

*President Rivlin.* Thank you. Thank you so very much. President Obama, Barack, and First Lady Michelle, thank you. Thank you for honoring and hosting my wife Nechama and me and all the guests from Israel to celebrate Hanukkah with you.

This is my 76th Hanukkah. [*Laughter*] I remember nearly all of them. [*Laughter*] I love all of them. But this one is for sure a little different. It is not easy to be away from your family—from our children and our grandchildren—to be away from Israel or from the wonderful city of Jerusalem, especially at Hanukkah. But they told me that the latkes and the doughnuts would be worth coming all the way, so here we are—[*laughter*]—

*President Obama.* Yes. That's true.

*President Rivlin.* —standing here next to the menorah, which we call a *Hanukiah* in Hebrew.

We remember the brave Maccabees. We remember they did not fight against, they fought for: for liberty, for freedom of religion, for their traditions, for our traditions, for their ability to celebrate their own identity. Hanukkah is the holiday of spiritual activism. It is a holiday which represents the spirit of human being, created equally in the image of God.

Today, we see around the world terrible crimes and the danger to humanity cause a lack of respect, freedom of faith, freedom of reli-

gion. Each night of Hanukkah, we add; we add a new light to the menorah. Rabbi Abraham Heschel, one of the best friends of Martin Luther King, wrote in his book "Insecurity of Freedom" that people usually follow the path of regression. They begin high and fall down. But instead, we should be like the Hanukkah candles and follow the path of progression. He said that the people will have the strength to ascend if the leader himself continues to rise.

Today, we are all looking for strong and clear moral leadership of the kind of—you represent, President Obama. Leadership committed to the safety of its people, to the opportunity and the dignity of every human being. I would like to light this candle, this little flame, with a prayer and hope that one day, religious, cultural, and moral liberty will be enjoyed without question by each and every person in the world.

*Hanukkah Sameach.* Happy Hanukkah!

And to the Christian people all over the world, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year!

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Alan P. Gross, a former U.S. Agency for International Development contractor who was detained by Cuban authorities for 5 years and released to U.S. custody on December 17, 2014.

## Remarks at a Hanukkah Reception December 9, 2015

*The President.* All righty. Good evening, everybody!

*Audience members.* Good evening.

*The President.* Welcome to the White House. Happy Hanukkah! I want, first of all, everybody to acknowledge and give it up for the Chai Notes from Cornell University. Give them a big round of applause.

A couple of other special guests who are here—we have the honor of the participation of three of our Supreme Court Justices: Justices Kagan, Justices Breyer, and Justice Ginsburg—there she is, also known as the Notorious RBG. [*Laughter*] We've got some Mem-

bers of Congress who are here. None of them are notorious. [*Laughter*]

This is a wonderful event for two reasons. Number one, latkes—[*laughter*]—which are excellent here at the White House. [*Laughter*] Number two, we get to tell a really inspiring story. Tonight we recall a small band of Maccabees who, outmanned and outarmed, holding fast to their faith, won their freedom. When they found their temple ransacked, they built a new altar. When their golden menorah was stolen, they made a new one using whatever materials that they had. When there wasn't enough fuel to keep the flame in their temple

alive, they lit whatever oil they had. In other words, they did not take no for an answer. [Laughter] And their faith was rewarded when a miracle occurred, and the oil that was supposed to last for just 1 night lasted for 8.

So Hanukkah is a chance for us to remember not only ancient miracles, but modern-day miracles as well. In just a few minutes, Manny Lindenbaum will light the candles here at the White House along with his granddaughter Lauren. In August of 1939, Manny and his brother escaped from Poland to England as refugees—the famous *Kindertransport*—just days before the Nazis invaded. In 1946, the Jewish organization HIAS reunited Manny with an aunt and an uncle in New Jersey, and he's been an American ever since.

Manny never forgot that the miracle of his life was only made possible because righteous people reached out their hand to a stranger. He's determined to be one of those people for a new generation of refugees. So, last year, at age 81—you wouldn't know it looking at him—[laughter]—Manny bicycled 200 miles through Europe with his kids and his grandkids, retracing his journey to freedom in reverse. Now, I think, in my view, any 81-year-old on a bike tour is pretty cool. [Laughter]

*The First Lady.* That's right.

*The President.* But Manny didn't ride just for himself, he rode to honor the family members he had lost in the Holocaust, to raise money for HIAS's work with refugee children from Darfur.

Imagine the world we could build together if all of us took our cues from Manny and truly

lived up to the ideal that we are all God's children, that none of us should turn our backs on a stranger. [Applause] Right? And that's our challenge during this Hanukkah season. Whether it's standing up for the dignity of refugees, standing up against anti-Semitism—or any kind of bigotry or discrimination leveled at any religion—or standing with our ally, the State of Israel, we can raise our voices, each of us, for the security and dignity of every human being. Because we are at our best when we believe that our light has the power to shine through darkness; that the story of the Jewish people, the story of America—it's the story of the menorah Manny and Lauren will light this evening.

As a young man, the artist Erwin Thieberger survived Auschwitz. And even when he was a prisoner, he used whatever materials he could find—cement, nails, lead—to make menorahs like this one. And during one of humanity's darkest hours, he never lost faith. Tonight the light of one of Erwin's menorahs will burn brightly at the White House.

This Hanukkah, may the examples of miracles old and new inspire us all. May we reaffirm the power of faith over fear. And may our common humanity shine throughout the world.

With that, I would like to invite Rabbi Sid Schwarz from Adat Shalom in Bethesda to lead us in the blessing and help us to light the candles.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:37 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

## Remarks on Signing the Every Student Succeeds Act December 10, 2015

Well, thank you so much, everybody. Please have a seat, have a seat. Welcome to the White House. First of all, I want to thank Antonio for being such an outstanding role model. Back in 2011, when he was much shorter—[laughter]—I visited Kenmore Middle School and saw firsthand their great work helping students like Antonio achieve their potential. And that's why we're here today.

This is an early Christmas present. After more than 10 years, Members of Congress from both parties have come together to revise our national education law. A Christmas miracle: a bipartisan bill signing right here. [Laughter] So I was telling Lamar, we should do this more often. [Laughter] I love it when we're signing bipartisan bills. Today I'm proud to sign a law that's going to make sure that every