REMARKS FOR ADMINISTRATOR BOLDEN

HIDDEN FIGURES – NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Dec. 14, 2016

- Thank you, Lonnie (Bunch, NMAAHC director).
- I'm both humbled and excited to be here at this magnificent museum and to recognize an amazing American, Katherine Johnson.
- When I was growing up in segregated South Carolina, African American role models with national prominence were few and far between. Little did I know when my fellow flight students and I, in training at the Naval Air Station, Meridian, MS, clustered around a small television watching the Apollo 11 moon landing that one of the key figures responsible for its success was an unassuming Black woman from White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.
- It was my honor to be part of history last year as President Barack Obama, our nation's first African American president, presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Katherine Johnson for her indispensable contributions to our nation's early space program.

- Katherine's legacy is evident in so many ways, but with the *Hidden Figures* movie and book, she's receiving a lot of high profile and well-deserved attention. She and her fellow human computers, including Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson, who are also prominently represented in the movie, were as much a part of our nation's early space program as the astronauts who got all the accolades and who we saw on television.
- I was so pleased to be able to meet the families of all these great women when we presented them with a NASA Certificate of Achievement earlier this month at the Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia.
- It was there at Langley where they all worked so hard to ensure the successful flights and safety of our early Mercury, Gemini and Apollo astronauts. There they raised our spirits and helped unify our nation even as they toiled in relative obscurity and suffered the racial discrimination of the time.
- Katherine calculated John Glenn's trajectory at his personal request and this is a bittersweet moment for us all as we remember with deep thankfulness the contributions of that great American to our national

life and our achievements as a country. As Katherine herself said last week, "A good man has left Earth for the last time."

- Today we celebrate the brimming optimism of our space program and the nuts and bolts that made it possible. People like John Glenn and Katherine Johnson sacrificed for all of us and we're a better people, with much wider horizons, as a result of their extraordinary talents, patriotism and dedication to duty.
- I can't thank enough the talented Annie Liebovitz for the amazing portrait she took of Katherine Johnson. It does so much to enhance Katherine's indelible legacy. Thank you, Annie, for sharing your amazing talent with us and creating this incredible portrait that generations of Americans will now enjoy at this museum. I'm confident they'll be inspired to pursue Katherine's story and, indeed, many of them will surely take up the mantel of science, technology, engineering and mathematics to shape our country's next giant leaps in exploration.
- I also want to thank Aimee Bell and Carol Blue Hitchens at Vanity Fair for getting the ball rolling for the profile of Katherine that was so beautifully complemented by Annie's photograph.

- Now, more than ever, we need these stories to be told. That's one reason I'm so happy that at NASA we've undertaken the "Modern Figures," initiative, a way to capture the stories of today's women of color who are taking on great challenges on behalf of us all just as Katherine did decades ago. With us tonight is Andrea Razzaghi, one of those modern figures – she's deputy director of our Astrophysics Division at NASA Headquarters, which is responsible for the Hubble Space Telescope and many other missions that are peering beyond our solar system.
- Thank you, Andrea, for your great work and for the inspiration you provide to girls and young women everywhere. Katherine Johnson's legacy is in good hands.
- We'll keep building and expanding on it and with the opening of this museum, millions of Americans and people from around the world for generations to come will see what it took for African Americans to step from the shadows and use our talents in a world that didn't know if it wanted our help.

- Helping us tell all of these stories is our NASA Historian, Bill Barry, who is with us tonight, and who spent countless hours with the filmmakers to ensure as much historical accuracy as possible in the *Hidden Figures* movie.
- So, thank you, Katherine. God bless all the NASA human computers. Godspeed, John Glenn, and may we all carry forward from this point with the optimism and courage that they represent.
- And now, as a small taste of the legacy that John Glenn helped us build, let me introduce a video from space by our legendary astronaut Peggy Whitson, currently aboard the International Space Station about 250 miles above us. In February she will become the first woman to command the orbiting outpost twice. By the conclusion of her mission she is set to become the U.S. astronaut with the most cumulative time in space. Please enjoy this special message from orbit. **[Video plays]**

INTRODUCTION OF HIDDEN FIGURES DIRECTOR TED MELFI AND CAST

- Now it's my great pleasure to introduce the creative people behind the film, *Hidden Figures,* about the lives of Katherine Johnson,

Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson and their fellow human computers. *Hidden Figures* is already receiving wide critical acclaim.

- As a panel with director Ted Melfi and the actors at the Kennedy Space Center said earlier this week, they were drawn to *Hidden Figures* as a story that needs to be told, and along the way it's edifying and educational while also very inspiring and entertaining.

Please welcome:

Director Ted Melfi

Executive Producer Mimi Valdés

Producer Pharrell Williams

Kevin Costner

Janelle Monáe

Octavia Spencer

And the woman who plays our honoree, Katherine G. Johnson, Taraji P. Henson