



Remarks by The Honorable Carlos Mayans
Mayor, City of Wichita
Americans All® Press Conference, November 6, 2003
Wichita, Kansas

It's exciting being here with you today. I think it's very appropriate that I do a welcome with an accent. You know, this is a great passion for me. As a Cuban refugee, I used to live just a couple of blocks from here, down at 118 South Erie. And, you know, I took several courses here at East High. So I know this place. And my foster mother used to be in high school here at East High. So for me, this school has a great, great tradition.

When I recently went to the Buddhist temple in East Wichita, I visited with some Laotian folks, and they told me that 7,000 of their people live here. And I was just sharing with some folks that, on Monday, two mayors from the state of Durango came here to visit. But, actually, they didn't come to visit me. They came to visit their constituency living here—11,000 of them; 11,000 of their folks are here! I found that to be very interesting.

And, therefore, it is not surprising why Americans All® is here today. They are here because they recognize, as many people have come to recognize, that the reason our immigrant population is so strong is that Wichita opens their arms to these folks.

And I can recollect, when I was staying at the refugee camp back in 1962, they showed me a map of the United States and asked me where I would like to go. They wanted me to move on because there were more children coming to the camp. And, after looking at the map, I said, "Well, you know, I don't really want to go to New York, Chicago or Los Angeles, because no real Americans live there. I want to go where the real Americans live—Cowboy and Indians. I want to learn about America. And what better place could there be than Wichita, Kansas."

And they said, "Really?" And I said, "yes." That was on a Tuesday, and by Friday I was on an airplane. I guess it was quick because nobody else wanted to come here. But I'm real glad that I came here. I love this place. I've been to other places in the United States, and they're really great, too, but here is where I've chosen to live and to raise my family. When former Mayor Bob Knight contacted me about the importance of the mission of Americans All® and its work with our school system, I was happy to be here because education is so important to our community. Although we try, we do not provide enough education. We don't focus enough on history or geography to let people have a better understanding of where we've come from and why we have these conflicts all

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over the world. We don't understand what these misunderstandings are all about. And we need to get back to those kinds of basics in education as we become more diverse. Diversity is a great thing, but we cannot be seen as a melting pot. This is because a melting pot denotes that we have to give up something to all become the same. We are more like a salad bowl. And, as any of you know, it takes more than just lettuce to make a great salad. It takes peppers, jalapenos or whatever else you like to add to the salad to make it great. If you just eat lettuce, you'd be like a rabbit.

As a final note, I want to quote the poet, Jose Marti, who once said, "To be educated is to be free. And it's only people who are educated who can be free."

So, again, congratulations to Americans All® and to Mr. Knight for being chosen as your next president when your national funding is secured. And you folks need to bring that organization here, because what better place could there be. As I picked Wichita, you need to pick Wichita, too.

Thank you very much.



Carlos Mayans
Mayor of Wichita, Kansas

Carlos Mayans is the mayor of Wichita, Kansas. For a decade before his election to that office, he was a member of the Kansas House of Representatives. In the legislature, he served on several committees: Health and Human Services, which he chaired; Local Government; and Kansas Futures. An advocate for the interests of Wichita, he wrote legislation to lower airfares and increase flights out of Wichita Mid-Continent Airport and spearheaded a drive for legislation to fund the National Aviation Research Institute at Wichita State University. In addition, he worked to promote Kansas agriculture and aviation exports to Latin America. Before becoming mayor he also served on the Sedgwick County Mental Health Advisory Board. Moreover, he owned and operated an insurance agency and risk management business, which he sold in 2002.

Mr. Mayans is a certified insurance and risk management counselor. He has been a member of the National Conference of State Legislatures, the American Legislative Exchange and the National Association of Latino Elected Officials. He also was a medic in the United States Army.

In addition to a bachelor's degree in political science from Georgia State University, Mr. Mayans holds a master of arts degree in human resources development from Webster University. He participated in the Leadership in Minority Health Program at Harvard University in 2000.

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