

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026*

## **Remarks at a Black History Month Reception**

*February 18, 2026*

*The President.* This is a nice, full room. You know, we have a ballroom being built, right now. So, in about a year and a half, we'll be able to have about, I'd say, 10 times the number. You can invite some friends that couldn't make it today because, frankly, this was a sold-out crowd—has been ever since I've been President. Every year, it's been sold out. So a lot of great friends.

There's your knockout panel—okay?—for those that are interested. See that curtain? You open that curtain, and it's a beautiful funnel right into the most beautiful ballroom. It's being built right now.

*Audience member.* Go Trump! Go Trump! Go Trump! Only he can do it.

*The President.* So it's pretty—and they've wanted it for 150 years. We're getting it done a lot, we're getting a lot of other things done too.

Well, I want to thank you all and welcome you to the White House on this very special occasion—it is indeed; I've been at every one of them—and we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Black History Month. That's a big deal. One hundredth. Wow. That's sort of special, the 100th. That's about—it's like 150 is good—[*laughter*]—but 200 is better, right? [*Laughter*] One hundred is better.

### *Death of Civil Rights Advocate and Former Democratic Presidential Candidate Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.*

I want to begin by expressing our sadness at the passing of a person who was—I knew very well. Jesse was a piece of work, I want to tell you. [*Laughter*] He was a piece of work, but he was a good man. He was a real hero, and I just want to pay my highest respects to Reverend Jesse Jackson—all right? He was a good man.

He was actually—as you got to know him, he got better and better all the time. A lot of one—lot of people you get to know them; they get worse and worse. [*Laughter*] Jesse got better and better.

But I knew him well long before becoming President, and he really was special, with lots of personality, grit, and street smarts. You would say Jesse had serious street smarts, right? A very important ingredient to life, I will tell you.

He was gregarious and someone who truly loved people and a force of nature. He was somebody that we're going to greatly miss. And on behalf of everyone here today, I know you join me in sending our condolences to the entire family. Had a great family.

### *Black History Month*

We're also honored to be joined this afternoon by many exceptional African American leaders and patriots, including Secretary Scott Turner, recommended—where is Scott? Where is Scott? Will you come up here, Scott?

He was recommended by somebody who's very special to me: Ben Carson. Ben Carson. Where's Ben? Where's Ben?

*Audience member.* Over there.

*The President.* He's been—come on up here, Ben. Come here. I've got to get—and his wonderful wife Candy. Candy, I'm going to steal Ben for a second. Because, you know, Ben recommended Scott, and when Ben recommends somebody, I just do it. Did I make a good decision?

Be careful. Don't fall, Ben. *[Laughter]* If you fall, that's the end. It's never—you can never recover from a fall. *[Laughter]*

You know, if you make the greatest speech ever, but if you fall—my predecessor taught me that. *[Laughter]*

So is Scott doing a good job, Ben?

*National Nutrition Adviser Benjamin S. Carson, Sr.* He's doing the best job ever.

*The President.* Come on, say that. I like that.

*Nutrition Adviser Carson.* You know, one of the reasons I was so high on Scott Turner is he was really the driving force behind the Opportunity Zones, which was—which doesn't get nearly the attention that it should.

But it was because President Trump realized that the best way to get things done is through public-private partnerships and have everybody with skin in the game. And it is working, as are all the other things that he's been recommending.

And at some point—at some point, the mainstream media will recognize that you don't politicize everything. You open your eyes and your ears, and you look and you see what works, and you deal with that.

And—but the best thing about Scott: He's got a lot of energy. *[Laughter]* You know, I'm an old man now. I'll be 75 on my next birthday. And I'm not like President Trump; he just goes forever. But the—*[laughter]*——

*The President.* You're doing okay.

*Nutrition Adviser Carson.* No——

*The President.* You're doing good.

*Nutrition Adviser Carson.* No one else is like that. But Scott Turner, we call him the Energizer Bunny, and he is doing a fantastic job. And I want to congratulate all the people at HUD, because most of them have come back and continued with what we were doing during the first Trump term, and it's fantastic.

*The President.* Thank you very much. Scott?

*Secretary of Housing and Urban Development E. Scott Turner.* Well, just very briefly. Thank you, Mr. President. We are so grateful for your leadership and for your heart for America.

And Dr. Carson, who is a tremendous, just, leader—servant leader and been a great mentor to me. And you know, I never thought that I would see the day where I'm standing between the President and Dr. Ben Carson. *[Laughter]* That's pretty cool. Yes.

*The President.* He's more important. He's more important.

*Secretary Turner.* And so I just want to say to everyone that's here: You know, as we celebrate this special day in not only Black history but American history, this year that we've been here, you know, under President Trump, the Lord has been so gracious to us, and he's been faithful. And the President has been a tremendous leader in his work ethic, his heart for people. And when he says, "America first," he really does mean America first. Yes.

And so—and to be able to stand on the shoulders of Dr. Ben Carson and for the President to trust Dr. Carson at his word is truly humbling for me. And so, to stand now as the servant leader and the Secretary of HUD, I'm grateful to the Lord. I'm grateful to the President and Dr. Carson.

And I promise you we will continue to do good work and to make not just housing affordable and everybody achieve the American dream, but really to bring transformation and—so that those that are in our country who depend on subsidies and this, that, and the other will get off of that and live a life of self-sustainability.

So God bless y'all.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Secretary Turner.* Thank you, sir.

*The President.* Thank you.

Thank you, Ben.

Thank you. And Ben mentioned Opportunity Zones. We did that. And I want to thank Tim Scott, because he really—that was his baby. That was his baby, and he did a great job with it. We appreciate it.

And, again, Candy, thank you very much for being here. Special woman.

Ben is getting the Presidential Medal of Freedom. That's the biggest—it's the highest award you can have outside of the congressional Medal of Honor. But it's better because, you know, a lot of people get the congressional Medal of Honor—they're not around. You get them—they're not around. *[Laughter]* They got—whereas we don't have to go that far, generally speaking. *[Laughter]*

But it's the highest award—civilian. And then you have the—matching is the Congressional Medal of Honor. Both tremendous.

So, Ben, I'll be seeing you back here pretty soon, I think, and you're going to get the award. You'll probably fill up this room. I said, "We'll do it in the Oval Office." He said, "Sir, it's not big enough." I said, "What?" *[Laughter]* So we're going to do it right here. Okay? And we love him.

I'd like to also thank Senior Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General—he's a fantastic man; he's been my friend for a long time—Leo Terrell. There's no better. We have time, right? Do we have time? Yes? Anybody have to go, like—come on up here, Leo. Get up here. This guy, he says it like it is. I like Leo. Come here, Leo. Look at you. Spry.

*Audience member.* Two-point-oh!

*The President.* Leo 2.0.

*Senior Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Leo Terrell.* Let me just thank you for—thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, we are living under the administration of the greatest President in our lifetime. And we have the hottest country in our lifetime.

And I want to make sure the mainstream media knows this, because you represent the people who basically counter what the mainstream media has done. President Trump was the President who fully funded Historically Black Colleges and Universities. President Trump took the lead and performed criminal justice reform. President Trump made sure that we had Opportunity Zones.

Let me close by saying this: This country is at a crossroads, and we have the right President at the right time. And if you want school choice, like I know you do, President Trump wants it. If you want a law-and-order society and secure border, President Trump wants that.

And more importantly—I say this because this is the greatest country on the planet—American citizens should decide American elections. Vote for the SAVE Act.

*The President.* Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Leo 2.0. We don't—[laughter]—we love Leo. Thank you, Leo. That was very good.

*Senior Counsel Terrell.* Four more years! [Inaudible]

*The President.* Yes, 4 more years. [Laughter]

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* Anyway. So he's a special guy. I watched him on "Sean Hannity" a long time ago. He used to be a Democrat, you know? Leo was a Democrat. That's a long time ago, right? Can you imagine? You were a Democrat.

*Senior Counsel Terrell.* Not any longer.

*The President.* I can't imagine it.

*Senior Counsel Terrell.* I'm a Trump supporter.

*The President.* You'd see him with "Leo 2.0" up on the hat. We love him. He's a great man, actually.

General Counsel for the Department of War, Earl Matthews. That's a big deal. Thank you, Earl. Thank you very much.

I see Johnny over there, with a great book. How is the book doing? Good?

*Participant.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* What a great person you are. Great book.

White House Pardon Czar—this is a big job. This is a big job. Alice Johnson. Alice. She—where is Alice? What a sweetheart. I met Alice, and she was incarcerated for what some people would say today is not even a fine. Right, Alice? It's not even a fine. And I said, "How long has she been in jail?" "Twenty-two years." I said, "Twenty-two years?" And—right, Alice? And—come on up here, Alice. Come on up.

I said, "Twenty-two years?" And she was on a phone call. This was over a phone call. I know about fake phone calls too, Alice. You know? [Laughter] Remember? They tried to get me on a fake phone call.

But Alice was in jail for, like, 22 years. I said, "How many years does she have left?" "Twenty-eight." I said, "Twenty-eight years left?" And I said it, and—I mean, she admits she made a little mistake, but it was not the kind of a mistake that you serve 50 years in jail for. Like, maybe a couple of months. Maybe less than that.

And I said, "This is the most unfair"—and then, when I met her, I fell in love. I fell—

*White House Pardon Czar Alice M. Johnson.* It's mutual. It's mutual.

*The President.* My wife was very upset with it. [Laughter]

*Pardon Czar Johnson.* It's mutual.

*The President.* Our great First Lady did not like that, Scott. We didn't—she didn't like it.

But Alice is great. And say a couple of words. It was so ridiculous. Twenty-two years. She had 28 left, and I said, "Let's get her the hell out," and we got her out.

We did a commute, and then, when I got to know her, she was so high quality, I said, "Full pardon." So she's cleaner than anybody in this room, even than my friend right here. She's cleaner—because of that, she's cleaner than anybody in this room. *[Laughter]*

*Pardon Czar Johnson.* Thank you, Mr. President.

The feeling was mutual. I fell in love with this man, with his heart, with his heart for this country, with his heart to really bring America back to the former greatness that it deserved. And that's exactly what he has done.

My story is truly a "Joseph story." This President right here, President Donald Trump, brought me from the prison pit to the White House. Only in America could there be a story like my story, and President Trump is the only President who would have had the courage—the courage—to bring someone like me, someone who received a second chance. But who knows more than someone who has sat among the captives than someone who has been in captivity themselves?

*[Pardon Czar Johnson continued her remarks, concluding as follows.]*

Let's get real with the realness. Let's get behind President Trump, who truly has turned our Nation around and made us the envy of every country in the world.

Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you, God, for recognizing and raising up this man to be the leader of the free world.

I love you.

*The President.* Thank you. Beautiful.

She's a great woman. You know, when I was looking for a pardon person, like a Pardon Czar, they gave me somebody from Harvard, somebody from Yale, somebody from Princeton, somebody from Penn, somebody from Stanford. And I said, "Do you know anything about it?" "Well, we can learn." You know, they can learn. *[Laughter]* And when I met Alice, I said, "She's better than these people." And she's done a fantastic job.

You know, I said to Alice—I said: "So I'm looking for people like you to let out. How many people are there like you?" She said, "Many." I said, "Many?" In jail. Think of it: 22 years she was in jail, and she had 28 years to go on a phone call.

You admit you did a little something wrong, right? But it was, like, okay. *[Laughter]* It wasn't 50 years. Even if you said 6 months, today it would be probably nothing. But even if you said some little time.

But I said: "I'm looking for other people like you. How many are there?" "Many."

*Pardon Czar Johnson.* Many.

*The President.* Then I was worried, because I——

*Pardon Czar Johnson.* There are many.

*The President.* Then I was worried. I said, "Well, maybe she's going to say everybody should be let out," and we're not a believer in that. I said, "So, Alice, are there people that shouldn't be let"—you met a lot of people, right? "Are there people that shouldn't be let out?" "Absolutely." Then I felt better—*[laughter]*—because there are some bad ones in there too, right?

But you are fantastic, and you've been great and so respected all over the country, all over the world, in a sense. It's become—you've become a very big story.

Thank you very much, Alice. I appreciate it.

And we have Lynne Patton. Lynne, thank you. You've been such a help.

And Kelly Mitchell. Thank you, Kelly. Thank you. Where is Kelly? Thank you, Kelly.

And we have—oh, ho, ho—Dr. Alveda King. Thank you, darling. Thank you. You've been with me from day one, right? From day one, she's been there. She's been fighting for me, and I fight for her. I don't have to do too much fighting for her. She takes care of herself. Thank—

*Alveda King Ministries Founder Alveda C. King.* And we can say "merry Christmas" again.

*The President.* Ah, thank you. We can say "merry Christmas" is right. Thank you. Thank you for all that support for years—for years, right? Even before Alice—a long time, years before Alice, right?

*Ms. King.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* Thank you, darling. Corinn Rankin, thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you, Corinn. And Diante Johnson, thank you.

And a man who's been with me for a long time, and he's never asked me for a thing: Bruce. Thank you very much. Bruce LeVell, thank you very much. I wasn't sure if they had your name down here, Bruce. I was going to mention you anyway. Okay? But they had your name. They did a job, finally.

*Department of Agriculture Director of Public and Private Partnerships Bruce LeVell.* I ain't going nowhere.

*The President.* They always leave a lot of names out, and that bothers me. Like, I see Scott Bessent. His name was left out. First time ever. Look at Scott. I'm looking for his name. I'm looking for his name. I said, "I'd better"—he's the greatest Treasury Secretary we've ever had. I think he's—how's the economy doing, Scott? Good?

*Secretary of the Treasury Scott K.H. Bessent.* It's doing great, sir.

*The President.* The best. It's really—people are going to see.

And watch the State of the Union. We're going to be talking about the economy. We inherited a mess, and now we have prices way down. We have energy way down. Gasoline is now breaking \$2 a gallon in many places, and it's been actually amazing.

But Scott's fantastic. I don't want to forget to mention him. I'd be in big trouble. All of a sudden, the economy would turn bad on us. *[Laughter]* I'd say: "What happened? It was Scott." Thank you, Scott.

And Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer. Lori, thank you very much. She's Secretary of Labor.

Assistant Attorney General, Harmeet Diller *[Dhillon; White House correction]*. How are you doing with Harvard? How are you doing with Harvard?

*Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Harmeet K. Dhillon.* We're going after them.

*The President.* You know, Harvard is extremely discriminatory, unfortunately, and it's working good. Harmeet is on their trail, right?

*Assistant Attorney General Dhillon.* We're suing them, sir.

*The President.* Good. Good. You keep suing them. The hell with them. *[Laughter]*

I like the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which I saved.

Leo 2.0 said it, but which I saved. I—we saved them. But we—they had no funding. And every year, they'd come back, and I got to know some of the heads. And every year, they come back, and after my third year—first term—I said: "You guys keep coming back. Why do you keep coming back?" Said, "We have to come back every year." For years and years, they had to come back. And one of them said—one of the heads, a great guy, said: "They make us feel like beggars. We have to come back." I said, "I'm going to get you long-term financing." And I got it for them. And I said, "The only"——

*Audience members.* Thank you!

*The President.* I said, "The only bad thing, I'll never see you guys again. I'll never"—I haven't seen too many of them, but we took care of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, right? And it was a great thing to do.

And so many others are in the audience that are just friends of mine. I—look at them. So many. But if I introduce all of you, we're going to be here a long time, and that's unacceptable.

Not only are we celebrating the century of Black History Month, also, as you know, this year, we'll also be celebrating the 250th anniversary of our Nation's founding.

And the good thing, when they cheated on the election, they made me wait 4 years. And because I waited 4 years, I get the 250th year—I get the Olympics, which I was the one got—that got it, and I get the World Cup.

So I got the World Cup, and I said, "You know, it's too bad." Before all this nonsense takes place—took place, I said: "It's too bad. I got the World Cup to come here." Gianni—another Johnny—we got the World Cup. It was fantastic. The head of it—one of the great people. And I said, "The only bad part is I won't be in office because my 4 years will be up." This would have been the more traditional route.

And then they cheated on the election. And I said, "Now"—[*laughter*]—oh, we won by so much. We won by millions of votes, but they cheated. It was during a COVID period, and they cheated. And we did it again, and we made it too big to rig. Too big to rig. And by doing that, I ended up getting the Olympics. I ended up getting—because we were responsible for both of them.

And we're going to have a great year, but we're going to have a great 3 years. We're going to have, hopefully, a great—hopefully, we're going to have a great century, because that's ultimately what we—[*inaudible*]. We'll get it started.

But as we honor America's 250—and I can't say that I got the 250. I tried doing that a couple of times, Bruce. I said, "I got the Olympics, I got the World Cup, and I got the 250th year." They said, "You didn't do that." I said: "You're right about that. I didn't do two-fifty"—we happened to be here at the right time. That's all that was.

But we thank God for the strength and courage and grit and devotion of Black Americans who have helped make America the most powerful country in the history of the world.

We now have—and you saw that with our attack a few weeks ago on Venezuela. We have the greatest military in the world. We make the greatest equipment in the world. There's nobody even close.

Nearly 10,000 African Americans fought for the Patriot cause in the Revolutionary War. Did you know that? Ten thousand and—it's actually a number even—I've heard even num—higher than that.

Helping secure our independence in every generation since, from the Buffalo Soldiers to the Tuskegee Airmen, Black Americans have stepped forward to defend the flag and to defend our

country like few others, really—like few others. And you've never really been given the recognition that you should get for that.

You know that, Ben? They never—I don't think a lot of people have given the kind of recognition, but everyone knows all about the Tuskegee Airmen. They were great and amazing.

The Buffalo Soldiers. Do you know the Buffalo Soldiers? Good stuff, right?

From jazz to the blues—that, you know; that, you do get recognition for—[*laughter*—jazz, the blues, from rock and roll to rap, Black artists like Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters—how—how about Nicki Minaj? Do we love Nicki Minaj? Right? I love Nicki Minaj.

She was here a couple of weeks ago. So beautiful. Her skin's so beautiful. I said, "Nicki, you're so beautiful"—[*laughter*—her nails are, like, that long. I said, "Nicki, are they real?" She said—you know, she didn't want to get into that. [*Laughter*] But she was so beautiful and so great. And she gets it. You know, more importantly, frankly, she gets it.

But Black leaders, from Frederick Douglass to Martin Luther King, right? Little relative over here—have made our country freer and, really, what they've really done is made life more just.

And Black athletes have inspired billions around the globe, from Sugar Ray Robinson—Sugar Ray Leonard also, by the way, great—what a great fighter. Muhammad Ali, who was a friend of mine. I put a picture of myself and Muhammad. He was another piece of work. You talk about a piece of work. But he could fight, couldn't he? Huh?

Mike Tyson. Boy, I'll tell you, Mike has been loyal to me. Whenever they come out, they say, "Trump's a racist"—you know, it's like a statement—"Trump's a racist," Mike Tyson goes out: "He's not a racist. He's my friend. He's been there from the beginning—good times and bad." But Mike Tyson's a great guy, and he's—was so loyal. Always been loyal.

And Herschel Walker, speaking about loyal—how good a football player was Herschel? Herschel Walker. Now, he's Ambassador to the Bahamas. I don't know. Bahamas, Bermuda—is he Bahamas? Whatever. [*Laughter*] It's nice—a nice place.

You'd like that, Bruce, wouldn't you?

*Director LeVell.* I would.

*The President.* Bruce wants it.

And a friend—a guy that became really—he liked Trump. Jim Brown. He was tough. He'd come in—he was very silent. He was silent, but deadly. He'd come in, and he'd look at people, and if he didn't like him, he'd just look at me, and he'd go, "They're no good." [*Laughter*] He wanted to rip their heart out. I would say there can't be a better football—greater football player than Jim Brown.

By the way, Lawrence Taylor—great friend. Lawrence—the great Lawrence Taylor. Greatest defensive player, probably, in the history of football. He's a great friend of mine.

And—but I'm longer off the tee than him. You know why? Because I take the club back further. [*Laughter*] He takes the club back this far, and he hits it 200 yards. When you can do that, you're strong. He's a great guy, I'll tell you that.

And all of this is a part of the legacy that we celebrate on July 4, 2026, because Black History Month is really all about American history. And this is a big year. This is a big year for you.



During my first term, I was honored to deliver unprecedented victories for Black Americans—and all Americans, frankly—but Black Americans. I single-handedly secured record, long-term funding for, I told you, the historically Black colleges and universities.

I created nearly 9,000 Opportunity Zones with our great Secretary. And, also, I think we have to do—and as I said before, Tim Scott really—he came to me with that idea, and we put it into use. Right, Scott?

And I signed historic criminal justice reform into law. We got criminal justice reform.

Just so you know, for 30 years, you, more than any other group of people, has been trying to get criminal justice reform, and they couldn't do it. And a group of people came to my office, and they asked me to do it. They couldn't get it. They needed five conservative votes in the Senate, and conservative was five conservative White votes in the Senate. And of the five, all five of them were totally against.

And I called them up, and they were great. They were great. And they—one of them was Senator John Kennedy, to be honest with you. He was—he was not in favor of it, and I spoke to him, and he was a hundred percent—he's a great Senator, a great guy. And you know that? He was a tremendous help.

So we got criminal justice reform done and approved, and nobody thought it could be done. And it's no wonder that, in 2024, we won more African American votes than any Republican Presidential candidate in history.

And just over 1 year ago, we had a dead country. We were a dead country. Scott just said it. We were dead as a doornail. We had an idiot as a President. We had a man that was not a President. Number one, he didn't win the election. He was not a President.

*Audience member.* He didn't speak highly of you.

*The President.* Yes, right. *[Laughter]* He was a real beauty, wasn't he?

He allowed 25 million people into our country. Many of them should not have been here. And we've done—now we have—by the way, we went from the worst border in history to the best—by far, the best border in history.

But I had the support of many people—Bruce—I had the support of many people in this room, and we've got, right now, the hottest country anywhere in the world.

The King of Saudi Arabia told me that. He said: "You were a dead country a year and a half ago. Now you're the hottest country in the"—we're the hottest country right now anywhere in the world. And you're a big part of it, and you're a big beneficiary.

I'll tell you what: Take a look at your 401(k)s. Has anybody got a 401(k) that's lower than it was—better put your hand down—lower than it was a year ago? They're double. I mean, they are through the roof.

The stock market has hit 53 alltime record highs since the election. And earlier this month, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose above 50,000 for the first time ever. Right, Scott? First time ever.

And all the—also, you know, they don't talk about this: The S&P broke 7,000. So, when I got elected, they said for the S&P to break 7,000 within 4 years would be a great achievement for the President, and for the Dow Jones to break 50,000 would be great—a great thing, but it's not possible. They were talking about in 4 years. Scott, they said, in 4 years, it would not be possible to break 50,000 or 7,000 under these two very important—call them a metric—they're metrics.

And you know what happened? We broke it before the end of my first year. So—right? So we did something.

So they said we couldn't do it in 4 years. We did it in 1 year.

More Americans are working today than at any time in American history. So we have more Americans right now working than at any time. And you know, when I say this stuff—I got the fake news back there. A lot of it.

*Audience members.* Boo! [*Laughter*]

*The President.* Thank you. I agree.

Sometimes we have to be very careful, because they actually go, and it's not pretty, Leo. We have to get Leo and the DOJ involved.

But think of that. Leo, think of that. More Americans are working today than any time in history. And since I took office, African American employment has increased by 182,000—the highest ever—jobs. A hundred and eighty-two thousand.

Nearly half a million Black Americans have rejoined the labor force since we took office. Half a million. Wages for workers have increased \$1,000, \$2,000, even \$3-, and even sometimes, in some cases, \$5,000 a year. That's faster than inflation. So wages have gone up at a much faster clip than inflation.

We took over the worst inflation in the history of our country. They say 48 years—or 49 years. I said that—you know, I said, "Inflation under Biden went up more than at any time in the history of our country." They said: "He's not right about that. It's 49 years." I said: "All right. I'll accept that too." Actually, I think it sounds worse, Harmeet. I think, for some rea—because when you say "the worst ever"—but when you say "the worst in 49 years," I'll take that, right? The fake news got me on that one. I think I was right, by the way, but I'll accept 48 or 49 years.

But for the first time in many years, 100 percent of all net job creation is going to American-born citizens. Think of that: 100 percent. And in the last administration, it was going mostly to illegal aliens that came in, many of them murderers and others.

Last summer, we passed the largest working class tax cuts in the history of our country. That includes no tax on tips, no tax on overtime, no tax on Social Security for our great seniors. And you're going to see that. You know, it just kicked in on January 1. You're going to see tremendous results, and they're already seeing it. And I think we're going to have GDPs—we're going to have numbers that nobody has ever seen before, Scott.

Joining us this afternoon and, really, somebody that is fantastic—Annetta [Arnetta; White House correction] Bradford. In 2019, Annetta [Arnetta; White House correction] and her husband opened an incredibly successful coffee shop in Arkansas named HeBrews 11:1. That's an interesting name.

No one thinks that the no tax on tips matters. Well, it does matter, and it mattered a lot to Annetta [Arnetta; White House correction]. And she was able to grow her business just in a short period of time and hired more employees, and she's making a fortune.

I'd like you to give some of the people in that room some of that money, Annetta [Arnetta; White House correction]. [*Laughter*] She's making a lot.

Annetta [Arnetta; White House correction], come in. Annetta, come—where are you? Arne—Arnetta. Come on up here, Annetta. Come on up. Hi, darling.

Please. Let me move that down.

*HeBrews 11:1 coffee shop owner Arnetta Bradford.* I can't do anything first but say to God be the glory.

*Audience members.* Amen!

*Ms. Bradford.* I have no business being here other than Him having me here. And so—yes, I'm not going to do it.

*Audience member.* Preach.

*Ms. Bradford.* I'm not going to preach. *[Laughter]* I'm going to settle myself.

Thank you so much for inviting me and having me here. It's such an honor to be here today.

HeBrews 11:1—people ask me all the time why did I even open the business? Why did I even call it HeBrews 11:1? Hebrews 11:1 is my very favorite scripture: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen."

That scripture has walked with me and has grown me from a little girl on up. Not having no longer my mother here, no longer having my father here, my husband not having his mother and his father here, we opened HeBrews 11:1 with no funding, no money, no big family investors, no business loans. Didn't have great credit. It was us and faith in God.

That was 7 years ago, but I ran that business with just myself and one employee. Then here comes no tax on tips. I was able to hire seven more employees just by what you did.

Not only that, I was open to—able to open a second location on our college campus.

Things are just going off simply because having "now faith." And so I love the fact of that scripture.

Now, I say all of that as to—I'm trying to stick to my little written-down thing that I wrote. I don't know how to do that so well.

But as a small-business owner, I understand how critical support is. I understand that you have to have the right people that make the right policies for us as small-business owners.

So no tax on tips has been an extreme blessing for me and my business—not just mine, but I know so many people across the country.

I know a lot of us don't want to talk about the good part of it. We only want to share the negative. But I'm here today to tell you, you've done a great thing.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Ms. Bradford.* Thank you for just loving on us and showing us that even in small-town Hope, Arkansas—and I have got to say this: I have the best Governor in the world. I don't only just call Sarah my friend, I call her my sister.

And so that's why I am here today to just tell you that no tax on tips has been an amazing blessing for me; President Trump has been an amazing blessing for me; and at the end of the day, Jesus has been an amazing blessing for me.

I love you guys, and thank you so much, because I am a youth pastor, but I will not preach on today. I love y'all. Thank you so much.

*The President.* Thank you, Arnetta.

*Ms. Bradford.* Thank you. Thank you.

*The President.* Good job. Good job, huh?

So thank you very much, Arnetta.

And we can't provide opportunity for the next generation if we do not also have a thing called law and order. We need law and order.

You know, Washington, DC, is amazing. It was a crime capital. It was a horror show. A year ago, it was really dangerous, and now it's one of the safest cities anywhere in the country.

And we're in Memphis, Tennessee, now, where it's like a different world. In four months, we've made it safe. We're in Louisiana, as you know. We're in lots of other places.

And we have the lowest crime numbers that we've had in many years. We have the lowest murder numbers in 125 years—since 1900. And that's despite the fact that a lot of people are here, but those people have been taken out. Lots of them have been taken out.

That's why we stopped the invasion at the southern border. And just 1 year ago—and think of this. One year ago, we had the absolute worst border that we've ever had, and now we have the safest border that we've ever had. So it's going to be really something.

A hundred and twenty-five years ago—that's before my father was born. I had a wonderful father. But that was before. So we have murders are down. From 125 years, we had the best numbers. When you think about it, that's pretty incredible. And those numbers are made up by Democrats. Can you believe it? They don't want to give me those numbers. They could add a couple of people here and there.

But I've also deployed the National Guard to bring back safety to Memphis and to New Orleans and Washington. And the National Guard has been incredible, and people are safe.

In the case of Washington, the restaurants were all closing up. People were getting really badly, badly hurt and killed, frankly. Many people killed. And now you can walk down the street, and you have nothing to fear. We have one of the safest cities in the world, and it happened very fast, Bruce.

One of those who knows the importance of this mission is Forlesia Cook, a lifelong Washingtonian who tragically lost her grandson to violence in 2017.

Forlesia, we're so sorry, and you are a spectacular person. If you could say a few words, please. Thank you very much.

Yes, come on—oh, yes. Oh, help her up. We don't want any mistakes. [Laughter] Come on in.

*Washington, DC, resident Forlesia Cook.* First of all——

*The President.* Thank you.

*Ms. Cook.* ——can I have a hug?

*The President.* Yes, you can.

*Audience members.* Aww!

*The President.* Thank you, darling.

*Ms. Cook.* Thank you.

*The President.* Thank you. That's so nice. Thank you. I like her.

Please.

*Ms. Cook.* I like him too. [Laughter]

One thing I like about him: He keeps it real, just like grandma. *[Laughter]* I appreciate that, because I can trust him because he tells exactly how he feel and what he think.

Thank God for this President. I am filled, my cup runneth over, because he allowed his constituents, his people to come to my house to interview me, to talk about the murder of my grandson. It seemed like nobody cared. I'm an advocate for murder. I marched. I rallied. I pulled out other families in the District of Columbia that had murders and did not have answers. Ooh.

We marched and we rallied, and nobody heard me, Democrats—get mad at me—until this Republican sent his constituents, his people out there to interview me in my home. Have you ever heard of a thing? Then they invited me twice before Congress to testify for the "Beautiful Bill" that's going to change crime in the District.

If you kill somebody—okay?—you take a life, you do life. Just that simple. If you do a harsh crime, you do harsh time. Just that simple. And if we need National Guard, in which we did years ago, he brought it on.

I love him. I don't want to hear nothing you got to say about that racist stuff, and don't be looking at me on the news hating on me because I'm standing up for somebody that deserves to be stand up for. Get off the man's back! Let him do his job! He's doing the right thing. Back up off of him!

And grandma said it!

*The President.* Wow. That's pretty good. When is she running for office?

Forlesia, when are you running for office, please? You have my endorsement. You have my endorsement, Forlesia. *[Laughter]* Thank you, darling. Very—that's great. What a great—well, it's—and it's from the heart. Your little baby—right?—was just so horribly taken from you.

Under the Trump administration, we believe that no community should be abandoned to the scourge of violent crime, and we're saving thousands and thousands of lives in many cities.

And frankly, if these radical-left lunatic Democrats would come and say, "Please, help us, please," we'd stop crimes all over the place, and we're doing it in a lot of cities. Sometimes we have to force ourselves upon them because they're so bad, and I don't even think they realize what's happening to their cities and their towns.

But every town that we go in, every city that we go in, like Washington—Forlesia, you feel much safer now. Totally safe. You can walk to a restaurant. The restaurants were all closing. Now you can't get a restaurant. And the bad news is, you can't get into a restaurant. But it's a great thing to see what's happening in Washington. It's like it's a hot place, and hopefully—

*Audience member.* Come to Baltimore!

*The President.* —people will be coming in record numbers. And it's been—

*Audience member.* Baltimore is next!

*The President.* Well, I know we need a little help. You need help in Atlanta. He just said—

*[At this point, several participants spoke at once.]*

You're right, Atlanta. Atlanta. We could take care of Atlanta. I'll tell you what. You ought to get them to call me. We could take care of Atlanta so fast.

*Audience members.* Do it!

*The President.* Oh, they don't want to call. They don't want to call because they don't want to admit it, and they'll never fix it themselves.

Don't forget, we move people out. We don't just go in and, you know, be tough guys. We move people out. We take career criminals, and we get them out. We bring them back to the country from where they came. And think of it: 90 percent of the crime is caused by 2 percent of the people. Think of it. So, when you get the criminals out, you solve a lot of problems.

Another way that we're fulfilling our duty to the next generation is the single biggest thing that's happened, having to do with schools and education. It's called school choice. In our "Great Big Beautiful Bill," the—our bill, our beautiful bill, which really covers 4 years—we put it all together. That's why we call it the "Great Big Beautiful Bill." This will help millions of African American children and ensure that no child is condemned to a failing government or a horrible school.

And we have a person here who is fantastic on this subject. Greta, would you please come up? Please, Greta, come on up. Thank you. And her beautiful daughter. Thanks, Greta.

Thank you very much.

*ACE Scholarship mother and school choice advocate Greta Alexander.* How are you? God bless you. Happy to meet you.

*The President.* Thank you, darling.

*Ms. Alexander.* Well, I did owe. To God be the glory.

And we're grateful for our President. He's doing some tremendous work. And I want to remind those that don't know that this was prophesied, so you weren't supposed to have the second term when you—when it came about. This is your season. And God said that it was going to be rough the first 2 years and that things were going to happen, but then the last 2 years are going to be great, and——

*The President.* Well, I hope so. *[Laughter]*

*Ms. Alexander.* Yes, you're going to do some tremendous things.

*The President.* Thank you, darling. Thank you.

*Ms. Alexander.* And so, for that, we thank you.

On behalf of all the mothers all around the world—I'm from Texas. I live in a Zip Code that I didn't have an opportunity to have a choice to go to school. And so, when I raised my children, I wanted a better opportunity for them. And I'm so grateful to ACE Scholarships and all the doors that the President is opening for education.

My son was in a school that he didn't have any voice, and he found drugs in school, and he died. And so I'm here today to just show my appreciation for all the moms around the world. We have a choice now. This choice is so important to mothers.

I have a child that, because I had a choice, she's in private school, she's thriving. She's thriving. She's going to be an anesthesiology nurse, and she's doing great, and ACE Scholarships was a big part of that.

Changing education changes everything.

*The President.* Thank you, sweetheart.

*Ms. Alexander.* Changing education——

*The President.* Yes.

*Ms. Alexander.* —changes everything.

In my Zip Code, it feels like we were locked in a cage, and being locked in a cage and can't get out. And because of all of the things that you're doing for education, now we can get out and soar.

Our children can have a chance to be prosperous, just like other children. And I thank you for that. This is a great opportunity.

So, on behalf of all the mothers all around the world, I stand here and I give you your flowers while you can still get them. Thank you.

*The President.* Thank you very much.

*Ms. Alexander.* I appreciate you.

*The President.* How nice. Thank you.

*Ms. Alexander.* Give me a hug. God bless you.

*The President.* Thank you, sweetheart.

*Ms. Alexander.* And this is Miracle.

*The President.* Look how beautiful. What a beautiful daughter. Thank you.

Wow. So nice. Thank you very much. Thanks, Greta.

So we'll—calling an end. And I just want to say, this is an honor to be here.

We celebrate Black History Month. We honor the memory of those who came before us by continuing their legacy and fighting for an America that's—really, an America that's safe and strong and prosperous. We now have a country that's bigger, better, greater than ever before.

I want to thank all my Secretaries and all of the people that came here. Our military leaders are here. We have a lot of people that are here, and I want to thank you all. But this is a very special group of people.

So happy Black History Month, happy Black history year, and happy Black history century.

Thank you all. Thank you, Bruce. Thank you. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:12 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to civil rights advocate and former Democratic Presidential candidate Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., who died on February 17; Sen. Timothy E. Scott; Sean P. Hannity, host, Fox News Channel's "Hannity" program; White House Director of Minority Outreach Lynne Patton of White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities Executive Director Kelly Mitchell; Corrin Rankin, chairwoman, California Republican Party; Diante Johnson, founder and president, Black Conservative Federation; Giovanni V. Infantino, president, Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA); former professional boxer Mike Tyson; Jim Brown, former fullback, National Football League's Cleveland Browns; Lawrence Taylor, former linebacker, NFL's New York Giants; King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; and Chad Bradford, husband of Arnetta Bradford, owner of the HeBrews 11:1 coffee shop in Hope, AR. Ms. Bradford referred to Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders of Arkansas. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 19.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Black History Month reception.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Alexaander, Miracle; Alexander, Greta; Bessent, Scott K.H.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Bradford, Arnetta; Bradford, Chad; Brown, Jim; Carson, Benjamin S., Sr.; Carson, Candy; Chavez-DeRemer, Lori M.; Cook, Forlesia; Dhillon, Harmeet K.; Hannity, Sean P.; Infantino, Giovanni V.; Jackson, Jesse L., Sr.; Johnson, Alice M.; Johnson, Diante; Kennedy, John N.; King, Alveda C.; Levell, Bruce; Matthews, Earl; Minaj, Nicki; Mitchell, Kelly; Patton, Lynne; Rankin, Corinn; Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, King; Scott, Timothy E.; Taylor, Lawrence; Terrell, Leo; Trump, Melania; Turner, E. Scott; Tyson, Mike; Walker, Herschel J.

*Subjects:* America's 250th birthday celebration; Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division; Bahamas, U.S. Ambassador; Black History Month; California, 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles; Crime rates; Criminal justice system, reform efforts; Deaths, Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.; Department of Agriculture, Director of Public and Private Partnerships; Department of Agriculture, National Nutrition Adviser; Department of War, General Counsel; District of Columbia, law enforcement improvement efforts; Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup; Gasoline costs; Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Illegal immigration; Inflation; Job creation and growth; Massachusetts, Harvard University in Cambridge; National Guard; Opportunity Zones, improvement efforts; Pardons and commutations; Presidential Medal of Freedom; Saudi Arabia, King; School choice and voucher programs; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; Secretary of Labor; Secretary of the Treasury; Senior Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights; Stock market; Tax Code reform; Tennessee, law enforcement improvement efforts in Memphis; Undocumented immigrants, deportation of criminals; Venezuela, U.S. military capture and exfiltration of President Maduro; White House Ballroom construction project; White House Director of Minority Outreach; White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities; White House Pardon Czar.

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