

**Remarks at a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month Reception**

*June 30, 2014*

*The President.* Hello, everybody. Hey! Well, I want to thank Jim and Patrick. First of all, I think they supported me in my State senate campaign. [*Laughter*] So those were some early supporters, and we might not be here if it hadn't been for them. Congratulations on finally tying the knot after 51 years. I looked it up, and depending on how you count, the traditional gift for your next anniversary is either paper, for year 1, or whatever you want, because there is no traditional gift for 52 years. [*Laughter*] But I think it's so important to understand how rare relationships like yours are. And however you celebrate, we hope you have many, many more years together.

And then, with that, why don't you guys sit down, because that knee is acting up. [*Laughter*]

I want all of you to know how much it means to us for you to be able to join here at this year's Pride Celebration. We've got some terrific public servants who are here today, including our Secretary of Labor Tom Perez. Hey! We've got mayors, and we've got State legislators, and we've got LGBT members of my administration. We also have three judges that I was proud to name to the Federal bench: Todd Hughes, Judy Levy, and Nitza Quiñones Alejandro. Give them a big round of applause.

Before I took office, we had only one openly gay Federal judge to be confirmed by the Senate. Now, along with Todd, Judy, and Nitza, that number is 11. So we're making some progress.

Three other people I want to mention. First of all, Tobias Wolff, who's been advising me for—since my first Presidential campaign and has had a great impact on my administration and how we've thought about a bunch of issues. Please give Tobias a big round of applause.

Number two—a special treat for me—my college professor when I was a freshman in college at Occidental, Dr. Lawrence Goldyn is here. I want to just talk a little bit about Lawrence. When I went in as a freshman—this is 1979 at Occidental College—and according to Lawrence, I guess there were maybe a couple of other gay professors, but they weren't wildly open about it. Lawrence was not shy. [*Laughter*] And I took a class from him, and because he was one of the younger professors, we became really good friends. But also, he was the first openly gay person that I knew who was unapologetic, who stood his ground. If somebody gave him guff, he'd give them guff right back, and was, I think, part of a generation that really fought so many battles that ultimately came into fruition later. And he also played a huge role in advising lesbian, gay, and transgender students at the school at a time when that was still hard for a lot of young college kids. And he went on to become a doctor and ran an AIDS clinic and now is the head of a health center.

But I just wanted to acknowledge him because he helped shape how I think about so many of these issues, and those sort of quiet heroes that sometimes don't get acknowledged. So give Lawrence a big round of applause. So—[*applause*].

Finally, I have to mention a man who's made life at the White House very sweet. This is one of Michelle and my favorite people, our Executive Pastry Chef, Bill Yosses—[*laughter*]—who's here tonight with his husband Charlie. Where's Bill?

*The First Lady.* But he's leaving.

*The President.* He's—this is the problem. We call Bill the Crustmaster because his pies—I don't know what he does, whether he puts crack in them, or—[*laughter*]—but——

*The First Lady.* No, he doesn't. [*Laughter*] There is no crack in our pies. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* I'm just saying that when we first came to the White House—I don't know if you—some of you remember this—the first year, like, my cholesterol shot up. [*Laughter*] And the doctor was like, what happened? You had, like, this really low cholesterol. You were really healthy. And I thought, it's the pie. [*Laughter*] It's the pie. So we had to establish, like, a really firm rule about no pie during the week. [*Laughter*]

*The First Lady.* We had to be disciplined.

*The President.* But he's also just a wonderful person. And after 7 years, he's leaving the White House. So we just want to give Bill and Charlie the best of luck. And we love them. Thank you.

So a lot has happened in the year since we last gathered here together. Same-sex marriage has gone into effect in 10 more States, which means that 43 percent of Americans now live in States where you're free to marry who you love. The NFL drafted its first openly gay player. Harvey Milk got a stamp. Laverne Cox was on the cover of Time. Coca-Cola and Honeymaid were unafraid to sell their products in commercials showing same-sex parents and their children. And perhaps most importantly, Mitch and Cam got married, which caused Michelle and the girls to cry. [*Laughter*] That was big. [*Laughter*]

*The First Lady.* It was big. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* This year, we mark the 45th anniversary of Stonewall. And I know some of you were there. And this tremendous progress we've made as a society is thanks to those of you who fought the good fight and to Americans across the country who marched and came out and organized to secure the rights of others. So I want to thank all of you for making the United States a more just and compassionate place.

I want to thank you for offering support and guidance to our administration. Because of your help, we've gone further in protecting the rights of lesbian and gay and bisexual and transgender Americans than any administration in history.

In 2009, I told you at this reception that I would sign an inclusive hate crimes bill with Matthew Shepard's name on it, and I did. Because hate-driven violence has taken the lives of too many people in this community, and it has to end.

When we came together in 2010, I told you we'd repeal "don't ask, don't tell." Some of you didn't believe me. [*Laughter*] You know who you are. [*Laughter*] We did that too, because nobody should have to hide who you love to serve the country you love. That same year, we released the first-ever comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy to unite our entire Government behind fighting this disease and helping those most at risk.

In 2011, I said my administration would no longer defend the so-called Defense Against Marriage Act. And thanks to Edie Windsor and Robbie Kaplan and the Department of Justice,

that law was overturned, and we've extended benefits to legally married same-sex couples across the country.

In 2012, I promised that my administration would do more to address and prevent bullying and discrimination in our classrooms. And we have, because it's not enough just to say it gets better, we have to actually make it better, like so many Americans are trying to do every day.

We've got here today Pete Cahall, who is the principal of Woodrow Wilson High here in Washington. At a school pride events this month, inspired by brave students, Pete stood up and said something he'd never said at the school before, which is, "I am a proud gay man." And the students all cheered. Pete is here today. Because of his example, more young people know they don't have to be afraid to be who they are; no matter who they love, people have their backs. So we're proud of Pete.

Last year, I promised to implement the Affordable Care Act so this community could get quality, affordable health care like you deserve. And we did that too. And thanks to that law, you can no longer be denied health insurance on the basis of your sexual orientation or gender identity.

We've still got a little more work to do. I've repeatedly called on Congress to pass the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act." Right now there are more States that let same-sex couples get married than there are States who prohibit discrimination against their LGBT workers. We have laws that say Americans can't be fired on the basis of the color of their skin or their religion or because they have a disability. But every day, millions of Americans go to work worried that they could lose their job, not because of anything they've done——

[*At this point, a baby cried.*]

*The President.* I know, it's terrible—[*laughter*]—but because of who they are. [*Laughter*] It's upsetting. It is wrong.

The majority of Fortune 500 companies already have nondiscrimination policies to protect their employees because it's the right thing to do and because many say it helps to retain and attract the best talent. And I agree. So if Congress won't act, I will. I have directed my staff to prepare an Executive order for my signature that prohibits discrimination by Federal contractors on the basis of sexual orientation and identity.

And I've asked my staff to prepare a second Executive order so that Federal employees, who are already protected on the basis of sexual orientation, will now be formally protected from discrimination based on gender identity as well.

So we've got a lot to be proud of, but obviously, we can't grow complacent. We've got to defend the progress that we've made. We've got to keep on reaching out to LGBT Americans who are vulnerable and alone and need our support, whether it's teenagers in rough situations to seniors who are struggling to find housing and care.

[*A baby cried.*]

*The President.* I know, it's tough. [*Laughter*]

We've got to keep fighting for an AIDS-free generation and for the human rights of LGBT persons around the world.

And we've got to—and I would also ask all of us to direct some of the energy and passion and resources of this movement towards other injustices that exist. Because one of the things that I think we should have learned—[*applause*—Dr. King said an "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." And that's—and that means that we've got to be able to set up a community that extends beyond our own particular narrow interests; we've got to make sure that we're reaching out to others who need our help as well.

And that means fighting for poor kids. And it means fighting for workers to get a decent wage. It means showing compassion for the undocumented worker who is contributing to our society and just wants a chance to come out of the shadows. It means fighting for equal pay for equal work. It means standing up for sexual—standing up against sexual violence wherever it occurs. It means trying to eliminate any vestige of racial or religious discrimination and anti-Semitism wherever it happens.

That's how we continue our Nation's march towards justice and equality. That's how we build a more perfect Union, a country where no matter what you look like, where you come from, what your last name is, who you love, you've got a chance to make it if you try. You guys have shown what can happen when people of goodwill organize and stand up for what's right. We've got to make sure that that's not applied just one place, in one circumstance, in one time. That's part of the journey that makes America the greatest country on Earth.

So thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:40 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chicago, IL, residents Darby Patrick and Jim Bova; Todd M. Hughes, U.S. Circuit Court Judge for the Federal Circuit; Judith E. Levy, U.S. District Court Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan; Nitza I. Quiñones Alejandro, U.S. District Court Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania; Deborah A. Batts, U.S. District Court Judge for the Southern District of New York; author Tobias J.A. Wolff; Lawrence Goldyn, medical director, Mendocino Coast Clinics in Fort Bragg, CA; Charlie J. Fabella, Jr., husband of White House Executive Pastry Chef William Yosses; Michael Sam, defensive end, National Football League's St. Louis Rams; actor Laverne Cox; Edith Windsor, plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case *United States v. Windsor*; and Roberta A. Kaplan, partner, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, who argued before the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of Edith Windsor in *United States v. Windsor*.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month, reception.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Batts, Deborah A.; Bova, Patrick; Cahall, Pete; Cox, Laverne; Darby, Jim; Fabella, Charlie J., Jr.; Goldyn, Lawrence; Hughes, Todd M.; Kaplan, Roberta A.; Levy, Judith E.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Perez, Thomas E.; Quiñones Alejandro, Nitza I.; Quiñones, Nitza I.; Sam, Michael; Windsor, Edith; Wolff, Tobias J.A.; Yosses, William.

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