

It's very impressive that yesterday I had a chance to visit a farmer who raised grapes. And the life is very happy, and they have a warmth of feelings toward Vietnam. And the owner had to hug me several times, hesitating to say good bye to us, and that demonstrates the desire for friendship between our two peoples.

And President Bush and I have had productive and constructive discussions. And both sides agree that our bilateral relationship has continued to develop. Especially since Mr. President's last visit to Vietnam, our relations have witnessed a new, fine development. On the economic front, our cooperation has been intensified. In addition to that, our cooperation has also intensified in other areas such as humanitarian cooperation, science, technology, education, and training.

And I sincerely thank the U.S. Government and people for your aid to HIV and AIDS patients. And we highly appreciate the Congress appropriations for dioxin and Agent Orange victims. And I believe that the increased and good relationship between our two country would benefit not only our two countries but also constitute a constructive factor for safeguarding peace and stability in our region.

And we have also discussed on specific measures of how to advance further our relations in a wide range of areas, be it political, economic, trade, investment, education, or training, humanitarian, et cetera. And in short, our relations are broadened, deepened on a sustainable and effective—in a sustainable and effective manner. And as Mr. President has mentioned, both sides have just signed a Trade Investment Framework Agreement, TIFA, and many other high-value economic agreements and contracts.

And Mr. President and I also had direct and open exchange of views on a matter that we remain different, especially on matters related to religion and human rights. And our approach is that we would increase our dialog in order to have a better understanding of each other. And we are also determined not to let those differences afflict our overall, larger interest.

And I also would like to take this opportunity to send a message to American people,

particularly the good feelings from Vietnamese people to American people. I would like to tell you that Vietnam nowadays is a stable, peaceful, and friendly country. And Vietnamese people want to have a good consolidarity and friendship with American people. And so if both peoples—both want peace, friendship, and solidarity, then we should join hands and march toward the future.

And on this occasion, I also would like to extend my warmest greetings to my fellow man living in the United States. And Vietnamese Americans are part and parcel of the Vietnamese nation. And it is my desire to see them succeed, and hope they will continue to serve as a bridge of friendship between our two countries.

And so, once again, I would like to thank Mr. President and the U.S. Government and American people for your warm hospitality.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Triet spoke in Vietnamese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Reception for Black Music Month

June 22, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you. Rachel, thank you—thanks for coming; thanks for the introduction; and thanks for representing the United States. Proud to have you here.

I want to welcome you all right here to the people's house. I'm pleased you could join us for this annual celebration of Black Music Month. This is an event I've always looked forward to. It's a chance to listen to some good music—[laughter]—and to be with some good friends. It's an opportunity for us to thank artists whose work inspire our country. And so thanks for coming. I hope you enjoy the day as much as I do.

I appreciate the fact that Alphonso is with us, Alphonso Jackson and Marcia. He's the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Dr. Dorothy Height is with us. I'm proud you're here, Dr. Height.

Thanks for joining us. My friend Bob Johnson has joined us. He knows a little something about black entertainment. *[Laughter]* Thanks for coming. Roslyn Brock, vice chairman of the NAACP—I'm proud you're here, Roslyn. Thank you for coming. Thanks for joining us. Dyana Williams, president of the International Association of African American Music Foundation—she knows something about music. *[Laughter]* I appreciate Kevin Liles, executive vice president of the Warner Music Company. Thank you for coming—and Jonathan Platt, senior vice president of EMI Music Publishing and Virgin Records. Appreciate you all being here. Thanks for coming.

Most of all, thank you all. Thanks for taking time out of your day to come. One of the best things about living here is that some of the best musicians come to play. *[Laughter]* It's amazing what kind of talent you can draw here at the White House. *[Laughter]*

And over the years, American Presidents have seen some fantastic African American musicians here on the White House stage. President Chester Arthur—you might remember Chester—*[laughter]*—he welcomed the first black choir to perform at the White House, the Jubilee Singers from Fisk University. President Benjamin Harrison hosted one of the first black soloists to play at the White House, Sissieretta Jones, who was the daughter of a slave. President William Howard Taft invited Joseph Douglass—grandson of Frederick Douglass—to perform here. Franklin Roosevelt hosted the great Marian Anderson, when she performed “Ave Maria” for the King and Queen of England. President Ronald Reagan hosted Mikhail Gorbachev and invited the legendary Pearl Bailey to entertain. And when he introduced her, he just simply said—simply, “our Pearl”—“welcome, our Pearl.” *[Laughter]* I hope the translator got that right. *[Laughter]*

And Laura and I had some incredible entertainers and Americans sing for us and our friends. We've had Eartha Kitt, Patti Austin, B.B. King, Irwin Mayfield, Aaron Neville—just to give you a taste of what happens here at the White House. Each of the performers has inspired people across the world with their talents, and each performer has brought great pride to the United States. It's really

a great country that can produce a diverse group of musicians that can serve as ambassadors about what's right about America.

And we're proud to welcome some new musicians here to the White House today. We're just keeping in a long trend of Presidents who have welcomed some of our great musicians here to the White House. So as we honor Black Music Month, it makes sense to bring some talent here to entertain us.

Karina Pasian grew up in New York City. She's the child of immigrants from the Dominican Republic. Her parents are both teachers in the New York Public School System, and early on, it became clear that Karina had an incredible gift for music. At age 3—that's the definition of “early on”—*[laughter]*—she was singing and studying piano. By age 12, she was performing at the Coliseum in Rome before a television audience of more than a half-million people, alongside Alicia Keys and Stevie Wonder and Andrea Bocelli. Today, she's 15 years old. She's already recorded her first album.

And despite her young age, she tackles very mature issues with her music. She sings about hunger and disease in Africa and the genocide in Darfur. And we appreciate that clarity, appreciate her bringing these issues to focus to help more people understand that the world's got to do something about it now, before it's too late. I will tell you, the—America is in the lead when it comes to HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa; we're on the lead when it comes to feeding the hungry; we're on the lead when it comes to eradicating malaria. And that's where we need to be, and that's where we will stay. And I appreciate very much Karina bringing this issue to focus. We're proud that you're here, and we're proud that you brought your big heart to this stage.

We're also going to welcome Kem Owens, who learned to love music growing up in Detroit listening to R&B greats. He listened to them on his mom and dad's radio. He taught himself to play piano at the home of his Baptist minister grandfather. But as a teenager, this good man lost his way. He became addicted to drugs and alcohol, and eventually, he became homeless. Today he finds a home, a warm home to welcome him. He was sleeping on the ground near a building on the

Detroit River, and he said this: God found him and inspired him to set his life straight. With the help of the Almighty, he overcame his addictions and he rediscovered his passion for music. In 2001, he used a credit card to finance the production of an independent CD he called “Kemistry.” Get it—Kem Owens? [Laughter] Kemistry? [Laughter]

The disc sold 10,000 copies in 5 months. It caught the attention of music executives in New York who signed KEM to a major label deal. He has gone on to become one of America’s most popular R&B singers. But he knows the audience he’s truly playing for. He says, quote, “I want my life to be one that God will be pleased with. I’m by no means a saint.” I know what you’re saying, KEM. [Laughter] But he went on to say, “My eye is on the prize. He’s not done with me yet.” We’re proud to welcome such a man to the White House today.

And finally, Tourie and Damien Escobar discovered their love for the violin in the third grade and soon found themselves studying classical music at New York’s finest conservatories. But they grew up in a tough neighborhood, and soon Tourie and Damien had dropped their music, dropped out of school, and fallen in with a bad crowd. Yet their mother and aunt never gave up hope. And with their encouragement and prayers, these two brothers returned to the music they loved.

They formed a group called “Nuttin’ But Stringz,” performing a new music fusion that bridges classical, R&B, and rap. I’m looking forward to it. [Laughter] They started by playing on subways and went on to win amateur music contests at the Apollo Theater. And last month, they released their first album. Here’s what Tourie says: “The passion for music and the violin saved my life.” And today that passion has brought these talented musicians right here to the White House.

All these artists represent the best of our country. They represent hope and hard work. We’re looking forward to hearing them perform. They’re going to be in a long list of performers who have come here to be able to entertain the country, to lend their musical talents to this, the people’s house.

I appreciate them coming to help us celebrate Black Music Month. I appreciate you all joining to help celebrate Black Music Month. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Miss USA 2007 Rachel Smith; civil rights leader Dorothy I. Height; and Robert L. Johnson, founder and chairman, The RLJ Companies.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President’s public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

June 16

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

June 17

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

June 18

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority to discuss the situation in the Middle East. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, President Jalal Talabani, and Vice Presidents Adil Abd Al-Mahdi and Tariq al-Hashimi of Iraq.

In the afternoon, at the historic Evermay house, the President attended a Republican National Committee luncheon. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a signing ceremony for H.R. 1676, the Native American Home Ownership Opportunity Act of 2007.