

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2011*

**Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Los Angeles, California**

*October 24, 2011*

*The President.* Hello, everybody! Well, it is good to be here tonight. Everybody, please have a seat. Make yourselves comfortable.

Although some of them have already been acknowledged, I just want to say, first of all, thank you to Eva. She is just a powerhouse. I don't know how much—I couldn't say no if she had called me. [*Laughter*] So—and between her and Giselle and all the folks who helped to make this Futuro Fund possible, I am grateful.

To Melanie and Antonio—could not be more gracious hosts—and their beautiful family, thank you so much. We are grateful to you.

We have some great guests. Somebody who—daughter of a Teamster, fighting for working people every single day, and one of my favorite people, just a great member of my Cabinet, Hilda Solis. We are so proud of her. There are two of my majors—two—there are two of my favorite mayors as well: Mayor Villaraigosa and Mayor Castro. They work hard every single day on behalf of their constituents. So we're proud of them. One of the finest Senators we have in the country, Bob Mendendez of New Jersey is here in the house. And a personal hero of mine, Dolores Huerta is here. Where's Dolores at? Where is she? There she is back there. We love her.

Before I came to Los Angeles today, I was in Las Vegas. And I think as many of you know, Las Vegas has been hit as hard as any part of the country as a consequence of a housing bubble that burst. Unemployment is higher than it is any place in the country. There are more homes that are underwater than just about any place in the country.

And we went to announce a new program that we have for refinancing of mortgages, because so many people are having difficulty refinancing, taking advantage of these low rates. Their mortgages are now higher than what the homes are being valued for, and as a consequence, the banks won't refinance. And so we took some executive action to try to get this fixed.

But what was interesting was the setting. We went into this subdivision, and we visited the home of the Bonillas—Jose and Lissette. And their story is a classic American story. Jose had come here 26 years ago as an undocumented worker, and he got a job sweeping floors in a supermarket.

He met Lissette, who was also undocumented and was a housekeeper. And when the amnesty program came, they were able to get legal status here in this country. They had three beautiful children, and for 17 years, they lived in a one-bedroom apartment—all three—the three kids in bunk beds in one room and Jose and Lissette slept in the living room. And that's how they raised their family. But they worked incredibly hard, they saved, eventually each of them got U.S. citizenship, and Jose rose up through the ranks until he was finally a manager at this supermarket. But they still didn't have enough money for a home. And then a program that we had set up that we're now trying to replicate all across the country took homes that were vacant, that had been foreclosed on, and converted them. And so they finally got their first home.

And they invited in the President of the United States, after apologizing to their neighbors for blocking the streets—[laughter]—to their home, and we sat around the dining room table and talked about their life and their experience and what was happening to their friends and neighbors and those who had lost their homes and those whose families had been separated. And at one point in the conversation, Jose says: "Understand our dream is not complete. Our dream will not be complete until my children have all gone to college and they have a home of their own and everybody here in this country understands that they are full-fledged Americans."

Now, what struck me in this conversation was not how unique their story is, but how typical their story is of what built this country, that spirit of being willing to take enormous risks, of coming to a new land, of charting a new course, of starting at the bottom and working your way up, of putting your blood, sweat, and tears into this distant vision for the future. That's what built this country. That's the essence of America; that's its foundation. And when I ran for President, I ran not because of the title, not because of a pursuit of power, but because I so deeply believed in those ideals and those values that helped to propel this country forward and made it a beacon for all the world.

That's what America is. That's why all around the world even today people still think about this country differently than they think about other countries, no matter how critical they may be sometimes, no matter how frustrated they may be. The American ideal, the American creed, is one that animates the entire world. And I ran for President because I want to make sure that this country remains that beacon and remains that ideal. And that the hopes of the Joses and the Lissettes, people all across the country, regardless of their station, regardless of what they look like, regardless of where they come from, that they're going to be able to have that piece of the American Dream.

Now, part of the reason that I ran was because too many people felt that dream slipping away. For a decade, we saw that dream neglected. And so even though some of us were extraordinarily fortunate, those of us at the very top were doing very well, the average family saw their wages flatline, their incomes flatline, even as the cost of everything from a college education to their health care to their groceries to their gas was going up. More and more people felt like they were working harder just to stay in the same place or not to fall behind.

We had a health care system that was broken. We have an energy policy that leaves us subject to the whims of the world oil market. We had a Washington that seemed less and less responsive to those values and ideals that we believe in so deeply. And this was all before the worst economic crisis and the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

And so we came in knowing that those problems hadn't been created overnight; they weren't going to be solved overnight. But what we were determined to do was to start realigning Washington to our best selves, not our worst, to start pushing to make sure that folks' voices were heard and that we went back to a system in which everybody has a fair shake, everybody gets a shot, that if they're willing to try they can make it in this country, and where we ask a fair share from everybody. And that's what we've been working on over the last 3 years. And it hasn't always been easy; the other side has been fighting us every step of the way.

But despite that, we brought about change. Despite that, we got health care passed, and 30 million Americans are going to have health care in this country. And a million young people already have health care now that didn't have it before. Despite the resistance, we were able to not only prevent this country from going into a great depression and stabilized the financial system, but were also able to pass financial reform so that we never have the same kinds of

irresponsibility on Wall Street again. And we have consumers protected, and people, including in places right here in this city, are protected from unscrupulous mortgage brokers and from credit card companies that are charging hidden fees and taking advantage of families.

Despite the resistance, we were able to make sure that anybody can serve this country that they love—put an end to "don't ask, don't tell." Despite their resistance, we were able to bring about an end to a war and start bringing our troops home. Despite that resistance, we were able to stop sending \$60 billion to banks for the student loan program and start sending that \$60 billion to students and expand the Pell grant programs and expand access to college.

And all this has made a incredible difference to people all across the country. And that's before you even get into the amazing work that the Cabinet has done, of people like Hilda Solis making sure that workers are treated fairly and not exploited by their employers and, working in concert with people like Bob Menendez, making progress across a whole range of issues.

So we've seen change. We know what it looks like. We know what it takes. But we've got so much more work to do. And I keep a checklist in my desk, and I kind of see, all right, I made a bunch of these promises during the campaign—[laughter]—and let me see, yes, I got that done—[laughter]—and that one, yes. No, that one's not done yet. [Laughter]

So we've got about 60 percent done in 3 years but—so I'm pretty confident we can get the other 40 percent done in the next 5 years. But to do that, I'm going to need your help. To do that, I am going to need your help because this campaign, this Presidency, was never about me. It was about you. It was about the commitments you made to each other. It was about giving voice to the aspirations and the hopes and the dreams of your friends and your neighbors and your family. It's about folks in this room, all of whom have been incredibly successful, remembering that we're successful because somebody allowed us to be successful, because our parents worked hard.

Just meeting Eva's parents, from San Antonio, and I thought how proud they must be, but also the sacrifices they made, remembering that the history of this country is—is that we have always have had to make investments in the future, in our kids, in our grandkids. And those are commitments that you made to each other when you signed on to this campaign those 3 or 4 years ago.

So we've got more work to do, because the economy is still hurting right now. I've been spending the last month trying to get Congress to do something about jobs in this country. We've put together a jobs proposal that contains the best Democratic and Republican ideas. Historically, these are things that both sides support: putting construction workers back to work rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our hospitals so we've got the best infrastructure in the world; rebuilding our schools. We've got kids in trailers all across the country. They've got science labs that were built in the 1960s. What are we doing? We're in the 21st century. Put those folks back to work. Put teachers back in the classroom. We can't be laying off teachers. We've got to be hiring teachers right now so our kids are doing better than any other kids around the world in terms of math and science and technology.

Giving tax breaks to small businesses so they can excel and hire more people, giving them tax breaks for hiring our veterans—we ask these incredible men and women in uniform to put the pause button on their careers, to leave their families, to put themselves at risk. They shouldn't have to fight for a job when they come home. We should be doing everything we can to put them back to work right now. And yet 100 percent of Republican Senators so far have

said no. Maybe it's just because I proposed it—[laughter]—because the American people support it, it's paid for, economists say it would create almost 2 million jobs.

So that's what we're up against. We're going to have to fight for jobs. We're going to have to fight to have the kind of energy policy that makes sure that we're freeing ourselves from dependence on foreign oil. We are going to have to fight to make sure that we're continuing to improve our schools all across the country. And yes, we are going to have to fight to make sure that immigration reform is a reality in this country.

I want to make a special point about this, because Giselle, she—[laughter]—she's opinionated, so she comes up to me and—before we come out—and she's like, "Barack, we got to"—I won't tell exactly what she said, because there's still press here, and it would have to be edited out. [Laughter]

*Audience member.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* She said, "That's true." She said, "Yes, that's true." [Laughter]

But I want to be clear. I believe this is a nation of laws, and this is a nation of immigrants. And those two things don't contradict each other. We have a system that is broken, and we are doing everything we can administratively to try to lessen the pain and the hardship that it's causing, yes, to make sure our borders are secure, but also to say that families like the Bonillas, who are here, they are building this country. They are making it better. They are making it stronger. And we've got to give them opportunities.

And it makes no sense—it makes no sense for us, at a time when we're competing with talent all around the world, to have kids here who are excelling in school, who want to go to universities, who want to get an engineering degree or get a business degree and start some enterprise that could end up growing into the next Apple and the next Google, and we want to send them away? These American kids, these kids who grew up alongside our children? It makes no sense.

But again, I'm going to need your help, because we're not going to be able to get this done by ourselves. We're going to have to mobilize and we're going to have to organize and we've got to tap into those best instincts of the American people in order to make it happen. But we're going to get it done. We are going to get it done. Have no doubt that we're going to get it done.

But here's my final point. In order to get it done, we've got to have the same determination, the same focus, the same hard-headedness, the same passion that that family I saw in Las Vegas today has, the same determination that our parents and our grandparents or great-grandparents had. We've been through tougher times before in this country. We've been through slavery and Jim Crow and a Civil War and two World Wars and a Great Depression. And there have been times where most of the folks in this room wouldn't have had opportunity of the sort we have today. We've been through tougher times.

But somewhere along the way, somebody said it doesn't have to be like that. We can imagine something better. We are determined to create a better future. That's what the Futuro Fund is all about. And that's what this campaign has always been about. This campaign has never been about glitz and glory or just the blind pursuit of power. That's not why we got involved. That's not why you guys signed up back in 2007, 2008. You supported a candidate named Barack Hussein Obama. The odds were not in your favor. The odds were not in your favor.

You knew it wasn't going to be easy. *[Laughter]* If you thought it was going to be easy, you would have signed up for somebody else. You knew it wasn't going to be easy, but you also knew that if we pulled it off, it would be worth it. And so I was joking with some folks—well, not joking, really—I'm a lot grayer now than I was then. *[Laughter]* And these President years are dog years. *[Laughter]* And so there's not the same excitement. It's not quite as cool as it was. Nobody—folks, I don't know if you guys still have those "Hope" posters; they're all kind of—all kind of dog-eared.

But here's the message I want to deliver to you today—is, don't get weary. *[Laughter]* Don't get tired. Because I'm not tired. I may be gray, but I'm not tired. My passion is still there. My commitment is still there. My vision for this country is still there. And if you're still there, then we're going to win this election and we are going to create the kind of America that our children and our grandchildren deserve.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:27 p.m. at the residence of Antonio Banderas and Melanie Griffith. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Eva Longoria Parker and her parents, Enrique Longoria, Jr., and Ella E. Mireles; Giselle Fernandez, chair, National Latino Gala; Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa of Los Angeles, CA; Mayor Julian Castro of San Antonio, TX; and Dolores C. Huerta, cofounder, United Farm Workers of America. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 25. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraisers :: Los Angeles, CA.

*Locations:* Los Angeles, CA.

*Names:* Banderas, Antonio; Bonilla, Franco; Bonilla, Jose; Bonilla, Lissette; Bonilla, Margarita; Bonilla, Mario; Castro, Julian; Fernandez, Giselle; Griffith, Melanie; Huerta, Dolores C.; Longoria Parker, Eva; Longoria, Enrique, Jr.; Menendez, Robert; Mireles, Ella E.; Solis, Hilda L.; Villaraigos, Antonio R.

*Subjects:* Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Business and industry : Small businesses :: Hiring incentives; California : Democratic Party event; California : President's visit; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Credit markets, stabilization efforts; Economy, national : Financial regulations, modernization efforts; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : School improvement and renovation; Education : Teachers; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : National energy policy; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Housing : Mortgage refinancing regulations; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Labor, Department of : Secretary; Nevada : Housing, decline; Nevada : Unemployment rate; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Veterans : Hiring incentives.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201100789.