

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017*

**Remarks at an African American History Month Listening Session**  
*February 1, 2017*

*The President.* Hello, everybody.

*Participants.* Good morning, Mr. President.

*The President.* These are a lot of my friends, but you have been so helpful, Darrell. I appreciate that. You have been really, really—and we did well. The election, we—it came out really well. Next time, we'll triple it up or quadruple it, right?

*Participant.* That's right.

*The President.* And we want to get over 51, right? At least 51.

Well, this is Black History Month, so this is our little breakfast, our little get together. Hi, Lynne, how are you?

*Department of Housing and Urban Development Director of Public Liaison Lynne Martine Patton.* Hi, how are you, sir?

*The President.* Good, nice to see you. And just a few notes. During this month, we honor the tremendous history of the African Americans throughout our country—throughout the world, if you really think about it, right? And their story is one of unimaginable sacrifice, hard work, and faith in America.

I've gotten a real glimpse during the campaign, I'd go around with Ben to a lot of different places that I wasn't so familiar with. They're incredible people.

*Secretary of Housing and Urban Development—designate Benjamin S. Carson, Sr.*  
Absolutely

*The President.* And I want to thank Ben Carson, who's going to be heading up HUD. And it's a big job, and it's a job that's not only housing, it's mind and spirit, right, Ben?

*Secretary-designate Carson.* Oh, yes.

*The President.* And you understand that. Nobody is going to be better than Ben.

Last month, we celebrated the life of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., whose incredible example is unique in American history. You read all about Dr. Martin Luther King a week ago when somebody said I took the statue out of my office, and it turned out that that was fake news. [Laughter]

[At this point, the President gestured toward members of the media at the back of the room.]

*The President.* From these people. Fake news. [Laughter] The statue is cherished. It's one of the favorite things in the—and we have some good ones. We have Lincoln, and we have Jefferson, and we have Dr. Martin Luther King, and we have—but they said the statue, the bust of Dr. Martin Luther King was taken out of the office. And it was never even touched. So I think it was a disgrace, but that's the way the press is. Very unfortunate.

I am very proud now that we have a museum on the National Mall where people can learn about Reverend King, so many other things. Frederick Douglass is an example of somebody who's done an amazing job and is being recognized more and more, I notice. Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and millions more Black Americans who made America what it is today. Big impact.

I am proud to honor this heritage, and we'll be honoring it more and more. The folks at the table in almost all cases have been great friends and supporters. And Darrell—I met Darrell when he was defending me on television. [Laughter] And the people that were on the other side of the argument didn't have a chance, right?

*Participant.* That's right.

*The President.* And Paris has done an amazing job in a very hostile CNN community. [Laughter] He's done—he's all by himself—they'll have seven people and Paris. So I'll take Paris over the seven. [Laughter] But I don't watch CNN so I don't get to see you as much as I used to. [Laughter] I don't like watching fake news.

*Participant.* None of us watch it either, anymore.

*The President.* So, but Fox has treated me very nice. Wherever Fox is, thank you. [Laughter]

We're going to need better schools, and we need them soon. We need more jobs, we need better wages, a lot better wages. We're going to work very hard in the inner city. Ben is going to be doing that big league.

*Secretary-designate Carson.* Big time.

*The President.* It's one of his big, big things that you're going to be looking at.

We need safer communities, and we're going to do that with law enforcement. We're going to make it safe. We're going to make it much better than it is right now. Right now it's terrible, and I saw you talking about it the other night, Paris, on something else that was really—you did a fantastic job the other night on a very unrelated show. [Laughter] I'm ready to do my part—it's the only time I can see him. I'm ready to do my part, and I will say this: We're going to work together.

This is a great group. This is a group that's been so special to me. You really helped me a lot. If you remember, I wasn't going to do well with the African American community, and after they heard me speaking and talking about the inner city and lots of other things, we ended up getting—I won't go into the details, but we ended up getting substantially more than other candidates who had run in the past years.

*Participant.* Almost triple.

*The President.* And now, we're going to take that to new levels.

I want to thank my television star over here. [Laughter] Omarosa is actually a very nice person. Nobody knows that, but—[laughter]—I don't want to destroy her reputation. [Laughter] She is a very good person, and she's been helpful right from the beginning of the campaign.

*White House Office of Public Liaison Communications Director Omarosa O. Manigault.* That's right, sir. I'm at your service.

*The President.* And I appreciate it. I really do. Very special.

And so I want to thank everybody for being here. Could we maybe just go around the room, and we'll introduce ourselves. And the press can stay for that, and I'm sure they have no questions about last night, because it was such a good launch. We have a fantastic, hopefully, new Justice of the Supreme Court. And hopefully, that will be—he'll be approved very, very quickly. He's outstanding in every way—academically. He's done almost as well as you did, Darrell, in college. [Laughter] Not quite, right? But he is a great man, and I think he'll be a great, great Justice. And he's being very well-received. It was a big evening. Very big evening.

So, Paris, why don't we start with you? Go ahead.

*Thurgood Marshall College Fund Director of Strategic Communications Paris Dennard.* Happy to be here, Mr. President. Honored to be here. Paris Dennard. I'm at Thurgood Marshall College Fund who represents the 47 publically supported Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which I know you are very much in support of. So it's a pleasure to be here, sir.

*The President.* Well, I'm glad you're in support of me, because I'd be all—I'd be in the wilderness without you guys. [*Laughter*] You are so effective. I appreciate it.

*Mr. Dennard.* Thank you. We have your back.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Former Vice Mayor William C. Cleveland of Alexandria, VA.* Bill Cleveland. Retired Capitol police officer, former vice mayor of city of Alexandria, and substitute teacher in the Alexandria school system.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Mr. Cleveland.* Glad to be here.

*The President.* Thank you. Thank you, Bill.

*Department of Defense staffer Earl Matthews.* And Bill is also a Vietnam veteran, sir.

*The President.* Oh, good. Very good.

*Mr. Matthews.* I'm Earl Matthews, sir. I work for you at the Department of Defense. I was sworn in an hour——

*The President.* That's right.

*Mr. Matthews.* —— after you were. So, I'm also a veteran and a longtime supporter of yours. I've worked for you since late summer. And I'm happy to be here.

*The President.* Lieutenant Colonel, good job.

*Mr. Matthews.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* That's a good job. Our Vice President, we know already. [*Laughter*]

*New Spirit Revival Center Senior Pastor and Cofounder Belinda C. Scott.* I'm sitting here watching—[*laughter*—]you're next. Belinda Scott, Darrell's wife. New Spirit Revival Center from Cleveland, Ohio, pastor of New Spirit. Great amount of support in the African American community where we are. We love the Lord, we love our new President, and we are praying for our President on a regular basis.

*The President.* You know, the one thing I didn't understand about Belinda—I thought they were married maybe 5 or 6 years, because look how they look so young. [*Laughter*] Should you say how many years you've been married?

*Mrs. Scott.* Thirty-five.

*New Spirit Revival Center Senior Pastor and Cofounder Darrell C. Scott.* Been together 38.

*Mrs. Scott.* Been together 38, but in the Lord—[*laughter*—]35, yes.

*Mr. Scott.* Thirty-three—3 of the 38 under the blood. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* That's actually amazing. I wouldn't have known.

*Mrs. Scott.* But can I say this: I am so grateful that our President gives us that ear to listen to the community, to listen. And people like us are just here to constantly put that message out into the community.

*The President.* Thank you for that. That's so nice.

*Mrs. Scott.* And we love you for that. We love you for listening, and we thank you for that.

*The President.* Thank you. Thank you very much.

*Mr. Scott.* Darrell Scott, pastor at New Spirit Revival Center and Black Trump supporter.  
[Laughter]

*The President.* Thank you for that. You have been a great supporter.

*Mr. Scott.* But speaking of the community, let me just say this real quick. Omarosa, I told you I'm going to try to throw it in. I was recently contacted by some of the top gang thugs in Chicago for a sit-down.

*Mrs. Scott.* They want a sit-down.

*Mr. Scott.* They reached out to me because they associated me with you. They respect you, they believe in what you're doing, and they want to have a sit-down about lowering that body count. So in a couple of weeks, I'm going into Chicago.

*The President.* I think it's a great idea, because Chicago is totally out of control.

*Participant.* Absolutely.

*Mr. Scott.* But I let him know, I said, we've got to lower that body count. We don't want to talk about anything else—get that body count down. And they agreed that the principle is they can do it. These are guys straight from the streets—no politicians—straight street guys. But they're going to commit that if they lower that body count, we'll come in, and we'll do some social programs. So they're in agreement.

*The President.* Well, if they're not going to solve the problem—and what you're doing is the right thing—then we're going to solve the problem for them, because we're going to have to do something about Chicago. Because what's happening in Chicago should not be happening in this country.

*Mr. Scott.* But they want to work with this administration.

*The President.* Good.

*Mr. Scott.* They want to. They reached out. I didn't reach out to them; they reached out to me.

*The President.* I understand.

*Mr. Scott.* They want to work with this administration. They believe in this administration. They didn't believe in the prior administration. They told me this out of their mouth. But they see hope with you.

*The President.* I think that's good. I love it.

*Howard Stirk Holdings Chief Executive Officer Armstrong Williams.* Mr. President, I'm a member of the—what we call the media, but we try to be fair—[laughter]—and objective. Not all media seems to be the opposition party. There are those that see the good that you're doing. We report it. And I'm just honored to have a seat at the table today.

*The President.* Thank you, Armstrong. And it is—I mean, a lot of the media is actually the opposition party. They're so biased, and really, it's a disgrace. Some of the media is fantastic and fair, but so much of the media is opposition party and knowingly saying incorrect things. So it's a very sad situation. But we seem to be doing well. It's almost like, in the meantime, we won. So

maybe they don't have the influence they think. But they really are—they really have to straighten out their act. They're very dishonest people.

James.

*National Diversity Coalition for Trump Board Member James Davis.* Pastor James Davis. We've been a—Mr. President, we've been a supporter of yours from the beginning, alongside Mr. Michael Cohen and Dr. Darrell Scott with the National Diversity Coalition, helped to bring out a huge number in the Black community with respect to the vote. And we're still happy to be in support as we go forward.

*The President.* Thank you. You've been great. Thank you, James.

*Mr. Davis.* Thank you, sir.

*Ms. Manigault.* We've got Lynne Patton.

*The President.* Okay. And, Lynne, we no longer—[inaudible].

*Ms. Patton.* Hi, Mr. President. Yes, I am, as you know, the former vice president of the wonderful charity that your son founded.

*The President.* Right.

*Ms. Patton.* The Eric Trump Foundation. I've been with your family for about 8 years now, right, Jared? And I will—I was an RNC speaker, and I will be landing with Dr. Carson at HUD—

*The President.* Well, that's great. You've got a good person.

*Ms. Patton.* —as one of his senior advisers—

*The President.* Wow.

*Ms. Patton.*—and Director of the Office of Public Liaison.

*The President.* That's great. That's great, Lynne.

*Ms. Patton.* Thank you.

*The President.* You did a fantastic job.

*Ms. Patton.* Thank you.

*American Enterprise Institute Resident Fellow Gerard T. Robinson.* Mr. President, my name is Gerard Robinson. I'm a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and I was proud to be the leader of the education policy team for Trump-Pence transition.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Mr. Robinson.* Thanks a lot.

*Ms. Manigault.* We have our Ashley Bell behind you and some others.

*Department of State staffer Ashley D. Bell.* Mr. President, good to be with you. I'm Ashley Bell, Gainesville. Chairman Priebus called me out of my little town to come help run African American outreach for your campaign. I'm glad to support Omarosa, glad to be here, and I'll be wanting to help you out at the State Department.

*The President.* Fantastic.

*Mr. Bell.* Thank you.

*The President.* Thank you. Thank you very much.

*Ms. Manigault.* Tucker was a star at the Inauguration.

*Department of the Interior staffer Landon T. Davis.* I'm Tucker Davis. Yes, I ran your campaign in West Virginia, working for you in the Department of the Interior.

*The President.* We did well in West Virginia. [Laughter]

*Mr. Davis.* Coal miners love you.

*The President.* And we love the coal miners too. We're going to put them back to work.

*Mr. Davis.* Absolutely.

*National Diversity Coalition for Trump Adviser Leah V. LeVell.* Leah LeVell. I was at the RNC and also at PIC. And I helped launch the video series every week—the midweek message—that reached out to millennials and college students and helped launch the college Republican chapter at Howard University.

*Participant.* You did a great job.

*The President.* Good.

*Ms. Manigault.* Howard University.

*The President.* Good. I heard that. Good job.

*Ms. Manigault.* That's Bruce LeVell's daughter. We snagged her. [Laughter]

*The President.* Oh, that's good. Great job.

*Ms. LeVell.* Thank you.

*White House Office of Public Liaison staffer Monica Alexander.* Mr. President, Monica Alexander, Executive Administrative Assistant in the Office of Public Liaison, in support of Omarosa.

*Ms. Manigault.* Spelman graduate. [Laughter] Spelman graduate.

*The President.* Good. Thank you. That's nice.

*Domestic Policy Council staffer Ja'Ron K. Smith.* Mr. President, Ja'Ron Smith. I'm with the Domestic Policy Council, Andrew Bremberg's team, and I'll be focusing on urban affairs and revitalization, so all the positives.

*The President.* Fantastic.

*Ms. Manigault.* And Howard graduate. [Laughter]

*The President.* Howard graduate. That's good stuff. Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:30 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Neil M. Gorsuch; and Vice President Michael R. Pence. Mr. Davis referred to the President's personal attorney, Michael D. Cohen, in his capacity as cochair of the National Diversity Coalition for Trump. Ms. Patton referred to White House Senior Adviser Jared C. Kushner. Mr. Bell referred to White House Chief of Staff Reinhold R. "Reince" Priebus, in his former capacity as chairman of the Republican National Committee. Ms. Manigault referred to Bruce LeVell, executive director, National Diversity Coalition for Trump. Mr. Smith referred to Director of the Domestic Policy Council Andrew P. Bremberg.

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