

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

Remarks at the White House Student Film Festival

February 28, 2014

The President. Hello. My name is Shelly Ortiz and—oh, wrong page. [*Laughter*] All right, then, I was just teasing. I knew I wasn't Shelly Ortiz. [*Laughter*] Everybody give Shelly a big round of applause for the great work. Thank you so much. Thanks for not only the introduction, but for the beautiful video that you made about your dad.

Shelly Ortiz. Thank you.

The President. Us dads, we get pretty touched by stuff like that. [*Laughter*]

And I am thrilled that all of you are with us for our first-ever White House Student Film Festival. And I know we're running a little bit late. It's not because the projector was not working. It was because of me. But I appreciate all of you guys being here and your patience.

The Academy Awards are not until Sunday, but as you can see, we've brought the Oscars to the White House a little bit early. And I want to thank our partners: FOX, National Geographic, and the American Film Institute. We've got the red carpet, we've got the big screens, the opening monologue. The only difference is nobody asks what you're wearing. [*Laughter*]

And we've got Bill Nye the Science Guy and Neil deGrasse Tyson from the Hayden Planetarium, who might even give you a sneak peak of his new show, "Cosmos," if everybody behaves themselves. And I saw the original version—I'm a little older than all of you—and it was spectacular and wonderful, and I know this is going to be not just as good, but even better. And so we're thrilled with that. And we're putting on a big show here because we're honoring some remarkable filmmakers.

I've said before, I believe, and I hope all of us believe, that every child in America deserves a world-class education, especially in science and technology and engineering and math, because it's skills like these that made us an economic superpower and built our middle class. We also need folks who are studying the arts because our film industry is a huge generator of jobs and economic power here in the United States, and it tells us our story and helps us to find what's—our common humanity.

And it's skills like these that allowed NASA to announce the other day that we've discovered more than 700 new planets. [*Applause*] That's cool. I mean, we didn't make the planets, but we—[*laughter*—we found out that they were there. And one of the ways that we deliver the best education in the world is by empowering our students with the best technology in the world.

To help inspire us, we invited students from across the country to send their videos about how their schools use technology today, how they might use it in the future. So kids got to—got their cameras out and went to work. And we received about 2,500 videos—2,500. And we watched them all. I did not personally watch them all, but the White House watched them all.

And today the Oscar goes to all of you. Because among all the incredible videos we received, yours stood out. And in my official capacity as President, let me just say, these movies are awesome. Like all great movies, yours do something special: They tell a story. They help us understand, in this case, the amazing things that are going on in classrooms and how

technology is empowering our students and broadening their imaginations and challenging them to dream bigger and reach further.

Now, here is the spoiler alert: There is some wonderful stuff going on out there. So even before you have seen some of these films, you need to know that what these filmmakers have displayed is the incredible innovation and creativity of this generation coming up.

You've got Gabrielle Nafie and Miles Pilchik from Science Tech Kids in New York. [Applause] Hey! They showed us that their class isn't just dreaming about going into space, they're actually going into space. They designed density experiments and used a 3-D printer to build tiny satellites to hold them. And then they actually launched a giant balloon that carried their satellites up to the edge of space—very cool——

Gabrielle Nafie. Thank you. [Laughter]

The President.——so they could collect the data. When I was in elementary school, I was not launching satellites into space.

You've got Alex Emerson, who showed how his sixth—his eighth-grade class at Brookwood School in Massachusetts changed the definition of pen pals by video chatting with students in Uganda. And one of the things they did was collaborate on cook stoves that help families in rural areas cook safer and with cleaner energy.

And it doesn't stop with what's possible today. These videos show how students are imagining the future: classrooms that are fully accessible to classmates with disabilities, individualized learning platforms that you can carry around in your pocket. And that's the kind of creativity and imagination we want all of our young people to embrace.

We cannot wait to see more of that innovative spirit later this year when we host our first-ever White House Maker Fair. We've already—we already have a White House Science Fair. This new event is going to highlight how Americans young and old—tinkerers and inventors—are imagining and designing and building tools and machines that will open our minds and power our economy.

We want to bring this spirit—including more technology—into the classroom. And that's why I launched something we're calling ConnectED, our initiative to close the technology gap in our schools and connect 99 percent of America's students to high-speed broadband Internet within 5 years. Because when the average American school has about the same Internet bandwidth as the average American home, but serves 200 times as many people, that means our students are at a disadvantage. And when less than 30 percent of our students have access to true high-speed Internet in their classroom, while in South Korea students have a hundred percent, that's like waving the white flag when it comes to our global competition. But here's what I think: In a country where we expect free Wi-Fi at our coffee shops, then we should demand it in our schools and in our libraries.

So this is not something we can do alone. And as a consequence, I picked up the phone and started asking business leaders to help bring our schools and libraries into the 21st century. They did not just answer the call, they came up huge. So earlier this month, some of our biggest technology companies committed to more than \$750 million in computers and software and broadband access to put our kids and classrooms on the cutting edge of technology.

Today I'm proud to announce that more companies are getting on board. Prezi will provide over a hundred million dollars in presentation products to help students develop ready-

to-work skills in slideshows and creative communication. So give them a big round of applause. We're very proud of them for that.

And Adobe will make available, for free, more than \$300 million in creating—creative and teaching software so that kids can turn their ideas into films and graphics, and teachers can deliver lessons electronically. So give Adobe a big round of applause. [*Applause*] Proud of them. Thank you.

If you're quick at math, which I know you are, then you'll see that this means we've delivered over \$1 billion in technology commitments to our schools, which isn't too shabby for 1 month. But there's still more to do, and we need even more companies to get on board. Because, thanks to innovative schools and teachers and students like all of you, we know what school might look like in the century ahead: classrooms wired to space, and students who are fluent in coding and web design, teachers collaborating on projects with peers around the world. We've always imagined giving every child the chance to learn like that. And with these private sector partners, we're helping to make it a reality.

So let me leave you with a wonderful example of the difference that technology can make. Kyle Weintraub is a seventh grader at David Posnak Jewish Day School in Florida. And last year, he was diagnosed with lymphoma, had to move to Pennsylvania for treatment. In the past, that meant Kyle would have had to leave his school and his friends behind. But every day, Kyle puts on his school uniform, and without even leaving his room in Pennsylvania, he goes to school in Florida because he has a special robot with a high-tech video feed that goes to class for him. And even as he's getting medical treatment and fights to get better, Kyle can keep up with his studies, controlling his robot from his computer at home. And through a video feed, Kyle can see his classmates; they can see him. So the robot doesn't just have a name, they just say, "Hey, Kyle."

And he can look around the classroom, move down the hallways, even sit with his friends at lunch. And I know the teachers think this is just extraordinary as well, because if there's one thing you don't want to do, is start a food fight with a robot. [*Laughter*] So everybody kind of seems to be better behaved when Kyle's robot is around. Kyle is here today. He did not bring his robot, but everybody give Kyle a big round of applause.

Kyle's story is just one example of what's possible when we put our extraordinary technologies to work for our students and our schools. And that's what this film festival is about. So to all the young filmmakers out there, remember, you are much better at this than all that adults. [*Laughter*] It's your imagination and your creativity and your innovation and your dreams that are going to help this country move forward.

Keep up the great work. We could not be prouder of you. Your parents are proud of you, I know that, but I am too. And America is counting on you.

So with that, let's start the show. All right? Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:11 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Shelly Ortiz, student, Metropolitan Arts Institute in Phoenix, AZ, and her father Epi Ortiz; Gabrielle Nafie and Miles Pilchik, student ambassadors, SciTech Kids learning center in New York City; William S. Nye, television personality and executive director of the Planetary Society; Neil deGrasse Tyson, director, Hayden Planetarium; and Alex Emerson, student, Brookwood School in Manchester, MA.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : White House Student Film Festival.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Emerson, Alex; Nafie, Gabrielle; Neil deGrasse Tyson; Nye, William S.; Ortiz, Epi; Ortiz, Shelly; Pilchik, Miles; Weintraub, Kyle.

Subjects: Communications : Broadband and wireless technologies; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Technology and innovation, expansion efforts; White House Student Film Festival.

DCPD Number: DCPD201400124.