

groups are actively encouraging people—around the world and in our country—to commit terrible acts of violence, oftentimes as lone-wolf actors. And even as we work to prevent attacks, all of us—Government, law enforcement, communities, faith leaders—need to work together to prevent people from falling victim to these hateful ideologies.

More broadly, this tragedy reminds us of our obligation to do everything in our power, together, to keep our communities safe. We know that the killers in San Bernardino used military-style assault weapons—weapons of war—to kill as many people as they could. It's another tragic reminder that here in America, it's way too easy for dangerous people to get their hands on a gun.

For example, right now people on the no-fly list can walk into a store and buy a gun. That's insane. If you're too dangerous to board a plane, you're too dangerous, by definition, to buy a gun. And so I'm calling on Congress to close this loophole now. We may not be able to prevent every tragedy, but at a bare minimum, we shouldn't be making it so easy for potential terrorists or criminals to get their hands on a gun that they could use against Americans.

Today, in San Bernardino, investigators are searching for answers. Across our country, law

enforcement professionals are tireless. They're working around the clock, as always, to protect our communities. As President, my highest priority is the security and safety of the American people.

This is work that should unite us all—as Americans—so that we're doing everything in our power to defend our country. That's how we can honor the lives we lost in San Bernardino. That's how we can send a message to all those who would try to hurt us. We are Americans. We will uphold our values: a free and open society. We are strong, and we are resilient, and we will not be terrorized.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:50 p.m. on December 4 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on December 5. In the address, the President referred to Tashfeen Malik and Syed Rizwan Farook, suspected perpetrators of the shooting and attempted bombing at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, CA, on December 2. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 4, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 5.

Remarks at the Kennedy Center Honors Reception December 6, 2015

Thank you so much. Please, everybody, have a seat, have a seat. Have a seat and welcome to the White House. This is a good-looking group. [Laughter] President Kennedy once said, "There is a connection, hard to explain logically but easy to feel, between achievement in public life and progress in the arts."

I believe he was right. Our achievements as a country and as a culture go hand in hand. The oldest of the 2015 Kennedy Center Honorees was born over 90 years ago—you won't be able to tell. [Laughter] But when we look back on the last century, for all the challenges we faced, what we see is a time of extraordinary progress. We won one World War and then another. And we endured one Depression

and prevented another. And through it all, we created new medicines and technologies that changed the world for the better. We welcomed new generations of striving immigrants that made our country stronger. We worked together and marched together to open up new doors of opportunity for women, African Americans, Latinos, LGBT Americans, Americans with disabilities, achievements that made all of us more free.

Tonight we honor five artists who helped tell the story of the first American century through music, theater, and film, and by doing so, helped to shape it, helped to inspire it, helped to fortify our best instincts about ourselves.

[At this point, a baby in the audience cried.]

Yes. [Laughter] It includes your grandpa. [Laughter]

About 80 years ago, the ship carrying a young girl named Rosa Dolores Alverio—[ap-*plause*]—yes—from Puerto Rico, came into New York City, steamed by the Statue of Liberty. “Oh my goodness,” she thought, “a lady runs this country!” [Laughter] She wasn’t yet known by the stage name of Rita Moreno, but even then, she knew she wanted to be a star. At age 9, she debuted as a dancer. At 13, she set foot in a Broadway theatre for the first time in her life, as a member of the cast. At 30, she became the first Latina to win an Academy Award for her unforgettable performance as Anita in “West Side Story.”

[The baby cried again.]

Yes, it was good, wasn’t it? [Laughter]

After more than seven decades on stage and screen, Rita’s one of just a handful of artists to win an Emmy, a Grammy, an Oscar, and a Tony. She’s got an “EGOT.” But being a pioneer is never easy. For years, she was pigeonholed as what she called “the house ethnic.” [Laughter] She says she played all her parts with the same accent, because nobody “seemed to care.” [Laughter] And when she pushed back against Hollywood typecasting, the roles dried up. But Rita refused to sell herself short. This is a woman who won the Tony for best supporting actress, then concluded her acceptance speech by reminding everyone: “I am a leading lady. I am not a supporting actress.” [Laughter]

And she was right. She was the leading lady of that show. And she is still a leading lady of her era, a trailblazer with the courage to break through barriers and forge new paths. Eight decades after Rita Moreno first laid eyes on the Statue of Liberty, she continues to personify its promise: that here, in America, no matter what you look like or where you come from or what your last name is, you can make it if you try.

As a teenager in Tokyo, an aspiring classical pianist named Seiji Ozawa defied his mother’s

orders and joined a rugby match. [Laughter] Now, I have to say, looking at you Seiji, I’m not sure that was a good idea. [Laughter] I mean, I don’t know much about rugby, but—[laughter]. He broke two fingers, and that put an end to his piano-playing career. But fortunately for the rest of us, it opened up the door to a career as a conductor.

Now, here, Michelle and my mother-in-law would like me to point out that defying one’s mother does not usually work out well. [Laughter] But there are exceptions, and for Seiji, it did. In 1960, when he was 25 years old, he landed at Logan Airport with only a few words of English and a sign that read, “Lennox, Mass.” But his work as a conductor spoke volumes. Just a few weeks later, the New York Times pronounced him “a name to remember.” He went on to become Leonard Bernstein’s assistant conductor at the New York Philharmonic, and then led the Toronto and San Francisco Symphonies, all by the time he was 35. It makes you feel kind of underachieving. [Laughter] His conducting was somehow sensitive and intense, drawing the “lyric essence” of every note. And with his mop haircut and his turtlenecks and his love beads, he almost looked like a Beatle. [Laughter]

And in 1973, Seiji found his musical home with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which he led for 29 years. When he wasn’t cheering on his beloved Red Sox and Patriots, he was transfixing audiences with passionate, precise performances conducted entirely from memory, using his whole body—elbows, fingers, knees, hair—[laughter]—as a baton. Seiji has dedicated his life to bridging East and West with classical music. In his words: “Music is easier to understand than language. It can be understood right away. Just like the sunset, which is beautiful wherever you watch it.”

As a child in Harlem, Cicely Tyson sold shopping bags on the street corner to make—to help her family make ends meet. After high school, she found work as a secretary, until one day she stood up and announced to everyone in the room, “[I am] sure that God did not put me on the face of this Earth to bang on a typewriter for the rest of my life!” [Laughter]

Cicely was already displaying what you could call a flair for the dramatic. [Laughter] And like all great actors, she never just plays a character, she becomes one. “I’m looking inside myself,” she once explained. “Inside of me is where this character is coming from.”

It certainly took character to get where she is today. As a Black woman, Cicely wasn’t offered many roles with the pay and stature her tremendous talent should have commanded. But that only steeled her resolve. She once said: “When I became aware of the kind of ignorance that existed, I made a very conscious decision that I could not afford the luxury of just being an actress. I had some very important things to say, and I would say them through my work.”

Cicely has been saying important things for nearly 60 years, from “The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman” to “Sounder” to “The Trip to the Bountiful.” And even now, eight shows a week, she walks onto a Broadway stage to beat James Earl Jones in hand after hand of rummy in “The Gin Game.” [Laughter] At 90 years old, she’s still delivering remarkable, heartfelt performances night after night after night, just like God intended, and she sure does look good doing it every night. Cicely Tyson.

At age 15, a young woman named Carol Klein formed a doo-wop group with her friends called the Co-Shines—Co-Sines—that’s a little math. [Laughter] They did great with the hard-to-reach trigonometry demographic. [Laughter] Around the same time, Carol talked to a DJ, and asked him the best way to get in touch with record companies. He told her a secret: Look them up in a phone book. [Laughter] So Carol made some calls, landed a contract, and took on the stage name of Carole King.

It turned out to be a perfect choice, because today, in the world of American music, Carole is royalty. By the time she was 30, she’d teamed up with Gerry Goffin to write hits like “Up on the Roof” for the Drifters, “One Fine Day” for the Chiffons, “The Loco-Motion” for Little Eva—[laughter]—and of course, “You Make Me Feel (Like A Natural Woman).” I think I just became the first President ever to

say that. [Laughter] It sounded better when Aretha said it. [Laughter]

And then, finally, in the 1970s, Carole found the perfect voice for her songs, which was her own. At one point, her solo album “Tapestry”—which, by the way, was one of the first albums I ever bought—was the highest selling album of any genre in history. It stayed on the charts for 6 years, full of songs you could not get out of your head: songs about home and friendship and vulnerability, songs about just being human. And that’s what makes Carole so special. Whether it’s winter, spring, summer, or fall—[laughter]—whether she’s fighting with passion for our environment or campaigning for the causes that she believes in, Carole is always that honest, unvarnished voice, the friend who tells you again and again that you are beautiful, as beautiful as you feel.

George Lucas recently shared one of his regrets. He told a reporter: “I never got the experience that everyone else got to have. I never got to see ‘Star Wars.’” [Laughter] Well, George, let me tell you, you missed out. It was really good. [Laughter] That movie was awesome. [Laughter]

As one wise Jedi Master might put it, “Changed nearly everything, George Lucas has.” [Laughter] George was at the vanguard of the New Hollywood, blending genres and combining timeless themes with cutting-edge technology. Without him, movies would not look as good or sound as good as they do today. Spaceships might still fly around the screen with little strings attached to them. [Laughter] The effects were only part, though, of what makes George special. He created a mythology so compelling that in a 2001 census, the fourth largest religion in the United Kingdom was Jedi. [Laughter]

Think about how many children have been raised, at least in part, by George Lucas. [Laughter] Think about how many young people searching for their place in the universe have thought to themselves, “If a kid from a Tatooine moisture farm can go from bulls-eyeing womp rats in his T-16 to saving the galaxy, then maybe I can be something special too?” [Laughter] How many engineers got their start

arguing about the structural flaws in the Death Star? How many philosophers got their start arguing about whether Hans shot first? [Laughter] How many bookish teenagers have taken solace in the fact that the most charismatic guy on the planet is an archeologist named Indiana Jones? [Laughter]

George, I don't know if you've heard, but they might even make a brand new "Star Wars" movie soon. [Laughter] It's very low key; it's not getting a lot of promotion. [Laughter] But it's also pretty remarkable that nearly 40 years after the first star destroyer crawled across the screen, we are still obsessed with George's vision of a galaxy far, far away. And we'll be raising our children on his stories for a long, long time to come.

Rita Moreno. Seiji Ozawa. Cicely Tyson. Carole King. George Lucas. Each of these artists was born with something special to offer their country and the world. Each of them found a way to enrich our lives with their lives' work. For all the joy and the pleasure, all the insight and the understanding that they have brought to us over the years, we want to thank them, and we sure are proud to celebrate them as our 2015 Kennedy Center Honorees. Please give them a big round of applause.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson; actor James Earl Jones; musician Aretha Franklin; and Hank Steuver, television critic, the Washington Post.

Statement on the Observance of Hanukkah *December 6, 2015*

Tonight Jews in America, Israel, and around the world come together to light the first candle of the Festival of Lights. At its heart, Hanukkah is about the struggle for justice in the face of overwhelming obstacles. It's a chance to reflect on the triumph of liberty over tyranny, the rejection of persecution, and on the miracles that can happen even in our darkest hours. It renews our commitment as Americans—as people who live by faith and conscience—to lead

the way and act as unyielding advocates for the fundamental dignity of every human being.

During these 8 days, let us be inspired by the light that can overcome darkness. As we recall the Maccabees' struggle to free a people from oppression, let us rededicate ourselves to being the engine of the miracles we seek. May the lights of the menorah brighten your home and warm your heart, and from my family to yours, *Chag Sameach*.

Address to the Nation on United States Counterterrorism Strategy *December 6, 2015*

Good evening. On Wednesday, 14 Americans were killed as they came together to celebrate the holidays. They were taken from family and friends who loved them deeply. They were White and Black, Latino and Asian, immigrants and American-born, moms and dads, daughters and sons. Each of them served their fellow citizens, and all of them were part of our American family.

Tonight I want to talk with you about this tragedy, the broader threat of terrorism, and how we can keep our country safe.

The FBI is still gathering the facts about what happened in San Bernardino, but here is what we know. The victims were brutally murdered and injured by one of their coworkers and his wife. So far, we have no evidence that the killers were directed by a terrorist organization overseas or that they were part of a broader conspiracy here at home. But it is clear that the two of them have—had gone down the dark path of radicalization, embracing a perverted interpretation of Islam that calls for war against America and the West.