

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner

April 27, 2013

White House Correspondents' Association President Ed Henry. And without further ado, I'd like to introduce the President of the United States.

[At this point "Hail to the Chief" began to play. The music then changed to "All I Do Is Win" by rap artist DJ Khaled.]

The President. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. *[Laughter]* How do you like my new entrance music? Rush Limbaugh warned you about this. Second term, baby. *[Laughter]* We're changing things around here a little bit. *[Laughter]*

Actually, my advisers were a little worried about the new rap entrance music. *[Laughter]* They are a little more traditional. They suggested that I should start with some jokes at my own expense, just take myself down a peg. I was like, guys, after 4½ years, how many pegs are there left? *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the White House correspondents. Ed, you're doing an outstanding job. We are grateful for—the great work you've done. To all the dignitaries who are here, everybody on the dais—I especially want to say thank you to Ray Odierno, who does outstanding service on behalf of our country, and all our men and women in uniform every single day.

And of course, our extraordinary First Lady, Michelle Obama. Everybody loves Michelle. *[Laughter]* She's on the cover of Vogue, high poll numbers. But don't worry, I recently got my own magazine cover. *[Laughter]*

[An image of a magazine titled "Senior Leisure" with a photo of the President and Vice President Biden playing golf was shown.]

Now, look, I get it. These days, I look in the mirror and I have to admit, I'm not the strapping young Muslim socialist that I used to be. *[Laughter]* Time passes. You get a little gray. *[Laughter]*

And yet, even after all this time, I still make rookie mistakes. Like, I'm out in California, we're at a fundraiser, we're having a nice time. I happen to mention that Kamala Harris is the best looking attorney general in the country. *[Laughter]* As you might imagine, I got trouble when I got back home. *[Laughter]* Who knew Eric Holder was so sensitive? *[Laughter]*

And then there's the Easter egg roll, which is supposed to be just a nice, fun event with the kids. I go out on the basketball court, took 22 shots, made 2 of them. *[Laughter]* That's right: 2 hits, 20 misses. The executives at NBC asked, "What's your secret?" *[Laughter]*

So yes, maybe I have lost a step. But some things are beyond my control. For example, this whole controversy about Jay-Z going to Cuba, it's unbelievable. I've got 99 problems, and now Jay-Z is one. *[Laughter]* That's another rap reference, Bill. *[Laughter]* I wanted to let you know.

Of course, everybody has got plenty of advice. Maureen Dowd said I could solve all my problems if I were just more like Michael Douglas in "The American President." *[Laughter]* And I know Michael is here tonight. Michael, what's your secret, man? *[Laughter]* Could it be

that you were an actor in an Aaron Sorkin liberal fantasy? *[Laughter]* Might that have something to do with it? I don't know. Check in with me. Maybe it's something else. *[Laughter]*

Anyway, I recognize that this job can take a toll on you. I understand, second term, you need a burst of new energy, try some new things. And my team and I talked about it. We were willing to try anything. So we borrowed one of Michelle's tricks. *[Laughter]*

[Several images of the President with a bangs hairstyle were shown.]

I thought this looked pretty good, but no bounce. *[Laughter]* Anyway—

I want to give a shout-out to our headliner, Conan O'Brien. I was just talking to Ed, and I understand that when the Correspondents' Association was considering Conan for this gig, they were faced with that age-old dilemma: Do you offer it to him now or wait for 5 years and then give it to Jimmy Fallon? *[Laughter]* That was a little harsh. *[Laughter]* I love Conan.

And of course, the White House press corps is here. I know CNN has taken some knocks lately, but the fact is, I admire their commitment to cover all sides of a story, just in case one of them happens to be accurate. *[Laughter]*

Some of my former advisers have switched over to the dark side. For example, David Axelrod now works for MSNBC, which is a nice change of pace since MSNBC used to work for David Axelrod. *[Laughter]*

The History Channel is not here. I guess they were embarrassed about the whole Obama-is-a-devil thing. *[Laughter]*

[An image of Satan, played by actor Mohamen Mehdi Ouazanni, from the History Channel's miniseries "The Bible" was shown.]

Of course, that never kept FOX News from showing up. *[Laughter]* They actually thought the comparison was not fair—to Satan. *[Laughter]*

But the problem is, is that the media landscape is changing so rapidly. You can't keep up with it. I mean, I remember when BuzzFeed was just something I did in college around 2:00 a.m. *[Laughter]* It's true. *[Laughter]*

Recently, though, I found a new favorite source for political news: These guys are great. I think everybody here should check it out; they tell it like it is. It's called whitehouse.gov. *[Laughter]* I cannot get enough of it.

The fact is, I really do respect the press. I recognize that the press and I have different jobs to do. My job is to be President; your job is to keep me humble. Frankly, I think I'm doing my job better. *[Laughter]*

But part of the problem is everybody is so cynical. I mean, we're constantly feeding cynicism, suspicion, conspiracies. You remember a few months ago, my administration put out a photograph of me going skeet shooting at Camp David? You remember that? And quite a number of people insisted that this had been Photoshopped.

[An image of the President skeet shooting was shown.]

But tonight I have something to confess: You were right. Guys, can we show them the actual photo? *[Laughter]*

[An image of the President skeet shooting, with a bald eagle perched on his shoulder, kneeling on the roof of a racecar driven by Vice President Biden in a barren, rocky landscape with a rainbow, lightning, and a large full moon in the sky, and a giant kitten shooting laser beams out of its eyes at a monster truck in the background was shown.]

We were just trying to tone it down a little bit. *[Laughter]* That was an awesome day. *[Laughter]*

There are other new players in the media landscape as well, like super PACs. Did you know that Sheldon Adelson spent \$100 million of his own money last year on negative ads? You've got to really dislike me—*[laughter]*—to spend that kind of money. I mean, that's Oprah money. *[Laughter]* You could buy an island and call it "Nobama" for that kind of money. *[Laughter]* Sheldon would have been better off offering me \$100 million to drop out of the race. *[Laughter]* I probably wouldn't have taken it, but I'd have thought about it. *[Laughter]* Michelle would have taken it. *[Laughter]* You think I'm joking? *[Laughter]*

I know Republicans are still sorting out what happened in 2012, but one thing they all agree on is they need to do a better job reaching out to minorities. And look, call me self-centered, but I can think of one minority they could start with. *[Laughter]*

[The President raised his hand.]

Hello? Think of me as a trial run, you know? *[Laughter]* See how it goes. *[Laughter]*

If they won't come to me, I will come to them. Recently, I had dinner—it's been well publicized—I had dinner with a number of the Republican Senators. And I'll admit it wasn't easy. I proposed a toast; it died in committee. *[Laughter]*

Of course, even after I've done all this, some folks still don't think I spend enough time with Congress. Why don't you get a drink with Mitch they ask. Really? *[Laughter]* Why don't you get a drink with Mitch McConnell? *[Laughter]* I'm sorry. I get frustrated sometimes.

I am not giving up. In fact, I'm taking my charm offensive on the road: a Texas barbeque with Ted Cruz, a Kentucky bluegrass concert with Rand Paul, and a book-burning with Michele Bachmann. *[Laughter]*

My charm offensive has helped me learn some interesting things about what's going on in Congress: it turns out, absolutely nothing. *[Laughter]* But the point of my charm offensive is simple: We need to make progress on some important issues. Take the sequester. Republicans fell in love with this thing, and now they can't stop talking about how much they hate it. It's like we're trapped in a Taylor Swift album. *[Laughter]*

One Senator who has reached across the aisle recently is Marco Rubio, but I don't know about 2016. I mean, the guy has not even finished a single term in the Senate and he thinks he's ready to be President. *[Laughter]* Kids these days.

I, on the other hand, have run my last campaign. On Thursday, as Ed mentioned, I went to the opening of the Bush Presidential Library in Dallas. It was a wonderful event, and that inspired me to get started on my own legacy, which will actually begin by building another edifice right next to the Bush Library. Can we show that, please? *[Laughter]*

I'm also hard at work on plans for the Obama Library. And some have suggested that we put it in my birthplace, but I'd rather keep it in the United States. *[Laughter]* Did anybody not see that joke coming? *[Laughter]* Show of hands. Only Gallup? Maybe Dick Morris? *[Laughter]*

Now, speaking of Presidents and their legacies, I want to acknowledge a wonderful friend, Steven Spielberg, and Daniel Day-Lewis, who are here tonight. We had a screening of their most recent film, "Lincoln," which was an extraordinary film. I am a little nervous, though, about Steven's next project. I saw a behind-the-scenes look on HBO. Well, let's just check it out. Roll the tape.

[A video was shown.]

It's a remarkable transformation. Do I really sound like that, though, honey? [Laughter] Wow.

Groucho Marx once said—and, Senator Cruz, that's Groucho Marx, not Karl. That's the other guy. [Laughter] Groucho Marx once told an audience, "Before I speak, I have something important to say." [Laughter] And along those same lines, I want to close on a more serious note.

Obviously, there has been no shortage of news to cover over these past few weeks. And these have been some very hard days for too many of our citizens. Even as we gather here tonight, our thoughts are not far from the people of Boston and the people of West, Texas. There are families in the Midwest who are coping with some terrible floods. So we've had some difficult days.

But even when the days seemed darkest, we have seen humanity shine at its brightest. We've seen first responders and National Guardsmen who have dashed into danger, law enforcement officers who lived their oath to serve and to protect, and everyday Americans who are opening their homes and their hearts to perfect strangers.

And we also saw journalists at their best, especially those who took the time to wade upstream through the torrent of digital rumors to chase down leads and verify facts and painstakingly put the pieces together to inform and to educate and to tell stories that demanded to be told.

If anyone wonders, for example, whether newspapers are a thing of the past, all you needed to do was to pick up or log on to papers like the Boston Globe. When their communities and the wider world needed them most, they were there making sense of events that might at first blush seem beyond our comprehension. And that's what great journalism is, and that's what great journalists do. And that's why, for example, Pete Williams's new nickname around the NBC newsroom is "Big Papi."

And in these past few weeks, as I've gotten a chance to meet many of the first responders and the police officers and volunteers who raced to help when hardship hits, I was reminded, as I'm always reminded when I meet our men and women in uniform—whether they're in war theater or here back home or at Walter Reed in Bethesda—I'm reminded that all these folks, they don't do it to be honored, they don't do it to be celebrated. They do it because they love their families and they love their neighborhoods and they love their country.

And so these men and women should inspire all of us in this room to live up to those same standards, to be worthy of their trust, to do our jobs with the same fidelity and the same integrity and the same sense of purpose and the same love of country. Because if we're only focused on profits or ratings or polls, then we're contributing to the cynicism that so many people feel right now.

And so those of us in this room tonight, we are incredibly lucky. And the fact is, we can do better, all of us. Those of us in public office, those of us in the press, those who produce

entertainment for our kids, those with power, those with influence—all of us, including myself—we can strive to value those things that I suspect led most of us to do the work that we do in the first place, because we believed in something that was true and we believed in service and the idea that we can have a lasting, positive impact on the lives of the people around us.

And that's our obligation. That's a task we should gladly embrace on behalf of all of those folks who are counting on us, on behalf of this country that's given us so much.

So thank you all, to the White House correspondents for the great work you do. God bless you all. May God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 p.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to radio show hosts Rush Limbaugh and Dick Morris; talk show host Oprah Winfrey; musician Shawn C. "Jay-Z" Carter; Bill O'Reilly, host, FOX News Channel's "The O'Reilly Factor" program; Maureen B. Dowd, columnist, the New York Times; screenwriter Aaron Sorkin; Conan C. O'Brien, host, TBS's "Conan" program; James T. Fallon, Jr., host, NBC's "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon"; former White House Senior Adviser David M. Axelrod; Sheldon G. Adelson, chairman and chief executive officer, Las Vegas Sands Corp; talk show host Oprah Winfrey; film director Steven Spielberg; actor Daniel Day-Lewis; and Pete Williams, correspondent, NBC News.

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Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Adelson, Sheldon G.; Axelrod, David M.; Bachmann, Michele M.; Carter, Shawn C. "Jay-Z"; Cruz, R. Edward; Day-Lewis, Daniel; Douglas, Michael; Dowd, Maureen B.; Fallon, James T., Jr.; Harris, Kamala D.; Henry, Edward M.; Holder, Eric H., Jr.; Limbaugh, Rush; McConnell, A. Mitchell; Morris, Dick; Obama, Michelle; O'Brien, Conan C.; Odierno, Raymond T.; O'Reilly, Bill; Paul, Rand; Rubio, Marco A.; Sorkin, Aaron; Spielberg, Steven; Swift, Taylor; Williams, Pete; Winfrey, Oprah.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Congress : Senate :: Minority leader; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Massachusetts : Terrorist attack in Boston; Natural disasters : Midwest, floods; Texas : West Fertilizer Company Plant in West, explosion; White House Correspondents' Association.

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