

**Palabras de S.A.R. La Infanta Doña Elena en la inauguración de la
Exposición "Herencia: España y los Estados Unidos en la Edad de la
Independencia"**

National Portrait Gallery. Washington, 26 de septiembre de 2007

Dear Ambassador,

Dear Friends of the Smithsonian Institution,

the National Portrait Gallery, and the Smithsonian Latino Center,

Representatives of the Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural en el Exterior,

President and Patrons of the Fundación-Consejo España-Estados Unidos,

I am truly delighted to meet so many friends of Spain in this beautiful city of Washington D.C.

I thank you for your kind invitation to open this highly interesting exhibition.

It is a pleasure to extend my warmest congratulations to all those involved in such a great initiative, that, once again, has brought together Americans and Spaniards.

American and Spanish peoples and Histories have long been joined together since the origins of this great Nation.

From the mid-eighteenth century, at the request of American Patriot Commissioners, Spain sent observers, vital financial help and means of transport across the Atlantic. Spain also contributed to the U.S. Independence through its military actions in Louisiana and Florida, under the command of Bernardo de Gálvez.

Friendly relations and links grew steadily between men of both countries, represented by George Washington and King Charles the Third of Spain. In 1777 Benjamin Franklin was appointed Commissioner to Spain, where he was extremely well received.

For all these reasons, the American and Spanish portraits and original documents that we contemplate in this excellent exhibition have a strong evoking and symbolic power.

They enhance the key role of Spain in the Revolutionary War and in the founding of the United States. But they also reflect shared values and aspirations, over the background of the enlightened spirit of the time.

Some of those values, that in part continue fully in force, have fostered the dialogue and collaboration shared by our two countries for centuries.

I am also delighted to convey my warmest congratulations to the organizers of the Symposium starting tomorrow, under the title "The Spanish Contribution to the

Independence of the United States: between Reform and Revolution, 1763-1848", which will take place at the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture in Washington, D.C.

Well known academics, scholars and historians from the United States, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Spain, will discuss the far reaching historical interaction between America and Spain, whilst embracing its contemporary implications.

In fact, as early as in 1513, Spanish presence started in Florida and, later on, expanded to much wider areas in the South and West of the States, leaving a legacy that is still alive in those territories and throughout your Nation.

Spanish names like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Texas or Florida can be easily traced around the country. The Spanish heritage enriches your communities, contributes to your economic prosperity and enhances the culture in the United States.

We are in the Hispanic Heritage Month. It gives me a further opportunity to acknowledge the breadth of our friendship. The Hispanic Community, sharing American and Spanish standpoints and attitudes, plays a very significant role in the present and future of this great Country, and strengthens its society, traditions and political views.

His Majesty King Juan Carlos visited the Nation's capital Washington for the first time as Head of State in July 1976, when the United States were celebrating the 200 Anniversary of its Independence. On such occasion, and at the statue of Bernardo de Gálvez, he stated: "the statue of Gálvez will serve to remember that Spain offered the blood of its soldiers for the great cause of the North American Independence".

I am sure that the particularly attractive and valuable paintings and objects shown here today will receive the approval of both specialists and the general public, and will highlight the depth of the friendship between the United States and Spain.

It is with great pleasure, therefore, that I formally declare open the exhibition on "Legacy: Spain and the United States in the Age of Independence, 1763-1848".

Thank you