

Barack Obama: Eulogy at the Funeral of Clementa Pinckney, Charleston, June 2015

Following the killing of 9 people at a Bible study group in [Charleston, South Carolina](#) President Barack Obama attended the funeral of the pastor of the church and South Carolina state senator, [the Reverend Clementa C. Pinckney](#).

The video is from [the C-SPAN Youtube channel](#), and the transcript from [the Washington Post](#).

President Barack Obama:

Giving all praise and honor to God.

(APPLAUSE) The Bible calls us to hope, to persevere and have faith in things not seen. They were still living by faith when they died, the scripture tells us.

(APPLAUSE)

They did not receive the things promised. They only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

We are here today to remember a man of God who lived by faith, a man who believed in things not seen, a man who believed there were better days ahead off in the distance, a man of service, who persevered knowing full-well he would not receive all those things he was promised, because he believed his efforts would deliver a better life for those who followed, to Jennifer, his beloved wife, Eliana and Malana, his beautiful, wonderful daughters, to the Mother Emanuel family and the people of Charleston, the people of South Carolina.

I cannot claim to have had the good fortune to know Reverend Pinckney well, but I did have the pleasure of knowing him and meeting him here in South Carolina back when we were both a little bit younger...

(LAUGHTER)

... back when I didn't have visible gray hair.

(LAUGHTER)

The first thing I noticed was his graciousness, his smile, his reassuring baritone, his deceptive sense of humor, all qualities that helped him wear so effortlessly a heavy burden of expectation.

Friends of his remarked this week that when Clementa Pinckney entered a room, it was like the future arrived, that even from a young age, folks knew he was special, anointed. He was the progeny of a long line of the faithful, a family of preachers who spread God's words, a family of protesters who so changed to expand voting rights and desegregate the South.

Clem heard their instruction, and he did not forsake their teaching. He was in the pulpit by 13, pastor by 18, public servant by 23. He did not exhibit any of the cockiness of youth nor youth's insecurities. Instead, he set an example worthy of his position, wise beyond his years in his speech, in his conduct, in his love, faith and purity.

As a senator, he represented a sprawling swathe of low country, a place that has long been one of the most neglected in America, a place still racked by poverty and inadequate schools, a place where children can still go hungry and the sick can go without treatment – a place that needed somebody like Clem.

(APPLAUSE) His position in the minority party meant the odds of winning more resources for his constituents were often

long. His calls for greater equity were too-often unheeded. The votes he cast were sometimes lonely.

But he never gave up. He stayed true to his convictions. He would not grow discouraged. After a full day at the Capitol, he'd climb into his car and head to the church to draw sustenance from his family, from his ministry, from the community that loved and needed him. There, he would fortify his faith and imagine what might be.

Reverend Pinckney embodied a politics that was neither mean nor small. He conducted himself quietly and kindly and diligently. He encouraged progress not by pushing his ideas alone but by seeking out your ideas, partnering with you to make things happen. He was full of empathy and fellow feeling, able to walk in somebody else's shoes and see through their eyes.

No wonder one of his Senate colleagues remembered Senator Pinckney as "the most gentle of the 46 of us, the best of the 46 of us."

Clem was often asked why he chose to be a pastor and a public servant. But the person who asked probably didn't know the history of AME Church.

(APPLAUSE)

As our brothers and sisters in the AME Church, we don't make those distinctions. "Our calling," Clem once said, "is not just within the walls of the congregation but the life and community in which our congregation resides."

(APPLAUSE)

He embodied the idea that our Christian faith demands deeds and not just words, that the sweet hour of prayer actually lasts the whole week long, that to put our faith in action is more than just individual salvation, it's about our collective

salvation, that to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and house the homeless is not just a call for isolated charity but the imperative of a just society.

What a good man. Sometimes I think that's the best thing to hope for when you're eulogized, after all the words and recitations and resumes are read, to just say somebody was a good man.

(APPLAUSE)

You don't have to be of high distinction to be a good man.

Preacher by 13, pastor by 18, public servant by 23. What a life Clementa Pinckney lived. What an example he set. What a model for his faith.

And then to lose him at 41, slain in his sanctuary with eight wonderful members of his flock, each at different stages in life but bound together by a common commitment to God – Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance, DePayne Middleton Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel L. Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Myra Thompson.

Good people. Decent people. God-fearing people.

(APPLAUSE)

People so full of life and so full of kindness, people who ran the race, who persevered, people of great faith.

To the families of the fallen, the nation shares in your grief. Our pain cuts that much deeper because it happened in a church.

The church is and always has been the center of African American life...

(APPLAUSE)

... a place to call our own in a too-often hostile world, a

sanctuary from so many hardships.

Over the course of centuries, black churches served as hush harbors, where slaves could worship in safety, praise houses, where their free descendants could gather and shout "Hallelujah..."

(APPLAUSE)

... rest stops for the weary along the Underground Railroad, bunkers for the foot soldiers of the civil-rights movement.

They have been and continue to community centers, where we organize for jobs and justice, places of scholarship and network, places where children are loved and fed and kept out of harms way and told that they are beautiful and smart and taught that they matter.

(APPLAUSE)

That's what happens in church. That's what the black church means – our beating heart, the place where our dignity as a people in inviolate.

There's no better example of this tradition than Mother Emanuel, a church...

(APPLAUSE)

... a church built by blacks seeking liberty, burned to the ground because its founders sought to end slavery only to rise up again, a phoenix from these ashes. (APPLAUSE)

When there were laws banning all-black church gatherers, services happened here anyway in defiance of unjust laws. When there was a righteous movement to dismantle Jim Crow, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached from its pulpit, and marches began from its steps.

A sacred place, this church, not just for blacks, not just for

Christians but for every American who cares about the steady expansion...

(APPLAUSE)

... of human rights and human dignity in this country, a foundation stone for liberty and justice for all.

That's what the church meant.

(APPLAUSE)

We do not know whether the killer of Reverend Pinckney and eight others knew all of this history, but he surely sensed the meaning of his violent act. It was an act that drew on a long history of bombs and arson and shots fired at churches, not random but as a means of control, a way to terrorize and oppress...

(APPLAUSE)

... an act that he imagined would incite fear and recrimination, violence and suspicion, an act that he presumed would deepen divisions that trace back to our nation's original sin.

Oh, but God works in mysterious ways.

(APPLAUSE)

God has different ideas.

(APPLAUSE)

He didn't know he was being used by God.

(APPLAUSE)

Blinded by hatred, the alleged killer would not see the grace surrounding Reverend Pinckney and that Bible study group, the light of love that shown as they opened the church doors and invited a stranger to join in their prayer circle.

The alleged killer could have never anticipated the way the families of the fallen would respond when they saw him in court in the midst of unspeakable grief, with words of forgiveness. He couldn't imagine that.

(APPLAUSE)

The alleged killer could not imagine how the city of Charleston under the good and wise leadership of Mayor Riley, how the state of South Carolina, how the United States of America would respond not merely with revulsion at his evil acts, but with (inaudible) generosity. And more importantly, with a thoughtful introspection and self-examination that we so rarely see in public life. Blinded by hatred, he failed to comprehend what Reverend Pinckney so well understood – the power of God's grace.

(APPLAUSE)

This whole week, I've been reflecting on this idea of grace.

(APPLAUSE)

The grace of the families who lost loved ones; the grace that Reverend Pinckney would preach about in his sermons; the grace described in one of my favorite hymnals, the one we all know – Amazing Grace.

(APPLAUSE)

How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

(APPLAUSE)

I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.

(APPLAUSE)

According to the Christian tradition, grace is not earned. Grace is not merited. It's not something we deserve. Rather, grace is the free and benevolent favor of God.

(APPLAUSE)

As manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings. Grace – as a nation out of this terrible tragedy, God has visited grace upon us for he has allowed us to see where we've been blind.

(APPLAUSE)

He's given us the chance where we've been lost to find out best selves. We may not have earned this grace with our rancor and complacency and short-sightedness and fear of each other, but we got it all the same. He gave it to us anyway. He's once more given us grace.

But it is up to us now to make the most of it, to receive it with gratitude and to prove ourselves worthy of this gift.

For too long, we were blind to the pain that the Confederate Flag stirred into many of our citizens.

(APPLAUSE)

It's true a flag did not cause these murders. But as people from all walks of life, Republicans and Democrats, now acknowledge, including Governor Haley, whose recent eloquence on the subject is worthy of praise...

(APPLAUSE)

... as we all have to acknowledge, the flag has always represented more than just ancestral pride.

(APPLAUSE)

For many, black and white, that flag was a reminder of systemic oppression...

(APPLAUSE)

... and racial subjugation.

(APPLAUSE)

We see that now.

Removing the flag from this state's capital would not be an act of political correctness. It would not an insult to the valor of Confederate soldiers. It would simply be acknowledgement that the cause for which they fought, the cause of slavery, was wrong.

(APPLAUSE)

The imposition of Jim Crow after the Civil War, the resistance to civil rights for all people was wrong.

(APPLAUSE)

It would be one step in an honest accounting of America's history, a modest but meaningful balm for so many unhealed wounds.

It would be an expression of the amazing changes that have transformed this state and this country for the better because of the work of so many people of goodwill, people of all races, striving to form a more perfect union.

By taking down that flag, we express adds grace God's grace.

(APPLAUSE)

But I don't think God wants us to stop there.

(APPLAUSE)

For too long, we've been blind to be way past injustices continue to shape the present.

(APPLAUSE)

Perhaps we see that now. Perhaps this tragedy causes us to ask some tough questions about how we can permit so many of our

children to languish in poverty...

(APPLAUSE)

... or attend dilapidated schools or grow up without prospects for a job or for a career.

Perhaps it causes us to examine what we're doing to cause some of our children to hate.

(APPLAUSE)

Perhaps it softens hearts towards those lost young men, tens and tens of thousands caught up in the criminal-justice system and lead us to make sure that that system's not infected with bias.

(APPLAUSE)

... that we embrace changes in how we train and equip our police so that the bonds of trust between law enforcement...

(APPLAUSE)

... and the communities they serve make us all safer and more secure.

(APPLAUSE)

Maybe we now realize the way a racial bias can infect us even when we don't realize it so that we're guarding against not just racial slurs but we're also guarding against the subtle impulse to call Johnny back for a job interview but not Jamal...

(APPLAUSE)

... so that we search our hearts when we consider laws to make it harder for some of our fellow citizens to vote...

(APPLAUSE)

... by recognizing our common humanity, by treating every child

as important, regardless of the color of their skin...

(APPLAUSE)

... or the station into which they were born and to do what's necessary to make opportunity real for every American. By doing that, we express God's grace.

(APPLAUSE)

For too long...

(APPLAUSE)

For too long, we've been blind to the unique mayhem that gun violence inflicts upon this nation.

(APPLAUSE)

Sporadically, our eyes are open when eight of our brothers and sisters are cut down in a church basement, 12 in a movie theater, 26 in an elementary school. But I hope we also see the 30 precious lives cut short by gun violence in this country every single day...

(APPLAUSE)

... the countless more whose lives are forever changed, the survivors crippled, the children traumatized and fearful every day as they walk to school, the husband who will never feel his wife's warm touch, the entire communities whose grief overflows every time they have to watch what happened to them happening to some other place.

The vast majority of Americans, the majority of gun owners want to do something about this. We see that now.

(APPLAUSE)

And I'm convinced that by acknowledging the pain and loss of others, even as we respect the traditions, ways of life that

make up this beloved country, by making the moral choice to change, we express God's grace.

(APPLAUSE)

We don't earn grace. We're all sinners. We don't deserve it.

(APPLAUSE)

But God gives it to us anyway.

(APPLAUSE)

And we choose how to receive it. It's our decision how to honor it.

None of us can or should expect a transformation in race relations overnight. Every time something like this happens, somebody says, "We have to have a conversation about race." We talk a lot about race.

(APPLAUSE)

There's no shortcut. We don't need more talk.

(APPLAUSE)

None of us should believe that a handful of gun safety measures will prevent every tragedy.

It will not. People of good will will continue to debate the merits of various policies as our democracy requires – the big, raucous place, America is. And there are good people on both sides of these debates.

Whatever solutions we find will necessarily be incomplete. But it would be a betrayal of everything Reverend Pinckney stood for, I believe, if we allow ourselves to slip into a comfortable silence again.

(APPLAUSE)

Once the eulogies have been delivered, once the TV cameras move on, to go back to business as usual. That's what we so often do to avoid uncomfortable truths about the prejudice that still infects our society.

(APPLAUSE)

To settle for symbolic gestures without following up with the hard work of more lasting change, that's how we lose our way again. It would be a refutation of the forgiveness expressed by those families if we merely slipped into old habits whereby those who disagree with us are not merely wrong, but bad; where we shout instead of listen; where we barricade ourselves behind preconceived notions or well-practiced cynicism.

Reverend Pinckney once said, "Across the south, we have a deep appreciation of history. We haven't always had a deep appreciation of each other's history."

(APPLAUSE)

What is true in the south is true for America. Clem understood that justice grows out of recognition of ourselves in each other; that my liberty depends on you being free, too.

(APPLAUSE)

That – that history can't be a sword to justify injustice or a shield against progress. It must be a manual for how to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, how to break the cycle, a roadway toward a better world. He knew that the path of grace involves an open mind. But more importantly, an open heart.

That's what I felt this week – an open heart. That more than any particular policy or analysis is what's called upon right now, I think. It's what a friend of mine, the writer Marilyn Robinson, calls "that reservoir of goodness beyond and of another kind, that we are able to do each other in the ordinary cause of things."

That reservoir of goodness. If we can find that grace,
anything is possible.

(APPLAUSE)

If we can tap that grace, everything can change. Amazing
grace, amazing grace.

Amazing grace...

(SINGING)

(APPLAUSE)

... how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was
lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now, I see.

(APPLAUSE)

Clementa Pinckney found that grace...

(APPLAUSE)

... Cynthia Hurd found that grace...

(APPLAUSE)

... Susie Jackson found that grace...

(APPLAUSE)

... Ethel Lance found that grace...

(APPLAUSE)

... DePayne Middleton Doctor found that grace...

(APPLAUSE)

... Tywanza Sanders found that grace...

(APPLAUSE)

... Daniel L. Simmons, Sr. found that grace...

(APPLAUSE) ... Sharonda Coleman-Singleton found that grace...

(APPLAUSE)

... Myra Thompson found that grace...

(APPLAUSE)

... through the example of their lives. They've now passed it onto us. May we find ourselves worthy of that precious and extraordinary gift as long as our lives endure.

May grace now lead them home. May God continue to shed His Grace on the United States of America.

Barack Obama: 2nd Inauguration Ceremony, January 2013

US President [Barack Obama](#) speaks after his inauguration as president for his second term on January 21, 2013.

The transcript can be downloaded from [Washington Post](#). The video is from [the New York Times](#) Youtube channel.

President Barack Obama:

Vice President Biden, Mr. Chief Justice, Members of the United States Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens:

Each time we gather to inaugurate a president, we bear witness to the enduring strength of our Constitution. We affirm the

promise of our democracy. We recall that what binds this nation together is not the colors of our skin or the tenets of our faith or the origins of our names. What makes us exceptional – what makes us American – is our allegiance to an idea, articulated in a declaration made more than two centuries ago:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Today we continue a never-ending journey, to bridge the meaning of those words with the realities of our time. For history tells us that while these truths may be self-evident, they have never been self-executing; that while freedom is a gift from God, it must be secured by His people here on Earth. The patriots of 1776 did not fight to replace the tyranny of a king with the privileges of a few or the rule of a mob. They gave to us a Republic, a government of, and by, and for the people, entrusting each generation to keep safe our founding creed.

For more than two hundred years, we have.

Through blood drawn by lash and blood drawn by sword, we learned that no union founded on the principles of liberty and equality could survive half-slave and half-free. We made ourselves anew, and vowed to move forward together.

Together, we determined that a modern economy requires railroads and highways to speed travel and commerce; schools and colleges to train our workers.

Together, we discovered that a free market only thrives when there are rules to ensure competition and fair play.

Together, we resolved that a great nation must care for the vulnerable, and protect its people from life's worst hazards

and misfortune.

Through it all, we have never relinquished our skepticism of central authority, nor have we succumbed to the fiction that all society's ills can be cured through government alone. Our celebration of initiative and enterprise; our insistence on hard work and personal responsibility, are constants in our character.

But we have always understood that when times change, so must we; that fidelity to our founding principles requires new responses to new challenges; that preserving our individual freedoms ultimately requires collective action. For the American people can no more meet the demands of today's world by acting alone than American soldiers could have met the forces of fascism or communism with muskets and militias. No single person can train all the math and science teachers we'll need to equip our children for the future, or build the roads and networks and research labs that will bring new jobs and businesses to our shores. Now, more than ever, we must do these things together, as one nation, and one people. This generation of Americans has been tested by crises that steeled our resolve and proved our resilience. A decade of war is now ending. An economic recovery has begun. America's possibilities are limitless, for we possess all the qualities that this world without boundaries demands: youth and drive; diversity and openness; an endless capacity for risk and a gift for reinvention. My fellow Americans, we are made for this moment, and we will seize it – so long as we seize it together.

For we, the people, understand that our country cannot succeed when a shrinking few do very well and a growing many barely make it. We believe that America's prosperity must rest upon the broad shoulders of a rising middle class. We know that America thrives when every person can find independence and pride in their work; when the wages of honest labor liberate families from the brink of hardship. We are true to our creed

when a little girl born into the bleakest poverty knows that she has the same chance to succeed as anybody else, because she is an American, she is free, and she is equal, not just in the eyes of God but also in our own.

We understand that outworn programs are inadequate to the needs of our time. We must harness new ideas and technology to remake our government, revamp our tax code, reform our schools, and empower our citizens with the skills they need to work harder, learn more, and reach higher. But while the means will change, our purpose endures: a nation that rewards the effort and determination of every single American. That is what this moment requires. That is what will give real meaning to our creed.

We, the people, still believe that every citizen deserves a basic measure of security and dignity. We must make the hard choices to reduce the cost of health care and the size of our deficit. But we reject the belief that America must choose between caring for the generation that built this country and investing in the generation that will build its future. For we remember the lessons of our past, when twilight years were spent in poverty, and parents of a child with a disability had nowhere to turn. We do not believe that in this country, freedom is reserved for the lucky, or happiness for the few. We recognize that no matter how responsibly we live our lives, any one of us, at any time, may face a job loss, or a sudden illness, or a home swept away in a terrible storm. The commitments we make to each other – through Medicare, and Medicaid, and Social Security – these things do not sap our initiative; they strengthen us. They do not make us a nation of takers; they free us to take the risks that make this country great.

We, the people, still believe that our obligations as Americans are not just to ourselves, but to all posterity. We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future

generations. Some may still deny the overwhelming judgment of science, but none can avoid the devastating impact of raging fires, and crippling drought, and more powerful storms. The path towards sustainable energy sources will be long and sometimes difficult. But America cannot resist this transition; we must lead it. We cannot cede to other nations the technology that will power new jobs and new industries – we must claim its promise. That is how we will maintain our economic vitality and our national treasure – our forests and waterways; our croplands and snowcapped peaks. That is how we will preserve our planet, commanded to our care by God. That's what will lend meaning to the creed our fathers once declared.

We, the people, still believe that enduring security and lasting peace do not require perpetual war. Our brave men and women in uniform, tempered by the flames of battle, are unmatched in skill and courage. Our citizens, seared by the memory of those we have lost, know too well the price that is paid for liberty. The knowledge of their sacrifice will keep us forever vigilant against those who would do us harm. But we are also heirs to those who won the peace and not just the war, who turned sworn enemies into the surest of friends, and we must carry those lessons into this time as well.

We will defend our people and uphold our values through strength of arms and rule of law. We will show the courage to try and resolve our differences with other nations peacefully – not because we are naive about the dangers we face, but because engagement can more durably lift suspicion and fear. America will remain the anchor of strong alliances in every corner of the globe; and we will renew those institutions that extend our capacity to manage crisis abroad, for no one has a greater stake in a peaceful world than its most powerful nation. We will support democracy from Asia to Africa; from the Americas to the Middle East, because our interests and our conscience compel us to act on behalf of those who long for freedom. And we must be a source of hope to the poor, the

sick, the marginalized, the victims of prejudice – not out of mere charity, but because peace in our time requires the constant advance of those principles that our common creed describes: tolerance and opportunity; human dignity and justice.

We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths – that all of us are created equal – is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall; just as it guided all those men and women, sung and unsung, who left footprints along this great Mall, to hear a preacher say that we cannot walk alone; to hear a King proclaim that our individual freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of every soul on Earth.

It is now our generation's task to carry on what those pioneers began. For our journey is not complete until our wives, our mothers, and daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts. Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law – for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well. Our journey is not complete until no citizen is forced to wait for hours to exercise the right to vote. Our journey is not complete until we find a better way to welcome the striving, hopeful immigrants who still see America as a land of opportunity; until bright young students and engineers are enlisted in our workforce rather than expelled from our country. Our journey is not complete until all our children, from the streets of Detroit to the hills of Appalachia to the quiet lanes of Newtown, know that they are cared for, and cherished, and always safe from harm. That is our generation's task – to make these words, these rights, these values – of Life, and Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness – real for every American. Being true to our founding documents does not require us to agree on every contour of life; it does not mean we will all define liberty in exactly the same way, or follow

the same precise path to happiness. Progress does not compel us to settle centuries-long debates about the role of government for all time – but it does require us to act in our time.

For now decisions are upon us, and we cannot afford delay. We cannot mistake absolutism for principle, or substitute spectacle for politics, or treat name-calling as reasoned debate. We must act, knowing that our work will be imperfect. We must act, knowing that today's victories will be only partial, and that it will be up to those who stand here in four years, and forty years, and four hundred years hence to advance the timeless spirit once conferred to us in a spare Philadelphia hall.

My fellow Americans, the oath I have sworn before you today, like the one recited by others who serve in this Capitol, was an oath to God and country, not party or faction – and we must faithfully execute that pledge during the duration of our service. But the words I spoke today are not so different from the oath that is taken each time a soldier signs up for duty, or an immigrant realizes her dream. My oath is not so different from the pledge we all make to the flag that waves above and that fills our hearts with pride.

They are the words of citizens, and they represent our greatest hope.

You and I, as citizens, have the power to set this country's course.

You and I, as citizens, have the obligation to shape the debates of our time – not only with the votes we cast, but with the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideals.

Let each of us now embrace, with solemn duty and awesome joy, what is our lasting birthright. With common effort and common purpose, with passion and dedication, let us answer the call

of history, and carry into an uncertain future that precious light of freedom.

Thank you, God Bless you, and may He forever bless these United States of America.

Barack Obama: Victory Speech, November 2012

US President [Barack Obama](#) addresses his supporters after defeating [Mitt Romney](#) and winning a second term as president.

The transcript can be downloaded from [Chicago Sun Times](#) and is copyright the Federal News Service. The video is from [Al Jazeera](#).

President Barack Obama:

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: (Chanting.) Four more years! Four more years!

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA:

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Tonight, more than 200 years after a former colony won the right to determine its own destiny, the task of perfecting our union moves forward.

It moves forward because of you. It moves forward because you reaffirmed the spirit that has triumphed over war and depression, the spirit that has lifted this country from the depths of despair to the great heights of hope, the belief

that while each of us will pursue our own individual dreams, we are an American family, and we rise or fall together as one nation and as one people.

Tonight, in this election, you, the American people, reminded us that while our road has been hard, while our journey has been long, we have picked ourselves up, we have fought our way back, and we know in our hearts that for the United States of America, the best is yet to come.

I want to thank every American who participated in this election. Whether you voted for the very first time or waited in line for a very long time by the way, we have to fix that. Whether you pounded the pavement or picked up the phone whether you held an Obama sign or a Romney sign, you made your voice heard and you made a difference.

I just spoke with Governor Romney and I congratulated him and Paul Ryan on a hard-fought campaign. We may have battled fiercely, but it's only because we love this country deeply and we care so strongly about its future. From George to Lenore to their son Mitt, the Romney family has chosen to give back to America through public service. And that is a legacy that we honor and applaud tonight. In the weeks ahead, I also look forward to sitting down with Governor Romney to talk about where we can work together to move this country forward.

I want to thank my friend and partner of the last four years, America's happy warrior, the best vice president anybody could ever hope for, Joe Biden.

And I wouldn't be the man I am today without the woman who agreed to marry me 20 years ago. Let me say this publicly. Michelle, I have never loved you more. I have never been prouder to watch the rest of America fall in love with you too as our nation's first lady.

Sasha and Malia before our very eyes, you're growing up to become two strong, smart, beautiful young women, just like

your mom. And I am so proud of you guys. But I will say that for now, one dog's probably enough. (Laughter.)

To the best campaign team and volunteers in the history of politics the best – the best ever some of you were new this time around, and some of you have been at my side since the very beginning.

But all of you are family. No matter what you do or where you go from here, you will carry the memory of the history we made together. And you will have the lifelong appreciation of a grateful president. Thank you for believing all the way to every hill, to every valley. You lifted me up the whole day, and I will always be grateful for everything that you've done and all the incredible work that you've put in.

I know that political campaigns can sometimes seem small, even silly. And that provides plenty of fodder for the cynics who tell us that politics is nothing more than a contest of egos or the domain of special interests. But if you ever get the chance to talk to folks who turned out at our rallies and crowded along a rope line in a high school gym or – or saw folks working late at a campaign office in some tiny county far away from home, you'll discover something else.

You'll hear the determination in the voice of a young field organizer who's working his way through college and wants to make sure every child has that same opportunity. You'll hear the pride in the voice of a volunteer who's going door to door because her brother was finally hired when the local auto plant added another shift.

You'll hear the deep patriotism in the voice of a military spouse who's working the phones late at night to make sure that no one who fights for this country ever has to fight for a job or a roof over their head when they come home.

That's why we do this. That's what politics can be. That's why elections matter. It's not small, it's big. It's important.

Democracy in a nation of 300 million can be noisy and messy and complicated. We have our own opinions. Each of us has deeply held beliefs. And when we go through tough times, when we make big decisions as a country, it necessarily stirs passions, stirs up controversy. That won't change after tonight. And it shouldn't. These arguments we have are a mark of our liberty, and we can never forget that as we speak, people in distant nations are risking their lives right now just for a chance to argue about the issues that matter the chance to cast their ballots like we did today.

But despite all our differences, most of us share certain hopes for America's future.

We want our kids to grow up in a country where they have access to the best schools and the best teachers a country that lives up to its legacy as the global leader in technology and discovery and innovation with all of the good jobs and new businesses that follow.

We want our children to live in an America that isn't burdened by debt, that isn't weakened up by inequality, that isn't threatened by the destructive power of a warming planet.

We want to pass on a country that's safe and respected and admired around the world, a nation that is defended by the strongest military on earth and the best troops this – this world has ever known but also a country that moves with confidence beyond this time of war to shape a peace that is built on the promise of freedom and dignity for every human being.

We believe in a generous America, in a compassionate America, in a tolerant America open to the dreams of an immigrant's daughter who studies in our schools and pledges to our flag to the young boy on the south side of Chicago who sees a life beyond the nearest street corner to the furniture worker's child in North Carolina who wants to become a doctor or a

scientist, an engineer or an entrepreneur, a diplomat or even a president.

That's the that's the future we hope for.

That's the vision we share. That's where we need to go – forward. That's where we need to go.

Now, we will disagree, sometimes fiercely, about how to get there. As it has for more than two centuries, progress will come in fits and starts. It's not always a straight line. It's not always a smooth path. By itself, the recognition that we have common hopes and dreams won't end all the gridlock, resolve all our problems or substitute for the painstaking work of building consensus and making the difficult compromises needed to move this country forward.

But that common bond is where we must begin. Our economy is recovering. A decade of war is ending. A long campaign is now over. And whether I earned your vote or not, I have listened to you. I have learned from you. And you've made me a better president. And with your stories and your struggles, I return to the White House more determined and more inspired than ever about the work there is to do and the future that lies ahead.

Tonight you voted for action, not politics as usual. You elected us to focus on your jobs, not ours.

And in the coming weeks and months, I am looking forward to reaching out and working with leaders of both parties to meet the challenges we can only solve together – reducing our deficit, reforming our tax code, fixing our immigration system, freeing ourselves from foreign oil. We've got more work to do.

But that doesn't mean your work is done. The role of citizens in our democracy does not end with your vote. America's never been about what can be done for us; it's about what can be done by us together, through the hard and frustrating but

necessary work of self- government. That's the principle we were founded on.

This country has more wealth than any nation, but that's not what makes us rich. We have the most powerful military in history, but that's not what makes us strong. Our university, our culture are all the envy of the world, but that's not what keeps the world coming to our shores. What makes America exceptional are the bonds that hold together the most diverse nation on Earth, the belief that our destiny is shared that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another and to future generations, so that the freedom which so many Americans have fought for and died for come with responsibilities as well as rights, and among those are love and charity and duty and patriotism. That's what makes America great.

I am hopeful tonight because I have seen this spirit at work in America. I've seen it in the family business whose owners would rather cut their own pay than lay off their neighbors and in the workers who would rather cut back their hours than see a friend lose a job. I've seen it in the soldiers who re-enlist after losing a limb and in those SEALs who charged up the stairs into darkness and danger because they knew there was a buddy behind them watching their back. I've seen it on the shores of New Jersey and New York, where leaders from every party and level of government have swept aside their differences to help a community rebuild from the wreckage of a terrible storm.

And I saw it just the other day in Mentor, Ohio, where a father told the story of his 8-year-old daughter whose long battle with leukemia nearly cost their family everything had it not been for health care reform passing just a few months before the insurance company was about to stop paying for her care. I had an opportunity to not just talk to the father but meet this incredible daughter of his. And when he spoke to the crowd, listening to that father's story, every parent in that

room had tears in their eyes because we knew that little girl could be our own.

And I know that every American wants her future to be just as bright. That's who we are. That's the country I'm so proud to lead as your president.

And tonight, despite all the hardship we've been through, despite all the frustrations of Washington, I've never been more hopeful about our future. I have never been more hopeful about America. And I ask you to sustain that hope.

I'm not talking about blind optimism, the kind of hope that just ignores the enormity of the tasks ahead or the road blocks that stand in our path. I'm not talking about the wishful idealism that allows us to just sit on the sidelines or shirk from a fight. I have always believed that hope is that stubborn thing inside us that insists, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us so long as we have the courage to keep reaching, to keep working, to keep fighting.

America, I believe we can build on the progress we've made and continue to fight for new jobs and new opportunities and new security for the middle class. I believe we can keep the promise of our founding, the idea that if you're willing to work hard, it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from or what you look like or where you love (ph). It doesn't matter whether you're black or white or Hispanic or Asian or Native American or young or old or rich or poor, abled, disabled, gay or straight. You can make it here in America if you're willing to try.

I believe we can seize this future together because we are not as divided as our politics suggests. We're not as cynical as the pundits believe. We are greater than the sum of our individual ambitions and we remain more than a collection of red states and blue states. We are, and forever will be, the

United States of America.

And together, with your help and God's grace, we will continue our journey forward and remind the world just why it is that we live in the greatest nation on earth. Thank you, America. God bless you. God bless these United States.

Mitt Romney Concession Speech, 2012

2012 Presidential candidate for the Republican Party [Mitt Romney](#) addresses Republican supporters in Boston in November 2012 after losing the presidential election to the incumbent Barack Obama.

The video of this speech by Mitt Romney can be downloaded from [here on the New York Times website](#). The transcript is also from the [New York Times](#) website.

Mitt Romney:

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, my friends. Thank you so very much. Thank you. (Cheers, applause.) Thank you. Thank you.

I have just called President Obama to congratulate him on his victory. His supporters and his campaign also deserve congratulations. I wish all of them well, but particularly the president, the first lady and their daughters. (Applause.) This is a time of great challenges for America, and I pray that the president will be successful in guiding our nation.

I want to thank Paul Ryan for all that he has done for our campaign – (cheers, applause) – and for our country. Besides

my wife Ann, Paul is the best choice I've ever made. (Cheers, applause.) And I trust that his intellect and his hard work and his commitment to principle will continue to contribute to the good of our nation. (Cheers, applause.)

I also want to thank Ann, the love of my life. (Cheers, applause.) She would have been a wonderful first lady. (Cheers, applause.) She's – she has been that and more to me and to our family and to the many people that she has touched with her compassion and her care. I thank my sons for their tireless work on behalf of the campaign, and thank their wives and children – (cheers, applause) – for taking up their slack as their husbands and dads have spent so many weeks away from home. (Cheers, applause.)

I want to thank Matt Rhoades and the dedicated campaign team he led. (Cheers, applause.) They have made an extraordinary effort, not just for me but also for the country that we love. And to you here tonight and to the team across the country – the volunteers, the fundraisers, the donors, the surrogates – I don't believe that there's ever been an effort in our party that can compare with what you have done over these past years. Thank you so very much. (Cheers, applause.)

Thanks for all the hours of work, for the calls, for the speeches and appearances, for the resources and for the prayers. You gave deeply from yourselves and performed magnificently, and you inspired us and you humbled us. You've been the very best we could have imagined.

The nation, as you know, is at a critical point. At a time like this, we can't risk partisan bickering and political posturing. Our leaders have to reach across the aisle to do the people's work. And we citizens also have to rise to the occasion. We look to our teachers and professors. We count on you not just to teach, but to inspire our children with a passion for learning and discovery.

We look to our pastors and priests and rabbis and counselors of all kinds to testify of the enduring principles upon which our society is built – honesty, charity, integrity and family. We look to our parents, for in the final analysis, everything depends on the success of our homes. We look to job creators of all kinds. We're counting on you to invest, to hire, to step forward. And we look to Democrats and Republicans in government at all levels to put the people before the politics.

I believe in America. I believe in the people of America. (Cheers, applause.)

And I ran for office because I'm concerned about America. This election is over, but our principles endure. I believe that the principles upon which this nation was founded are the only sure guide to a resurgent economy and to a new greatness.

Like so many of you, Paul and I have left everything on the field. We have given our all to this campaign. (Cheers, applause.) I so wish – I so wish that I had been able to fulfill your hopes to lead the country in a different direction. But the nation chose another leader. And so Ann and I join with you to earnestly pray for him and for this great nation.

Thank you, and God bless America. (Cheers, applause.) You guys are the best. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thanks, guys. (Cheers, applause.)

Barack Obama: Democratic

Convention speech, September 2012

President candidate for the Republican Party [Barack Obama](#) addresses the Democratic party convention, in September 2012, three months before the 2012 presidential election in the US.

The video of this Barack Obama's speech can be downloaded from [the CSPAN channel on Youtube](#). The transcript is from the [Huffington Post](#) website, edited slightly.

President Barack Obama:

Thank you! Thank you so much!

Michelle, I love you so much. A few nights ago, everybody was reminded just what a lucky man I am.

Malia and Sasha, we are so proud of you... and, yes, you still have to go to school in the morning. And Joe Biden, thank you for being the very best Vice President I could have ever hoped for, and being a strong and loyal friend.

Madam Chairwoman, delegates, I accept your nomination for President of the United States.

Now, the first time I addressed this convention, in 2004, I was a younger man; a Senate candidate from Illinois who spoke about hope – not blind optimism, not wishful thinking, but hope in the face of difficulty; hope in the face of uncertainty; that dogged faith in the future which has pushed this nation forward, even when the odds are great; even when the road is long.

Eight years later, that hope has been tested – by the cost of war; by one of the worst economic crises in history; and by political gridlock that's left us wondering whether it's still

even possible to tackle the challenges of our time.

I know that campaigns can seem small, and even silly sometimes. Trivial things become big distractions. Serious issues become sound bites. The truth gets buried under an avalanche of money and advertising. If you're sick of hearing me approve this message, believe me – so am I.

But when all is said and done – when you pick up that ballot to vote – you will face the clearest choice of any time in a generation. Over the next few years, big decisions will be made in Washington, on jobs and the economy; taxes and deficits; energy and education; war and peace – decisions that will have a huge impact on our lives and our children's lives for decades to come.

And on every issue, the choice you face won't be just between two candidates or two parties.

It will be a choice between two different paths for America.

A choice between two fundamentally different visions for the future.

Ours is a fight to restore the values that built the largest middle class and the strongest economy the world has ever known; the values my grandfather defended as a soldier in Patton's Army; the values that drove my grandmother to work on a bomber assembly line while he was gone.

They knew they were part of something larger – a nation that triumphed over fascism and depression; a nation where the most innovative businesses turned out the world's best products, and everyone shared in the pride and success – from the corner office to the factory floor. My grandparents were given the chance to go to college, buy their own home, and fulfill the basic bargain at the heart of America's story: the promise that hard work will pay off; that responsibility will be rewarded; that everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does

their fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules – from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington, DC.

And I ran for President because I saw that basic bargain slipping away. I began my career helping people in the shadow of a shuttered steel mill, at a time when too many good jobs were starting to move overseas. And by 2008, we had seen nearly a decade in which families struggled with costs that kept rising but paychecks that didn't; folks racking up more and more debt just to make the mortgage or pay tuition; put gas in the car or food on the table. And when the house of cards collapsed in the great recession, millions of innocent Americans lost their jobs, their homes, and their life savings – a tragedy from which we are still fighting to recover.

Now, our friends down in Tampa at the Republican convention were more than happy to talk about everything they think is wrong with America, but they didn't have much to say about how they'd make it right. They want your vote, but they don't want you to know their plan. And that's because all they have to offer is the same prescription they've had for the last thirty years:

“Have a surplus? Try a tax cut.”

“Deficit too high? Try another.”

“Feel a cold coming on? Take two tax cuts, roll back some regulations, and call us in the morning!”

Now, I've cut taxes for those who need it – middle-class families and small businesses. But I don't believe that another round of tax breaks for millionaires will bring good jobs to our shores, or pay down our deficit. I don't believe that firing teachers or kicking students off financial aid will grow the economy, or help us compete with the scientists and engineers coming out of China. After all we've been through, I don't believe that rolling back regulations on Wall Street will help the small businesswoman expand, or the laid-

off construction worker keep his home. We have been there, we've tried that, and we're not going back. We're moving forward, America!

Now I won't pretend the path I'm offering is quick or easy. I never have. You didn't elect me to tell you what you wanted to hear. You elected me to tell you the truth. And the truth is, it will take more than a few years for us to solve challenges that have built up over decades. It will require common effort, shared responsibility, and the kind of bold, persistent experimentation that Franklin Roosevelt pursued during the only crisis worse than this one. And by the way – those of us who carry on his party's legacy should remember that not every problem can be remedied with another government program or dictate from Washington.

But know this, America: Our problems can be solved. Our challenges can be met. The path we offer may be harder, but it leads to a better place. And I'm asking you to choose that future. I'm asking you to rally around a set of goals for your country – goals in manufacturing, energy, education, national security, and the deficit; real, achievable plans that will lead to new jobs, more opportunity, and rebuild this economy on a stronger foundation. That's what we can do in the next four years, and that is why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

We can choose a future where we export more products and outsource fewer jobs. After a decade that was defined by what we bought and borrowed, we're getting back to basics, and doing what America has always done best:

We're making things again.

I've met workers in Detroit and Toledo who feared they'd never build another American car. Today, they can't build them fast enough, because we reinvented a dying auto industry that's back on the top of the world.

I've worked with business leaders who are bringing jobs back to America – not because our workers make less pay, but because we make better products. Because we work harder and smarter than anyone else.

I've signed trade agreements that are helping our companies sell more goods to millions of new customers – goods that are stamped with three proud words: Made in America.

After a decade of decline, this country created over half a million manufacturing jobs in the last two and a half years. And now you have a choice: we can give more tax breaks to corporations that ship jobs overseas, or we can start rewarding companies that open new plants and train new workers and create new jobs here, in the United States of America. We can help big factories and small businesses double their exports, and if we choose this path, we can create a million new manufacturing jobs in the next four years. You can make that happen. You can choose that future.

You can choose the path where we control more of our own energy. After thirty years of inaction, we raised fuel standards so that by the middle of the next decade, cars and trucks will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. We've doubled our use of renewable energy, and thousands of Americans have jobs today building wind turbines and long-lasting batteries. In the last year alone, we cut oil imports by one million barrels a day – more than any administration in recent history. And today, the United States of America is less dependent on foreign oil than at any time in nearly two decades.

Now you have a choice – between a strategy that reverses this progress, or one that builds on it. We've opened millions of new acres for oil and gas exploration in the last three years, and we'll open more. But unlike my opponent, I will not let oil companies write this country's energy plan, or endanger our coastlines, or collect another \$4 billion in corporate

welfare from our taxpayers.

We're offering a better path – where we – a future where we keep investing in wind and solar and clean coal; where farmers and scientists harness new biofuels to power our cars and trucks; where construction workers build homes and factories that waste less energy; where we develop a hundred year supply of natural gas that's right beneath our feet. If you choose this path, we can cut our oil imports in half by 2020 and support more than 600,000 new jobs in natural gas alone.

And yes, my plan will continue to reduce the carbon pollution that is heating our planet – because climate change is not a hoax. More droughts and floods and wildfires are not a joke. They're a threat to our children's future. And in this election, you can do something about it.

You can choose a future where more Americans have the chance to gain the skills they need to compete, no matter how old they are or how much money they have. Education was the gateway to opportunity for me. It was the gateway for Michelle. It was the gateway for most of you. And now more than ever, it is the gateway to a middle-class life.

For the first time in a generation, nearly every state has answered our call to raise their standards for teaching and learning. Some of the worst schools in the country have made real gains in math and reading. Millions of students are paying less for college today because we finally took on a system that wasted billions of taxpayer dollars on banks and lenders.

And now you have a choice – we can gut education, or we can decide that in the United States of America, no child should have her dreams deferred because of a crowded classroom or a crumbling school. No family should have to set aside a college acceptance letter because they don't have the money. No company should have to look for workers overseas because they

couldn't find any with the right skills here at home. That's not our future. That is not our future.

Government has a role in this. But teachers must inspire; principals must lead; parents must instill a thirst for learning, and students, you've got to do the work. And together, I promise you – we can out-educate and out-compete any country on Earth. So help me. Help me recruit 100,000 math and science teachers in the next ten years, and improve early childhood education. Help give two million workers the chance to learn skills at their community college that will lead directly to a job. Help us work with colleges and universities to cut in half the growth of tuition costs over the next ten years. We can meet that goal together. You can choose that future for America.

That's our future. You know, in a world of new threats and new challenges, you can choose leadership that has been tested and proven. Four years ago, I promised to end the war in Iraq. We did. I promised to refocus on the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11. And we have. We've blunted the Taliban's momentum in Afghanistan, and in 2014, our longest war will be over. A new tower rises above the New York skyline, al Qaeda is on the path to defeat, and Osama bin Laden is dead.

Tonight, we pay tribute to the Americans who still serve in harm's way. We are forever in debt to a generation whose sacrifice has made this country safer and more respected. We will never forget you. And so long as I'm Commander-in-Chief, we will sustain the strongest military the world has ever known. When you take off the uniform, we will serve you as well as you've served us – because no one who fights for this country should have to fight for a job, or a roof over their head, or the care that they need when they come home.

Around the world, we've strengthened old alliances and forged new coalitions to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. We've reasserted our power across the Pacific and stood up to China

on behalf of our workers. From Burma to Libya to South Sudan, we have advanced the rights and dignity of all human beings – men and women; Christians and Muslims and Jews.

But for all the progress we've made, challenges remain. Terrorist plots must be disrupted. Europe's crisis must be contained. Our commitment to Israel's security must not waver, and neither must our pursuit of peace. The Iranian government must face a world that stays united against its nuclear ambitions. The historic change sweeping across the Arab World must be defined not by the iron fist of a dictator or the hate of extremists, but by the hopes and aspirations of ordinary people who are reaching for the same rights that we celebrate today.

So now we face a choice. My opponent and his running mate are new to foreign policy, but from all that we've seen and heard, they want to take us back to an era of blustering and blundering that cost America so dearly.

After all, you don't call Russia our number one enemy – not al Qaeda, Russia – unless you're still stuck in a Cold War time warp. You might not be ready for diplomacy with Beijing if you can't visit the Olympics without insulting our closest ally. My opponent said that it was "tragic" to end the war in Iraq, and he won't tell us how he'll end the war in Afghanistan. Well, I have, and I will. And while my opponent would spend more money on military hardware that our Joint Chiefs don't even want, I will use the money we're no longer spending on war to pay down our debt and put more people back to work – rebuilding roads and bridges, and schools, and runways. Because after two wars that have cost us thousands of lives and over a trillion dollars, it's time to do some nation-building right here at home.

You can choose a future where we reduce our deficit without sticking it to our middle class. Independent experts shows that my plan would cut our deficits by \$4 trillion. And last

summer, I worked with Republicans in Congress to cut \$1 billion in spending – because those of us who believe government can be a force for good should work harder than anyone to reform it, so that it's leaner, more efficient, and more responsive to the American people.

I want to reform the tax code so that it's simple, fair, and asks the wealthiest households to pay higher taxes on incomes over \$250,000 – the same rate we had when Bill Clinton was president; the same rate we had when our economy created nearly 23 million new jobs, the biggest surplus in history, and a whole lot of millionaires to boot.

Now, I'm still eager to reach an agreement based on the principles of my bipartisan debt commission. No party has a monopoly on wisdom. No democracy works without compromise. I want to get this done and we can get this done. But when Governor Romney and his allies in Congress tell us we can somehow lower our deficit by spending trillions more on new tax breaks for the wealthy – well, what [did] Bill Clinton call it “you do do the arithmetic.” You do the math. I refuse to go along with that. And as long as I'm President, I never will.

I refuse to ask middle class families to give up their deductions for owning a home or raising their kids just to pay for another millionaire's tax cut. I refuse to ask students to pay more for college; or kick children out of Head Start programs, to eliminate health insurance for millions of Americans who are poor and elderly, or disabled – all so those with the most can pay less. I'm not going along with that.

And I will never turn Medicare into a voucher. No American should ever have to spend their golden years at the mercy of insurance companies. They should retire with the care and dignity they have earned. Yes, we will reform and strengthen Medicare for the long haul, but we'll do it by reducing the cost of health care – not by asking seniors to pay thousands

of dollars more. And we will keep the promise of social security by taking the responsible steps to strengthen it – not by turning it over to Wall Street.

This is the choice we now face. This is what the election comes down to. Over and over, we have been told by our opponents that bigger tax cuts and fewer regulations are the only way; that since government can't do everything, it should do almost nothing. If you can't afford health insurance, hope that you don't get sick. If a company releases toxic pollution into the air your children breathe, well, that's the price of progress. If you can't afford to start a business or go to college, take my opponent's advice and "borrow money from your parents."

You know what? That's not who we are. That's not what this country's about. As Americans, we believe we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights – rights that no man or government can take away. We insist on personal responsibility and we celebrate individual initiative. We're not entitled to success. We have to earn it. We honor the strivers, the dreamers, the risk-takers, the entrepreneurs who have always been the driving force behind our free enterprise system – the greatest engine of growth and prosperity that the world has ever known.

But we also believe in something called citizenship – a word at the very heart of our founding, a word at the very essence of our democracy; the idea that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another, and to future generations.

We believe that when a CEO pays his autoworkers enough to buy the cars that they build, the whole company does better.

We believe that when a family can no longer be tricked into signing a mortgage they can't afford, that family is protected, but so is the value of other people's homes, and so

is the entire economy.

We believe that a little girl who's offered an escape from poverty by a great teacher or a grant for college could become the next Steve Jobs, or the scientist who cures cancer, or the President of the United States – and it's in our power to give her that chance.

We know that churches and charities can often make more of a difference than a poverty program alone. We don't want handouts for people who refuse to help themselves, and we certainly don't want bailouts for banks that break the rules. We don't think government can solve all of our problems. But we don't think that government is the source of all our problems – any more than are welfare recipients, or corporations, or unions, or immigrants, or gays, or any other group we're told to blame for our troubles.

Because, America, we understand that this democracy is ours.

We, the People, recognize that we have responsibilities as well as rights; that our destinies are bound together; that a freedom which only asks what's in it for me, a freedom without a commitment to others, a freedom without love or charity or duty or patriotism, is unworthy of our founding ideals, and those who died in their defense.

As citizens, we understand that America is not about what can be done for us. It's about what can be done by us, together, through the hard and frustrating but necessary work of self-government. That's what we believe.

So you see, the election four years ago wasn't about me. It was about you. My fellow citizens – you were the change.

You're the reason there's a little girl with a heart disorder in Phoenix who'll get the surgery she needs because an insurance company can't limit her coverage. You did that.

You're the reason a young man in Colorado who never thought he'd be able to afford his dream of earning a medical degree is about to get that chance. You made that possible.

You're the reason a young immigrant who grew up here and went to school here and pledged allegiance to our flag will no longer be deported from the only country she's ever called home; why selfless soldiers won't be kicked out of the military because of who they are or who they love; why thousands of families have finally been able to say to the loved ones who served us so bravely: "Welcome home." "Welcome home." You did that. You did that.

If you turn away now – if you buy into the cynicism that the change we fought for isn't possible... well, change will not happen. If you give up on the idea that your voice can make a difference, then other voices will fill the void: the lobbyists and special interests; the people with the \$10 million checks who are trying to buy this election and those who are trying to make it harder for you to vote; Washington politicians who want to decide who you can marry, or control health care choices that women should make for themselves.

Only you can make sure that doesn't happen. Only you have the power to move us forward.

You know, I recognize that times have changed since I first spoke to this convention. The times have changed – and so have I.

I'm no longer just a candidate. I'm the President. I know what it means to send young Americans into battle, for I have held in my arms the mothers and fathers of those who didn't return. I've shared the pain of families who've lost their homes, and the frustration of workers who've lost their jobs. If the critics are right that I've made all my decisions based on polls, then I must not be very good at reading them. And while I'm proud of what we've achieved together, I'm far more

mindful of my own failings, knowing exactly what Lincoln meant when he said, "I have been driven to my knees many times by the overwhelming conviction that I had no place else to go."

But as I stand here tonight, I have never been more hopeful about America. Not because I think I have all the answers. Not because I'm naïve about the magnitude of our challenges.

I'm hopeful because of you.

The young woman I met at a science fair who won national recognition for her biology research while living with her family at a homeless shelter – she gives me hope.

The auto worker who won the lottery after his plant almost closed, but kept coming to work every day, and bought flags for his whole town and one of the cars that he built to surprise his wife – he gives me hope.

The family business in Warroad, Minnesota that didn't lay off a single one of their four thousand employees when the recession hit, even when their competitors shut down dozens of plants, even when it meant the owners gave up some perks and pay – because they understood their biggest asset was the community and the workers who helped build that business – they give me hope.

And I think about the young sailor I met at Walter Reed hospital, still recovering from a grenade attack that would cause him to have his leg amputated above the knee. Six months ago, we would watch him walk into a White House dinner honoring those who served in Iraq, tall and twenty pounds heavier, dashing in his uniform, with a big grin on his face; sturdy on his new leg. And I remember how a few months after that I would watch him on a bicycle, racing with his fellow wounded warriors on a sparkling spring day, inspiring other heroes who had just begun the hard path he had traveled.

He gives me hope.

He gives me hope.

I don't know what party these men and women belong to. I don't know if they'll vote for me. But I know that their spirit defines us. They remind me, in the words of Scripture, that ours is a "future filled with hope."

And if you share that faith with me – if you share that hope with me – I ask you tonight for your vote.

If you reject the notion that this nation's promise is reserved for the few, your voice must be heard in this election.

If you reject the notion that our government is forever beholden to the highest bidder, you need to stand up in this election.

If you believe that new plants and factories can dot our landscape; that new energy can power our future; that new schools can provide ladders of opportunity to this nation of dreamers; if you believe in a country where everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules, then I need you to vote this November.

America, I never said this journey would be easy, and I won't promise that now. Yes, our path is harder – but it leads to a better place. Yes our road is longer – but we travel it together. We don't turn back. We leave no one behind. We pull each other up. We draw strength from our victories, and we learn from our mistakes, but we keep our eyes fixed on that distant horizon, knowing that Providence is with us, and that we are surely blessed to be citizens of the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you and God bless you.