

which are—[*applause*]. Now, these are changes that are rooted in America's commitment to freedom and democracy for all the Cuban people, including its small, but proud, Jewish community. And Alan's remarks about the need for these changes was extremely powerful.

So what brings us together is not just lox and latkes—[*laughter*—although, I have heard the latkes here are outstanding. Am I wrong? Not as good as your mom's, but they're good.

We're here to celebrate a story that took place more than 2,000 years ago, when a small group of Maccabees rose up to defeat their far more powerful oppressors. In the face of overwhelming odds, they reclaimed their city and the right to worship as they chose. And in their victory, they found there wasn't enough oil to keep the flame in their temple alive. But they lit the oil they had, and miraculously, the flame that was supposed to burn for just 1 night burned for 8. The Hanukkah story teaches us that our light can shine brighter than we could ever imagine with faith, and it's up to us to provide that first spark.

This is something that Inbar Vardi and Mouran Ibrahim know very well. They are Israeli ninth-graders at Hand in Hand, which is a bilingual school in Jerusalem. For more than a decade, it's brought Jewish and Arab children together. So Inbar is Jewish; Mouran is Muslim.

Just 2 weeks ago, their school's first-grade classroom was set on fire by arsonists. In the weeks that followed, they and their classmates could have succumbed to anger or cynicism, but instead, they built this menorah, one of four that we brought here from Israel this year. Each of its branches are dedicated to one of the values their school is founded on, values

like community and dignity and equality and peace. Inbar and Mouran flew here from Israel along with Rebecca Bardach, the mother of the—of a first-grader and second-grader at Hand in Hand, and in just a few minutes the three of them are going to join us in lighting the Hanukkah candles here at the White House.

So Inbar and Mouran and their fellow students teach us a critical lesson for this time in our history: The light of hope must outlast the fires of hate. That's what the Hanukkah story teaches us. That's what our young people can teach us: that one act of faith can make a miracle, that love is stronger than hate, that peace can triumph over conflict. And during this Festival of Lights, let's commit ourselves to making some small miracles ourselves and then sharing them with the world.

Audience members. Amen!

I now want to invite Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson to the podium, who can lead us in the blessings for the candle lighting. Rabbi.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:27 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Shira and Nina Gross, daughters of former U.S. Agency for International Development contractor Alan P. Gross; David Shneyer, founder and director, Am Kolel Jewish Renewal Community of Greater Washington; Rebecca Bardach, director of resource development and strategy, Hand in Hand Center for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel, and her sons Adin and Amitai Goldstein; and Bradley S. Artson, the Abner and Roslyn Goldstine Dean's Chair at the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, American Jewish University.

Statement on the Resignation of Rajiv J. Shah as Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development *December 17, 2014*

For the past 5 years, Raj Shah has been at the center of my administration's efforts to advance our global development agenda as the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for In-

ternational Development (USAID). To be sure, his tasks have never been easy: responding to natural disasters, epidemics, and famine, to name just a few examples. But Raj, the

son of proud Indian immigrants, has embodied America's finest values by proactively advancing our development priorities, including ending global poverty, championing food security, promoting health and nutrition, expanding access to energy sources, and sup-

porting political and economic reform in closed societies.

Raj's leadership and counsel will be missed, but I join his USAID colleagues and administration counterparts in wishing him well as he embarks on a new chapter.

Remarks at a Hanukkah Reception December 17, 2014

The President. Yay! Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. Happy Hanukkah!

Audience members. Happy Hanukkah!

The President. This is a particularly good-looking Hanukkah crowd.

The First Lady. It's good. [Laughter] It's good.

The President. It's very impressive.

Now, every year, Michelle and I like to invite just a few friends over for a small Hanukkah celebration. [Laughter] Nothing fancy. This is the second year we've invited so many friends that we ended up having to have two Hanukkah parties. We had one earlier this afternoon. I have to tell you, this is the better party. Don't tell anybody because—

The First Lady. Because he said that earlier.

The President. I said that earlier. [Laughter]

But I really mean it this time.

The First Lady. Okay.

The President. Yes. We are blessed to have so many friends and dignitaries here. I want to welcome Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer, who's here, and his wife Rhoda; all our friends from the State of Israel, who remind us that the bonds between our two countries are unbreakable.

We have leaders from across my administration, including our outstanding Secretary of the Treasury, Jack Lew; Council of Economic Advisers Chair Jason Furman.

The First Lady. Yay, Jason! Jason!

The President. Give Jason some more—Jason actually is the guy who gives me the job reports every month. Ever since he's come on, they've been really good. So give Jason a big round of applause.

National Economic Council Director Jeff Zients is here. We've got the Governor of

Maryland, Martin O'Malley. We've got all kinds of Members of Congress here, including our DNC Chair, Debbie Wasserman Schultz; the president of the Anti-Defamation League, Abe Foxman; and a member of my team who's leaving to become ADL's next president, Jonathan Greenblatt.

Now, I'm going to begin by saying what a glorious day this is because, after 5 years, American Alan Gross is free. As all of you know, he was arrested 5 years ago by Cuban authorities simply for helping ordinary Cubans—including a small Jewish community in Cuba—just for accessing information on the Internet. Today, after 1,840 days, he is back where he belongs, with his wife Judy and his family. And as you heard Alan say today, this is his best Hanukkah.

From his cell, Alan once wrote, "I refuse to accept that my country would leave me behind." And he is right. We're committed to the principle that no American ever gets left behind. We do everything in our power to bring Americans home. So we thank all those who helped to make sure that Alan was never forgotten. And as now we're moving forward, we know that the historic changes I announced today will mean greater opportunity and progress for both Americans and for Cubans, including the small, but proud, Jewish community in Cuba.

So we are here to celebrate a story that took place more than 2,000 years ago, when a small group of Maccabees rose up to defeat their far more powerful oppressors. In the face of—what do we got playing there? [Laughter] What you got on your phone? I was trying to figure out the ringtone. [Laughter]

Where was I? Small group of Maccabees—right! Rose up to defeat their far more power-