

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2012*

## **Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Oakland, California**

*July 23, 2012*

*The President.* Hello, Oakland! Thank you so much, Oakland. Thank you. Okay, good night. Thank you. [*Laughter*] See——

*Audience member.* We love you, President Obama!

*The President.* I love you back. Thank you. You know, I might want to just stop here. [*Laughter*] What a nice reception. Thank you so much. It is great to be in Oakland, California. Wonderful to be at the Fox Theater.

There are a couple of people I want to acknowledge. First of all, one of the finest Members of Congress we've got, your own Barbara Lee is in the house. Another outstanding member of the California delegation, Pete Stark is here. Your own mayor, Jean Quan, is here. Ledisi is in the house. And Nnamdi Asomugha—now, I know he plays for the Eagles, but he's from around here, so you've got to give him a big round of applause.

Well, Oakland, this is my last political campaign. It is. No, it's—I promise you—I'm term limited after this. [*Laughter*] And because this is my last political campaign, it's had me thinking these days. You get a little nostalgic, and you start thinking about your first political campaigns, when I was running as a State senator in Illinois and had to xerox my own flyers, go to Kinko's. [*Laughter*] And then Michelle and I would go out, and we'd be knocking on doors on a Saturday morning. And then, when I ran for the United States Senate, I'd drive all across Illinois, which isn't quite as big as California, but is a big State. And you didn't have GPS back then, and I didn't have Marine One—[*laughter*]—so I'd be driving myself. Sometimes I'd have a staffer who would make me make phone calls while I was driving and, which was—you're not supposed to do anymore, but—[*laughter*]. And since I didn't have GPS, we'd have those maps that you actually had to fold. Young people wouldn't understand this, but you'd have to fold them and then fold them back again. [*Laughter*] And I'd get lost, and, then once I got to the event, I'd have to park the car myself. And sometimes I couldn't find a parking spot, and so I'd end up being late, and if it was raining, I'd have to fumble with my umbrella, and I'd come in kind of drenched.

But I have such good memories about those campaigns because what inspired me wherever I went—I'd be in inner cities or rural communities; you'd see folks from every walk of life: rich, poor, urban, suburban, Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, you name it—wherever we went, there would be a common thread to people's stories.

So I'd meet an elderly veteran, and he'd remind me of my grandfather who fought in World War II. He was a man who grew up during the Depression and served his country and, when he came home, was rewarded with a chance to go to college on the GI bill. And I think about my grandmother, who while my grandfather was gone, already had my mom—was a baby—and was Rosie the Riveter; she worked on a bomber assembly line. And when they married, after my grandfather came back, they were able to get a home with the help of an FHA loan.

And if I met a working couple, I think about Michelle's parents, especially her dad, who almost never missed a day of work at the water filtration plant where he worked—a blue-collar job—even though he had MS. So he needed two canes to walk, and he had to wake up an hour

earlier than everybody else just to punch in on time. But he wouldn't miss work. And Michelle's mom worked as a secretary. But even though they didn't have a lot, they were able to support a family, and Michelle and her brother ended up getting a great education and would be able to go as far as their dreams would take them.

And then I'd meet a single mom somewhere, and I'd think about my own mom, who raised my sister and me, with the help of my grandparents, because my dad left when I was a baby. And my mom didn't have a lot of money, but she worked hard. And she went to school at the same time as she worked, all so that she could give her two kids the best education possible.

And so the people that I'd meet in these campaigns, these early campaigns of mine, and what I've experienced ever since as I've traveled around the country, is that as different as those folks seemed on the surface—despite having all these different backgrounds, despite the fact that some were Republicans and some were Democrats and some were Independents—all of them shared this belief that's at the core of the American experience that binds us together, the idea that no matter who you are, no matter where you come from, no matter what you look like, this place, America, is a place where you can make it if you try.

This is a place where hard work allows you to achieve your dreams. We don't expect handouts as Americans, but we do expect hard work to pay off. We expect responsibility to be rewarded. We believe that if you put in enough effort, you should be able to find a job that pays the bills and supports a family. You should be able to buy your own home and count on health care if you get sick and retire with dignity and respect, and most of all, that you should be able to give your children an education that gives them an even better shot than you had.

And we're here today for the same reason that so many of us came together in 2008, because this basic bargain, this core American Dream, is at risk. And it's been at risk like never before. For more than a decade before I was sworn in, it had been slipping away from too many hard-working people. Jobs in factories were shipped overseas. Folks at the top were doing better than ever, but middle class families saw their paychecks get smaller, saw their bills—their bills get bigger. And in Washington, trillions were spent on two wars and two tax cuts that took us from record surpluses to record deficits, while on Wall Street a culture of anything goes led to the worst financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Ever since I first ran for this office, I've said that it will take more than one year or one term or even one President to restore the dream that this country built. And obviously, the crisis that we went through made it that much harder. But for those cynics who say that our best days are behind us, they haven't witnessed the everyday courage and the character of the American people. They have not met the small-business owners in Minnesota who chose to sacrifice some of their own perks and pay just to avoid laying off a single worker during the recession. They haven't met those folks in the auto plants in Michigan and Ohio that were never supposed to build another car again, but now they can't build them fast enough.

They haven't talked to the factory workers that I meet in North Carolina or Ohio, in their fifties sometimes, decided that when one industry left town, they'd go back to school. One woman I met, she started going back to community college to study biotech. She was in her mid-fifties. So she's sitting there with all these kids. And I talked to her about why she decided to go back to school. She said, not only do I expect that this will help me get a job, but also because, she said, I want to make sure that my kids know never to give up on their dreams.

So, Oakland, there are no quick fixes, there are no easy solutions to some of the challenges we face, but there is no doubt that we have the capacity to meet them. We've got the world's best workers, the world's best entrepreneurs. We've got the best scientists. We've got the best researchers. We've got the best colleges and universities.

We are a young nation, and we've got the greatest diversity of talent and ingenuity that comes from every corner of the globe; you can see it here in Oakland. No matter what the naysayers tell us, there is not a country on this Earth that wouldn't trade places with the United States of America.

So I continue to feel as optimistic, as hopeful about the capacity for us to institute meaningful change, as I ever have been. What's standing in our way right now despite all the progress we've made—despite the health care bill that we passed, despite Wall Street reform, despite saving the auto industry—despite all that, what's holding us back right now is not the lack of big ideas, it's what's going on in Washington: this uncompromising view that the only path forward is to go back to the same top-down economics that got us into this mess in the first place.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* My opponent's entire plan, his whole plan for economic renewal, is more tax cuts for the wealthy.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* More regulation—eliminating regulations for banks and corporations that we put in place after the crisis.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Cutting more investments in things like education and research.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* And somehow this is supposed to create jobs and prosperity for everybody. That's what Mitt Romney believes. That's what his allies in Washington believe.

But here's the problem: We tried that, and it didn't work. It's not what you believe, it's not what I believe, it's not what most Americans believe will actually make a difference. This country was not built from the top down, it was built from the middle class out, from the bottom up. That's how we became the most prosperous nation in the history of the world. That's the path that you can choose for America in this election. And that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* So we've got two contrasting visions for where we want to take the country. And frankly, the other side knows they can't sell their ideas, so what they're going to do is try to distort my vision. Earlier today Governor Romney was at it again, knowingly twisting my words around to suggest that I don't value small businesses.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Now, look, in politics, we all tolerate a certain amount of spin. I understand these are the games that get played in political campaigns, although when folks just, like, omit entire sentences of what you said—[laughter]—they start kind of splicing and dicing, you may have gone a little over the edge there.

But look, there's actually a real choice at stake here. I believe with all my heart that it is the drive and the ingenuity of Americans who start businesses that lead to their success. I always have, and I always will. The ability for somebody who's willing to work hard, put in their sweat and their sacrifice to turn their idea into a profitable business, that's the nature of America. That's what helped make our economy the envy of the world.

I've always said don't bet against American workers, don't bet against American ingenuity. And I believe that the free market is the greatest source of prosperity in our history. But I also believe that if you talk to any business owner, they'll tell you that what also helps them succeed, alongside all their hard work, all their great ideas, is the ability to hire workers with the right skills and education. What helps them succeed is the ability to ship and sell their products on new roads and bridges and ports and wireless networks. What helps them succeed is having access to cutting-edge technology, which, like the Internet, often starts with publicly funded research and development. And what helps them succeed is a strong and growing middle class who can buy the products that they're selling. Every business needs customers.

Now, for two centuries, we've made these investments, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans who understand what it takes to give our people and our businesses the best possible chance at success. But my opponent disagrees. Mr. Romney's plan is to gut these investments, just so that he can give more tax breaks to millionaires and companies that are shipping jobs overseas. He thinks that's the best way to grow the economy.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* He thinks that's the best way to help small businesses. And I've got to tell you, Oakland, he is dead wrong. We did not build this country from the top down. We built this country together, individual entrepreneurs taking advantage of opportunities and putting their sweat and tears into it and all of us making investments in things like public schools and public colleges and universities, the Hoover Dam and the Golden Gate Bridge. That's how we sent a man to the Moon. That's how we saw medical breakthroughs that saved millions of lives.

If Mr. Romney does not understand that, then he doesn't understand what it takes to build an economy where everybody has a shot to succeed: from the worker who punches a clock to the entrepreneur who wants to take a chance on a new idea.

There's only one way to grow our economy for the long run. That's what we're fighting for. That is what this election is about. That's why I'm running for a second term as President.

I'm running because I believe you can't reduce the deficit—which is a serious problem, we've got to deal with it—but we can't reduce it without asking folks like me, who have been incredibly blessed, to give up the tax cuts that we've been getting for a decade. I'll cut out Government spending that's not working, that we can't afford, but I'm also going to ask anybody making over \$250,000 a year, to go back to the tax rates they were paying under Bill Clinton, back when our economy created 23 million new jobs, the biggest budget surplus in history, and everybody did well.

Just like we've tried their plan, we've tried our plan. And it worked. That's the difference. That's the choice in this election. That's why I'm running for a second term.

When the American auto industry was on the brink of collapse, more than 1 million jobs were on the line, Governor Romney said, we should just let Detroit go bankrupt.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* I refused to turn my back on a great industry and American workers. I bet on American workers. I bet on American manufacturing. Three years later, the American auto industry has come roaring back. And what happens in the auto industry can happen in other industries.

I want to invest in advanced manufacturing, high-tech manufacturing jobs. I want to make sure they don't take root in China and Germany; I want to make sure they take root right here in Oakland and Cleveland and Raleigh and Richmond.

And Governor Romney, his main calling card in this election is, I've got private sector experience. Well, you know what, his experience has been investing in companies that were called "pioneers" in the business of outsourcing. He wants to keep giving tax breaks to companies that are shipping jobs overseas. I'm a big proponent of insourcing. I want to end these tax breaks and start rewarding companies that create jobs right here in Oakland, right here in the United States, making products that we sell around the world, stamped with three proud words: Made in America. That's what I believe. That's why I'm running for a second term.

I'm running because after a decade of war, it's time to do some nation-building here at home. Because of the courage and the selflessness of our men and women in uniform, America is safer and more respected than before. Because of their sacrifices, we've been able to end the war in Iraq, as I promised to do. We've been able to refocus our efforts on those who actually carried out the 9/11 attacks and gone after Al Qaida and bin Laden. We have set a timetable to transition out of Afghanistan and are bringing our troops home.

And now, as we wind down a decade of war, I want to make sure that this is a country where we care for our veterans and serve our veterans as well as they've served us, because they haven't—they shouldn't have to fight for a job or a roof over their heads, when they've been fighting for us.

Building our economy is part of our national security. So my plan would take about half of the money that we're no longer spending on war, let's use it to put people back to work: rebuilding our roads, our runways, our ports, laying broadband lines into rural communities, updating our wireless networks. Let's create a veterans jobs corps so we can put our returning heroes back to work as cops and firefighters in communities that need them most. That's the America we want to build. That's the choice in this election.

I'm running to make sure America once again leads the world in educating our kids and training our workers. I want to help our schools hire and reward the best teachers, especially in math and science. I want to give 2 million more Americans the opportunity to go to community colleges and learn the skills that local businesses are hiring for right now. I want to get colleges and universities to bring down the cost of tuition, because a higher education is no longer a luxury, it is an economic necessity in the 21st century. That's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

Across the board in this election, there's a choice. Housing is still a problem all across the country. Mr. Romney's plan is to let foreclosures hit bottom. That's not a solution; that's part of the problem. So my administration has already helped more than a million responsible homeowners refinance their mortgages. I want to give every homeowner the chance to save \$3,000 a year, take advantage of historically low rates. That's an example of the difference in this election.

I continue to believe that nobody in America should go broke just because they get sick. We fought to get health care passed. It was the right thing to do. The Supreme Court has spoken, and we are going forward. And for all the misinformation out there, let me just make this plain. If you've got health insurance, the only thing that you're going to get out of this is a lot more security dealing with your insurance company, because they won't be able to mess around with you just because of some fine print: impose lifetime limits; suddenly, your health care is not there when you need it most. You will have security if you already have health insurance.

Young people will be able to stay on their parent's plans till they're 26 years old. Women won't be getting charged more than men, and you'll be getting free preventive care. Seniors will see the cost of their prescription drugs go down. If you don't have health insurance, we're going to help you get it. It's the right thing to do.

And look, that's not the only difference that we're going to have in this campaign. Now is not the time to refight the same political battles we've had over the past 4 years. It was important to get Wall Street reform in place, to make sure that consumers aren't being taken advantage of by unscrupulous mortgage brokers or payday lenders. The other side wants to roll it back. We're not going backwards, we're going forwards.

Ending "don't ask, don't tell" was the right thing to do. We're not going back, we're going forward. Making sure that women control their own health care choices is the right thing to do. We're not going back, we're going forward. Expanding Pell grants for young people, right thing to do. We're not going back, we're going forward, Oakland.

All these things—whether it's making sure every child gets a great education, making sure that we're investing in our infrastructure, making sure that we're attracting advanced manufacturing, making sure that health care is secure, making sure everybody is treated fairly and not discriminated against, making sure that our veterans are getting the benefits that they've earned—all these things tie together. They're all part of a vision that says you can make it if you try. They're all central to the idea that made this country great: that if you work hard, you can get ahead. It's the same promise our parents and our grandparents passed down to us. It's the promise we've got to pass on to our kids and our grandkids.

Now, over the course of the next 4 months, the other side will spend more money than we have ever seen on ads that basically tell you the same thing you've been hearing from them for months. Like I said, they don't really have an economic plan. They know their economic theory is not going to sell. So really what their ads all boil down to is: The economy is not where it should be, and it's Obama's fault. It's very simple, easy to summarize. You will continue to see a variation on this theme. [*Laughter*]

And I guess it may be a plan to try to win an election, but it's not a plan to create jobs. It's not a plan to revitalize the economy. It's not a plan to rebuild our middle class.

And you know, the nice thing is, as I see all of you here tonight, it reminds that we've been outspent before. We've been counted out more times than I can remember. But through every one of my campaigns, what's always given me hope is you: your ability to cut through the nonsense, your ability to focus on what's important.

When Americans come together and they focus on what's true and they focus on what's right and they think about what's best in the story of their own families—all the struggles their parents and grandparents went through, some coming here as immigrants, some coming here through no choice of their own, some working in mills or factories, some working out on farms,

folks coming here and not knowing what to expect, but understanding there was something special about America, knowing that here there was embedded in the very charters of this country the idea that everybody had certain inalienable rights, endowed by their Creator, life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the idea that we're free to pursue our own individual dreams, and yet, even as we express this incredible self-reliance, this rugged individualism, that we can also come together as one American family, as a more perfect Union.

Our parents, our grandparents, our great-grandparents, what they were fighting for, they knew that the middle class, it wasn't about a certain amount of money in your bank account, it was about knowing that you work hard and you could succeed and you could have some security and your kids could leapfrog over you, do things you couldn't imagine. And that there would be times where we stumbled and had setbacks, but in America, you got a second chance and a third chance, as long as you just didn't give up, you kept on going.

When we tap that spirit, when we tap into that idea that it's not a matter of bloodlines, it's not a matter of everybody being of the same race or the same faith, but it has to do with a creed that binds us together, when we focus on that, then all this other money doesn't matter. All those negative ads don't matter. What matters is you. When you come together, change happens. When you come together, you inspire me.

I told you in 2008, I wasn't a perfect man and I wouldn't be a perfect President. But I also said that I'd always tell you what I thought, I'd always tell you where I stood, and most importantly, I would wake up every single day fighting as hard as I knew how, to make your lives a little bit better, because I saw myself in you. In your grandparents, I saw my grandparents. In your kids, I saw Malia, and I saw Sasha. In your story, I saw my own. And, Oakland, I've kept that promise.

Every day that I've had the privilege of having this office, I have been thinking about you and fighting as hard as I knew how to make sure that your hard work pays off.

And now I'm asking you for your help. Now I'm asking you for your vote. Now I'm asking you to knock on doors and make phone calls and do all the things that we did in 2008. And if you're willing to stand with me and fight with me, then I promise you, we will finish what we started. And we will grow this economy and build the middle class and remind the world just why it is that the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:55 p.m. at the Fox Theater. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Ledisi A. Young; Nnamdi Asomugha, defensive back, National Football League's Philadelphia Eagles; and Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson, his brother-in-law Craig M. Robinson, and his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies :: Oakland, CA.

*Locations:* Oakland, CA.

*Names:* Asomugha, Nnamdi; Clinton, William J.; Lee, Barbara J.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Quan, Jean; Robinson, Craig M.; Robinson, Marian; Romney, W. Mitt; Soetoro-Ng, Maya; Stark, Fortney H. "Pete"; Young, Ledisi A.

*Subjects:* Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Strengthening efforts; California : Democratic Party events; California : President's visits; Communications : Broadband technology; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Financial regulations, strengthening efforts; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Pell grants; Health and medical care : Contraception and family planning; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Housing : Mortgage refinancing programs; Iraq : U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Funding.

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