

energy sources that make us more secure and less dependent on foreign oil. When we think about skills for American workers, we got to make sure that everybody has the opportunity not only for 4-year colleges, but also 2-year colleges, the community colleges that Dr. Jill Biden is doing such a great job promoting all across the country.

We've put forward plans on each of these areas that can make a huge difference. But most of all, we've got to have a return to some home-spun American values: hard work, fair play, shared responsibility. That's who we are as a people.

And the reason I'm so confident in our future is because the folks who are standing with me today, some of the folks who are in the audience, because of all the families and workers and small-business owners and students and seniors that I've met over the last few weeks and that I've met during the course of my political career. When times are tough, Americans don't give up. They push ahead. They do

whatever it takes to make their lives better, their communities, better and their countries better.

And with or without Congress, every day I'm going to be continuing to fight with them. I do hope Congress joins me. Instead of spending the coming months in a lot of phony political debates, focusing on the next election, I hope that we spend some time focusing on middle class Americans and those who are struggling to get into the middle class. We've got a lot more work to do. Let's do it.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thanks for the great job you did. Appreciate you, proud of you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Biden.

Remarks at PBS's "In Performance at the White House: Red, White, and Blues" February 21, 2012

Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. That sounded pretty good. [Laughter] I might try that instead of ruffles and flourishes. [Laughter]

Well, first of all, I want to wish everybody a happy Mardi Gras. I hear Trombone Shorty brought some beads up from New Orleans. And I see that we've got some members of our Cabinet here. We've got some Members of Congress. And we have elected officials from all across the country.

One of the things about being President—I've talked about this before—is that some nights when you want to go out and just take a walk, clear your head, or jump into a car just to take a drive, you can't do it. Secret Service won't let you. And that's frustrating. But then there are other nights where B.B. King and Mick Jagger come over to your house to play for a concert. So I guess things even out a little bit. [Laughter]

In 1941, the folklorist Alan Lomax traveled throughout the Deep South, recording local musicians on behalf of the Library of Congress. In Stovall, Mississippi, he met McKinley Morganfield, a guitar player who went by the nickname Muddy Waters. And Lomax sent Muddy two pressings from their sessions together, along with a check for \$20.

Later in his life, Muddy recalled what happened next. He said: "I carried that record up to the corner, and I put it on the jukebox. Just played it and played it and said, I can do it." I can do it. In many ways, that right there is the story of the blues.

This is music with humble beginnings, roots in slavery and segregation, a society that rarely treated Black Americans with the dignity and respect that they deserved. The blues bore witness to these hard times. And like so many of the men and women who sang them, the blues refused to be limited by the circumstances of their birth.

The music migrated north, from Mississippi Delta to Memphis to my hometown in Chicago. It helped lay the foundation for rock and roll and R&B and hip-hop. It inspired artists and audiences around the world. And as tonight's performers will demonstrate, the blues continue to draw a crowd. Because this music speaks to something universal. No one goes through life without both joy and pain, triumph and sorrow. The blues gets all of that, sometimes with just one lyric or one note.

And as we celebrate Black History Month, the blues reminds us that we've been through tougher times before. That's why I'm proud to have these artists here, and not just as a fan, but also as the President. Because their music teaches us that when we find ourselves at a

crossroads, we don't shy away from our problems. We own them. We face up to them. We deal with them. We sing about them. We turn them into art. And even as we confront the challenges of today, we imagine a brighter tomorrow, saying, I can do it, just like Muddy Waters did all those years ago.

With that in mind, please join me in welcoming these extraordinary artists to the White House. And now, it is my pleasure to bring out our first performer to the stage, the King of the Blues, Mr. B.B. King.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to musician Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews.

Remarks at a Groundbreaking Ceremony for the National Museum of African American History and Culture *February 22, 2012*

Thank you so much. Please, have a seat. Thank you very much. Well, good morning, everybody.

I want to thank France for that introduction and for her leadership at the Smithsonian. I want to thank everybody who helped to make this day happen. I want to thank Laura Bush; Secretary Salazar; Sam Brownback; my hero, Congressman John Lewis; Wayne Clough; and everybody who's worked so hard to make this possible.

I am so proud of Lonnie Bunch, who came here from Chicago, I want to point out. [Laughter] I remember having a conversation with him about this job when he was planning to embark on this extraordinary journey. And we could not be prouder of the work that he has done to help make this day possible.

I promise to do my part by being brief.

As others have mentioned, this day has been a long time coming. The idea for a museum dedicated to African Americans was first put forward by Black veterans of the Civil War. And years later, the call was picked up by members of the civil rights generation, by men and women who knew how to fight for what

was right and strive for what is just. This is their day. This is your day. It's an honor to be here to see the fruit of your labor.

It's also fitting that this museum has found a home on the National Mall. As has been mentioned, it was on this ground long ago that lives were once traded, where hundreds of thousands once marched for jobs and for freedom. It was here that the pillars of our democracy were built, often by Black hands. And it is on this spot, alongside the monuments to those who gave birth to this Nation and those who worked so hard to perfect it, that generations will remember the sometimes difficult, often inspirational, but always central role that African Americans have played in the life of our country.

This museum will celebrate that history. Because just as the memories of our earliest days have been confined to dusty letters and faded pictures, the time will come when few people remember drinking from a colored water fountain or boarding a segregated bus or hearing in person Dr. King's voice boom down from the Lincoln Memorial. That's why what we build here won't just be an achievement for our