

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Democratic Presidential Nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton in Cleveland, Ohio

October 14, 2016

The President. Hello, Ohio! Thank you! Thank you so much. Hello, Cleveland! Well, the—

Audience member. I love you, Barack!

The President. I love you back. I do. I do.

The head of the airport here pointed out that in 2012, one of our last rallies was right here. Some of you might have been there. But I've got to say, it was an amazing rally, and everybody was so enthusiastic, and it was a beautiful——

Audience member. Still are!

The President. Still fired up! But the one thing I've got to say, though, is, since I've been in Cleveland, this time it seems like there's an extra pep in your step. I don't know what happened exactly. I don't know whether I'm—did something happen here in Cleveland? Did LeBron have something to do with it? All right, well, congratulations, everybody.

Can everybody please give Jackie a big round of applause, not just for the introduction, but for her service to our country? We've got some outstanding Members of Congress who are here. Marcia Fudge is in the house. Marcy Kaptur is here. Your outstanding mayor, Frank Jackson, is here. And although he's campaigning elsewhere in the State, I want to make sure we give a shout out to your former Governor and the next United States Senator from Ohio, Ted Strickland. Well——

Audience members. We love you!

The President. I know. I love you back but—thank you, guys. Thank you.

So this will probably be one of the last times that I visit Cleveland as your President.

Audience members. No!

The President. No, no, I'm going to come back to Cleveland, we'll just have—I'll go to a game. But no, understand, Michelle and I, our lease was only 8 years. So now we're making sure we didn't break any china, making sure Bo and Sunny haven't ruined too many carpets. [*Laughter*] We wanted to get our security deposit back. [*Laughter*] But we are so grateful, so blessed, to have had all your support over these years. And it's been a great privilege.

And I remember when we were campaigning here on that closing day. And we were in the midst of two long wars, putting an enormous burden on our military families. We were in the early days of what would turn out to be the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes. You had all kinds of challenges, from health care to climate change, where we weren't even pretending to do something about it. We were just kicking the can down the road.

And I told you then, 8 years ago, that I wasn't a perfect person and I wasn't going to be a perfect President, but what I guaranteed you was that I would work every single day as hard as I could to make sure that working families all across this country got a better deal. And you gave me the honor of serving you, and 8 years later, we have fought our way back from

recession. We have helped our auto industry set new records. Our businesses have turned job losses into 15 million new jobs. We've slashed our dependence on foreign oil.

[At this point, there was a disruption in the audience.]

Hold on a second, young man. Don't be interrupting everybody. Come on. Come on, sir. Come on. Everybody is going—come on, everybody. Let's do our little chant. Hillary! Hillary! Hillary!

Audience members. Hillary! Hillary! Hillary!

The President. All right, I think we're okay now. I notice this has been happening everywhere, and I keep on telling folks you've got to organize your own rallies. *[Laughter]* Don't—if you're confident about the other guy, just go to his rallies. I feel confident about my candidate. That's why I'm at this rally. So you don't have to spend time over here. Go knock on some doors for your guy. That's a better way for you to spend your time. *[Laughter]* Unless you're just being paid to be here, in which case, hey, you know, everybody's got to make a living. *[Laughter]*

Where was I? *[Laughter]* So 8 years ago, we were in tough situations. But because of your resilience, because of your faith in each other, in this country, we have slashed our unemployment rate in half. Incomes are rising again. In fact, incomes went up last year by the largest amount that has ever been measured. Poverty is falling. In fact, last year, poverty went down faster than any time since 1968. Twenty million people have health insurance who didn't have it before. The uninsured rate is now at an alltime low.

We brought more of our brave troops home to their families. We delivered justice to Usama bin Laden. Marriage equality is a reality in all 50 States. By almost every measure, our economy is better than it was when we came into office. And that's not just true across the country, it's true right here in Ohio.

You just look at the auto industry that was flat on its back when we came into office and now is selling the best cars in the world and is doing as well or better than ever before. And that means there are hundreds of thousands of folks here in Ohio that have benefited.

So we've been busy. But I'm here to tell you——

Audience member. Tell us!

The President. I'm here—you want me to tell you? *[Laughter]* I'm here to tell you that all that progress goes out the window if we don't make the right choice right now. And it shouldn't be a complicated choice, because it's a choice between somebody who is as qualified as anybody who has ever run for this office and somebody who has proven himself unfit to lead or represent this country that we love.

And I've said this before: Democrats and Republicans have always had their differences, and that's a good thing. That's how democracy is supposed to work. And when I was running against John McCain, when I was running against Mitt Romney, we had serious disagreements and debates about economic policy and foreign policy and social policy. And those elections were close. And I thought I had the better argument and I'd be the better President. But I could have seen either one of them serving honorably, not embarrassing us on the world stage. They would have engaged in legitimate debates and normal democratic processes.

But that's not the case with today's Republican nominee. He doesn't have the temperament. He doesn't have the knowledge. He doesn't seem to have the interest in

acquiring the knowledge or the basic honesty that a President needs to have. And that was true before we heard him——

Audience member. That's right, sir!

The President. ——talking about how he treats women. And it was——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo. What do I say?

Audience members. Vote!

The President. Don't boo, vote.

And by the way, that was true when he talked about how Muslims are unpatriotic or when he talked about how Mexicans were rapists or when he made fun of somebody who was disabled. Or he talked about our veterans and our troops and our Gold Star mom.

You know, you don't have to be a husband or a father to know that that kind of language, those kinds of thoughts, those kinds of actions——

Audience member. Unacceptable!

The President. ——are unacceptable. They're not right. You just have to be a decent human being.

And for those of you who didn't have a chance to hear Michelle yesterday talk about what it meant to her, I could not be prouder of her. I said yesterday that this is why I married her, to improve my gene pool to—[*laughter*]—so my daughters would be smarter than me. But she was sticking up. Yes, she was sticking up for women. Yes, she was thinking about the lessons we're teaching the next generation. She was also talking on behalf of men who know we're better than this or who don't want to teach our sons the kind of things that we've been hearing on television; that believe that one of the measures of any society is how does it treat its women, how does it treat its girls? Are you treating them with respect and dignity and equality? And if you believe that we are better than what we've been hearing, the good news is, as she pointed out yesterday, there's something we can do about it. Right here in Ohio, a battleground State. Ohio is always close.

And so you can go vote early right now. Early voting started on Wednesday. And I know everybody here is early voting, because otherwise, you wouldn't be here. If you stood in line to get in this rally, then you've got enough sense to go early vote. But for those of you who are— may not be here, and you don't even know if you're registered, you need to go to iwillvote.com/locate, and you can find the early vote site nearest you. Or you can request a mail-in ballot.

I'm going to repeat that website: iwillvote.com/locate. This is not an infomercial. [*Laughter*] This is an opportunity for you to exercise your——

Audience member. Right to vote!

The President. ——your right to vote, your civic responsibility, the essence of citizenship. And you don't need to wait until election day.

You have a chance to reject a dark and pessimistic vision of a country where we turn against each other, where we turn away from our role in the world. You can reject a politics of fear and resentment and blame and anger and hate. You can choose the America we know

ourselves to be, a country full of courage and optimism, a country full of generosity and ingenuity.

We've got real challenges still. When I ran 8 years ago, I said we're not going to solve everything in one Presidency. We've got real challenges. There are folks out there who are still struggling to pay the bills. There are students who are still trying to figure out how to pay off student loan debt. There are parents who are still concerned about caring for a sick child or worried about whether they're going to be able to keep their home. Everybody is worried about political gridlock. All across the country, people are concerned about the possibilities of increased racial division. There are pockets of Ohio and pockets of America, despite the progress we've made, that haven't recovered from factory closures. There are young people who are worried about whether they're going to have the same opportunities that we've had.

But I will tell you this: I've traveled all 50 States. I have talked to hundreds of thousands of people. And what I've seen more than anything else is everything that's good about America, everything that's right about America. I see people working hard. I see people starting businesses. I see teachers teaching kids, taking money out of their own pockets to make sure they've got school supplies. I've seen doctors who are out there serving the indigent and the poor, making sure they've got health care. I have seen our men and women in uniform serving to make sure we are safe. I've seen police officers and law enforcement and first responders who run into danger instead of run away from it.

I've seen young activists who call on us to live up to our highest ideals. I see a young generation that is full of energy and ideas and is not going to be held back by what is right now, but is going to seize what ought to be. And I see, most of all, Americans of every party, background, every faith who believe that we are stronger together—young, old, Black, White, Latino, Asian, Native American, folks with disabilities—all of us pledging allegiance to that same proud flag. That is the America that I know.

And there's only one candidate in this race who's devoted her life to that vision of a better America and that is the next President of the United States, Hillary Clinton.

Now, her opponent has made it pretty clear he's just going to drag this election as low as it can possibly go. And he figures that if he makes our politics just toxic, then maybe you'll just figure out, you've got no good choices and you just get discouraged and you just don't vote.

Audience member. He's wrong!

The President. But don't fall for it.

Audience members. No!

The President. Because I'm telling you right now, Hillary is one of the smartest, toughest, best prepared, most experienced persons ever to run for this job. You know, there's nothing that completely prepares you for what it's like to manage a global crisis or send a young person to war. But Hillary has been in the room when those decisions were made. She's been a First Lady. She has been a Senator. She has been my Secretary of State. And in each and every job she has worked tirelessly and diligently, and she's listened to the American people.

She's done her homework. She has performed. She knows what the decisions that a President makes mean concretely for a soldier or a veteran, for a kid who needs a great education, for a worker who is still looking for a good job or a raise or a decent retirement. Even in the middle of crisis, she keeps her cool, and she pays everybody the proper respect. And most importantly, no matter how tough the odds, no matter how much people try to knock

her down, she doesn't point fingers or whine. She doesn't talk about how everything is rigged. She just works harder and gets the job done and never, ever quits. She doesn't quit, and she doesn't make excuses. And by the way, isn't that what you want from a President?

You know, I notice, her opponent——

Audience member. He's a crybaby! [*Laughter*]

The President. He seems to be in the middle of the game, making excuses all the time for why he might be losing. [*Laughter*] And it's always interesting to me to see folks who talk tough, but then don't act tough. Because if you're tough, you don't make excuses. You don't start complaining about the refs before the game is even done. You just play the game, right?

That's what Hillary Clinton is doing. She's out there playing the game. She's just in the arena for you, fighting every single day to make sure that everybody gets a fair shake. That's what she's doing. There is not a person out there who has been more qualified to serve as our President. That includes me, and that includes Bill. [*Laughter*]

And she's going to be great at it. She's got real plans to address the things she's heard from you: specific ideas to invest in new jobs; specific ideas to help workers share in their company's profits; specific ideas to make sure that fewer jobs move overseas, to make sure that jobs come back in places that have been abandoned, to invest in our people, to put kids in preschool, to put students through college without taking on a ton of debt.

You know, her opponent's maybe getting headlines this week for picking fights with everybody in his own party, threatening to sue the press for stories he doesn't like. Meanwhile, you know what Hillary is doing? She's been talking about what we need to do to fight climate change. She put forward a child tax credit that would help millions of families. She wasn't complaining or whining or fighting, she was just doing the work. And that's what you want from a President: somebody who is going to sit there and do the work for you. Her opponent, he doesn't make very specific plans.

Audience member. No plans! No plans!

The President. If you asked his opponents right now—if you asked his supporters right now, it would be really hard for them to describe what exactly they were going to do. He says he's great at making deals. But as I pointed out, I don't know a lot of people who operate a casino and manage to lose almost a billion dollars in 1 year. [*Laughter*] Usually, the house wins. You know that saying "the house always wins"? [*Laughter*] Unless he owns the house; then, it loses a billion dollars. [*Laughter*]

I don't know a lot of successful business people who just use that failure of losing a billion dollars to then avoid paying Federal income taxes. He says it makes him smart. [*Laughter*] All it does is, it means he's not doing what all of us as citizens should be doing, which is giving back to our troops and our veterans, and our roads and our schools and making sure that America continues to be the greatest nation on Earth. That's part of citizenship. Not trying to weasel out of your responsibilities. That's not smart. And then, you want to lead the country? What is that? You're going to teach everybody how to avoid doing their responsibilities? [*Laughter*]

He rooted for a housing crisis because he said it might help his real estate situation. He says, "That's called business." Filed for bankruptcy six times, and then, that allowed him to stiff small businesses and their workers that had already done work for him and that he owed money. When your concern isn't the family that's worried about foreclosure or the small business that is just trying to make ends meet, you'd rather make a buck off their dreams, but

not being honest on the other side of your deal, then you can't claim to lead this country. You're not fit to be President of the United States.

And I have to say—because he's getting some support from some working folks. And I want to say to them, look, if a guy spent 70 years on this Earth showing no regard for working people—there's no record that he's supported minimum wage or supported collective bargaining or invested in poor communities—and then suddenly, he's going to be the champion of working people? Come on. Come on, man. *[Laughter]*

Apparently, in a speech yesterday, he started talking about global elites, that there was a conspiracy of global elites. This is a guy who spent all his time hanging around trying to convince everybody he was a global elite. *[Laughter]* Talking about how great his buildings are and how luxurious. And how rich he is and flying around everywhere. All he had time for was celebrities. And now suddenly, he's acting like he's a populist out there: "Man, I'm going to fight for working people." Come on, man. *[Laughter]*

You want to know what somebody is going to do, look what they've been doing their whole lives. And if you want a leader who actually values hard work and respects working Americans, if you want higher wages and better benefits and a fair Tax Code and equal pay for women and stronger regulations on Wall Street, then you should vote for Hillary Clinton!

If you want to know who is going to keep you safe in a dangerous world, the choice is even clearer. Hillary is going to make sure we finish the job of defeating ISIL, and she won't have to resort to torture or ban entire religions from our country. And she's got the knowledge and the experience and the temperament to be the next Commander in Chief.

You can't have a guy who's insulted POWs and attacks a Gold Star mom and has called our troops and veterans weak and cozies up to dictators and tells our allies we might not stand by their side unless they pay up first. He may be up at 3 a.m. in the morning, but it's because he's tweeting insults to somebody who got under his skin. *[Laughter]* That's not the kind of President you want. Not fit to be Commander in Chief and not fit to lead the world's greatest democracy.

And by the way, this is somebody who threatens to jail his political opponents or silence the media, who welcomes Russian meddling in our electoral process and is now suggesting that if the election doesn't go his way, it's not because all the stuff he said—

Audience member. It's somebody else's fault!

The President. —but because it's rigged and it's a fraud. Some nations do operate that way. And they're tyrannies. And they're oppressive. They're not the world's greatest democracy. We have fought against those kinds of things. We—around the world, we talk to other countries. We say, no, in a democracy you can't just threaten to jail your opponents. There are things called due process. No, in a democracy, you can't just ban reporters or press that you don't like, because there's this thing called the First Amendment. No, in a democracy, you have a contest, but if you lose, then you say congratulations, and you move on, because the country and our system of government is bigger than any single individual.

That's what we do. The United States of America has always stood for something better. Which by the way—I said this last night; I've just got to go back to this again—it's part of why I'm disturbed about Republican elected officials who know better, but are still supporting this guy. I said that, in part, what's happened here is, over the last 8 years, Republican officials who know better, some of whom I talk to—they're sane people. They're normal folks but what

they've done is, they have allowed a lot of crazy talk to just be pumped out again and again through all kinds of these media outlets. Conspiracy theories—I was born outside this country, and Hillary and I started ISIL—[laughter]—and we're going to impose martial law, and we're trying to take everybody's guns away, and crazier stuff than that.

And a lot of Republican elected officials have just stood by. A lot of House Members, a lot of Senators, they stood by, and they didn't say anything because it was a way to rile up their base, and it was a way to mount opposition to whatever we were trying to do. And over time, because a lot of the hardcore Republican partisan voters were just hearing this stuff over and over again, they started to believe it. And that's what allowed Donald Trump suddenly to emerge. Donald Trump didn't build all this crazy conspiracy stuff.

And some Republicans who knew better stood by silently, and even during the course of this campaign, didn't say anything. I mean, I know that some of them now are walking away. But why did it take you this long? You said you're the party of family values. What, you weren't appalled earlier when he was saying degrading things about women? When he was judging them based on a score of are they a two or a ten? That wasn't enough for you? You're walking away from him now. You—it wasn't disturbing enough for you when he was saying Mexicans who come here are rapists or suggesting that people—patriotic Americans of the Islamic faith—are somehow are suspect and should be treated differently? That wasn't enough?

I'm glad that some of them now say, "Wow, this is really bad. I guess we need to walk away." But if you're doing it just for political expedience, just because you're looking at poll numbers, and you say, "Oh, this might get me in trouble"—that's not enough.

If you say you're about family values, you've got to be about family values all the way through. If you spent all these years extolling Reagan and how tough he was with the Russians, how is it that you suddenly stand silently when you nominate a guy who says his—a guy he admires is the former head of the KGB? If you say that you're about the Constitution and you're opposed to what Obama is doing with executive actions because that shows you're—he's a tyrant, but you're okay with a guy who says to his opponent in the middle of the debate, I'm going to throw you in jail.

Audience members. Crazy!

The President. How does that work? [Laughter]

Audience member. It doesn't!

The President. It doesn't work.

And that's why I want everybody to understand what's at stake here. You know, one of the things I've learned these past 8 years is that progress is hard, but you've got to battle it out. And even when you have victories, like the Affordable Care Act, it's not always perfect, and you've got to work to make it better. And you take two steps forward on something like climate change, there are going to be folks who try and push you back. And the special interests are strong, and it is true that the country is so often divided along party lines, and it's very hard to get folks to compromise.

And Hillary understands all that. But what she also knows is that if you stay at it and you work hard, good things can happen. She knows that in a democracy as big and diverse as this, we can't demonize each other. We can't just refuse to compromise. Even when we're right, we've got to work with other folks. She knows that you've got to listen to each other and see

ourselves in each other and fight for our principles. She believes that there's common ground out there.

And she believes that we can and should conduct ourselves better; that our leaders are not going to be perfect, but we should aspire to at least express the decency and goodness of the American people, not our worst impulses. We should conduct ourselves with just a basic sense of——

Audience member. Dignity!

The President. ——what this country is about: a certain sense of dignity. And that's not always flashy. That doesn't always grab headlines. That's not always the thing that will get you on the news. That's not always—— doesn't fit on a tweet. Politics doesn't always lend itself to that. But if we want our——if we want progress, we've got to work for it. Progress, it doesn't always come right away, and we don't always get a hundred percent what we want. But if we keep at it the way Hillary has kept at it, decade after decade, progress happens.

And if you don't believe that, ask the 20 million more Americans who've got health insurance today that didn't have it before. Ask all those autoworkers right here in Ohio who had been laid off and thought their plant was going to shut down, and now they're working double shifts because we're cranking out so many cars. Ask the proud marine who no longer has to hide the husband that he loves. Ask the young persons who are getting more help now to pay off their student loans. Change is possible. But it doesn't just depend on one person, it depends on all of us.

And so, young people especially out there, I want you to know, you've been through a lot. You've grown up through war and recession and all kinds of incredible change, but I have seen in you the best in America. I see that you don't try to turn against each other. You're trying to look out for each other. I know you care about being open to the world, not turning away from it. I know that you believe in an inclusive society, an innovative society, and a vibrant society. And you believe in democracy. And I see the same values in you that have always driven this country forward: decency and honesty and hard work and civility. They are not old-fashioned values, they are timeless values. They're what binds this country together.

And so even though sometimes politics can seem frustrating, even though sometimes our democracy can seem mean spirited, you have a chance right now to reject that kind of politics. You have a chance to reject the politics of fear. You can lift, again, back up the politics of hope. Let's not go backwards; let's go forward.

You've got a chance to elect a woman who's spent her entire life trying to make this country better. Don't fall for the easy cynicism that says your vote doesn't matter. Don't fall for what Trump tries to do and just make everybody depressed. Don't believe it. I promise you, your vote counts. Your vote matters.

There was a time when folks couldn't vote, when you had to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar to vote, the number of soap bubbles on a bar of soap to vote. Folks were beaten to vote. Folks risked everything to vote.

In this election, whatever the issue you care about, it could not be easier for you to vote. If you care about inequality, you need to vote. If you "felt the Bern" in the primaries, you need to vote. You can vote for somebody who only cares about themselves or somebody who is going to fight like heck for working people. Make sure we've got a minimum wage raise. Make sure we've got equal pay for equal work.

You care about criminal justice reform and civil rights, you can vote for somebody who has fought against civil rights for most of their lives, or you can vote for somebody who went undercover to make sure that minority kids were getting an equal shot at a good education and has never stopped fighting since.

You care about the environment and climate change, you can vote for somebody who thinks it's a Chinese hoax, or you can care—you can vote for somebody who thinks that there's something called science and that we should pay attention to it and will fight to protect our planet.

You care about immigration reform and want us to continue to see this Nation as one that is a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, then you've got to get out there and vote.

Donald Trump's closing argument is, "What do you have to lose?" [*Laughter*] The answer is everything. All the progress we've made right now is on the ballot. Civility is on the ballot. Tolerance is on the ballot. Courtesy is on the ballot. Honesty is on the ballot. Equality is on the ballot. Kindness is on the ballot. All the progress we've made the last 8 years is on the ballot. Democracy itself is on the ballot right now.

So if you want to send a message, make it loud. Turn back the voices of cynicism. Turn back the voices of ignorance. Send a message of progress. Send a message of hope. Send a message by voting for Hillary Clinton, and show our kids and the rest of the world we remain the greatest country in the world.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Hey!

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:09 a.m. on the tarmac at the Cleveland Burke Lakefront Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Khalid Bahhur, commissioner, Cleveland Burke Lakefront Airport; LeBron R. James, forward, National Basketball Association's Cleveland Cavaliers; Jackie Larkins, Navy veteran and owner, Coffee Phix Cafe in South Euclid, OH; Sen. John S. McCain III and former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, in their respective capacities as the 2008 and 2012 Republican Presidential nominees; New York Times reporter Serge F. Kovaleski, who suffers from arthrogryposis, a condition which limits the functioning of his joints; Ghazala Khan, mother of Capt. Humayun Khan, USA, who was killed in Iraq in 2004; former President William J. Clinton; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in his capacity as a former Democratic Presidential candidate. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

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Locations: Cleveland, OH.

Names: Bahhur, Khalid; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Clinton, William J.; Fudge, Marcia L.; Jackson, Frank G.; James, LeBron R.; Kaptur, Marcia C.; Khan, Ghazala; Kovaleski, Serge F.; Larkins, Jackie; McCain, John S., III; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Romney, W. Mitt; Sanders, Bernard; Strickland, Theodore; Trump, Donald J.

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