

Statement on the Observance of Juneteenth

June 19, 2012

On this day in 1865, 2 years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, word finally reached the people of Galveston, Texas, that the Civil War was over. All enslaved men, women, and children were now free.

Though it would take decades of struggle and collective effort before African Americans were granted equal treatment and protection under the law, Juneteenth is recognized by Americans everywhere as a symbolic

milestone in our journey toward a more perfect Union.

With the recent groundbreaking of the first Smithsonian museum dedicated to African American history and culture and the dedication of a monument to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on the National Mall, this Juneteenth offers another opportunity to reflect on how far we've come as a nation. And it's also a chance to recommit ourselves to the ongoing work of guaranteeing liberty and equal rights for all Americans.

Statement on World Refugee Day

June 20, 2012

On this World Refugee Day, the United States joins the international community in recognizing the nearly 15 million refugees worldwide, and millions more internally displaced people. We honor the dignity, courage, and determination of these men, women, and children who have fled persecution and violence in their homelands and the commitment and generosity of the countries and organizations that provide them protection and assistance during this difficult time.

While we work to promote lasting peace and stability and human rights around the world so that these refugees may one day return to their countries in safety and dignity, we know that for some voluntary return may not be possible.

For these refugees, social, economic, and legal integration in their country of asylum not only provides opportunities for them to begin rebuilding their lives, but also for the contribution of their knowledge, talents, and skills to be fully realized. Americans know the benefits of these valuable contributions firsthand. Since 1975, we have welcomed more than 3 million refugees from all over the world and continue to lead the world in refugee resettlement.

Together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the international community, we are committed to protecting the world's refugees, mitigating their suffering, and working to help find ways for them to live in dignity and peace.

Remarks on Education Reform

June 21, 2012

The President. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Well, it is good to see all of you.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you guys back. [Laughter] I have to say, the—I don't know about the choice of music coming in here, though. [Laughter] I love my Marine Band, but this is kind of a young demographic for the piano cocktail hour. [Laughter] are much more dressed up than usually when I

So some of the most fun I've had as President is when I get a chance to talk with you—college students—about the importance of earning a higher education in today's economy. And I'll admit that the East Room isn't as rowdy as Carmichael Arena at UNC or—we got any UNC folks here in the house? There we go. Coors Center at CU Boulder—any—no? Okay. [Laughter] I have to say that most of you see you in your own natural habitats.