White House Entertainment Program Remarks by Athletes/Youth

Ricardo Thornton:
When I was a child, I was sent to an institution at an early age because my mother and father could not take care of me. There were good days, but also many dark days. The institution closed and I was fortunate to move into a group home where I met my dream girl, my wife Donna. And today, I am a leader of the unified generation. I am a father, a husband who just celebrated his 30th wedding anniversary, a technician at the library and a great basketball player. And Mr. President, we need to focus on the abilities of people, not the disability. Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the committee for people with intellectual disability - where together we can continue to make a difference. Team work makes a dream work.

Loretta Clairborne:
When I was a child, my mother was told, "she's hopeless, put that child away Rita." Rita Claiborne said "No. My child will stay at home." Other families didn't want me, schools didn't want me, no one really wanted me, fighting and loneliness was all I had. I had to run for my life and that's just what I did—run in Special Olympics and run 26 marathons too. I am a leader of the unified generation. I work to teach children tolerance, I own my own home, I speak 4 languages, I hold two honorary doctorates and I still stay in shape Mrs. Obama, by playing sports all year round! I know the world can change.

Danielle Liebl:
In grade school my teacher said I was too dumb to understand I just graduated from the College of St. Benedict with a double major in Peace Studies and Theology. I recently won the Peace First Prize, a two-year fellowship to create peaceful and supportive schools and communities. I am creating the theology of the unified generation.

Brina Kei Maximo:
People in the Philippines don't know about special kids. They are scared of us and bully us. I am holding awareness campaigns in schools and playing unified sports to teach everyone that we can play together and be friends together too. Thank you Mr. President for signing Rosa's law. Words matter…a LOT! It has changed your country and now is changing mine. We are creating the language of the unified generation.

Kenny Brown:
My brother Kevin has Autism. Sometimes it's hard for Kevin to connect, but not when we're playing Special Olympics Unified soccer.   There's something about Kevin and me being in the game, playing, about being teammates that lets us just be brothers and nothing more. We are creating the sports of the unified generation.

Sean Bogart:
I never thought I'd play [SPORT] for my school, but my dream came true. I'm playing Special Olympics Unified X but I'm also wearing a varsity jersey for North Haven High School. I represent my school. O yea! Every school in America has a boys team and a girls team. Why shouldn't every school have a Special Olympics unified team too? We are creating schools filled with the unified generation.

Matthew Williams:
Seizures and brain surgery—that was me. And jokes and bullying—that was what I got in return.   But it just took one person who believed in me—my coach—who said to me, "Matthew, you might struggle in school, but you can be great, I know it." And you know what? I believed him! And now, I'm on my way to college to become a personal trainer. I'll be the first person with an intellectual disability trained to be a personal trainer for other people with intellectual challenges like me. If you need my advice on fitness, give me a call!! I am creating a healthy unifed generation.

Ricardo: We are here to put an end to injustice, inactivity, and intolerance.
Loretta: The days of being left out are over.
Danielle: This is our time and we are going to seize it.
Kenny: We will not stop until we've played our way into creating a future where everyone belongs.
Matthew: We are the Unified Generation.

ALL: Play unified to Live Unified - Game On!

Brina Kei Maximo:
And now we welcome the greatest musical artist and inspirational voice of the Unified generation, Miss Katy Perry!