

# Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey en Nueva Orleans Luisiana

Nueva Orleans (Estados Unidos), 15.06.2018

Thank you, Madam Mayor Latoya Cartwell, for your heartfelt welcome to New Orleans; I am sure you are perfectly aware of just how much this visit means to the Queen, and to me. For this very reason, please accept our sincere thanks for presenting us with the keys to the city; it is a deeply touching gesture of friendship and hospitality. We also wish you every success in the performance of your new duties.

And thanks to you, Governor John Bell Edwards, for your kind words of welcome; for the people of Spain, to speak of Louisiana is to conjure up images of its history, its majestic Mississippi River, and of the peoples who have built this great state, and this illustrious city, at the river's mouth.

It might be said that Spain's history here in Louisiana is not sufficiently well-known, despite the amount of painstaking research by historians and academics. Therefore, we must work to make this Spanish heritage and—no less importantly—the enduring Spanish legacy here, more widely known.

The wealth of cultural heritage that this city possesses, and the immense archives of documents—above all from the Spanish period—are deserving of further study and wider dissemination.

Allow me a few words in Spanish:

La presencia de España en estas tierras estadounidenses se documenta desde los siglos XVI y XVII cuando hombres como Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Hernando de Soto y tantos otros exploraron los hoy Estados Unidos en todas direcciones ampliando los horizontes geográficos de la Monarquía Hispánica.

En lo que se refiere a Luisiana, hubo además un segundo periodo de presencia efectiva de cuatro décadas de duración especialmente entre 1763 y 1803 cuando apenas se habían configurado las bases de la sociedad y la cultura de este territorio. De ahí que durante ese tiempo España optase por una política abierta e integradora que hizo que Nueva Orleans creciera exponencialmente, pasando de 3.500 habitantes a casi 50.000. En 1803 Nueva Orleans se había ya convertido definitivamente en una urbe integradora, mestiza, sumamente original, ciudad internacional en la que han confluído experiencia y juventud, dinamismo empresarial y patrimonio cultural, que acaba de cumplir 300 años y puede celebrarlos con orgullo.

Therefore, when the United States acquired the vast territory of Louisiana, the country not only doubled its size, it also inherited an efficient government; a diverse, multicultural population; and an economic system that was advanced for its time.

In fact, in mentioning the young Republic, born from the War of Independence, we hark back to the memory of Spain's decisive contribution to that victory. Indeed, the

Founding Fathers of the United States greatly appreciated and valued Spain's contribution of military material and financial support for the revolutionary troops.

In this regard, one figure stands tall above the rest: Bernardo de Gálvez, Governor of Louisiana from 1777 to 1785, and victor of key battles in Baton Rouge, Mobile and Pensacola. It was Gálvez who coordinated Spain's assistance. Together with never like Gardogin and Salazar.

This historical period is skilfully presented in the exhibition "Recovered Memories: Spain, New Orleans and the Support for the American Revolution" at the historic Cabildo. Examining this era highlights just how far back Spain's mark on the United States reaches, and how deep its roots are, as reflected in the close bonds of friendship between our two nations. And it is our hope that, through this visit, these bonds will become even stronger. Because there are solid reasons for them to grow stronger.

Firstly, our language, which is the mother tongue for more than 50 million Hispanics in the USA, who want to preserve this language and who take pride in speaking it. They also know that speaking Spanish improves their opportunities in a world in which the Spanish language will continue to grow, increase in importance, and become even more economically significant. At this point, I cannot fail to recall that the first Spanish-language newspaper in the United States was published here in New Orleans: the *Misisipi*, founded in 1808.

Secondly, Spain's entrepreneurial and technological capabilities, which are already well-known in many of this Nation's states, through the work of companies that are undertaking highly complex projects and are offering today experience and know-how that are internationally very renowned.

Thirdly, there is our role as a very active partner in Latin America, where Spain is the largest foreign investor in many countries, as well as our membership of the European Union, the United States' main trading partner—not to mention our solid relations with the Arab World and our growing economic and financial presence in Asia.

Madam Mayor, we know that there is an initiative to twin or sister New Orleans with a Spanish city. I humbly encourage you to do so, as there is no shortage of ancient and splendid cities in my country, which, I am sure, would welcome this project of affinity and friendship between Spain and the United States. Cities whose character has been shaped by strengths that New Orleans shares: Culture (understood in the widest sense, including pop culture, food, festivals...); a bustling port, at the heart of the export sector; and hard-working citizens who are committed to social progress.

I would like to close by thanking all of you—officials, ladies and gentlemen—for your attention and for your warm welcome. The Queen and I wish you every happiness in this Tricentennial, to which you have so kindly invited us.