

Pertierra: Hopefully, decency, and respect will prevail in US-Cuba relations with Biden Administration



Cuban-American attorney Jose Pertierra

Havana, November 9 (RHC)—Radio Havana Cuba conducted an exclusive interview with Washington D.C.-based Cuban American attorney José Pertierra. The reasons behind president-elect Joe Biden's victory, prospects of Donald's Trump's resistance to concede, and expectations of Havana and Washington relations under the next Administration, are some of the issues covered in the interview that was conducted by Roberto Bastidas. Full transcript of the

QUESTION: Pertierra, what is your evaluation of the recent election in the U.S.?

ANSWER: We know the results. The American people know it as well. The media accepts Joe Biden as president-elect, and many world leaders also do. However, Trump, the loser, thus far refuses to accept reality.

Trump began his presidency in 2016 with the lie that his opponent, Hillary Clinton, had received "millions" of fraudulent votes in a losing effort. Now he ends his presidency in 2020 with the lie that Joe Biden wants to steal his election with the help of millions of alleged fraudulent votes. Without any evidence, Trump is now on the verge of starting a legal battle that experts say he has no chance of winning.

QUESTION: If there is no possibility of success in litigation, why is Trump insisting on going that route?

ANSWER: Trump is not as dumb as he seems. He knows that the best way to hinder Biden's tenure is to question the legitimacy of his presidency and to foment chaos and doubt in this country. Remember that despite losing this election, Trump received more than 70 million votes in his favor. Biden has defeated Trump, but not Trumpism.

Trump supporters dance to the same tunes as Hamelin's rats who, hypnotized by the sound of the musician's flute, came out of their hiding places to dance behind the Pied Piper. His 70 million fans follow him, despite a pandemic that is wreaking havoc in this country and is killing so many of us. Last Friday, the U.S. reported 137,200 Covid cases and more than 1,000 deaths. This in just one day! The coronavirus has infected more than 9,830,800 people in the U.S., and more than 236,500 have died. No other country comes close to that number.

Trumpists appear willing to follow the American Pied Piper to their deaths, like the rats that Hamelin led to the River Weser to drown.

Even the White House itself has become a local transmission center for the virus. The President, the First Lady, the Chief of Staff, advisers at the highest levels, and guests at political and social events at the seat of government of the United States have all been infected there. The Trump regime has downplayed the importance of using facemasks or of social distancing as measures necessary to combat the pandemic. On the contrary, Trump himself spurns and ridicules the use of facemasks and has declared himself in favor of spurious treatments such as hydroxychloroquine. He has even promoted the injection of chlorine to cure us of the plague.

Alarmed by so many coronavirus cases there, Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser has set up a tent in front of the White House, where they offer free coronavirus tests to people who have visited the presidential house. At the rate they are going, we will soon be able to say that there are more coronavirus cases within the White House than in all of Cuba.

QUESTION: Why do you think Biden won the presidency?

ANSWER: Biden won primarily for two reasons. One is Trump's demonstrated ignorance in the face of the pandemic and his reckless disdain for science in his zeal to con Americans into thinking it was a "Democrat hoax". Fortunately, most Americans did not drink the bleach and did not dance to the Pied Piper's beat because they are concerned about their health and the lives of their parents, grandparents, and children. They did not want to give Trump another four years in office. The other reason is Trump's toxic personality, who daily insulted his enemies, friends, and acquaintances. A president who boasted of knowing more than the scientists, generals, and experts. More than 75 million people in this country prefer a more balanced and pragmatic president, especially during this plague. The majority of Americans voted for a president who they perceived to have the virtue of empathy, rather than the vice of hatred.

Blacks in this country voted overwhelmingly for Biden. White women too. Poorly educated white men preferred Trump, and many Miami Cubans pitifully supported Trump.

QUESTION: Why did Trump receive the support of so many Cubans in Miami?

ANSWER: Experts wonder why so many Cubans in Miami decided to support a president who wants to suffocate their relatives on the island economically. This a complex question, and there are many

explanations and little space to develop them here.

I want to highlight only a couple. One is that the hatred spewed by Trump in his tweets and speeches about Cuba found its ideal echo chamber in Miami, a city where hatred is apparently inherited. The city where anti-Cuban terrorists like Luis Posada Carriles, Orlando Bosch, and many others were received and protected as heroes. Another reason is the desire to assimilate that all immigrants have. Mexicans, Chinese, Africans, Italians, Salvadorans, Hondurans, and Nicaraguans. The difference is that the Cubans of Miami want to assimilate to the United States of Miami: a very reduced version of the United States. For example, more American flags are flying in front of homes in Hialeah than in Washington. Here you see the flags of the Black Lives Matter movement, the Gay movement or the flag of Washington, D.C. Yes, we see the occasional American flag, but not nearly as many as in Hialeah. That is not to say that Washingtonians are less patriotic than Miameans: only that patriotism is much more nuanced among Washington residents than Hialeah residents.

QUESTION: What can Cuba expect from the government of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris?

ANSWER: Hopefully, decency and respect. The Trump regime's policy towards Cuba has been characterized by bullying, lies, McCarthyism, and attempts to intimidate Cuba. It is very similar to the rhetoric used by Miami's typical political leaders of Cuban descent. Consequently, we have seen a tightening of the U.S. blockade and the dramatic reduction of remittances to the island.

I am optimistic that the Biden administration will return to the Obamist position of 2016, but I fear it may gradually do so. I don't think Biden is as bold as Obama. He is more cautious, and it is politically easier to impose sanctions than to remove them. The team that he chose to advise him on foreign relations to Latin America is not a creative or audacious group: Mark Feierstein, Dan Restrepo, Juan Sebastián González, and Dan Erikson. A quartet that stands out more for not wanting to create waves in Washington than for rectifying its worn-out neoliberal approach to Latin America. But at least none of them is like Michael G. Kozak, who is now the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs and one of the historical architects of the policy of hatred and vengeance against Cuba. Bye-bye Trump is also bye-bye to his cast of characters, and that includes Michael Kozak and Mike Pompeo, the Secretary of State.

To begin to dismantle what Trump zealously dismantled of the Obama policy on Cuba, Biden can choose between many starting points. For example, allowing the return of diplomats to the respective embassies, lifting the veto on remittances, making travel categories more flexible for Americans who went to Cuba, removing Cuba again from the list of countries that do not collaborate in the fight against terrorism, eliminating the ridiculous prohibition that Americans and Cuban-Americans cannot stay in hotels and restaurants that are part of GAESA, canceling the imposition of Title 3 of Helms Burton (something he can easily do with a stroke of the pen), canceling the disgusting policy that tries to make Cuban doctors desert their humanitarian missions and stop pressuring other countries from using Cuban doctors.

Rather than hindering Cuban doctors, Biden should enlist them to help fight the coronavirus pandemic in the United States, a plague that has killed so many Americans. Perhaps the United States can also collaborate with Cuba and other countries to develop a vaccine to combat the virus.

But let's not get our hopes up with Biden. He also wants regime change on the island. Still, the way to achieve it through trade and collaboration is very different from that of Trump and legislators such as Marco Rubio and Mario Díaz-Balart. Biden will use Obamian "soft-power." Cuba knows this and how to defend herself from both kinds of power. As Martí said, trenches of ideas are worth more than trenches of stone.

QUESTION: What do you think is the fundamental difference between Trump and Biden?

ANSWER: Some on the left mistakenly think that there is not much difference between Trump and Biden. But that's like saying there isn't much difference between fascism and neoliberalism. If they could speak

to us, the victims of Pinochet's fascism would tell us the many differences between an authoritarian fascist leader who murdered, tortured, and disappeared tens of thousands of Chileans and a Christian-Democratic president who, although he has not responded to the needs of the Chilean people and whose soldiers shoot rubber bullets and jets of water at demonstrators, he has not repressed the Chileans in the same brutal way that Pinochet did. What about the 6 million Jews and the many thousands of gypsies, socialists, and communists that Hitler murdered in Europe: something that no president of the former Weimar Republic did.

The battle between Biden and Trump was a battle against neofascism, and although the neofascists lost the battle, they did not lose the war. Remember, there are 70 million Trump voters out there, many of them armed with AK47s in this country. There are 393 million guns in the hands of American civilians. That's scary.

Che reminded us that imperialism is not to be trusted. "Not even a tiny bit," he said. Likewise, fascism cannot be allowed to advance: not even a tiny bit. As Dolores Ibárruri, La Pasionaria, said in that famous 1936 speech in Madrid: "The fascists will not pass. No pasarán!"

Equating Biden and Trump because they are both leaders of the United States is a dangerous oversimplification: an enormous mistake.

Question: What do you expect from the next four years of the Biden government?

Answer: The next four years are monumental. It is up to the progressive groups that launched Biden to victory to organize and pressure so that Washington addresses the problems of the poor and the middle class in this country. The pandemic kills more low-income people than rich people. Systemic racism hits poor blacks harder than rich blacks. Immigrants are the most vulnerable. They need the solidarity of others to ensure that government does not abandon or persecute them. Economic gender inequality has to end. Climate change urgently needs attention. The lobby of the oil and coal companies that are so powerful in this country must be contained: not to mention Big Tech, which has been spreading disinformation and hatred at levels never seen before.

If Biden does not serve the needs of the majority of the American people in the next four years, neofascism will return in 2024.

For audio of the interview, press [here](#)

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