

Remarks Prior to a Musical Performance by Members of the Cast of “Hamilton” March 14, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, welcome to the White House! It is an understatement to say this was one hot ticket. [Laughter] The last time I went to “Hamilton,” I didn’t even get to see the show. They just let me come on stage and talk after the curtain fell. So, feeling a little deprived—[laughter]—we invited the cast to perform today because we wanted to share this incredible musical with folks who might otherwise not get the experience. And I want to thank them so much, the show’s producers, for helping to bring “Hamilton” to the White House.

Now, the truth is, though, they do owe me—[laughter]—because 7 years ago, Lin-Manuel Miranda came to the White House Poetry Jam, and he took the mike, and he announced that he and his musical collaborator, Alex Lacamoire—[applause]—that they were going to perform a song from a hip-hop album they were working on, and I’m quoting him, “about the life of somebody who embodies hip-hop: Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton.” [Laughter] And so we all started laughing, but Lin-Manuel was serious. And who’s laughing now? [Laughter]

Having said that, not to take undue credit or anything, but this is definitely “The Room Where It Happened,” right here. [Applause] This is it right here, on this stage.

Obviously, since that time, “Hamilton” has become a phenomenon, a smash hit. It’s taken Broadway by storm, captivating the entire country, winning tons of awards, turned musical haters into diehard fans. [Laughter] It has become a favorite in the Obama household.

The First Lady. Woo-hoo!

The President. That was the First Lady hooting. [Laughter] Was that Grandma who did it? [Laughter]

In fact, “Hamilton,” I’m pretty sure, is the only thing that Dick Cheney and I agree on. [Laughter]

Now, I’m trying not to get carried away. When my Secretary of Health and Human Ser-

vices challenged me to a rap battle, I had to draw the line. [Laughter] But this show brings unlikely folks together. And, Lin-Manuel, if you have any ideas about a show about Congress, for example—[laughter]—now is your chance. We can use the help.

There is a reason why this has become a cultural phenomenon. In Ron Chernow’s extraordinary biography of Alexander Hamilton—and a great historian is here on the front row. Lin-Manuel picked up this biography at the airport for some light beach reading. [Laughter] But he identified a quintessentially American story. In the character of Hamilton—a striving immigrant who escaped poverty, made his way to the New World, climbed to the top by sheer force of will and pluck and determination—Lin-Manuel saw something of his own family and every immigrant family.

And in the Hamilton that Lin-Manuel and his incredible cast and crew bring to life—a man who is “just like his country, young, scrappy, and hungry”—[laughter]—we recognize the improbable story of America and the spirit that has sustained our Nation for over 240 years.

Now, in this telling, rap is the language of revolution. Hip-hop is the backbeat. In each brilliantly crafted song, we hear the debates that shaped our Nation, and we hear the debates that are still shaping our Nation. We feel the fierce, youthful energy that animated the men and women of Hamilton’s generation. And with a cast as diverse as America itself, including the outstandingly talented women, the show reminds us that this Nation was built by more than just a few great men and that it is an inheritance that belongs to all of us.

And that’s why Michelle and I wanted to bring this performance to the White House. Because “Hamilton” is not just for people who can score a ticket to a pricey Broadway show, it is a story for all of us and about all of us.

And so we are absolutely thrilled that the show’s producers have been working with the

New York Public Schools, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Gilder Lehrman Institute to make sure that thousands of low-income students have the chance to see the show. There's now a curriculum to give students context and a deeper meaning—or deeper understanding of our Nation's founding.

Today Michelle hosted a workshop for a group of area high school students with some of the castmembers. I understand these young men—people put on some pretty terrific performances of their own. Look at this brother. He's like, "All right, thank you." [Laughter] That's good. I mean, you've got to have confidence. [Laughter] What did Malia and Sasha say to me the other day? You've got to be your own number-one fan. [Laughter] He's obviously internalized that. [Laughter]

We did have one rule, which is, no dueling on the nice furniture, some of which is antique. [Laughter]

But the real heroes are the extraordinary educators and counselors and community members who pour their heart into their students and make learning come alive every single day. So I want to give all those educators, counselors, and community members a big round of applause for the support that you've given to our students.

And we hope that this helps every teacher who's spent hours trying to make the "Federalist Papers" teenager-friendly. [Laughter] We hope that the remarkable life of Alexander Hamilton will show our young people the pos-

sibilities within themselves and how much they can achieve in the span of a lifetime.

And we hope that they'll walk away with an understanding of what our Founders got started, that it was just a start. It was just the beginning. That's what makes America so great. You finish the story. We're not finished. This is a constant work in progress, America. We're boisterous, and we're diverse. We're full of energy and perpetually young in spirit. We are the project that never ends. We make mistakes. We have our foibles. But ultimately, when every voice is heard, we overcome them.

It's not the project of any one person. America is what we make of it. And we only need to look at this cast, performing in front of George and Martha, to know that our Founders could not have dreamt—I think it's fair to say that our Founders couldn't have dreamt up the future that they set in motion. And it's only by exercising their greatest gift to us—the gift of citizenship—that we keep our democracy alive and continue the work of creating that more perfect Union.

So, with that, let's get started. Enjoy the show.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:38 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lin-Manuel Miranda, playwright, composer, and lyricist, Alex Lacamoire, music director and coarranger, and Sander Jacobs, Jill Furman, and Jeffrey Seller, producers, "Hamilton" musical; and former Vice President Richard B. Cheney. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of John B. King, Jr., as Secretary of Education *March 14, 2016*

I applaud the Senate for confirming John King as Secretary of Education. In this role, John will continue to lead our efforts to work toward high-quality preschool for all, prepare our kids for college and a career, make college more affordable, and protect Americans from the

burdens of student debt. John knows how education can transform a child's future. He's seen it in his own life. And his experience, counsel, and leadership couldn't be more valuable to me and to our country as we work to open the doors of opportunity to all of America's children.