

King's 'shut up' is a ringtone hit

A heated diplomatic exchange has turned into a cult-status ringtone, an auction of a website domain and parodies on YouTube pitting the Spanish monarch against the Venezuelan president.

The Miami Herald
Nov. 16, 2007

Video grab taken Nov. 10, when Spain's King Juan Carlos de Borbon shouts at Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez: 'Why don't you shut up?' Chavez interrupted the speech of Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero during a meeting of world leaders in Chile.

Political protest methodologies, circa 2007: King of Spain slaps down a ranting South American president on a mobile phone ringtone, edited DJ-scratch style with looping emphasis on ``shut up."

So when a protester saunters around Miami or Caracas, and a call comes in, Juan Carlos Rey de España announces it with an impatient "*por qué no te callas?*" (why don't you shut up?). As of Wednesday, eBay users were bidding up the price of porquenotecallas.com, which belongs to a quick-thinking Spaniard.

Highest bid as of 6 p.m. Thursday: about \$4,000.

"I knew the phrase would make history, but I never imagined it would get so much commentary," said Juan Antonio Morales, 34, of Almeria, Spain, who reserved the domain name Saturday evening after the news broke of the public spat.

``I've put it on sale because there's been so much pressure. People haven't stopped calling me."

That techy observers boiled down a heated diplomatic exchange to a cult-status ringtone and a domain name auction should not come as a surprise in a world where presidential candidates seek friends on MySpace.com and shy students break the ice on Facebook.com.

"Venezuelans will extract humor from anything," said Manuel Corao, director of the Miami-based newspaper *Venezuela al Dia*. ``Especially something like this."

INTERRUPTIONS

On Saturday, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez repeatedly interrupted socialist Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero during a summit of leaders from Latin America and Portugal, prompting Spanish King Juan Carlos de Borbón to angrily burst out: ``*Por qué no te callas?*"

The question has swept the hemisphere and across the Atlantic. A budding entrepreneur in Miami is planning to sell T-shirts on eBay.

At least one student protest group in Venezuela has downloaded the ringtone en masse. And the phrase has become a de facto greeting among some Venezuelans in Miami.

"I think that it's hilarious," said Alejandro Cáceres, 23, former president of the Venezuelan Student Association at Florida International University, who's planning to make the T-shirts.

'Yesterday I went to a show, and I saw a friend I haven't seen in a long time, and I was like, 'Hey, what's up?' and he just told me, '*Por que no te callas?*' "

In Venezuela, a loose-knit group of students who oppose Chávez's government have been downloading the ringtone, philosophy student Laura Solorzano, 21, said in a telephone interview Thursday from Caracas.

"It's a form of protest," she said. "It's something that a lot of people would like to tell the president. Now, whenever we call each other, that's what we hear."

To give an idea of how much attention the king's five-word outburst has received, consider the numbers on YouTube.com. Three YouTube postings with the exchange have been viewed almost 800,000 times.

By comparison, the first part of the YouTube/CNN Democratic debate received about 73,000 hits, according to YouTube.

Other postings on YouTube include parodies of Juan Carlos as the Spartan king from the movie *300*, a trance remix of the phrase, puppets of a dolphin and gingerbread man waxing diplomatic and a series of beatings by the king on the president.

It's not every day that people see a king's temper flare, particularly over someone as polarizing as Chávez.

POLITICAL CRISIS

For Aracelis Nass, current president of FIU's Venezuelan student group, the incident has shed needed attention on the political crisis gripping Venezuela.

Chávez is trying to change the Venezuelan constitution to gain more political power, including a proposed clause that would allow him to become president for life.

"It's not just anybody telling him [Chávez] to shut up," Nass said.

"He [Juan Carlos] magnified the problems Venezuela is facing with the reforms in December."