

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

**Remarks at a Grand Opening Ceremony for the Stonewall National Monument  
Visitor Center in New York City**

*June 28, 2024*

*The President.* Madam Secretary. Hello, hello, hello. Thank you. Please.

Hello, everyone. Happy Pride!

Thank you, Ann Marie and Diana. Thank you, thank you. They're off the stage already. I don't blame them. *[Laughter]* It's your love for each other and your vision for this community and for our country that brought this center to life. And I mean that sincerely.

And I want to thank Cynthia for the beautiful performance.

And by the way, thank you all for being here today and for being here, including—the Governor here? She—I was told she might be able to be here.

*Audience member.* Yes, Mr. President. Right over there.

*The President.* Where is she?

*Audience member.* There she is.

*The President.* Oh, there you are.

*[At this point, the President greeted Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul of New York.]*

*The President.* *[Inaudible]*

*Gov. Hochul.* *[Inaudible]*—I'm here. Thank you.

*The President.* Is Senator Gillibrand here?

*Audience member.* Yes.

*The President.* All right, well——

*Audience member.* O.M.G., that's a big deal. *[Laughter]*

*[The President Biden greeted Sen. Kirsten E. Gillibrand.]*

*The President.* *[Inaudible]*

*Sen. Gillibrand.* *[Inaudible]*—so proud of you. Keep fighting—*[inaudible]*. You're a fighter, and you're awesome. God bless you.

He's the best! He's a fighter!

*The President.* And I can see her sitting in front of me, one of the proudest appointments to this Cabinet I've ever made: Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. Deb—*[inaudible]*. And members of the National Park Service.

Look, Jill just talked about the power of stories. Fifty-five years ago today, on this hallowed ground, a pivotal story for our Nation unfolded. The soul of the Nation was literally tested. That's not hyperbole. The soul of the Nation was tested, and the heart of this movement was ignited. And the course of history has changed forever.

Not just here, but I traveled around the world; they look to us. They look to us, and it's part of our foreign policy as well now.

This beloved bar became the site of a call to cry for freedom, dignity, and equality and respect, a rebellion that galvanized the LBGTQ+ community all across the Nation and, quite frankly, around the world. You—I mean, you'd be amazed the number of places I am, whether its India or other places, where people talk about the gay movement here in the United States of America. I mean it.

You marked a turning point in civil rights in America. You inspired the hearts of millions of people around the world. To this day, Stonewall remains a symbol of the legacy of leadership of the LBGTQ+ community, especially trans women of color, who, for generations, have been at the forefront of helping realize the promise of America for all Americans.

Look, in 2016, President Obama—I was his Vice President at the time—designated Christopher Park as a national monument. Today I am proud to unveil a new visitor center for Stonewall National Monument, the first-ever LBGTQ+ visitor center in the national parks of America. And it matters. It matters.

We remain in a battle for the soul of America. I know I've said that for a while now. People looked at me when I first said it like I was kidding. I'm not. We're in the battle for the soul of America.

But I look around at the pride, hope, and light that all of you—all of you—bring, and I know it's a battle we're going to win and continue to make progress.

LBGTQ+ people are some of the most inspiring people I know. And of course, the courage—you know, I talk to a lot of younger LBGTQ people, in their teens and twenties, and I remind them: For a lot of people who started this operation, you took your life in your own hands—not figuratively, literally. You took your jobs in your own hands. You were put up in a position where you were—so much to lose, and you still did it. You still did it.

I remember my dad was dropping me off to get a license to be a lifeguard in Wilmington, Delaware, at a swimming pools. And I got out of the car in Rodney Square, they called. And there's a—that's where the DuPont Building is and the Hercules Corporation—all in that one quarter.

And two well-dressed men were kissing each other. And I hadn't seen that before. I looked at my dad. I was 16 years old. I looked at my dad, and he said: "It's simple, Joey. They love each other. It's simple." He was a good man.

And your courage and contributions enrich every part of American life. You set an example—I'm not exaggerating—for the entire world. That's what this center, this monument, this month is all about.

So today let's proudly remember who we are. We're the United States of America. And there's nothing beyond our capacity when we work together, and everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, no matter what their background, period, period, period.

As you can tell, I want to say a hell of a lot more, but I'm not going to—*[laughter]*—because I want to hear a guy you—you know, there's a guy that you've probably heard about. He's a dear friend. A guy who's—like so many Americans, whose family loves this iconic music—my family loves it. And of course, his incredible music career. He also empowered countless people to be themselves, to be treated with dignity and respect they deserve, including those in the fight against HIV/AIDS, a fight he led with sheer willpower.

Two years ago, Jill and I had the honor to host him in the White House and bestow on him the National Humanitarian Medal—Humanities Medal, one of America's highest awards.

So today we're honored to be with him again here at Stonewall.

Please welcome Elton John.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:48 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ann Marie Gothard, cofounder, and her wife Diana Rodriguez, founder and chief executive officer, Stonewall National Monument Visitor Center; and musician Cynthia Erivo. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 29.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Stonewall National Monument Visitor Center in New York City, grand opening ceremony.

*Locations:* New York City.

*Names:* Biden, Jill T.; Erivo, Cynthia; Gillibrand, Kirsten E.; Gothard, Ann Marie; Haaland, Debra A.; Hochul, Kathleen C.; John, Elton; Obama, Barack; Rodriguez, Diana.

*Subjects:* Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Pride Month; National Park Service; New York, Governor; New York, President's visit; New York, Stonewall National Monument Visitor Center in New York City; Secretary of the Interior.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD202400553.