

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2014*

**Remarks at the Democratic National Committee Women's Leadership Forum**  
*September 19, 2014*

Hello, everybody. Thank you! Thank you so much! All right, everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. I am Barack, also known as Michelle's husband. *[Laughter]* It's good to see all of you. I see so many friends in the room and just incredible leaders from all across the country.

Speaking of leaders, I want to thank Debbie for the great work she is doing to keep our party strong. Nobody anywhere works harder than Debbie Wasserman Schultz. I want to thank her for her incredible efforts.

I also want to thank the CEO of the DNC, Amy Dacey. Give Amy a big round of applause. And to the cofounders of the Women's Leadership Forum, Cynthia Friedman and Carol Pinsky. Where did they go? There they are.

Now, in addition to Debbie, you've heard some extraordinary leaders over the last few days. I already mentioned one, Michelle. *[Laughter]* Kirsten Gillibrand and Jill Biden and Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi. And apparently, only me and Joe are the guys that are speaking. That's okay; we're leaning in. *[Laughter]*

November 4 is 46 days away—46 days. And every day reminds us how much we have to fight for. Every day reminds us how much we have to protect. But over the last few months, world events have reminded us—all of us that some things in this world are bigger than politics.

We've seen that for all the challenges we've been through at home, America remains the one indispensable nation in the world. When the world is threatened, when the world needs help, the world looks to us, to America. Even the folks who badmouth us look to us. America is leading the effort to rally the world against Russian aggression. America is leading the fight to contain and combat an Ebola epidemic in Africa. America is leading the coalition that will degrade and ultimately destroy the terrorist group known as ISIL. And as Americans, we welcome these responsibilities, we don't shy away from them.

Our doctors, our volunteers, our diplomats, our servicemembers, they put themselves in harm's way. They don't represent Democrats or Republicans first, they represent America first. And for all the divisions and all the discord that's inherent in a democracy like ours—although, sometimes in this town, we get a little carried away with it—I continue to see the determination and resilience and fundamental goodness of the ordinary American every single day.

And that's why I'm more confident than ever about our country's future. Yes, we live in a time of enormous challenges. Thirteen years ago last week, this country was attacked. Six years ago this week sparked the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. And yet, despite all these shocks, through all the pain, all the difficulty, all the challenges, for all the gritty, grueling work that was required for America to bounce back, America is positioned better today than at any time to seize the future. We're better positioned than any nation on Earth to help shape a better world for our kids and our grandkids.

And it's not just that we have, by far, the world's strongest and most capable military. It's that we've worked tirelessly to not only recover from crisis, but to rebuild a more durable economy. There are times when I'm watching the news and I'm wondering whether they've been paying attention. [*Laughter*]

Our businesses have created more than 10 million new jobs over the last 30—54 months. This is the longest uninterrupted stretch of private sector job growth in American history. Last year, the number of children living in poverty fell by 1.4 million. We've cut the deficit by more than half. We're producing clean energy at a rate we've never seen before. Our auto industry is selling more cars than any time since 2006. Our high school graduation rate, it is at a record high. More young people are earning college degrees than ever before. Millions more Americans have quality, affordable health insurance they can count on. Manufacturing is bouncing back.

By almost every economic measure, we are better off today than we were when I took office. And that's not an exaggeration, those are facts. And thanks to the resilience of working Americans and the leaders you helped elect and the policies that we put in place, this country we love has recovered faster and come farther than almost any other advanced nation on Earth. And for the first time in more than a decade: you ask business leaders worldwide where should you be investing your money, the world's number-one place to invest is not China, it is the United States of America. And our lead is growing.

So there are enormous reasons to be optimistic about America. We've got the best cards. [*Laughter*] We've got the best hand. We've come so far. But the question on our minds today, 46 days before an election, is, where do we go from here? What does our future look like?

And in the coming weeks, the American people will see two very different visions of this country. One vision says that our economy grows best from the top down. If we tilt the Tax Code in favor of those at the very top, if we let the big banks and the polluters and the credit card companies do whatever they want, if we shrink investments in things like education and technology, if we make it harder for striving young immigrants to come here, then somehow, all that is going to add up to prosperity for everybody. It will all trickle down.

Another vision says that our economy grows best from the middle out; that if we give people a fair shot by investing in things like education; that if we ask people to pay their fair share so we can afford investments in basic science and research and infrastructure; if we ask big banks and credit card companies to play by the same rules to protect consumers and prevent another financial crisis; if we welcome striving, dreaming, young talent to our shores, then our businesses will grow and our middle class will thrive, and that will be good for everybody. That's a different vision.

And in case you didn't figure it out, the second vision is better. [*Laughter*] If you look at our history, that's the right vision. Whenever that's the direction that we move this country, everybody succeeds, everybody thrives. We don't succeed when we chase a top-down economic theory that says you're on your own. We do better when we embrace an economic patriotism that says we're all in this together.

And look, as Democrats, we don't agree on everything. But we share a vision of an America where opportunity is open to all who are willing to work for it. An America where we think beyond just the short term and we think about long-term investments in American energy and American infrastructure, American manufacturing, American innovation that unleashes new jobs and new industries. We think about an America where workers have the

chance to earn new skills that lead directly to a good job. We dream of an America where our children have the chance to graduate from school fully prepared for the global competition that they're going to face. An America where hard work pays off with higher incomes for the middle class, for—with a minimum wage that actually is a wage you can live on, and yes, with affordable health insurance for everybody. That's the vision that we embrace, and it speaks to something my mother taught me, which is you can measure how well a country does by how well it treats its women.

It is remarkable that at a time when women are about half of our workforce, the primary breadwinners in more families than ever before, that some folks still talk about women's issues as if they're something separate over there, and economics is over here. That's nonsense. We do better when we field a full team. When women succeed, America succeeds. It's pretty straightforward. And just to continue the sports analogy—[*laughter*]*—it wouldn't make much sense if you gave half the team really good equipment—[laughter]*—and the other half was saddled with bad equipment. You wouldn't succeed if half your team operated by one set of rules and the other half operated with another set of rules.

Earlier today Joe Biden and I launched a new initiative called "It's On Us," to help confront the crisis of sexual assault on college campuses. And in addition to all the work that we're doing to enforce the law and lift up best practices, we want to also change the culture. And so corporations and citizens and colleges and universities and men as well as women have a responsibility to create a culture where women's basic human rights are protected and her talent and potential is given the value it deserves. That's part of our vision for how America succeeds.

And government has a responsibility there. Part of expanding opportunity for all is getting rid of policies that belong in the "Mad Men" era. [*Laughter*] We need to update. It's 2014. A mom or a dad deserves a day off to care for a sick child or an aging parent without running into hardship. Women deserve equal pay for equal work. That should be pretty straightforward. All of us deserve workplaces where childcare and flexibility and decent wages aren't seen as a bonus, as a fringe benefit, but rather part of the basic social compact that we're in.

I talked about some of these issues at our first-ever Working Families Summit a few months ago. And before the summit started, some reporters asked me, isn't this sort of political? [*Laughter*] Family leave, childcare, fair pay, higher wages—isn't this sort of political? [*Laughter*] Well, I'm—[*laughter*]*—and I said, well, it's not political in the sense that it's not relevant. It's not political in the sense that it's just spin. It's not political in the sense that it's just catering to a quote, unquote, "special interest."*

We're talking about half the population. [*Laughter*] We're talking about families that depend on that half of the population. This is about getting the most out of our Nation's talent. It's about preparing our kids for the global economic competition that they'll face and rebuilding a middle class that hasn't seen a real raise in 15 years. It's about fulfilling the basic idea: here in America, you can make it if you try.

So it's not politics in the narrow, cramped sense, but yes, it's politics in the big sense of us organizing ourselves to try to move our country forward. The work we do is bigger than partisan politics. And I believe that for all that is wrong with our politics right now, there's so much that's right with America that if we could just create a government and a politics that spoke to common sense and what was important for ordinary Americans, we'd do great.

And I see it in individual Americans everywhere I go. And when I think about America, I think about the doctor who returns from the front lines of a deadly outbreak and then volunteers to go right back. Or the pilot flying over a distant land, risking everything in order to keep us safe and free. Or the military spouse who doesn't wear the uniform, never asks for credit, but who serves our country every day. America isn't the party we belong to. We're not born Democrats or Republicans. America is the values we share: hard work and responsibility and sacrifice and looking out for one another.

And so there is one brand of politics that we've gotten accustomed to, which is mean and nasty and polarizing, but there's another sense of politics in terms of civic participation and us having a common vision for the future and being willing to work for it and recognizing that there are things that are bigger than each of us.

Don't let anybody tell you that working and organizing and voting for the values that built this country isn't worth it. It is worth it. Because despite the cynics—and boy, we sure have a lot of them; sometimes, I think Washington is the capital of cynicism—but despite those cynics, America is making progress. Despite unyielding opposition, there are workers with jobs who didn't have them before. There are families with health insurance who didn't have it before. There are students in college who couldn't afford it before. There are troops who served tour after tour who are home now with their families.

And I know cynicism is fashionable these days. But cynicism did not put an astronaut on the Moon, did not win a war, has never cured a disease, didn't start a business, did not feed a young mind, was not responsible for making sure that workers had rights and women had rights and civil rights were enforced in this country. That wasn't produced by cynicism. Cynicism is a choice. Hope is a better choice.

And so today I'm asking the same thing I asked in 2008. I'm asking you to choose hope. Hope is what gave soldiers courage to storm a beach. Hope is what gave young people the strength to march for women's rights and worker's rights and civil rights and voting rights and gay rights and immigrant rights. Hope is the better choice, the belief that there are better days. And if we work together and organize together and vote together, then we can build up our middle class and hand down something better to our kids.

Hope is what built America. I've never been more confident that America's best days are still ahead, but we've got to work for it, and we've got to have faith in it. And you know what gives me faith is, we've got a whole bunch of strong women who are ready to work for it and have faith.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:43 p.m. at the Marriott Marquis Washington, DC, hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

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*Subjects:* Africa : Ebola outbreak, response and containment efforts; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Civil rights : Wage equality; Civil rights : Women's rights and gender equality; Congress : House of Representatives :: Minority leader; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education :: Sexual assault, prevention efforts; Elections : 2014 congressional elections; Iraq : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Labor issues : Workplace flexibility, improvement efforts; Russia : Relations with Ukraine; Terrorism : September 11, 2001, attacks; Ukraine : Russia, role; White House Office : Sexual assault, "It's On Us" campaign to prevent; White House Office : Vice President; Women's Leadership Forum.

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