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## Petroleumworld`s Opinion Forum:

viewpoints on issues in energy, geopolitics and civilization

### Saturday Lagniappe

#### Venezuelans tell CATO audience: "Chavez will not take our Country away from us"

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By Gustavo Coronel

Carlos Zuloaga, Vice-president of GLOBOVISION, the last independent Venezuelan TV station and Rafael Alfonzo, the President of CEDICE, the most prominent liberal think tank in Venezuela, told a large crowd gathered at [CATO](#)

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Institute in Washington, July 30, that "Chavez will not be able to steal the country from democracy-loving Venezuelans".

In a powerful presentation made with the help of videos young Carlos Zuloaga, the son of the main shareholder of the station, told the audience that his father had been prohibited from attending the event by the Chavez regime and went on to describe the different violations of Venezuelan law that had been applied by the Chavez regime in their attempts to close GLOBOVISION.

Among the many attacks against the station Zuloaga mentioned an illegal fine of \$2 million applied by the government. As soon the fine was applied the Venezuelan people made a collect and in a matter of days put the money together. Then, the government increased the fine to \$4 million and this amount was also collected spontaneously by the people, more than 400,000 Venezuelans contributing to pay the illegal fine.

The videos clearly showed the physical aggressions of the police; Chavez controlled mobs and regime authorities against the GLOBOVISION journalists trying to do their job.

Rafael Alfonzo made a presentation describing the manner in which Chavez is trying to implement a socialist-type regime in Venezuela. Alfonzo said: "the main objective of Chavez is to create an atmosphere where fear prevails, where people are afraid to talk, to go out, to express freely their feelings and opinions".

The combination of Alfonzo's presentation and Zuloaga's extremely powerful videos and comments made a great impact on the audience.

International public opinion is now finding out the full extent of Chavez's horror, the shameless behavior of the loutish gang that has been placed at the highest levels of the state bureaucracy. In a video segment the president of the Venezuelan Supreme Tribunal is shown talking in a gangster-like language, totally unacceptable for a lady. In another segment Chavez shouts to his red-clad followers: "Down with the shitty Yankees", not one but several times. Chavez forces Venezuelans to watch his speeches in national TV and radio hook-ups (cadenzas) at times in that he becomes "the only game in town". Zuloaga said that the compulsory time of the "cadenas" already add up to some 1850 hours since he arrived in power.

This event was one in a series of recent meetings on Venezuela in Washington think tanks. The Council of the Americas, the Heritage Foundation, the CATO Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, all have promoted these events to let U.S. public opinion know what Venezuelans are going through, while the OAS under Insulza (Insulza means insipid in Spanish) and the U.S. administration keep sitting on the fence. In all fairness, much more so the OAS than the Obama administration, where we start to notice some modest signs of action against the Chavez regime.

The lovers of democracy all over the world have to engage in the fight against despotism. This is not just a matter of Venezuelans being victimized, Cubans being slaved or Iranians having to suffer a fanatical and repressive regime. This is a global battle. Democracy lovers in Ohio, Argentina or Italy cannot be indifferent to what is going on in distant lands, simply because Venezuela is thousands of miles away from Ohio or Italy. As John Donne said 400 years ago the death of one person represents a partial death for all of us, because countries and individuals are not islands and cannot behave like islands. I am sure John Donne would have agreed that the loss of democracy in Venezuela represents a loss of democracy, a defeat, for all democracy lovers around the world. The death of human rights in Venezuela represents an insult to civilized

people all over the world.

Again, as John Donne said some many years ago: "Do not ask for whom the bells toll".

They are not tolling only for Venezuelans; they are also tolling for you.

**Gustavo Coronel** is a 28 years oil industry veteran, a member of the first board of directors (1975-1979) of Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), author of several books. At the present Coronel is Petroleumworld associate editor and advisor on the opinion and editorial content of the site. Petroleumworld does not necessarily share these views. Petroleumworld not necessarily share these views.

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