

Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

The President's Weekly Address

June 6, 2015

Hi, everybody. One of the remarkable things about America is that nearly all of our families originally came from someplace else. We're a nation of immigrants. It's a source of our strength and something we all can take pride in. And this month, Immigrant Heritage Month, is a chance to share our American stories.

I think about my grandparents in Kansas, where they met and where my mom was born. Their family tree reaches back to England and Ireland and elsewhere. They lived and raised me by basic values: working hard, giving back, and treating others the way you want to be treated.

I think of growing up in Hawaii, a place enriched by people of different backgrounds: native Hawaiian, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, and just about everything else. Growing up in that vibrant mix helped shape who I am today. And while my father was not an immigrant himself, my own life journey as an African American and the heritage shared by Michelle and our daughters, some of whose ancestors came here in chains, has made our family who we are.

This month, I'm inviting you to share your story too. Just visit whitehouse.gov/new-americans. We want to hear how you or your family made it to America, whether you're an immigrant yourself or your great-great-grandparents were.

Of course, we can't just celebrate this heritage, we have to defend it by fixing our broken immigration system. Nearly 2 years ago, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate came together to do that. They passed a commonsense bill to secure our border, get rid of backlogs, and give undocumented immigrants who are already living here a pathway to citizenship if they paid a fine, paid their taxes, and went to the back of the line. But for nearly 2 years, Republican leaders in the House have refused to even allow a vote on it.

That's why, in the meantime, I'm going to keep doing everything I can to make our immigration system more just and more fair. Last fall, I took action to provide more resources for border security; focus enforcement on the real threats to our security; modernize the legal immigration system for workers, employers, and students; and bring more undocumented immigrants out of the shadows so they can get right with the law. Some folks are still fighting against these actions. I'm going to keep fighting for them. Because the law is on our side, it's the right thing to do, and it will make America stronger.

I want us to remember people like Ann Dermody from Alexandria, Virginia. She's originally from Ireland and has lived in America legally for years. She worked hard, played by the rules, and dreamed of becoming a citizen. In March, her dream came true. And before taking the oath, she wrote me a letter. "The papers we receive . . . will not change our different accents [or] skin tones," Ann said. "But for that day, at least, we'll feel like we have arrived."

Well, to Ann and immigrants like her who have come to our shores seeking a better life: Yes, you have arrived. And by sharing our stories and staying true to our heritage as a nation of immigrants, we can keep that dream alive for generations to come.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:55 a.m. on June 5 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on June 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 5, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 6.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly Addresses.

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Names: Dermody, Ann; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha".

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