

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

## **Remarks at a Juneteenth Concert**

*June 10, 2024*

*The President.* Whoa! The White House lawn has never seen—please have a seat if you have one. *[Laughter]*

The White House lawn has never seen anything like this before. That was outstanding.

Thanks to all of the performers here tonight and to help us feel the power of Black culture that is American culture with a fitting tribute to Juneteenth.

You know, I was proud to have made Juneteenth a Federal holiday. And I'm grateful to the Members of Congress who are here today who helped make it possible. I'm not going to start to name them, because I'll miss somebody.

But it wasn't just a symbolic gesture. It was a statement of fact. It was about a statement of faith. It was testimony of a—testament to the resilience of generations of Black Americans who kept their eyes set on the Nation's north star. That north star was the idea that we're all created equal in the image of God and deserve to be treated equally throughout our lives.

While we've never lived up to it, we've never fully walked away from it either. That's because of you and generations before you who led the march from slavery to freedom toward more than a perfect Union.

But let's be clear: There are old ghosts in new garments trying to take us back—well, there are—taking away your freedoms; making it harder for Black people to vote or have your vote counted; closing doors of opportunity; attacking the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion; if you can believe it, banning books about Black experiences in America; trying to erase and rewrite history.

Our history is not just about the past, it's about our present and our future. It's whether that future is a future for all of us, not just for some of us. Folks, Black history is American history. That's why Kamala and I and our administration will always uplift it and protect it.

Let me close with this. I just returned from France, where I visited the beaches of Normandy to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day, which was the first step in liberating all of Europe amid a changing civilization.

On that hallowed ground, I spoke about a brave American soldier who fought tyranny for the hope, freedom of democracy. That includes the Red Ball Express, a convoy of mostly Black soldiers who landed in Normandy in wake of the D-Day to rush supplies to the frontiers and the front lines.

These Black soldiers were a link in a distinguished line of patriots, enslaved and free, who risked their lives in every war since the founding—since the founding of our ideals that we don't know fully what American soil is: equality and freedom.

One of those soldiers of the Red Ball Express who fought for freedom on distant shores was a civil rights lawyer who fought for freedom here at home. Sixty-one years ago this week, he was gunned down at home in Mississippi in the poison of White supremacy. But all these years later, his spirit endures. You all know his name. It was Medgar Evers.

Last month, I awarded Medgar Evers the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our Nation's highest civilian honor, posthumously because his life reminds us—reminds us—of our change that we have to keep in redeeming the soul of America.

Folks, that's what Juneteenth is all about. That's why—this is why I awarded the Medal of Freedom to Ms. Opal Lee as well, the grandmother of Juneteenth. She know—she knew so long as our history was denied, our freedom can never be secured.

Her decades-long march brought her here to the White House when she stood by my side as I signed the Juneteenth Federal holiday and handed her the signing pen for helping make Juneteenth possible.

A day of profound weight and power. A day to remember the original sin of slavery and the extraordinary capacity to emerge from the most powerful moments and the painful moments with a better vision for ourselves. A day that reminds us we have a hell of a lot more work to do.

So let's keep marching, let's keep the faith, and let us remember who we are. We're the United States of America, and there is nothing—nothing—beyond our capacity if we do it together.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you for tonight.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:03 p.m. on the South Lawn of the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Kamala D. Harris; and Fort Worth, TX, resident Opal Lee. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 11.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Juneteenth concert.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Harris, Kamala D.; Lee, Opal.

*Subjects:* D-Day, 80th anniversary; Juneteenth; Presidential Medal of Freedom; Racial equality, improvement efforts; U.S. servicemembers, service and dedication; Vice President.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD202400504.