

U.S. State Department fails to issue visa to Silvio Rodríguez

US-Cuba Cultural Exchange

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Following is the text of an email from Silvio Rodríguez (English, then Spanish original), regarding the failure of the United States State Department to issue him an entry visa. Rodríguez, Cuba's premier singer-songwriter and co-founder of that country's New Song Movement, was to perform at Pete Seeger's 90th birthday concert in New York today, Sunday, May 3.

Rodríguez's entry into the United States to perform might have been a major breakthrough following years of wrong-headed U.S. policy towards Cuban artists and professionals. Instead, the State Department, while not explicitly denying the visa, allowed it to be tied up such that it was not approved, at least not in time (as of this writing) for the very performance for which it was solicited.

You can help. Take a moment and call the U.S. State Department and express your sentiment that Cuban artists be allowed to enter the United States to share their work with appreciative and deserving American audiences. Tell them that it is an embarrassment that an artist of the stature of Silvio Rodríguez be denied entry into the country to join hands with Pete Seeger along with the dozens of other performers who joined with him today.

Thanks to Bill Martínez for all the work involved in the visa solicitation.

U.S. State Department Switchboard: 202-647-4000

Also, call the White House Comment Line and express your feelings: 202-456-1111

Thanks,

Louis Head

Message from Silvio Rodríguez to his sister in Havana, also his manager:

Today is May 1 and it is 8:40pm in Paris. I just connected online to the United States Embassy site in France, where information is published regarding visa solicitations. My visa application is listed as being in process, the same status that it has maintained since I made the application. Today being the day that I was to fly to New York, and given that the visa has still not appeared, tomorrow I will leave instead for Havana.

You can pass this message to Pete's grandson Tao, and to Bill the attorney, along with my gratitude for their efforts as well as my sorrow resulting from the lack of respect shown by the State Department to them for having invited me to celebrate the 90th birthday of our dear friend Pete Seeger, living legend of North American song.

I believe that the attitude of the State Department is very contradictory, given the desire expressed by President Obama to bring the United States closer to Cuba. As a Cuban cultural worker, I continue to feel blockaded and discriminated against by other governments. Hopefully this will truly change someday.

Thanks for your help.

Silvio

Mensaje de Silvio Rodríguez a su hermana, y gerente, en La Habana:

Es viernes 1º de mayo, son las 8 y 40 de la noche en París y me acabo de conectar al sitio web donde la embajada de Estados Unidos en Francia publica noticias sobre las visas solicitadas. La mía figura en estado de trámites, como ha figurado desde que la solicité. Como hoy era el día en que debía volar a Nueva York y la visa no ha aparecido, mañana parto hacia La Habana.

Puedes pasarle este correo a Tao el nieto de Pete y a Bill el abogado, con mi gratitud por sus esfuerzos y con mi pesar por el poco respeto que el Departamento de Estado ha mostrado a la invitación que me hicieron para celebrar los 90 años del querido Pete Seeger, leyenda viva de la canción norteamericana.

Creo que la actitud del Departamento de Estado es muy contradictoria con el deseo expresado por el presidente Obama de un acercamiento con Cuba. Como trabajador de la cultura cubana me sigo sintiendo tan bloqueado y discriminado como por otros gobiernos. Ojalá esto cambie de verdad algún día. Gracias por tu ayuda.

Silvio