

nesses to advance our country, who took up arms to defend our country.

What makes us Americans is something more than just the circumstances of birth, what we look like, what God we worship; rather, it is a joyful spirit of citizenship. And citizenship demands participation and responsibility and service to our country and to one another. And few embody that more than our men and women in uniform.

If we want to keep attracting the best and the brightest, the smartest and most selfless the world has to offer, then we have to keep this in mind: the value of our immigrants to our way of life. It is central to who we are; it's in our DNA. It's part of our creed. And that means moving forward we've got to fix our broken immigration system and pass common-sense immigration reform.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Park Geun-hye of South Korea in Seoul

April 25, 2014

President Obama. I would like to thank President Park for welcoming me here today. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to come back to the Republic of Korea. But I am very mindful that my visit comes at a time of deep mourning for the people of this nation, and I know that President Park and the South Korean Government are focused on responding to the tragedy of the ferry *Sewol*.

In our press conference later, President Park and I will have the opportunity to address a range of issues that we'll be discussing here today. But for now, I just wanted to express, on behalf of the American people, our deepest sympathies for the incredible and tragic loss that's taken place. As allies, but also as friends, we join you in mourning the lost and the missing and especially so many young people, students who represented the vitality and the future of this nation.

So, President Park, I thought that it would be appropriate and fitting for us to begin today by honoring the lost and the missing. And our delegation, out of respect, would appreciate

This is a huge advantage to us, the talent that we attract. We don't want to make it harder, we want to make it more sensible, more efficient. That's why I'm going to keep on pushing to get this done this year so that others like the young men and women here have the opportunity to join our American family and serve our great Nation.

Today I'm thrilled that, in a few moments, I'll get to call each of you my fellow Americans. I am so proud to be sharing this stage with you today. Congratulations. But I don't want to talk too long, because I'm not the main event. Thank you very much for your service.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. at the War Memorial of Korea. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Kim Y. Sung; and Gen. C. Michael Scaparrotti, commander, U.S. Forces Korea.

the opportunity to join together in a moment of silence.

[*At this point, a moment of silence was observed.*]

President Park. Mr. President, thank you so much for making this proposal to hold a moment of silence for the victims of the ferry *Sewol*. Right after the tragic accident, you personally expressed your condolences and your sympathies, and you were unsparing in providing active U.S. assistance, including the dispatch of salvage vessels. The Korean people draw great strength and courage from your kindness.

Just as the American people were able to rally together in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks and were able to prevail over difficult times, so too, I am sure that Korean people will, in fact, pull through this moment of crisis and be able to achieve the renewal of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. President, my sincere welcome to you once again on your visit to Korea, and may our summit meeting today kick off the next 60 years and produce very meaningful results that allow us to do so.

President Obama. Well, thank you, President Park. The Republic of Korea is our—one of our strongest allies in the world. I'm looking forward to our discussion and to reaffirming America's unshakeable commitment to South Korea and its security.

One last point I wanted to make: I have with me this American flag that I believe our protocol people have. In the United States, we have a tradition. After the loss of our servicemembers and veterans, we present a flag in their honor to their loved ones. This flag was flown

over the White House the same day as the sinking of the *Sewol*. And in that spirit, I'm presenting this American flag to you and the people of the Republic of Korea on behalf of the American people. It reflects our deep condolences, but also our solidarity with you during this difficult time and our great pride in calling you an ally and a friend.

President Park. Mr. President, thank you so much again for sharing in our sorrow, the sorrow of the Korean people as well as the bereaved families, and for your gracious gesture.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:21 p.m. at the Blue House. President Park spoke in Korean, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks With President Park Geun-hye of South Korea on the Return of South Korean Cultural Artifacts in Seoul April 25, 2014

President Obama. So we just had an excellent meeting, and I know that we'll have the opportunity to answer questions from the press about policy. But I just wanted to make a brief remark about these remarkable artifacts.

These are historic seals that were part of the monarchy here in Korea. And during the Korean war, a marine from the United States found them and took them back as mementos to the United States. And I don't think he fully appreciated the historic significance of them.

After his passing, his widow discovered how important they were, and she graciously recognized that they appropriately belonged here in Korea. So she facilitated the return, and I wanted to just let the Korean people know that they're back where they belong. And this is a symbol, hopefully, of the respect that we have for Korean culture and our friendship. And they're very beautiful.

President Park. It's very significant that we were able to return home these very historic and precious artifacts. And I do wish to thank

President Obama, as well as the American people, for this gesture.

This event is really the fruits of the close consultations and collaboration that our two countries have been undertaking since late last year. And I do wish to acknowledge all the hard work of the officials—the relevant officials at the Department of Homeland Security as well as other related agencies—for their hard work.

I also understand that later this year, we're preparing to adopt an MOU with regard to the return of cultural artifacts, and preparations are currently underway to do so. And I believe the event can further catalyze collaboration in terms and with regard to cultural heritage. Once again, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, and the American Government for this wonderful present.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:49 p.m. at the Blue House. President Park spoke in Korean, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.