

absolutely confident that the line that runs through America's story will, in the future, as it has in the past, be drawn with an upward curve. And I'm especially pleased that these young ladies are here today, because they're the ones who are going to help bend that curve towards justice and equality.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:52 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks,

he referred to entertainers Kerry Washington, Katharine McPhee, and Mozhda Jamalzadah; former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright; civil rights activists Dorothy I. Height and Sylvia Mendez; women's rights activist Gloria M. Steinem; former Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor; and Lilly Ledbetter, former employee, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks at a Celebration of Greek Independence Day *March 9, 2010*

Thank you so much. Well, good evening, everybody, and welcome to the White House. I can't imagine a better way to celebrate the independence of Greece than with the Prime Minister of Greece. [Laughter] So Prime Minister Papandreou, to your lovely wife, Mrs. Papandreou, we are honored by your presence here today. And we are pleased that you were able to bring the—your extraordinary delegation from Athens.

Now, like his father and his grandfather before him, the Prime Minister is leading Greece through challenging times. But as I told him during our meeting in the Oval Office today, whether in good times or in bad times, the people of Greece will always have a friend and a partner in the United States of America.

Thank you, Your Eminence, for your very kind introduction and for the wisdom and compassion that has always defined your ministry. Archbishop Demetrios marks his second decade guiding the Greek Orthodox Church and community in America, four decades as a bishop, and recently, his 82d birthday. And he is looking really good so—[applause]. I need to find out what he's eating. [Laughter]

Last year, His Eminence tried to compare me with Alexander the Great. [Laughter] I thought this would get me more respect from Michelle and the girls. [Laughter] It did not. [Laughter] They reminded me instead that Greek literature is full of very strong women. [Laughter]

I want to acknowledge the fact that we're joined by leaders who have strengthened the bonds between us, including our Ambassador, Kaskarelis, and from Cyprus, Ambassador Kakouris. Please stand up. Do we have our other Ambassador there? There he is.

We have some outstanding Members of Congress who are here, and we've got at least one potential Member of Congress—Alexi, stand up—from the State of Illinois. We've got, in fact—in addition to Alexi, we've got a lot of Greek American friends here who've been great friends and supporters of mine, including folks here from Chicago. I think we've got just about all of Greektown here. [Laughter] And we also have some of the outstanding Greek Americans who are serving in my administration.

Now, Greek Independence Day isn't for another few weeks. But I'll be on a trip to Asia, so I appreciate you coming early, not that Greeks have ever needed an excuse to celebrate, let's face it. [Laughter] But on that day, we'll remember how 189 years ago, another bishop stood up, in a monastery in the mountains, raised the Greek flag, declared independence, and began the struggle to restore democracy to its birthplace.

But on that day, we'll not only celebrate a singular moment in time, we'll be reminded of the spirit that has defined Greece and its people for all time. There's a concept that captures it, and it doesn't translate easily; it doesn't really have an equivalent in English. But it's a virtue that all of you know well, because it's the very

essence of being Greek—and you will forgive me if my pronunciation is just so-so—*philotimo*, all right? Literally—*philotimo*—literally, it translates as “love of honor.” I love that concept, love of honor. But, of course, it means much more than that.

It’s a sense of love to family and to community and to country and the notion that what we’re here on this Earth to do is to be all in this together. We all have obligations to each other and to work together. And so it was that the democratic example of a small group of city-states more than 2,000 years ago could inspire the founding generation of this country, that led one early American to imagine that “the days of Greece may be revived in the woods of America.”

It’s the sense of nobility and morality written in the pages of those timeless Greek texts, which have instructed students—and tormented them—[laughter]—down the ages, in every corner of the world. Indeed, when I was living in Indonesia as a child, when my mother would wake me up early in the morning to teach me, among the books that she used to pull off the shelf were the legends of Greek mythology.

Philotimo, it’s a sense of right and wrong and a duty to do what’s right. And so 189 years ago, Americans of Greek origin crossed the oceans and fought for Greek independence. Greek Americans, in turn, served and fought to preserve our Union. And through two World Wars and a long cold war, America stood with our Greek allies and friends.

And since the Prime Minister is here, let me acknowledge Greece’s efforts to extend this security and stability in our time, toward a just and final settlement in Cyprus, fully integrating the Balkans into Europe, and the Prime Minister’s personal work to improve relations with Turkey. We thank you for your leadership.

And let me commend Greece, our close NATO ally, for standing up for the security and opportunity of people around the world,

from the Balkans to Afghanistan, where Greek servicemembers are helping to give people who have known too much war the chance to live in peace and security.

This solidarity continues today, whether it’s the close counterterrorism efforts between our Governments or the deep partnerships between our people. Indeed, as the Prime Minister and I discussed this afternoon, Greece’s participation in the Visa Waiver Program will strengthen security in both our countries, and whether it’s to do business or visit family and friends, it will now be easier for our Greek friends to visit the United States.

And *philotimo* is a sense of dignity and respect as well. It’s the determination that has driven generations of Greek Americans, like those here tonight, to struggle and sacrifice for the same things that all Americans want: to pursue our dreams, to realize our God-given potential, and to give our children an even better life.

That’s the simple hope that caused a bishop to raise that flag on a mountaintop so many years ago. That’s the profound sense of friendship that will guide our work in the years ahead, because what one patriot of Greek independence wrote to John Quincy Adams nearly 200 years ago remains true today: We are “friends, copatriots, and brothers.”

So thank you all for coming. God bless you. God bless America. And *zito i Ellas*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:06 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Georgios Andreas Papandreou of Greece and his wife Ada; Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America; Greece’s Ambassador to the U.S. Vassilis Kaskarelis; Cyprus’s Ambassador to the U.S. Andreas Kakouris; and Illinois Democratic senatorial candidate Alexi Giannoulias. The related proclamation of March 24 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Rene Garcia Preval of Haiti March 10, 2010

President Obama. Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody, and on behalf of the American people, I want to welcome President Preval, the First Lady, and their delegation to the United States. The President and I have just concluded a very productive meeting in the Oval Office on the urgent and overriding challenges before us: helping the people of Haiti as they recover and rebuild after one of the most devastating natural disasters ever to strike our hemisphere.

Mr. President, as I did when I spoke to you in those first days after the earthquake, I again want to express to you and to the Haitian people the deepest condolences of the American people. Your grief is shared by our strong and vibrant Haitian American community, some of whom join us here today and who continue to mourn the loss of their loved ones back in Haiti. To you and to our fellow Americans, please know that you remain in our thoughts and in our prayers.

The United States joins in mourning the loss of American citizens, as more than 100 Americans died in this earthquake, and our hearts also go out to their loved ones. We also remember that this natural disaster was an international tragedy, taking the lives of Dominicans and Canadians, French, Brazilians, and people from dozens of nations around the world.

President Preval and his delegation offered an update on the status of relief, recovery, and reconstruction efforts, the progress so far, and the daunting challenges ahead in a disaster that, even now, defies comprehension. To offer just some perspective on the awful scale of Haitian loss, it's as if the United States, in a terrible instant, lost nearly 8 million people. Or, it's as if one-third of our country, 100 million Americans, suddenly had no home, no food or water. That gives you a sense of, relative to the populations, what has happened in Haiti. No nation could respond to such a catastrophe alone. It would require a global response. And that's exactly what we have seen these past 2 months.

Mr. President, even as you and other Haitian leaders have endured your personal trage-

dies—losing your own homes, your loved ones—you have carried on with great courage and determination. You've persevered, leading an international effort with critical support from the United Nations, many partner nations, and countless nongovernmental organizations. Representatives of some of the NGOs are here today, and for the extraordinary work that you've done to uplift lives every day, in Haiti and around the world, often at great risk to your own lives, we salute you as well.

In this international response, the United States has been proud to play a leading role. Mr. President, we are joined today by men and women representing all the Americans who answered Haiti's call in its hours of need, including Members of Congress and many State and local officials, who we thank for their support, and leaders from across my administration: the Department of State, USAID, Homeland Security, FEMA, Health and Human Services, Transportation, and the Department of Defense, including our great folks at Southern Command. Today I want to thank all of them for leading a swift and coordinated response during one of the most complex humanitarian efforts ever attempted.

We're joined by Ambassador Ken Merten and some of our heroic Embassy staff, who worked around the clock. We're joined by our disaster response teams, who were on the scene within 24 hours; our military personnel, who quickly reopened the airport and the port, making way for a massive humanitarian effort; our search-and-rescue teams, who crawled into the rubble to pull survivors out to safety, Haitian and American; the volunteer physicians and nurses and paramedics, who treated tens of thousands of patients with life-threatening injuries; and all our men and women in uniform, who have helped to distribute desperately needed food and water and medicine to millions of people—our remarkable soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen.

I just want to personally say how extraordinarily proud I am of each and every one of you, because I think you represent what's best in