NEW Special Episode of The 1600 Sessions

“Our Work and Recent Events: Q & A with David M. Rubenstein”

Focuses on History of Lafayette Square, Recent Protests, and COVID-19 Pandemic

June 18, 2020 (Washington, D.C.) — The White House Historical Association released a special episode of The 1600 Sessions podcast today, “Our Work and Recent Events: Q&A with David M. Rubenstein.” In this episode, Association President Stewart McLaurin is interviewed by David M. Rubenstein, Co-Founder and Co-Executive Chairman of the Carlyle Group and philanthropist. During this interview, the two discuss the work of the Association during the recent period of the pandemic and protests in Lafayette Square, and how the history of “The People’s House” provides context to the challenges of the present day.

“We are right across the street from the White House, on historic Lafayette Square, and its literally through the window behind me and over my shoulder where those demonstrations took place,” says McLaurin. “The square itself has always been a public square of First Amendment rights for Americans to express their feelings, their fears, their hopes for change. And that’s taken on really a variety of issues from the very initial demonstration which were a century ago focused on the suffrage movement to various wars, civil rights, economic issues, nuclear disarmament, many, many other issues.”

Rubenstein asks McLaurin about the President’s Neighborhood – including the burning of St. John’s Church during recent protests, the mission of the White House Historical Association and the evolution of the White House fence.

“The first fence that went up … was a wooden rail and post fence by Thomas Jefferson in 1801-1802. Before the end of his presidency, he built a stone fence north of the White House which is now the foundation of the iron and steel fence that’s presently between the North Lawn and Pennsylvania Avenue. And as you know, there’s construction going on with the fence, now, and as they were digging to put in the new elements of the fence project just in the past few weeks, they unearthed some of the stone from that Thomas Jefferson stone wall. It was wonderful to be able to see that and to know that Thomas Jefferson had actually put those stones in place… The most important thing to us and our mission is accessibility to the White House. That the American people have the opportunity to visit their house, and actually the Visitors Office of this presidency and the Obama presidency and others before have done a really good job of making that accessible to the American people. They do that day in and day out, and when the house is open for tours, which we hope it is again soon, about fifteen hundred people have the opportunity to go through each day and to visit the White House, which is really remarkable.
The 1600 Sessions

In this podcast series, White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin interviews luminaries, historians, and eyewitnesses to history about America’s most famous residence and office—the White House. Each episode includes a prominent guest or guests to discuss varying facets of White House history, including insights from former staff and many other topical issues.

The 1600 Sessions is available on iTunes, Google Play, and Stitcher. To hear the full episode, visit The1600Sessions.org.

For media inquiries, please contact press@whha.org.

About The White House Historical Association
First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy envisioned a restored White House that conveyed a sense of history through its decorative and fine arts. In 1961, the White House Historical Association was established to support her vision to preserve and share the Executive Mansion’s legacy for generations to come. Supported entirely by private resources, the Association’s mission is to assist in the preservation of the state and public rooms, fund acquisitions for the White House permanent collection, and educate the public on the history of the White House. Since its founding, the White House Historical Association has contributed more than $50 million in fulfillment of its mission. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit www.whitehousehistory.org.

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