

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Los Angeles, California

February 15, 2012

Hello, L.A.! Oh, it is good to be in L.A., although you guys are not used to this kind of weather, are you? You're all cold. This is balmy, people. I'm trying to let you know. *[Laughter]*

A few folks I just want to acknowledge. First of all, to Colleen and Brad and the entire Bell family, thank you for making this incredible night possible. We're so grateful to them. What about the Foo Fighters? Love the Foo Fighters. They were tired of winning so many awards, so they said, let's do something else tonight. *[Laughter]* We are so grateful to them. Jack Black, one of my favorites; Rashida Jones—we love Rashida; the mayor of Los Angeles, Antonio Villaraigosa, who was announced tonight as the permanent chair of the 2012 Democratic National Convention. And our host and cochair in Charlotte, North Carolina, Mayor Anthony Foxx of Charlotte is here. So we are grateful to him.

Now, some of you are back for a return engagement because you were around in 2008. A few of you guys in the front row, you were only 1-year-old so you may not remember this. *[Laughter]* But sometimes I have occasion to think back to the 2008 campaign, and I think about that magical night in Grant Park—when it was actually 60 degrees in November, which does not happen in Chicago very often—and I remind people of what I said that night. I said change is never easy. Change doesn't happen overnight. Change is hard, especially when you're dealing with challenges that have been building up over decades. But if everyone maintains their determination, their sense of purpose, the bonds that we have with each other as Americans, then there's no challenge we can't overcome.

Now it's hard to remember that because those were such heady days, those last few days of the campaign. Some of you had gotten involved in the campaign very early, before anybody could pronounce my name. *[Laughter]* Right here. And obviously, you didn't do it because it was a sure thing because, let's face it, the odds of Barack Obama—Barack Hussein Obama—becoming President were not high. *[Laughter]*

The reason you got involved, and the reason you were a constant source of inspiration to me, was because you recognized that the America that you grew up in, your idea of America wasn't matching up to what was happening all across the country; that the idea that if you work hard, if you are responsible, if you're looking after your family, if you're doing your very best, that somehow you can live out that American Dream and get ahead and support your family and have health care that protects your family if something goes wrong and you're able to retire with dignity and respect and watch your kids exceed your greatest dreams by going to college and doing great things; that too many folks felt that that dream had been betrayed. And this was before this extraordinary financial crisis that we ended up having in 2007 and 2008.

People were already feeling that there was a mismatch between our idea of what America should be and what was happening around the country. That's what you were fighting for. That's what this campaign was about. It was not about me. It was about you and the commitments you make to each other, to your families and your children, your grandchildren, your neighbors and your coworkers and your friends and your fellow citizens.

And because of the incredible work that you did, we began to transform the country. We knew it was going to be a long journey. We didn't know maybe how steep it was going to be. We didn't realize in 2008 the nature of the crisis, how profound it was going to be. Four million jobs lost before I even took office; 4 million jobs lost in the 6 months after I took office before any of our economic policies had a chance to take effect. The worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, all across the country, people struggling to find a job, seeing their home values deteriorate. We did not fully comprehend at that point how deep this crisis would be.

But because of you, because of your commitment, because of your determination and your vision, we began to see change happening all across the country. And when you think about change that we can believe in, as hard as these last 3 years have been, don't underestimate the changes we've made.

The month I took office, we were losing 750,000 jobs every month; last month we created 250,000 jobs. We've now created 3.7 million jobs all across the country over the last 23 months. We've seen more manufacturing jobs created than any time since the 1990s. An auto industry is saved, and GM is the number-one automaker in the world again.

So slowly, steadily, as difficult as it's been, we've started to see the economy rebound and recover. We've started to see people who were starting to lose hope see once again the possibilities in their lives.

But that's not all that we did. You know, I was talking to a young person who told me that they had been diagnosed with cancer—they had written me a letter, actually. And fortunately, the diagnosis was one where the prospects are good. But she told me that she wouldn't even have gone to a doctor had it not been for the fact that we passed something that had eluded Presidents for a century, the idea that everybody in America deserves health care. Nobody should be left out. And because of those changes, already 2.6 million young people have health care that they wouldn't otherwise have. And because she had health care, including preventive care, she was able to get a checkup and this cancer was diagnosed early and her prospects are good.

And she said, "This wouldn't have happened had it not been for what you did." And what I have to tell you today is that's something you did. There are people whose lives have been saved because of the work that you did in 2008.

I was at a Marine base in Hawaii—my hometown. And we were working out. And you don't want to really work out with marines because they're all in really good shape and they make you feel bad about yourself. [*Laughter*] But during the course of the 10 days that I was there, at least 3 times a marine would come up and say, "Mr. President, thank you for passing laws rescinding 'don't ask, don't tell,' because I am proud to serve my country, and I didn't think it was ever going to happen. And to see that happen makes all the difference in my life."

And you know what I told them? I said, don't thank me, thank all the people who worked in 2008 to make this campaign a reality. That's what you did, because of your commitment.

The first bill I signed into law, the Lilly Ledbetter Act, that says a very simple principle: There's got to be equal pay for equal work, and I don't want my daughters being treated [differently]* than anybody else's sons when it comes to how they're treated on the job. That happened because of you. That's what change means.

* White House correction.

Making sure that young people all across America have a little bit of a better shot going to college. We took \$60 billion that was going to banks, subsidizing banks through the student loan program, and we said let's give that money directly to students. And there are millions more students now who are able to go to college and accrue less debt because of you, because of what you did.

And then I was down in North Carolina and talking to some troops—the last troops to come home from Iraq—a war that I said we would end, and it is now over. And seeing them greet their families and hug their loved ones, I thought back to the campaign and all the volunteers who had knocked on doors and made phone calls. That was what you did. That's what you did.

So the point is, is that as tough as things are, the changes we've made are remarkable, and they're making a difference in the lives of people every single day. And that should be a source of satisfaction, but it can't be a source of complacency, because we're not done. We've got so much more work to do.

All the challenges that existed before the crisis are still there. We've still got a middle class that's struggling. We still have a make-or-break moment for folks who are in the middle class or trying to get in the middle class, who want to live out that American Dream.

And that's why at the most recent State of the Union I laid out a vision for where we need to go, and it means that we're once again making things in America—not just buying things in America, but we are building cars and creating new products and new services, and we're selling them all over the world.

It means American manufacturing resurging. It means American sources of energy—and not just the old energy, but the new energy—solar energy and wind energy and biodiesel that can not only free ourselves from dependence on foreign oil, but also help save a planet.

We've got more work to do. Making sure that every single one of our young people have the skills that they need to compete in the 21st century. We still have schools where half the kids are dropping out. And despite the amazing changes that we've been able to make and the reforms we've been able to push, we got to follow through, we've got to finish up.

And we've got to make sure that health care gets implemented, because there are folks who want to roll it back. And we've got to make sure that the Wall Street reform process that we put into place to make sure that never again do we have those kinds of bailouts and the kind of recklessness that almost brought this economy to its knees, we've got to make sure that those who are trying to roll it back do not succeed at rolling it back.

We've got more work to do so that America once again is a place where everybody has a fair shot, everybody does their fair share, and everybody is playing by the same set of rules. That's our vision.

And the other side has a fundamentally different vision of America. Their view is that everybody is on their own. If you don't have health care, tough luck, you're on your own. If you were born into poverty, pull yourself up by your bootstraps, you're on your own. They've got a different vision that basically says, let's go back to the old policies where a few do really well and everybody else struggles just to get by. And they're explicit about it. This is not me putting spin on the ball. *[Laughter]* They've been very clear about what their agenda is.

And so we're going to have to push back. We're going to have to preserve the changes we've made, and we've got to keep on driving. We've got to make sure that our schools are

number one. We've got to make sure that college is affordable. We've got to make sure health care is implemented. We've got to have immigration reform, because we are a nation of laws and we are a nation of immigrants.

On the foreign policy front, we've got to make sure that now that we've ended the war in Iraq responsibly, we've got to make sure that we're transitioning in Afghanistan responsibly and start bringing our troops home there.

One of the proudest things of my 3 years in office is helping to restore a sense of respect for America around the world, a belief that we are not just defined by the size of our military, despite the incredible feats of our military and the incredible sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, but we're also defined by our values and our respect for rule of law and our willingness to help countries in need. We've got to preserve that, and we've got to build on that.

So we've got enormous work to do. And the main message I've got for you tonight is it's not going to be easier this time, it's going to be harder this time. We're not going to have to just have as much energy as we did last time, we've got to have more energy than we did last time. It's not going to be enough for us to just sit back and say, look at all the great things we've done, because people out there are hurting and they need us to do more.

So I'm going to need you. You are going to have to carry this thing the same way that you did in 2008. And part of what's going to make it more difficult—I'll be honest with you—is look, I'm older now. I'm gray. *[Laughter]* I've been a little dinged up. It's not quite as cool to be on the Obama bandwagon. Back in 2008, it was the new thing. *[Laughter]* Everybody had their poster, and you'd be talking to your coworkers, "Oh, have you heard about Obama? Yeah! Oh, no, you haven't? Let me tell you about him." *[Laughter]* Now, everybody can pronounce my name. They don't always say it nicely, but—*[laughter]*.

But that determination, the values that got us this far, are undiminished. I believe even more in the possibility of change now than I did when I first got into office, not only because we've made those changes, but also because as President, I have a chance to travel all across the country and meet people of every walk of life: Black, White, Latino, Asian, gay, straight, rich, poor, north, south, east, west. And what's remarkable to me is, as hard as these last 3 years have been, that core decency, that sense that we can overcome whatever challenges are ahead of us, that we are still a nation full of possibility, that we still have the best workers on Earth, and we have the best universities on Earth, and we've got the best entrepreneurs on Earth and we've got a democracy that, as flawed and as frustrating as it can be sometimes, still gives everybody a chance to make their voices heard, and we work things out. As bitter and tough as they seem sometimes, we work it out, and we end up on the other side stronger and more unified than we were before. That's what gives me confidence. That's what inspires me. You inspire me.

And so if you are ready for one more round, if you are ready for one more fight, if, despite all the naysayers and all the cynicism and all the tough times we've been through, you're staying—still saying to yourself "yes we can," you're still saying to yourself there's change out there I can believe in, and if you're willing not just to talk the talk, but walk the walk and knock on doors and make phone calls and send out e-mails and tweet and do whatever it is that you do to mobilize your neighborhoods and your friends and your coworkers and your family. And if we get folks out to vote, I promise you there is nothing that can stop the United States of America. And we will remind them just why it is that this is the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:31 p.m. at the residence of Bradley and Colleen Bell. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers the Foo Fighters, Thomas J. "Jack" Black, and Rashida L. Jones. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 16. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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Locations: Los Angeles, CA.

Names: Bell, Bradley; Bell, Colleen; Black, Thomas J. "Jack"; Foxx, Anthony R.; Grohl, David E.; Hawkins, O. Taylor; Jones, Rashida L.; Mendel, Nathan G.; Ruthenberg, Georg "Pat Smear"; Shiflett, Christopher A.; Villaraigosa, Antonio R.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Improvement; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Improvement; California : Democratic Party events; California : President's visit; Civil rights : Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009; Civil rights : Wage equality; Economy, national : Financial regulations, strengthening efforts; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Income inequality, increase; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability ; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : Standards and school accountability; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Energy : National energy policy; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; Health and medical care : Health insurance reform; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment.

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