

Puerto Rican rapper Bad Bunny's Super Bowl halftime show highlights mass opposition to Trump

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Sunday's Super Bowl LX halftime show, headlined by Puerto Rican artist Bad Bunny, was an overt indication of the deep popular opposition to Donald Trump's far-right regime in Washington and its assault on democratic rights and immigrant workers.

The 2026 halftime show has already entered the record books as the most watched in history, with early figures indicating more than 135 million viewers in the United States alone. The songs were almost entirely in Spanish, with vivid displays of Puerto Rican and Latin American imagery, and a humane sensibility sharply at odds with Trump's fascistic xenophobia.

That this performance could attract such an audience underscores the highly integrated, multilingual character of the working population and its deep democratic sentiments, even within the framework of "Super Bowl Sunday," a central ritual of consumerism, nationalism and militarism. Within this thoroughly "all-American" spectacle, Bad Bunny's set was, in its own limited way, an artistic response to recent political developments.

It comes as the Trump administration has deployed heavily armed ICE agents into major US cities, who have carried out mass roundups and detentions, and murdered civilians like Minneapolis residents Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti. Only a month ago, Trump ordered the illegal invasion of Venezuela and the abduction of the country's president, actions which revive the legacy of colonial oppression.

Bad Bunny (Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, born March 10, 1994, in Bayamón, Puerto Rico) is a Puerto Rican reggaeton and rap artist who has become one of the world's most-streamed musicians. He has topped Spotify's global charts four times and drew nearly 20 billion streams in 2025. Since at least the 2019 mass protests that forced out Puerto Rico's governor, he has

become increasingly politically outspoken, denouncing colonialism and the repression of immigrants. This culminated last week in his Grammy speech demanding "ICE out" and affirming that Latinos "are humans, and we are Americans."

The rapper's halftime show featured a prominent rejection of colonialism and US imperialism. It opened on a scene of workers cutting sugar cane, a reference to the plantation economy through which Spain, and later the United States, exploited Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.

From this scene Bad Bunny moved into a series of set pieces modeled on a town square: nail salon workers, food cart vendors and day laborers, figures drawn from the reality of working-class life on the island and in the diaspora. At key moments Bad Bunny held up a light-blue Puerto Rican flag, while lyrics referencing repression of the flag under the 1948 Gag Law played over the stadium.

The performance culminated in "El Apagón" ("The Blackout"), a protest anthem against the privatization of Puerto Rico's power grid and the rolling blackouts that continue nearly a decade after Hurricane María in 2017. Surrounding Bad Bunny were dancers dressed as line workers, while transformers sparked and streets darkened, recalling the criminal neglect of Puerto Rican infrastructure by the US government and the ongoing enrichment of private utility firms.

The choice of material and imagery recalled the disastrous response to Hurricane María, when Trump's first administration starved the island of aid and used the catastrophe to open the way for privatization and austerity. In one notorious scene, Trump himself tossed rolls of paper towels to desperate survivors of the disaster, even while claiming that only a few dozen people had been killed: the actual death toll topped 5,000.

One of the most striking moments in the performance came when Puerto Rican singer Ricky Martin emerged to sing a portion of Bad Bunny's "Lo Que Le Pasó a Hawaii" ("What Happened to Hawaii"). The song, a lament over dispossession and migration, functioned as a rebuke to contemporary US policy in Latin America and beyond.

At one point in the performance, Bad Bunny handed his grammy award to a young child, prompting broad speculation that it was Liam Conejo Ramos, the 5-year-old child seized by ICE in Minneapolis and transported to Dilly detention center in Texas. It subsequently emerged that the child was an actor, possibly intended to represent a younger Bad Bunny, but the popular response nevertheless expressed the mass outrage over the actions of Trump's Gestapo.

The event concluded with Bad Bunny, football in hand, declaring "God bless America" and proceeding to name all nations in South, Central and North America. The gesture tended to highlight the shared interests of all working people throughout the region, even as much of the performance was confined to a vague pan-Latin Americanism.

The show stood at a qualitatively higher level than the same event last year. That spectacle, headlined by rapper Kendrick Lamar and capped by a petty diss track against Canadian rapper Drake, was hailed by the identity-politics-obsessed upper middle class as an "earth-shattering" revolt against Trump, when it was nothing of the sort. In the year since, political life in the United States has shifted enormously.

It is precisely this exposure of another, non-chauvinist America that has provoked the fury of Trump and the far right. Within minutes of the performance, Trump denounced the halftime show on social media as "absolutely terrible, one of the worst, EVER," calling it "a slap in the face to our country." Trump declared "nobody understands a word this guy is saying."

The ignoramus in the White House is apparently unaware that Spanish is the most widely spoken language in the Western Hemisphere, that nearly 50 million US citizens speak Spanish, and that 8.5 million K-12 and college students take Spanish classes, making it the most widely studied "foreign" language.

Other fascistic know-nothings mobilized to put their ignorance and racism on display, declaring Martínez "isn't an American"—the artist is a US citizen from Puerto Rico, a US territory. Fascist youth organization Turning Point USA staged an "All-American Halftime Show" as

counter-programming, headlined by Kid Rock and billed as a celebration of "faith, family, and freedom." The event was completely dwarfed by the 135 million viewers who tuned into the Super Bowl halftime show, drawing barely 6 million viewers in contrast.

The relatively tiny response to the Turning Point event is even more stark given that it received semi-official state approval. According to the *Washington Post*, prior to the event, "Trump administration figures ... rallied behind the idea of an alternative halftime show. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth asked on social media ... how his agency could get involved in the Turning Point concert." In response, Turning Point executive Tyler Bowyer called for Hegseth's military to "do a Fly Over [at] the actual Super Bowl to remind Bad Bunny that this is America," invoking images of a civil war.

The broad appeal of Bad Bunny's performance cannot be separated from political developments. Over the past weeks, the world has seen mass protests against Trump's deployment of ICE and the occupation of Minneapolis. Over the weekend, demonstrations at the Winter Olympics in Milan saw athletes and spectators alike voice hostility to the Trump administration's plans for dictatorship and war. Elsewhere within the cultural sphere, artists have canceled appearances at the Trump-controlled Kennedy Center in protest of the administration, leading the latter to aggressively attempt to shut it down to stem the embarrassment.

The halftime show forms part of this global process, which is witnessing the working class of all countries increasingly coming forward in opposition to far-right governments' assault on living standards and the shredding of democratic rights.



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