

The President. Before Jose returns to his seat, I just want to ask Santiago and Melvin to return to the stage, please. This is a remarkable moment. And as they come up, I'd like to recall—

[*The President greeted S4 Erevia and Sfc. Morris as they returned to the stage.*]

The President. As they take their positions, I'd like to recall the words of a poet:

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and
tho'
We are not now that strength which in old
days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we
are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong
in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Santiago Erevia, Melvin Morris, Jose Rodela: In the thick of the fight, all those years ago, for your comrades and your country, you refused to yield. And on behalf of a grateful nation, we all want to thank you for inspiring us—then and now—with your strength, your will, and your heroic hearts.

Please give them a big round of applause.

Gentlemen, thank you. Please take your seats. We'll proceed with the rest of the ceremony.

[*Medals were presented posthumously to the following individuals: S4 Leonard L. Alvarado, Sfc. Felix M. Conde-Falcon, S4 Ardie R. Copas, S4 Jesus S. Duran, Sgt. Candelario Garcia, Cpl. Joe R. Baldonado, Cpl. Victor H. Espinoza, Sgt. Eduardo C. Gomez, Pfc. Leonard M. Kravitz, Sgt. Juan E. Negron, M. Sgt. Mike C. Pena, Pvt. Demensio Rivera, Pvt. Miguel A. Vera, Sgt. Jack Weinstein, Pvt. Pedro Cano, Pvt. Joe Gandara, Pfc. Salvador J. Lara, Pfc. Wil-*

liam F. Leonard, S. Sgt. Manuel V. Mendoza, Sgt. Alfred B. Nietzel, and 1st Lt. Donald K. Schwab. For each recipient, the citation was read, and the President then presented the medal to a surviving relative.]

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, it is very rare where we have the opportunity to reflect on the extraordinary courage and patriotism of such a remarkable collection of men. We are so grateful to them. We are so grateful to their families. It makes us proud, and it makes us inspired. And so, before we conclude the program, I would ask all those who have witnessed this extraordinary day to please rise and give these latest recipients of the Medal of Honor your warmest applause.

Chaplain, would you give us the benediction?

[*Maj. Gen. Donald L. Rutherford, USA, Army Chief of Chaplains, said a prayer.*]

Thank you so much, everybody. This concludes our program. But please have an opportunity to enjoy the White House. We are so grateful that all of you had a chance to come. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to musician Lenny A. Kravitz, nephew of Medal of Honor recipient Leonard M. Kravitz; Marilyn Libman, wife of Mitchel Libman, a Korean war veteran who spent 60 years writing letters to the Pentagon urging them to award Leonard M. Kravitz the Medal of Honor; Mary Morris, wife of Medal of Honor recipient Melvin Morris; and Leticia Erevia, wife of Medal of Honor recipient Santiago J. Erevia. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citations.

Remarks at a White House Screening of “Cesar Chavez” March 19, 2014

The President. Welcome to the White House. We are here to celebrate the life of an

American hero. Cesar Chavez was a man who devoted this brief time that we have on Earth

to making sure that this country lived up to some of its lofty ideals, the words of our founding, the idea that all of us are created equal; a man who organized others to widen the circle of opportunity not just for the people he knew, but for future generations.

And some of those future generations are here today. Cesar's son Paul is here. Some of his—there he is. I was looking for him. [Laughter] He's right there. Some of his children—some of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren are here. I did not have the honor of knowing Mr. Chavez, but I'd imagine that he'd be pretty proud to know that his granddaughter works in the White House. And not only does she know how to deliver an outstanding introduction—[laughter]—but she also does just an extraordinary job carrying on his work organizing people, but now all across the country, to engage on issues that are of importance to all Americans. And Julie just does an extraordinary job. We're so proud of her. So thank you, Julie, for the great introduction.

A couple of other acknowledgements: I want to acknowledge an outstanding Democratic leader in the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi. The great Dolores Huerta, our dear friend who cofounded the United Farm Workers along with Cesar. Rosario told me she is playing Dolores, and I thought I can see that; there's the same fire. I did have to say Rosario is a little taller. Just a little bit. [Laughter]

I want to thank the UFW's current president, Arturo Rodriguez, a great friend of ours. Thank you. And I want to thank Diego Luna and the entire cast of "Cesar Chavez." The—I told him I loved "Y Tu Mamá También." [Laughter] But we can't screen that at the White House. [Laughter] It's a great movie, but this is a little more family friendly here. [Laughter]

This movie, this film tells the story of a man guided by an enormous faith: faith in a righteous cause and a loving God and the dignity of every human being. And it reminds us how, throughout our history, that faith has been tested and that it falls to ordinary Americans, ordinary people, to fight and restore that faith.

Cesar himself said that he spent his first 20 years working as an organizer without a single

major victory. But he never gave up. He kept on going, and the world is a better place because he did. And that's one of the great lessons of his life. You don't give up the fight. No matter how long it takes, no matter how long the odds, you keep on going, fueled by a simple creed: *Sí, se puede*.

Sometimes, people ask me—in fact, while we were backstage, somebody said, oh, you look pretty good. You look better than I expected. [Laughter] The implication being that there might be reason for me not to look good. [Laughter] But part of what sustains me and part of what I've said in the past—and some of you who have been in meetings with me and when we've experienced setbacks or frustrations on particular issues—I've tried to remind people, change is hard. It doesn't happen easily. It doesn't happen smoothly or painlessly. It happens because you put your shoulder behind the wheel and you keep on pushing. And then sometimes, it's going to roll back a little bit on you. And then you got to dig in, and you've got to push some more.

And Cesar Chavez understood that. You have to push, and you create this space. And sometimes, you won't even see all the victories that are achieved, but you've invested that time and that effort, and you've inspired others. And eventually, things change, and you pass the baton, and future generations then continue this process.

So we've got a lot of causes that are worth fighting for. We've got to keep fighting to make sure that every American has access to quality, affordable health care. We were very persistent about getting that website fixed. It's fixed now. [Laughter] And we've got more than 5 million people signed up. But we've got 2 more weeks to sign them up. So cuidadodesalud.gov—[laughter]—get on the website, spread the word.

We've got to keep fighting to make sure that our economy rewards the hard work of every American with a fair and living wage and equal pay for equal work. We've got to keep working to fix our broken immigration system. This is an example of where this is hard, but we've made progress, and we are going to get this

done. This is going to happen. It's not a matter of if, just a matter of when. And I want it to happen now, so we are going to keep on pushing.

Mr. Chavez once said, "When you have people together who believe in something very strongly—whether it's religion or politics or unions—things happen." And today, we've got labor leaders and CEOs and faith leaders and law enforcement, and they've come together, and they've said it's time to fix this broken immigration system. We've got Democrats and Republicans who have now passed in the Senate a comprehensive bill. And if we stay united, things will happen, things will get done.

And none of us can claim to know exactly what Cesar would have said about this fight or any other. But I do think he would want us to remember that the debates we have are less about policy than they are about people. They're about the lives of men and women and the young and not so young, who want nothing more than the chance to work hard, support their families, provide a future for their kids and their grandkids, earn their place in our American story. That's what this is all about. They're about our highest hopes and aspirations for this country that we love and the country that we leave for future generations.

As this film reminds us, that was the cause of Cesar Chavez's life, and I hope this afternoon,

it's going to inspire all of us in the causes that we have to fight as well.

I cannot stay for the screening. I've been promised by our director that I'm—or producer or somebody is going to get me the CD.

Audience member. DVD.

The President. They're—whatever. [Laughter] I'm a little technologically challenged. [Laughter] The DVD. [Laughter] The point is, I'm going to watch it this weekend. Michelle and the girls are on their way to China. It's very lonely at home, so nothing better than to see an inspiring film. And I'm really looking forward to seeing a chronicled life of one of my heroes and one of the people who inspired me to get into the work that I've gotten into. So thank you for sharing it with us. All right?

God bless. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:38 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Paul F. Chavez, son of late United Farm Workers cofounder Cesar E. Chavez; Deputy Director of Public Engagement Julie Chavez Rodriguez; actor Rosario Dawson, who portrayed United Farm Worker cofounder Dolores C. Huerta in the film "Cesar Chavez"; and Diego Luna, director, "Cesar Chavez."

Statement on the Death of Robert S. Strauss

March 19, 2014

Michelle and I were saddened to hear of the passing of Bob Strauss. Bob was one of the greatest leaders the Democratic Party ever had, yet Presidents of both parties relied on his advice, his instincts, and his passion for public service, not to mention his well-honed sense of humor. As President Carter's Trade Representative, he helped open new markets for American exports. As President Bush's last Ambassador to the Soviet Union and first Ambassador

to the Russian Federation, he stood up for our interests and values at a moment of immense change. Bob was truly one of a kind, and our thoughts are with his children, his family, and his friends too numerous to count.

NOTE: The statement referred to President George H.W. Bush; and Robert A. Strauss, Sr., Richard Strauss, and Susan Breen, children of Mr. Strauss.