



Written by [Patrick Krey](#) on July 19, 2016

Convention's Opening Night Features Celebrities, Politicians, and Victims

CLEVELAND — The second session of the first day of the Republican National Convention resumed Monday the 18th in Cleveland at 8 p.m. and was much more like a pep rally than the session that occurred earlier in the day, in which Trump's adversaries tried to unbind delegates so that bound delegates didn't have to vote for Trump.

Speaker after speaker elicited positive responses from a crowd who seemed eager to cheer and applaud. Trump's reality star background and entertainment industry connections were highlighted as Will Robertson (from *Duck Dynasty*), Scott Baio, and Antonio Sabato, Jr. spoke to the crowd. The theme of the night was "Make America Safe Again," which is a play on Trump's campaign slogan of "Make America Great Again" but directed specifically at both foreign and domestic security.

After the slew of celebrity speakers warmed up the crowd, things turned serious as the discussion moved to Benghazi. Pat Smith, the mother of a Benghazi victim, spoke to the crowd, giving a very emotional speech that recalled the details of her son's final moments and explained why [she felt that Hillary Clinton was responsible for her son's death](#).

One of the loudest reactions of the night was when Rick Perry introduced the former Navy Seal and lone survivor of a deadly 2005 battle in Afghanistan, [Marcus Luttrell](#). Luttrell did not appear comfortable reading prepared material from a teleprompter and decided to instead speak off the cuff halfway through, which was well received by the crowd.

Next up were the authors of the [book *13 Hours*](#), which was made into a Michael Bay film. [Veterans Mark "Oz" Geist and John "Tig" Tiegen](#) spoke at length about the Benghazi incident. All of the Benghazi-related speeches were peppered with numerous criticisms of Hillary throughout.

The convention then turned toward domestic security, focusing heavily on immigration. The family members of victims of illegal immigrants took to the stage to tell their personal stories to the delegates. After the tugging at the audience's heartstrings, Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions came out to make the intellectual argument for immigration control. A Code Pink protester tried disrupting the event during Session's speech but was quickly escorted out by security, and it appeared that Sessions might not even have been aware of it.

In recent days, Trump had pronounced himself as the "[law and order candidate](#)" after the deadly





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attacks on police in Dallas and Baton Rouge. The next few speakers reiterated that message, and Sheriff David Clarke directly addressed the matter and yelled “[BlueLivesMatter](#)” to the crowd. Rudy Giuliani echoed similar sentiments in one of the more impassioned speeches of the night, which received a standing ovation after Giuliani yelled out that police [officers protect and serve citizens regardless of their race](#).

As the night drew to a close, the lights dimmed and Queen’s song “We Are the Champions” began playing as blue lights panned through the crowd, and then Trump emerged, first appearing as a silhouette on the main stage. The reaction of the crowd was something you’d expect at a rock concert, and Trump seems to have honed his skills in working a live crowd though the numerous rallies he’s been holding across the country. Trump appeared only briefly, though, to introduce his wife and to prime the crowd for his eventual speech, which is planned for Thursday night. Trump’s wife, Melania, came out and delivered a very conventional “wife of the candidate” style speech, which avoided mud-slinging at political opponents and instead spoke in generalities about America being the land of opportunity. Some bloggers later made claims that Melania [plagiarized the speech from Michelle Obama](#)’s 2008 convention speech.

The night definitely peaked with the conclusion of Melania’s speech, and many attendees actually thought she was the finale, but additional speakers were still slated to give speeches.

[Lt. General Michael Flynn](#) came out next and gave a rambling speech, while the crowd began filtering out of the arena. By the time Iowa Senator Joni Ernst gave her speech, [the arena appeared practically empty](#).

The convention continues today at 5:30 p.m. eastern time, with a theme of “Make America Work Again,” which is expected to focus on economic matters.

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