

er the paper and the policy outlines and the conceptual framework.

Russia is a very significant military power, but they're not worrying right now about how to rebuild after a hurricane in Haiti. We are.

And I've said before, that's a burden that we should carry proudly. And I would hope that not just the 45th President of the United States, but every President of the United States understands that that's not only a burden, but it's also an extraordinary privilege.

And if you have a chance to do that right, then you should seize it.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:52 p.m. at the Nasca Room in the Ministry of Cultural Affairs Building. In his remarks, the President referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; former White House Counsel Gregory B. Craig; 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Merrick B. Garland.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom November 22, 2016

The President. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. We've got some work to do here. [Laughter] This is not all fun and games. [Laughter]

Welcome to the White House, everybody. Today we celebrate extraordinary Americans who have lifted our spirits, strengthened our Union, pushed us toward progress.

I always love doing this event, but this is a particularly impressive class. [Laughter] We've got innovators and artists, public servants, rabble rousers, athletes, renowned character actors, like the guy from "Space Jam." [Laughter] We pay tribute to those distinguished individuals with our Nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about each of them.

First, we came close to missing out on a Bill and Melinda Gates's incredible partnership. Because apparently Bill's opening line was, "Do you want to go out 2 weeks from this coming Saturday?" [Laughter] I mean, he's good with computers, but—[laughter].

Fortunately, Melinda believes in second chances. And the world is better for it. For two decades, the Gates Foundation has worked to provide lifesaving medical care to millions, boosting clean water supplies, improving education for our children, rallying aggressive international action on climate change, cutting childhood mortality in half. The list could go on.

These two have donated more money to charitable causes than anyone ever. Many years ago, Melinda's mom told her an old saying: "To know that even one life has breathed easier because you lived, that is success." And by this and just about any other measure, few in human history have been more successful than these two impatient optimists.

Frank Gehry has never let popular acclaim reverse his impulse to defy convention. "I was an outsider from the beginning," he says, "so for better or worse, I thrived on it." The child of poor Jewish immigrants, Frank grew up in Los Angeles, and throughout his life, he embraced the spirit of a city defined by an open horizon. He's spent his life rethinking shapes and mediums, seemingly the force of gravity itself; the idea of what architecture could be, he decided to upend, constantly repurposing every material available, from titanium to paper towel tube. He's inspiring our next generation through his advocacy for arts education in our schools. And from the Guggenheim to Bilbao to Chicago's Millennium Park—our hometown—to his home in Santa Monica, which I understand caused some consternation among his neighbors—[laughter]—Frank's work teaches us that while buildings may be sturdy and fixed to the ground, like all great art, they can lift our spirits. They can soar and broaden our horizons.

When an undergraduate from rural Appalachia first set foot on the National Mall many years ago, she was trying to figure out a way to show that “war is not just a victory or a loss,” but “about individual lives.” She considered how the landscape might shape that message, rather than the other way around. The project that Maya Lin designed for her college class earned her a B-plus—[laughter]—and a permanent place in American history. [Laughter] So all of you B-plus students out there—[laughter].

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial has changed the way we think about monuments, but also about how we think about sacrifice and patriotism and ourselves. Maya has given us more than just places for remembering; she has created places for us to make new memories. Her sculptures, chapels, homes are “physical act[s] of poetry,” each reminding us that the most important element in art or architecture is human emotion.

Three minutes before Armstrong and Aldrin touched down on the Moon, *Apollo 11*'s lunar lander alarms triggered: red and yellow lights across the board. Our astronauts didn't have much time. But thankfully, they had Margaret Hamilton. A young MIT scientist—and a working mom in the sixties—Margaret led the team that created the onboard flight software that allowed the Eagle to land safely. And keep in mind that, at this time, software engineering wasn't even a field yet. There were no textbooks to follow, so, as Margaret says, “There was no choice but to be pioneers.”

Luckily for us, Margaret never stopped pioneering. And she symbolizes the generation of unsung women who helped spend—send humankind into space. Her software architecture echoes in countless technologies today. And her example speaks of the American spirit of discovery that exists in every little girl and little boy who know that somehow, to look beyond the heavens is to look deep within ourselves and to figure out just what is possible.

If Wright is flight and Edison is light, then Hopper is code. [Laughter] Born in 1906, Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper followed her mother into mathematics, earned her Ph.D.

from Yale, and set out on a long and storied career. At age 37, and a full 15 pounds below military guidelines—[laughter]—the gutsy and colorful Grace joined the Navy and was sent to work on one of the first computers, Harvard's Mark I.

She saw beyond the boundaries of the possible and invented the first compiler, which allowed programs to be written in regular language and then translated for computers to understand. While the women who pioneered software were often overlooked, the most prestigious award for young computer scientists now bear her name. From cell phones to cyber command, we can thank Grace Hopper for opening programming to millions more people, helping to usher in the Information Age, and profoundly shaping our digital world.

Speaking of really smart people—[laughter]—in the summer of 1950, a young University of Chicago physicist found himself at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Dick Garwin was there, he said, because Chicago paid its faculty for 9 months, but his family ate for 12. So, by the next summer, Dick had helped create the hydrogen bomb. And for the rest of his life, he dedicated himself to reducing the threat of nuclear war. Dick's not only an architect of the atomic age. Ever since he was a Cleveland kid tinkering with his father's movie projectors, he's never met a problem he didn't want to solve. Reconnaissance satellites, the MRI, GPS technology, the touchscreen all bear his fingerprints. He even patented a “mussel washer” for shellfish which—that I haven't used. [Laughter] The other stuff I have. [Laughter] Where is he? Okay.

Dick has advised nearly every President since Eisenhower, often rather bluntly. Enrico Fermi, also a pretty smart guy, is said to have called Dick “the only true genius” he ever met. I do want to see this mussel washer. [Laughter]

Along with these scientists, artists, and thinkers, we also honor those who have shaped our culture from the stage and the screen.

In her long and extraordinary career, Cicely Tyson has not only exceeded as an actor, she has shaped the course history. Cicely was never the likeliest of Hollywood stars. The daugh-

ter of immigrants from the West Indies, she was raised by a hard-working and religious mother who cleaned houses and forbade her children to attend the movies. But once she got her education and broke into the business, Cicely made a conscious decision not just to say lines, but to speak out. “I would not accept roles,” she said, “unless they projected us, particularly women, in a realistic light, [and] dealt with us as human beings.” And from “Sounder,” to “The Trip to Bountiful,” to “The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman,” Cicely’s convictions and grace have helped for us to see the dignity of every single beautiful member of the American family. And she’s just gorgeous. And—[*applause*]. Yes, she is.

In 1973, a critic wrote of Robert De Niro, “This kid doesn’t just act, he takes off into the vapors.” [*Laughter*] And it was true, his characters are iconic: a Sicilian father turned New York mobster, a mobster who runs a casino, a mobster who needs therapy—[*laughter*]—a father-in-law who is scarier than a mobster—[*laughter*]—Al Capone, a mobster. [*Laughter*]

Robert combines dramatic precision and, it turns out, comedic timing with his signature eye for detail. And while the name De Niro is synonymous with “tough guy,” his true gift is the sensitivity that he brings to each role. This son of New York artists didn’t stop at becoming one of the world’s great actors. He’s also a director, a philanthropist, cofounder of the Tribeca Film Festival. Of his tireless preparation, from learning the saxophone to remaking his body, he once said, “I feel I have to earn the right to play a part.” And the result is honest and authentic art that reveals who we really are.

In 1976, Lorne Michaels implored the Beatles to reunite on his brandnew show. [*Laughter*] In exchange, he offered them \$3,000. [*Laughter*] And then he told them they could share it equally, or they could give Ringo a smaller cut. [*Laughter*] Which was early proof that Lorne Michaels has a good sense of humor.

On “Saturday Night Live,” he’s created a world where a band of no names become comedy’s biggest stars; where our friends the

Coneheads and cheerleaders and land sharks and basement deadbeats and motivational speakers and an unfrozen caveman lawyer show up and Tom Hanks is on “Black Jeopardy.” [*Laughter*] After four decades, even in this fractured media culture that we’ve got, SNL remains appointment viewing; a mainline into not just our counterculture, but our culture; still a challenge to the powerful, especially folks like me.

And yet, even after all these years, Lorne jokes that his tombstone should bear just a single word that’s often found in the show’s reviews: “uneven.” [*Laughter*] As a current U.S. Senator would say: “Doggone it, Lorne, that’s why people like you.” Hey, he’s produced—he produced a Senator too. It’s pretty impressive.

Ellen DeGeneres has a way of making you laugh about something rather than at someone, except when I danced on her show; she laughed at me. [*Laughter*] But that’s okay.

It’s easy to forget now, when we’ve come so far, where now marriage is equal under the law, just how much courage was required for Ellen to come out on the most public of stages almost 20 years ago. Just how important it was not just to the LGBT community, but for all of us, to see somebody so full of kindness and light, somebody we liked so much, somebody who could be our neighbor or our colleague or our sister challenge our own assumptions, remind us that we have more in common than we realize, push our country in the direction of justice.

What an incredible burden that was to bear: to risk your career like that—people don’t do that very often—and then to have the hopes of millions on your shoulders. But it’s like Ellen says: “We all want a tortilla chip that can support the weight of guacamole.” [*Laughter*] Which really makes no sense to me, but I thought would break the mood, because I was getting kind of choked up. [*Laughter*] And she did pay a price. We don’t remember this. I hadn’t remembered it. She did, for a pretty long stretch of time, even in Hollywood.

And yet, today—every day, in every way—Ellen counters what too often divides us with the countless things that bind us together,

inspires us to be better, one joke, one dance at a time.

When “The Candidate” wins his race in the iconic 1972 film of the same name—which continues, by the way, for those of you who haven’t seen it, and many of you are too young, to be perhaps the best movie about what politics is actually like, ever—he famously asks his campaign manager the reflective and revealing question: “What do we do now?” And like the man he played in that movie, Robert Redford has figured it out and applied his talent and charm to achieve success.

We admire Bob not just for his remarkable acting, but for having figured out what to do next. He created a platform for independent filmmakers with the Sundance Institute. He has supported our national parks and our natural resources as one of the foremost conservationists of our generation. He’s given his unmatched charisma to unforgettable characters like Roy Hobbs, Nathan Muir, and of course, the Sundance Kid, entertaining us for more than half a century. As an actor, director, producer, and as an advocate, he has not stopped—and apparently drives so fast that he had breakfast in Napa and dinner in Salt Lake. [Laughter] At 80 years young, Robert Redford has no plans to slow down.

According to a recent headline, the movie “Sully” was the last straw. We should never travel with Tom Hanks. [Laughter] I mean, you think about, you got pirates, plane crashes, you get marooned in airport purgatory, volcanoes—something happens with Tom Hanks. [Laughter] And yet, somehow, we can’t resist going where he wants to take us. He’s been an accidental witness to history, a crusty woman’s baseball manager, an everyman who fell in love with Meg Ryan three times. [Laughter] Made it seem natural to have a volleyball as your best friend. From a Philadelphia courtroom, to Normandy’s beachheads, to the dark side of the Moon, he has introduced us to America’s unassuming heroes.

Tom says he just saw “ordinary guys who did the right thing at the right time.” Well, it takes one to know one, and “America’s Dad” has stood up to cancer with his beloved wife Rita.

He has championed our veterans, supported space exploration, and the truth is, Tom has always saved his best roles for real life. He is a good man, which is the best title you can have.

So we’ve got innovators, entertainers. Three more folks who’ve dedicated themselves to public service.

In the early 1960s, thousands of Cuban children fled to America, seeking an education they’d never get back home. And one refugee was 15-year-old named Eduardo Padron, whose life changed when he enrolled at Miami Dade College. That decision led to a bachelor’s degree, then a master’s degree, then a Ph.D. And then he had a choice: He could go into corporate America, or he could give back to his alma mater. And Eduardo made his choice: to create more stories just like his.

As Miami Dade’s President since 1995, Dr. Padron has built a “dream factory” for one of our Nation’s most diverse student bodies: 165,000 students in all. He is one of the world’s preeminent education leaders: thinking out of the box, supporting students throughout their lives, embodying the belief that we’re only as great as the doors we open. Eduardo’s example is one we can all follow: a champion of those who strive for the same American Dream that first drew him to our shores.

When Elouise Cobell first filed a lawsuit to recover lands and money for her people, she didn’t set out to be a hero. She said, “I just wanted . . . to give people—I just wanted to give justice to people that didn’t have it.” And her lifelong quest to address the mismanagement of American Indian lands, resources, trust funds wasn’t about special treatment, but the equal treatment at the heart of the American promise. She fought for almost 15 years, across three Presidents, seven trials, 10 appearances before a Federal appeals court. All the while, she traveled the country some 40 weeks a year, telling the story of her people. And in the end, this graduate of a one-room schoolhouse became a MacArthur “genius.” She is a proud daughter of Montana’s Blackfeet Nation. Reached ultimately a historic victory for all Native Americans. Through sheer force of will and a belief that the truth will win

out, Elouise Cobell overcame the longest odds, reminding us that fighting for what is right is always worth it.

Now, every journalist in the room, every media critic knows the phrase Newt Minow coined: the “vast wasteland.” But the two words Newt prefers we remember from his speech to the nation’s broadcasters are these: “public interest.” That’s been the heartbeat of his life’s work: advocating for residents of public housing, advising a Governor and Supreme Court Justice, cementing Presidential debates as our national institution, leading the FCC.

When Newt helped launch the first communications satellites, making nationwide broadcasts possible and eventually GPS possible and cell phones possible, he predicted it would be more important than the Moon landing. “This will launch ideas into space,” he said, “and ideas last longer than people.” As far as I know, he’s the only one of today’s honorees who was present on my first date with Michelle. [Laughter] Imagine our surprise when we saw Newt, one of our bosses that summer, at the movie theater: “Do the Right Thing.” So he’s also been vital to my personal interests. [Laughter]

And finally, we honor five of the alltime greats in sports and music.

The game of baseball has a handful of signature sounds. You hear the crack of the bat. You’ve got the crowd singing in the seventh inning stretch. And you’ve got the voice of Vin Scully. Most fans listen to a game’s broadcast when they can’t be at the ballpark. Generations of Dodgers fans brought their radios into the stands, because you didn’t want to miss one of Vin’s stories.

Most play-by-play announcers partner with an analyst in the booth to chat about the action. Vin worked alone and talked just with us. Since Jackie Robinson started at second base, Vin taught us the game and introduced it—us to its players. He narrated the improbable years, the impossible heroics, turned contests into conversations. When he heard about this honor, Vin asked with characteristic humility, “Are you sure?” [Laughter] “I’m just an old baseball announcer.” And we had to inform him that to Americans of all ages, you are an old friend. In

fact, I thought about him doing all these citations—[laughter]—which would have been very cool. [Laughter] But I thought we shouldn’t make him sing for his supper like that. [Laughter] “Up next”—[laughter].

Here’s how great Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was: 1967, he had spent a year dominating college basketball, the NCAA bans the dunk. They’d didn’t say it was about Kareem, but it was about Kareem. [Laughter] When a sport changes its rules to make it harder just for you, you are really good. [Laughter] And yet, despite the rule change, he was still the sport’s most unstoppable force. It’s a title he’d hold for more than two decades, winning NBA Finals MVPs a staggering 14 years apart.

[At this point, an audience member sneezed.]

The President. Bless you. [Laughter]

And as a surprisingly similar-looking copilot, Roger Murdoch, once said in the movie “Airplane”—I mean, we’ve got some great actors here—“Space Jam,” “Airplane.” [Laughter] He did it all while dragging Walton and Lanier up and down the court for 48 minutes. But the reason we honor Kareem is more than just a pair of goggles and the “skyhook.” He stood up for his Muslim faith when it wasn’t easy and it wasn’t popular. He’s as comfortable sparring with Bruce Lee as he is advocating on Capitol Hill or writing with extraordinary eloquence about patriotism. Physically, intellectually, spiritually, Kareem is one of a kind, an American who illuminates both our most basic freedoms and our highest aspirations.

When he was 5 years old, Michael Jordan nearly cut off his big toe with an axe. [Laughter] Back then, his handles needed a little work. But think: If things had gone differently, Air Jordans might never have taken flight. [Laughter] I mean, you don’t want to buy a shoe with, like, one toe missing. [Laughter] We may never have seen him switch hands in mid-air against the Lakers or drop 63 in the Garden or gut it out in the “flu game” or hit “the shot” three different times: over Georgetown, over Ehlo, over Russell. We might not have seen him take on Larry Bird in H-O-R-S-E or lift

up the sport globally along with the Dream Team.

Yet MJ is still more than those moments, more than just the best player on the two greatest teams of all time: the Dream Team and the 1996 Chicago Bulls. [Laughter] He's more than just a logo, more than just an Internet meme. [Laughter] He's more than just a charitable donor or a business owner committed to diversity. There is a reason you call somebody "the Michael Jordan of"—[laughter]. Michael Jordan of neurosurgery or the Michael Jordan of rabbis—[laughter]—or the Michael Jordan of outrigger canoeing—and they know what you're talking about. Because Michael Jordan is the Michael Jordan of greatness. He is the definition of somebody so good at what they do that everybody recognizes it. That's pretty rare.

As a child, Diana Ross loved singing and dancing for family friends, but not for free. [Laughter] She was smart enough to pass the hat. And later, in Detroit's Brewster housing projects, she met Mary Wilson and Florence Ballard. Their neighbor, Smokey Robinson, put them in front of Berry Gordy, and the rest was magic, music history. The Supremes earned a permanent place in the American soundtrack.

Along with her honey voice, her soulful sensibility, Diana exuded glamour and grace and filled stages that helped to shape the sound of Motown. On top of becoming one of the most successful recording artists of all time, raised five kids, somehow found time to earn an Oscar nomination for acting. Today, from the hip-hop that samples her, to the young singers who've been inspired by her, to the audiences that still cannot get enough of her, Diana Ross's influence is inescapable as ever.

He was sprung from a cage out on Highway 9. [Laughter] Quiet kid from Jersey, just trying to make sense of the temples of dreams and the mystery that dotted his hometown: pool halls, bars; girls and cars; altars and assembly lines. And for decades, Bruce Springsteen has brought us all along on a journey consumed with the bargains between ambition and injustice and pleasure and pain; the simple glories

and scattered heartbreak of everyday life in America.

To create one of his biggest hits, he once said: "I wanted to craft a record that sounded like the last record on Earth . . . the last one you'd ever need to hear. One glorious noise . . . then the apocalypse." [Laughter] Every restless kid in America was given a story: "Born To Run."

He didn't stop there. Once he told us about himself, he told us about everybody else: steelworker in "Youngstown"; the Vietnam vet in "Born To Run"—"Born in the U.S.A."; the sick and the marginalized on "The Streets of Philadelphia"; the firefighter carrying the weight of a reeling but resilient nation on "The Rising"; the young soldier reckoning with "Devils and Dust" in Iraq; the communities knocked down by recklessness and greed in the "Wrecking Ball"; all of us, with all our faults and our failings, every color and class and creed, bound together by one defiant, restless train rolling toward "The Land of Hope and Dreams." These are all anthems of our America, the reality of who we are and the reverie of who we want to be.

"The hallmark of a rock and roll band," Bruce Springsteen once said, is that "the narrative you tell together is bigger than anyone could have told on your own." And for decades, alongside the Big Man, Little Steven, a Jersey girl named Patti, and all the men and women of the E Street Band, Bruce Springsteen has been carrying the rest of us on his journey, asking us all "what is the work for us to do in our short time here."

I am the President; he is "The Boss." [Laughter] And pushing 70, he's still laying down 4-hour live sets. If you have not been at them, he is working. "Fire-breathing rock 'n' roll." So I thought twice about giving him a medal named for freedom because we hope he remains, in his words, a "prisoner of rock 'n' roll" for years to come.

So, I told you, this is, like, a really good class. [Laughter]

Ladies and gentlemen, I want you all to give it up for the recipients of the 2016 Presidential Medal of Freedom. [Applause] It is a good group.

All right. Now we've actually got to give them medals. [Laughter] So please be patient. We are going to have my military aide read the citations. Each one of them will come up and receive the medals, and then we'll wrap up the program.

Okay? Let's hit it.

[At this point, Lt. Col. Andrew C. Steadman, USA, Army Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals, assisted by Lt. Col. Wesley N. Spurlock III, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President.]

The President. So, just on a personal note, part of the reason that these events are so special to me is because everybody on this stage has touched me in a very powerful, personal way, in ways that they probably couldn't imagine. Whether it was having been inspired by a song or a game or a story or a film or a monument or in the case of Newt Minow introducing me to Michelle—[laughter]—these are folks who have helped make me who I am and think about my Presidency, and what also makes them special is, this is America.

And it's useful when you think about this incredible collection of people to realize that this is what makes us the greatest nation on Earth. Not because of what we—not because of our differences, but because, in our difference, we

find something common to share. And what a glorious thing that is. What a great gift that is to America.

So I want all of you to enjoy the wonderful reception that will be taking place afterwards. Michelle and I have to get back to work, unfortunately, but I hear the food is pretty good. [Laughter] And I would like all of you to give one big rousing round of applause to our 2016 honorees for the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Give it up.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:13 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Elaine Amerland French, mother of Melinda French Gates, cofounder of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; *Apollo 11* crewmember Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr.; Sen. Alan S. Franken; musicians Ringo Starr, Mary Wilson, William "Smokey" Robinson, Steven Van Zandt, and Patti Scialfa; actor Meg Ryan; Rita Wilson, wife of medal recipient Thomas J. Hanks; former National Basketball Association players William T. Walton III, Robert J. Lanier, Joel C. Ehlo, Byron D. Russell, and Larry J. Bird; Berry Gordy, Jr., founder, Motown Records; and Chudney, Evan, and Tracee Ellis Ross, Rhonda Ross Kendrick, and Ross Arne Naess, children of musician Diana Ross. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citations.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony November 23, 2016

The President. Hey! Thank you so much, everybody. Please have a seat, have a seat.

For generations, Presidents have faithfully executed two great American traditions: issuing a proclamation that sets aside a Thursday in November for us to express gratitude, and granting pardons that reflect our beliefs in second chances. And this week, we do both. [Laughter]

Of course, Thanksgiving is a family holiday as much as a national one. So, for the past 7 years, I've established another tradition: embarrassing my daughters with a "corny-copia" of dad jokes about turkeys. [Laughter] This year, they had a scheduling conflict. [Laugh-

ter] Actually, they just couldn't take my jokes anymore. [Laughter] They were "fed" up.

Audience members. Ooh!

Audience member. Hey!

The President. Fortunately, I have by my side here today two of my nephews, Austin and Aaron Robinson, who, unlike Malia and Sasha, have not yet been turned cynical by Washington. [Laughter] They still believe in bad puns. They still appreciate the grandeur of this occasion. They still have hope. [Laughter]

Malia and Sasha, by the way, are thankful that this is my final Presidential turkey pardon. What I haven't told them yet is that we are going to do