

that they were just going to have a fun reunion up in Paris and ended up engaging a potential catastrophic situation and pinning down someone who clearly was intent on doing a lot of harm to a lot of people and inflicting terror on the French people.

Because of their courage, because of their quick thinking, because of their teamwork, it's fair to say that a lot of people were saved and a real calamity was averted. And the French people have already bestowed on them the highest honor that they can—the Legion of Honor—at a ceremony presided over by President Hollande of France. I had an opportunity to talk to him, and he told me that he could not have been more grateful for what these three outstanding young Americans did.

And I just wanted to make sure that, having talked to them on the phone right after the event, that I had a chance to shake their hands in person and tell them what I think they've heard from a lot of people, which is, they represent the very best of America: American character. And it's these kinds of young people who make me extraordinarily optimistic and hopeful about our future.

And I want to thank each and every one of them and wish them well. I'm glad to see that Spencer, apparently, his hand is in pretty good shape and making real progress. And he intends to continue to pursue his work in medicine and caring for people. Anthony is interested in sports medicine and therapy. And Aleksander, as soon as he is finished on "Dancing With the Stars"—[laughter]—plans to get into law enforcement.

Whatever they do, they're going to do it well. And we just want to say thank you to them for not only saving so many lives, but also for making America look so good. All right?

*Mr. Sadler.* Thank you, sir.

*Spc. Skarlatos.* Thank you.

*AIC Stone.* Thank you.

*The President.* Thank you. Come on, let's get one more—we'll get one good picture with everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:07 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ayoub El Khazzani, suspected gunman in the Thalys train attack outside Oignies in Pas-de-Calais, France, on August 21.

## Remarks at a White House Screening of the VICE News Documentary "Fixing the System" September 18, 2015

Hello, everybody! Hello, hello, hello. Everybody, please have a seat, have a seat. Have a seat. Well, I just wanted to stop by—[laughter]—and just say thank you, because we have in this audience some people who are doing outstanding work on behalf of criminal justice reform. I want to thank Angie for the introduction. I want to recognize a couple of Members of Congress who are here, who have been great champions of this. Congresswoman Frederica Wilson from the great State of Florida. And a great champion of this issue, he is working tirelessly in the Senate to advance some important legislation, Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey.

We also have former Attorney General and buddy of mine, Eric Holder. I know our cur-

rent Attorney General I think had to leave a little bit earlier, but obviously is deeply involved in these efforts. I want to thank Shane Smith and everybody at VICE for the great work and efforts that they've made in the production of what you're going to be seeing here today. And then there's a guy named Al Sharpton over here. [Laughter] What's up, Al? He's been working on these issues for a while.

America spends \$80 billion a year keeping folks locked up. We represent 5 percent of the world's population, 25 percent of its inmates. That's not an indicator that we want to be the leader in. Keep in mind that I'm the father of two kids, and I care about them being safe, and I am fiercely protective of them. And I think it is important for all of us to recognize that in

too many communities, crime destroys lives and hope and opportunity, and we cannot diminish the impact of crime. And I think everybody here recognizes that we have to have a criminal justice system that is effective and that prosecutes individuals in a fair way to ensure that we as a society are able to maintain peace and order and security. That's not something that anybody here would argue against.

But what we also know is that for too many individuals, particularly nonviolent offenders caught up in an environment in which drugs are pervasive and opportunity is lacking, the punishment does not fit the crime.

Too often, prosecutions, arrests are not being applied in a way that reflects our belief in equality under the law. And the effects of this mass incarceration ripple through families and communities, especially communities of color in ways that are not just a problem of the here and now, but continue across generations. So, as a society, we have to acknowledge that there is something wrong when we are locking up this many folks with this kind of frequency, concentrated in a handful of communities in cities and towns and counties across this country.

And that's why, in July, I visited the El Reno Federal penitentiary in Oklahoma—the first President, apparently, to have ever visited a prison—because the people in these prisons are deserving of our attention. They're human beings with hopes and dreams, who in many cases have made profound mistakes, but are American citizens nonetheless.

It was interesting, during that visit, we had a chance to meet with corrections officers and wardens and those who manage the system. They have an extremely difficult and often dangerous job. And we expressed our appreciation for what they do. But they also recognized that we could be doing better in how we administer justice.

And I met with a group of prisoners, and what was striking was the degree to which so many of these young people—and many of them were young; there were some older ones who were there, often because they had been serving time for mistakes they had made dur-

ing their youth. And I said at the time—I think I—you may hear me say it in this program—that they weren't so different from me. I made mistakes when I was young. I didn't always follow a straight path. The primary difference between me and them was, I had more of a cushion. I had second chances. In some cases, I had resources, or I was in an environment in which when I made a mistake as a teen, that I could recover from it. And these young people didn't have any margin for error.

And that notion that as a consequence of youthful mistakes, they could end up in a life-long cycle of crime to where the prospect of them being able to recover and reenter society with gainful employment and the ability to be part of their children's lives and to be citizens appeared remote—that the notion that that's how we think our criminal justice system should work, that that should be the end result, there's something un-American about that.

This is a country that believes in second chances. And right now we've got millions of people who aren't getting it. So we've got to make sure that our criminal justice system works. We've got to make sure that our criminal justice system keeps people safe. We have to respect the incredibly difficult job that police officers have and remind ourselves that they are protecting and serving us and they have a right to go home too. We have to recognize that there are prosecutors and judges throughout the system who want to do the right thing and feel compassion and understand the human stories that are involved in this thing, but are bound by laws that all too often have been created because of politics or misguided theories as opposed to being based on the evidence and what's required to keep people safe.

The bottom line is, we've got to make sure that our criminal justice system does not perpetuate a cycle of hopelessness, but rather lifts people up. And there's no contradiction between us being concerned and vigilant when it comes to keeping our streets safe and our children safe and also making sure that our system is fair and just and does not consign an entire class of people to a life on the margins.

And that means that we've got to support sentencing reform efforts, like the one that these Members of Congress are supporting, so that we can more effectively use our resources to protect the public. It means that we have to stay focused on prevention programs and alternatives like drug courts that can intercede with young people before they're locked into a path from which they cannot recover. It means that providing education and job training and focus inside of prisons is not being soft on crime; it is being smart about what is needed in order to make sure that people can recover from their mistakes.

And the good news is that people from Federal, State, and local governments, from law enforcement and the judiciary, from business and entertainment, and local communities are finding common ground on this issue. What's encouraging is, this is one of the few areas where we're seeing some really important bipartisan conversations taking place and members of the faith community stepping up alongside civil rights advocates in really significant and meaningful ways. And so I'm encouraged by it.

You represent the possibilities of shaping a coalition that makes this aspect of America more consistent with our ideals and our values. And for your extraordinary work, I want to

thank you. But recognize this is going to be hard work. It is not going to be easy. It is not going to happen soon. We are just going to have to keep on pushing at the Federal level, but also at the State and local levels. We've got a great Attorney General currently, and we had a previous Attorney General who cared deeply about this.

But we need States attorneys and local prosecutors and sheriffs and departments all across this country to internalize these issues as well, because the Federal system is just a very—is a small portion of our overall criminal justice system. And it's not something that I can direct by fiat to change. This is something that's going to have to be a collaboration with everybody.

So that's enough talking. Thank you for the great work you're doing. And enjoy the show. All right?

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:36 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Angela Martinez, host, Power 105.1's "The Angie Martinez Show" in New York City; Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch; Shane Smith, owner and chief executive officer, VICE Media LLC; and civil rights leader and activist Alfred C. Sharpton, Jr.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Persons Who Commit, Threaten To Commit, or Support Terrorism

September 18, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed

notice stating that the national emergency with respect to persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism declared in Executive Order 13224 of September 23, 2001, is to continue in effect beyond September 23, 2015.

The crisis constituted by the grave acts of terrorism and threats of terrorism committed by foreign terrorists, including the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, in New York and Pennsylvania and against the Pentagon, and the continuing and immediate threat of further attacks on United States nationals or the Unit-