

Good afternoon.

I am very honored to speak to you today.

I want to thank you, and all the people of the Republic of Cuba, for being such kind hosts.

As I was growing up in my neighborhood I was pretty much a regular kid who loved to play sports and hang out with my friends.

We loved to follow our baseball team, and in those days our team, the Minnesota Twins, had something very unique.

In the 1960s, when I was a young boy, my baseball heroes were Cuban born players like Tony Oliva, Camilo Pascual, Pedro Ramos, Zoilo Versalles, Julio Becquer and Sandy Valdespino.

They all played for the Minnesota Twins.

In fact, did you know that legend has it that the owner of the Minnesota Twins once had the rights to a very good Cuban baseball player by the name of Fidel Castro?

Well, it never worked out that Fidel Castro could play baseball in the United States because times changed and things happened to change the course of history.

It is sad that baseball fans do not have the everyday opportunity to see some of the most talented players in the world compete in our major leagues.

Why can't our leaders see that we would all benefit if Cuba actually had a baseball team in the Major Leagues?

But could it happen in the future?

I believe it could.

Never in all my dreams did I think that I would be the Governor of the State of Minnesota.

Never in all my dreams did I think that I would travel to the Republic of Cuba and be able to address an audience at the University of Havana.

Never in all my dreams did I think that I would grow up and be criticized by the President of the United States for wanting to establish a relationship with the people of Cuba.

But here I am.

Jesse Ventura, former Navy SEAL, former wrestler, former actor, former mayor, and former radio host--in Havana--working hard to bring the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba to a more civilized level of cooperation and communication.

It just goes to show you that anything is possible if you believe in yourself and you believe in others.

When I was first elected Governor I promised the people of my state that I would do what I could to help them sell our products to the world.

I told them that I believed that by establishing trade relationships with countries around the globe we can create good paying jobs in our state and improve the quality of life in the countries we trade with.

In the last four years I have traveled on trade missions to Japan, Canada, Mexico and just this summer to the Republic of China.

Incredibly, my state's trade with these countries has grown faster than the overall rate for the entire United States.

In fact, with just Mexico alone our exports have increased by 65% over the past four years.

Today, I am in your beautiful country.

I am here in the hope that we can do business together.

I am here because I believe that we can, and should, work toward bringing our countries together again.

I am here because I believe that if we are successful business partners there is a better chance that we can someday be better friends.

I know that many think that I am naive.

But I don't think so.

I have worked hard all my life and when you work hard good things happen.

As I said earlier, I come from very humble beginnings.

My father had only eight years of education.

But he worked hard and good things happened to him.

He married my mother.

He had a good job.

He dreamed that some day he would own a lake cabin, and his dream came true.

My message to you today is not only to dream, but to work hard to make those dreams come true.

And be assured, that while we may not agree on some very fundamental governing principles, someday, maybe we can, officially, be friends again.

I believe that.

I hope you do too.

Thank you.