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GUSTAVO DUDAMEL ACCEPTANCE REMARKS
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For more than 50 years, the Americas Society has inspired education, debate, and dialogue about the challenges and opportunities of the Americas, and under Susan Segal's inspired leadership, it continues this important mission. For that I, and indeed all the people of the Americas, remain grateful.

With great humility I accept this award for myself, but I also accept it for the children of the world—particularly the 700,000 youth playing in El Sistema orchestras in Venezuela, the kids at Youth Orchestra Los Angeles, and in all of the El Sistema inspired projects internationally.

They are me.

I was once a child with a dream and was lucky enough to live in a country where that dream could become a magical reality. That magical reality is the vision of one man, my beloved Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu.

My belief is that music is one of the things that brings people together; no matter their differences. In my orchestras I have the children of noblemen and the children of factory workers and they all come together with a common purpose.

It's the same with the audiences I see at each performance—people from all walks of life are moved and changed by beautiful music.

I travel the world, but my heart remains in Venezuela and to my countrymen and women I dedicate this award. I pray that we can stay strong, safe and hold our families together as we all go through difficult times.

As I watch the unrest in Venezuela and also the unrest right here in the United States of America, I am reminded what a polarized world we live in. And in today's world it's not enough just to disagree…people disagree with violence and aggression.

My great hope is that while we recognize that we have many differences and beliefs, we can focus our energy on tolerance, on healing and on finding things that unite us and our common goals. It is then, and only then, that we will be able to work together for the common good and create a better future for all.