

less we're Native American, has an ancestor who was born somewhere else.

And even though we haven't always looked the same or spoken the same language, as Americans, we've done big things together. We've won this country's freedom together. We've built our greatest cities together. We've defended our way of life together. We've continued to perfect our Union together.

And that's what makes America special. That's what makes us strong. The basic idea of welcoming immigrants to our shores is central to our way of life, it is in our DNA. We believe our diversity, our differences, when joined together by a common set of ideals, makes us stronger, makes us more creative, makes us different. From all these different strands, we make something new here in America. And that's why, if we want to keep attracting the best and the brightest from beyond our shores, we're going to have to fix our immigration system, which is broken, and pass commonsense immigration reform.

We shouldn't be making it harder for the best and the brightest to come here and create jobs here and grow our economy here. We should be making it easier. And that's why I'm going to keep doing—

[*At this point, an audience member applauded.*]

He agrees with me. [*Applause*] So I'm going to keep doing everything I can do to keep making our immigration system smarter and more efficient so hard-working men and women like all of you have the opportunity to join the American family and to serve our great Nation, so we can be stronger and more prosperous and more whole together.

I'll close with a quick story. George Mardikian was an immigrant from Armenia who be-

came a famous chef. And George had a quote that I think will ring true for most immigrants. He said, "You who have been born in America, I wish I could make you understand what it is like not to be an American—not to have been an American all your life—and then suddenly, to be one, for that moment and forever after."

Today, on this Fourth of July, all across the country—from Thomas Jefferson's Monticello to the Alamodome in Texas—immigrants from around the world are taking the oath of citizenship. And many of them have worked and sacrificed for years to get to this moment. All of them have done it for something none of us should ever take for granted: the right to be called an American, from this moment and forever after.

And that fact should give us hope and should make us confident about the future of our country. Because as long as there are men and women like all of you who are willing to give so much for the right to call yourselves Americans, and as long as we do our part to keep the door open to those who are willing to earn their citizenship, then we're going to keep on growing our economy, we'll continue to journey forward, and we'll remind the world why the United States of America is and always will be the greatest nation on Earth. And we're very proud of you. Congratulations.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. And now I'd like to turn it over to Deputy Secretary Mayorkas. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas; and Rendell Jones, Acting Deputy Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration

July 4, 2014

The President. Hello, everybody! Happy Fourth of July! Welcome to the White House!

Audience member. Thank you!

The First Lady. You're welcome!

The President. No, thank you. [*Laughter*]

Now, this little party is something we've been doing every year, because there's no group that we'd rather spend time with on this

most American of holidays than with you: the extraordinary men and women of America's military. And because of you, we're safe, we're free. You depend—we depend on you for our way of life, and the sacrifices you make are extraordinary.

Now, in the house we've got Army. We've got Navy. We've got Air Force. We've got Marines. We've got Coast Guard. And most important, we've got the incredible spouses and children. Give it up for our outstanding military families.

To help us celebrate, we've got our outstanding Marine Band. Later on, we're going to bring out Pitbull and his band. So we want to see if you like to party. [Laughter] And of course, this is always a special day for us because this is Malia's birthday.

Audience member. She can get her license!

The First Lady. Oh, she's going to get her license. [Laughter]

The President. She is. She's getting her license, but she has to practice a little bit before that happens. [Laughter]

Now, this is a gorgeous day. We want you to enjoy yourselves, so I'm going to keep my remarks brief. But it is important to remember why we're here.

Two hundred and thirty-eight years ago, our Founders came together and declared a new nation and a revolutionary idea: the belief that we are all created equal, that we're free to govern ourselves, that each of us is entitled to life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

And in the generations that have followed—through war and peace, through depression and prosperity—these truths have guided us as we have built the greatest democratic, economic, and military force the world has ever known.

So today, immigrants from around the world dream of coming to our shores. Young people aspire to study at our universities. Other nations look to us for support and leadership in times of disaster and conflict and uncertainty. And when the world looks to America, so often they look to all of you, the men and women of our Armed Forces. Every day, at home and abroad, you're working to uphold those ideals

first declared in that Philadelphia hall more than two centuries ago. Every day, you give meaning to that basic notion that as Americans, we take care of each other. And so today we honor all of you.

And we salute some of the folks who are here with us on this balcony. We salute our soldiers, like Chief Warrant Officer Tommy Oroho, who has served this Nation in uniform for 27 years, including deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Two summers ago, Tom was at the beach, saw a young girl and her father who had been swept out to sea, and jumped into dangerous riptide and pulled them back to safety. That's the kind of service we expect from our outstanding soldiers. Please give it up for Tom. Thank you.

We salute our sailors, like Seaman Reverlie Thomas, who came to America 21 years ago from Trinidad. She served a tour in the Persian Gulf for the Navy. Just a few hours ago here at the White House, I was proud to welcome Seaman Thomas and 24 other servicemembers and military spouses as our newest American citizens. Thank you Reverlie, and congratulations.

We salute our airmen, like Technical Sergeant Cheryl Uylaki, who manages the Fisher House at Dover Air Force Base, ensuring the families of our fallen are always provided comfort and care worthy of their profound sacrifice. We're so grateful to you, Cheryl, for your great work.

We salute our marines, like Sergeant Isaac Gallegos, who was severely wounded after an IED explosion in Iraq 8 years ago. He suffered burns on almost every inch of his face. He was pronounced dead three separate times. Undergone 161 surgeries. But he is here standing with us today, pursuing a master's degree, working full time for the Navy. That's what we're talking about when we talk about marines. Give it up for Isaac.

We salute our Coasties, like Lieutenant Commander Sean Plankey, who helped lead a cyber team in Afghanistan that supported our troops during firefights and helped prevent the detonation of remote-controlled IEDs, saving countless of lives. So thank you, Sean.

And we salute our military families: the spouses who put their careers on hold for their loved ones, the children who pick up extra chores while Mom or Dad is deployed, the siblings and parents and extended family members who serve the country every single day. You're the reason Michelle and Jill Biden started the Joining Forces initiative, to make sure America is supporting you too. And today we honor your service here today.

So, as we pause on this Fourth of July to celebrate what makes us American, we salute all of you whose service and sacrifice renews that promise of America every single day. On behalf of the entire country, Michelle and I sim-

ply want to say thank you to all of you for your courage and your strength and your unending service to this Nation.

Happy Fourth of July, everybody. Have a great party. Have a hotdog. Have a hamburger. We want to see you dancing. God bless you all. God bless the United States of America. Hey! Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:56 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to musician Armando C. "Pitbull" Pérez. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 5.

Remarks on Education Prior to a Lunch With Teachers *July 7, 2014*

Well, good afternoon, everybody. I am here with some outstanding teachers as well as Secretary Arne Duncan. And the reason we're here is with the school year now over, it is a great time for us to focus on what we need to do to make sure that next year and the year after that and the year after that continues to improve for students all across this country.

The one ingredient that we know makes an enormous difference is a great teacher, and we have four of the best teachers in the country here. But what we also know is that there are outstanding teachers all across the country, and Arne, myself, I suspect many of you had wonderful teachers that made all the difference in your lives and allowed you to be excited about learning and set you on a path for an extraordinary career.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of kids around the country who are not getting the kind of teaching that they need, not because there aren't a whole lot of great potential teachers out there, but because we're not doing enough to put a lot of our teachers in a position to succeed. They may not be getting the training they need; they may not be getting the professional development and support that they need in the classroom. And part of our goal since we came into office, since Arne became Secretary of Education, is how do we continually im-

prove how teachers can get better each and every year.

Of particular concern is the fact that, typically, the least experienced teachers, the ones with the least support, often end up in the poorest schools. So we have a problem in which the kids who need the most skilled teachers are the least likely to get them. And the most talented and skilled teachers oftentimes are teaching the kids who are already the best prepared and have the most resources outside of the school in order to succeed.

So what we're trying to do today—and Arne is going to have more to say about this this afternoon because there are a whole bunch of other teachers who are here in town—is to highlight what we're calling Excellent Educators for All. It's going to be a program in which we ask States to take a look at where they're distributing great teachers, what are they doing in order to train and promote and place teachers in some of the toughest environments for children. And what we're also going to be doing is providing technical assistance, highlighting best practices, all with the intention of making sure that wherever a child is, anywhere in the country, they've got that opportunity to have somebody in front of the classroom or beside them, guiding them, mentoring them, helping them learn.