cuba, but they are firmly and deeply planted in the U.S. Whenever I hear the Cuban national anthem, I cry. Not a pretty cry. I do the full-blown, red eyes and nose, swollen lips, red blotches on face and neck, the ugly cry. I cry for all that once was, all that was lost. A lost world. That anthem makes me just unbearably emotional and sad. Whenever I hear the American national anthem, I cry. But they are different tears, oh, it's still the ugly cry. Trust me, I have never been able to do the pretty cry. But, you see, the Cuban anthem brings sweet memories and great sadness, a sense of deep loss. The American anthem brings me also sweet memories, but also hope, gratefulness, a sense of safety, peace. Of freedom. Here I do not have to be afraid of speaking my mind and as anyone who knows me will tell you, that is one of my biggest faults. Very little, if any, filter.

I am grateful for all the rights we are given in this country. Freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of religion. For the right to vote. It really is a privilege, you know, the right to vote. Democrat or Republican or Independent, we are Americans. Some by birth, some by choice. We just have to remember we are one. One country, one people Sounds so simple, doesn't it? When it seems like the world is going to pieces, I pray and pray and then pray some more. I have hope. I have faith."
– *Barbie Rodriguez*

Friends and family, our world is in dire need of so much prayer! For electricity, water, a roof over my head, family, faith and freedom, I am so very grateful.

What are you thankful for today?

Until next Thursday´s post…si Dios quiere.



Satellite image of Cuba on October 19, 2024, 6:25 a.m. Where is the island?

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