

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks to Participants of the Year Up Center in Arlington, Virginia
June 19, 2009

The President. How is everybody doing today?

Audience members. Good.

The President. Doing good?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. Well, it is good to see you—it is impressive. First of all, I want to thank Gerald for founding this extraordinary program. Give him a big round of applause. And I want to thank Tynesia for running this thing in an extraordinary way. It seems like she's doing a great job. Give her a big round of applause.

So I am just very excited to be here. I just met four of your fellow Year Up participants, and they represented you very well. And they told me a little bit about the program.

I know that so many of you are doing extraordinary things now, but you've had your bumps in the road, and there have been some tough times. And part of the reason we wanted to come here is that Father's Day is coming up, and a lot of young people in America these days are growing up without fathers in the house, and as a consequence, without direction. And I'm somebody who didn't have a father in my house when I was coming up. And what we wanted to do was to highlight the fact that, first of all, there are all kinds of people who succeed despite the obstacles, but also to remind ourselves that there's so much talent out there that is untapped because people don't have pathways to success, and they don't have somebody who is giving them a hand and giving them advice and giving them counsel.

And so, number one, we want to send out a message that our parents—that's the first foundation—and fathers especially need to be involved with their children's lives. So the young men who are here today, I just want you to know that even if your father was not there, you can be there for your child when you have a child—and it's not a bad thing to wait to have a child—*[laughter]*—until you've got your act together.

But the second message was also to say that we as a community can help provide young people with support and direction. And I think that this Year Up program is a terrific example of that.

So I just want to thank all of you for being great model—role models for your peers and for younger people who are coming up; your brothers and sisters, people in the community, they're all watching you. I want to remind you that things are going to get tough at times in your lives, and I don't want anybody here to feel discouraged. Right now the economy is going through a very tough time, which means that the job market is more restrictive, especially for young people entering the market. But the skills that you've obtained and the poise, character that you've been developing is something that will last you a lifetime, and you will be successful as long as you stick with it.

So we're just very proud of you. That's it from me. Now what I want to do is just open it up and have questions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gerald Chertavian, founder and chief executive officer, Year Up; and Tynesia Boyea Robinson, executive director, Year Up, Washington D.C.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Year Up center in Arlington, VA.

Locations: Arlington, VA.

Names: Chertavian, Gerald; Robinson, Tynesia Boyea.

Subjects: Economy, national : Recession, effects; Father's Day; Virginia : President's visits ; Virginia : Year Up center in Arlington.

DCPD Number: DCPD200900485.