

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaCdyuSt1Ps> <Washington. POST

FROM: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/barack-obama-speech-full-transcript-2018-09-07/> [emphasis added – by Susan]

President Obama's full speech on the state of American democracy

Former President Barack Obama gave a speech at the [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#) on Friday, September 7, 2018, urging Americans to vote this November “because our democracy depends on it.” Obama also said President Trump is "a symptom, not the cause" of division in America today, and emphasized that only voters can change the present. **Following are his full remarks...” - with video links – and TEXT :**

- 1) NOT the video that Susan viewed – But, JUST President Obama's speech. <https://www.youtube.com/embed/RX1GYkxTAcY> (Total time of video = 1 hour:05 minutes:24 seconds)**
- 2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaCdyuSt1Ps> "Washington Post" Video. This is the video - which Susan viewed - AND updated TEXT provided - by CBS News (link above)**

W. Post" Video (total time of video = 2 hours:03minutes:02 seconds) Event begins (U. Pres. & Amaury Saulsbury “introduce” @ 22minutes:57 seconds) THIS VIDEO Event ENDS (1 hour: 34 minutes: 3 seconds) THUS, Event presentation is: 1 hour : 11 minutes : 46 seconds long.

--- **OBAMA:** Hey! Hello, Illinois! **I-L-L!**

AUDIENCE: I-L-L!

OBAMA: I-L-L!

AUDIENCE: I-L-L!

OBAMA: I-L-L!

AUDIENCE: I-L-L!

OBAMA: Okay, okay. Just checking to see if you're awake. Please have a seat, everybody.

It is good to be home. It's good to see corn. Beans.

I was trying to explain to somebody (as we were flying in), that's corn. That's beans. And they were very impressed at my agricultural knowledge.

Please give it up for Amaury (1) once again, for that outstanding introduction.

I have a bunch of good friends here today, including “somebody” who I served with, who is one of the finest senators in the country; and, we're lucky to have him, your Senator, Dick Durbin is here.

I also noticed, by the way, *former* Governor Edgar here, who I haven't seen in a long time, and somehow, he has not aged and I have. And it's great to see you, Governor. I want to thank President Killeen and everybody at the U of I System for making it possible for me to be here

today.

And, I am deeply honored at the “*Paul Douglas Award*” - that is being given to me. He is somebody who set the path for so much outstanding public service here in Illinois. (2)

Now, I want to start by addressing the elephant in the room.

I know people are still wondering why I didn't speak at the 2017 commencement.

The student body “president” sent a very thoughtful invitation. The students made a spiffy video. And, when I declined, I hear there was speculation that I was boycotting campus - until Antonio's Pizza reopened. [-LAUGHTER]

So, I want to be clear. I did not take sides in that late-night food debate. The truth is, after eight years in the White House, I needed to spend some time “one-on-one” with Michelle - if I wanted to stay married. And, she says “hello”, by the way.

I also wanted to spend some quality time with my daughters, who were suddenly young women “on their way out the door”. And, I should add, by the way; now, that I have a daughter in college, I can tell all the students here, your parents suffer. They cry privately. It is brutal. So please call. Send a text.

We need to hear from you. Just a little something. And, truth was, I was also intent on following a “wise American tradition”. Of, “ex-presidents” gracefully exiting the political stage - making room for new voices and new ideas. And, we have our first president, George

Washington, to thank - for setting that example. After he led the colonies to victory - as “General” Washington, there were no constraints on him (really); He was practically a “god”- to those who had followed him into battle.

There was no Constitution. There were no democratic norms that “guided” what he should or could do. And, he could have made himself “all-powerful”. He could have made himself potentially ‘President for life’. And instead, he resigned as “Commander-in-Chief” and moved back to his country estate. And, six years later, he was elected President. But, after two terms, he resigned again – and, rode off into the sunset. The point Washington made; The point - that is essential to American democracy – is, that in a government “of and by and for the people”, there should be no permanent ruling class. There are only citizens, who through their elected and temporary representatives, determine our course and determine our character.

I'm here today, because - this is one of those “pivotal moments” - when every one of us, as citizens of the United States, need to determine just who it is that we are; just what it is that we stand for; And, as a “fellow citizen”, not as an “ex-president”; but, as a fellow citizen, I am here to deliver a simple message: and, that is:

That - YOU need to vote! Because, our democracy depends on it!

Now, some of you may think I'm “exaggerating” when I say: “**This November's elections are more important than any I can remember in my lifetime.**” And, I know, “politicians” say that all the time. I have been guilty of saying it a few times – particularly - when I was on the ballot.

But, just a glance at recent headlines should tell you that this moment really is “different”. The stakes really are “higher”. The consequences of any of us “sitting on the sidelines” are more “dire”.

And, it's not as if we haven't had big elections before – or, big choices to make in our history.

The fact is, democracy has never been “easy”, and our founding fathers argued about everything. We waged a civil war. We overcame depression. We've lurched from eras of great progressive change to periods of retrenchment. Still, most Americans alive today, certainly the students who are here, have operated under some “common assumptions” about, who we are and what we stand for.

Out of the turmoil of the industrial revolution and the “Great Depression”, America adapted a new economy. A “20th century economy” - guiding our free market with regulations to protect health and safety and fair competition, empowering workers with union movements; investing in science and infrastructure and educational institutions (like U of I); strengthening our system of primary and secondary education, and stitching together a “social safety net”. And, all of this led to unrivaled prosperity and the rise of a broad and deep “middle class”; in the sense [that] if you worked hard, you could climb the ladder of success.

And, not everyone was included in this prosperity. There was a lot more work to do. And so, in response to the stain of slavery and segregation and the reality of racial discrimination, the civil rights movement not only opened new doors for African-Americans; but also, opened up the floodgates of opportunity for women and Americans with disabilities and LGBT Americans and others to make their own claims to full and equal citizenship. And, although discrimination

remained a pernicious force in our society and continues to this day; and although, there are “controversies” about ‘how’ to best ensure genuine equality of opportunity, there's been at least “rough agreement” (among the overwhelming majority of Americans) that our country is strongest when everybody's treated fairly, when people are judged on the merits and the content of their character, and not the color of their skin; or, the way in which they worship God; or, their last names. And, that consensus then extended beyond our borders. And, from the wreckage of World War II, we built a **“postwar web architecture system”** - of alliances and institutions - to underwrite freedom and oppose Soviet totalitarianism and to help poorer countries develop.

And American leadership - across the globe - wasn't perfect. We made mistakes. At times we lost sight of our ideals. We had fierce arguments about Vietnam; and, we had fierce arguments about Iraq. But, thanks to our leadership, a “bipartisan leadership”, and the efforts of diplomats and Peace Corps volunteers; And, most of all, thanks to the constant sacrifices of our men and women in uniform – we - not only reduced the prospects of war between the world's great powers; we -not only won the Cold War; we - helped spread a commitment to certain values and principles; - like, the “rule of law” and “human rights” and democracy and the notion of “the inherent dignity and worth of every individual”.

And, even those countries (that didn't abide by those principles) were still subject to shame; and, still had to (at least) give lip service for the idea. And, that provided a “lever” to continually improve the prospects for people around the world.

That's the story of America. A story of progress. Fitful progress. Incomplete progress - but progress. And, that “progress” wasn't achieved - by just a handful of famous leaders making speeches. It was won, because of countless quiet acts of heroism and dedication by citizens, by ordinary people, many of them not much older than you. It was won because rather than be “bystanders to history”, ordinary people fought - and marched - and mobilized - and built - and, yes, voted to make history!

Of course, there's always been another darker aspect to America's story. Progress doesn't just move in a straight line. There's a reason why progress hasn't been easy; and, why (throughout our history) every two steps forward – seems - to sometimes produce one step back. Each time, we painstakingly pull ourselves closer to our founding ideals, (that) “ all of us are created equal, endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights”; the ideals (that) say every child should have opportunity and every man - and woman - in this country (who's willing to work hard) should be able to find a job - and support a family - and pursue their small piece of the “American Dream”; ideals (that) say we have a “collective responsibility” to care for the sick and the infirm – and, we have a “responsibility” to conserve the amazing bounty, the natural resources of this country and of this planet for future generations. Each time we've gotten closer to those ideals - somebody (somewhere) has pushed back. The “status quo” pushes back. Sometimes, the “backlash” comes from people who are genuinely, if wrongly, fearful of change. More often, it's manufactured (by the powerful and the privileged) who want to keep us divided and keep us angry and keep us cynical - because that helps them maintain the status

quo and keep their power and keep their privilege. And, you happen to be coming of age during one of those moments. It did not start with “Donald Trump”. He is a symptom, not the cause.

He's just capitalizing on resentments that politicians have been fanning for years. A fear and anger - that's rooted in our past - but it's also born out of the enormous upheavals that have taken place in your brief lifetimes.

And, by the way, it is brief. When I heard “*Amaury* was eleven when I got elected” and now, “he's lik3 starting a company” - that was yesterday.

But, think about it. You've “come of age” in a smaller, more “connected” world; where, “demographic shifts” and the “winds of change” have “scrambled” - not only traditional economic arrangements; but, our social arrangements and our religious commitments - and our civic institutions.

Most of you don't remember a time before 9/11; when, you didn't have to take off your shoes at an airport. Most of you don't remember a time when America wasn't at war; or, when money and images and information could travel instantly around the globe; Or, when the climate wasn't changing faster than our efforts to address it. This change has happened fast, faster than any time in human history. And, it created a new economy - that has unleashed incredible prosperity.

But it's also upended people's lives in profound ways.

For those with “unique skills” or “access to technology” and capital - a “global market” has meant unprecedented wealth.

For those not so lucky; for the factory worker, for the office worker, or even middle managers, those same forces may have “wiped out” your job; or, at least put you in “no position” to ask for a raise. And, As “wages slowed” and “inequality accelerated” - those at the “top of the economic pyramid” have been able to “influence government”, to “skew things” - even more in their direction. Cutting taxes on the wealthiest Americans, unwinding regulations and weakening worker protections. Shrinking the safety net.

So, you (3) have “come of age” during a time of “growing inequality” - of “fracturing of economic opportunity”. And, that growing economic divide “compounded” other divisions in our country: regional, racial, religious, cultural. It [*the growing economic divide*] made it harder to:
A) build consensus on issues.

C) It made politicians less willing to compromise,

D) which [these things] increased “gridlock”

- which made people - even more cynical about politics.

And then, the reckless behavior of “financial elites” triggered a massive financial crisis (ten years ago this week); A “crisis” that resulted in the worst recession in any of our lifetimes and caused years of hardship for the American people, for many of your parents, for many of your families.

Most of you weren't old enough to fully focus on what was going on at the time, (3) but, when I came into office in 2009, we were losing 800,000 jobs a month. 800,000! Millions of people were losing their homes. Many were worried we were entering into a second “Great Depression”. So, we worked hard to end that crisis; but, also to break some of these longer term trends. **And, the actions (we took) during**

that crisis returned the economy to healthy growth and initiated the longest streak of job creation on record. And, we covered another 20 million Americans - with health insurance – and, we cut our deficits by more than half. Partly, by making sure that people like me, who have been given such amazing opportunities (by this country), pay our “fair share” - of taxes - to help folks coming up behind me.

And, by the time I left office, “household income” was near its all-time high and the “uninsured rate” had hit an all-time low and wages were rising and poverty rates were falling. I mention all this - just so - when you hear “how great the economy's doing right now” - let's just remember **when** this recovery started. [cheers]

I mean, I'm glad it's continued, but when you hear about this “economic miracle” that's been going on; when the job numbers come out - “monthly job numbers”... Suddenly Republicans are saying “...it's a miracle!” I have to kind of remind them: “... **actually, those job numbers are the same as they were in 2015 and 2016.**”

And -

Anyway, I digress.

So, we made progress. But – and, this is the truth -- my administration couldn't reverse forty-year trends in only eight years, especially, once Republicans took over the House of Representatives (in 2010)-and, decided to block everything we did! Even things they used to support.

So, we pulled the economy out of crisis. But, to this day, too many people (who once felt solidly middle-class) still feel very real and very personal economic insecurity.

Even though we took out “bin Laden” – and, “wound down” the wars in Iraq and our combat role in Afghanistan; and, got Iran to halt its nuclear program; The world is still full of “threats and disorder”. That comes streaming through people's televisions every single day. And, these “challenges” get people worried. And, it frays our civic trust. And, it makes a lot of people feel like “the fix is in” and, the “game is rigged”; And, nobody's looking out for them. Especially, those communities outside our big urban centers.

And, even though your generation is the most diverse in history, with a greater acceptance and celebration of our differences than ever before, those are the kinds of conditions [WHAT HE JUST DESCRIBED] that are **“ripe for exploitation” by politicians - who have no compunction and no shame about tapping into America's “dark history” of racial and ethnic and religious division.**

Appealing to tribe, appealing to fear, pitting one group against another, telling people that order and security will be restored -- if, it weren't for those who “don't look like us” or, “don't sound like us” or, don't pray like we do. that's an “old playbook”. It's as old as time. And, in a healthy democracy it doesn't work. Our antibodies kick in, and people of goodwill - from across the political spectrum - **callout the bigots and the fearmongers** – and, work to compromise and get things done and promote the better angels of our nature.

But, when there's a vacuum in our democracy, when we don't vote, when we take our basic rights and freedoms for granted, when we turn away and stop paying attention and stop engaging and stop believing...

and, look for the “newest diversion”; the electronic versions of “bread and circuses” (4) then, other voices fill the void.

A politics of fear and resentment and retrenchment takes hold. And demagogues promise simple fixes to complex problems. They’ll promise to fight for the little guy - even as they cater to the wealthiest and the most powerful. They’ll promise to clean up corruption and then plunder away. They start undermining norms that ensure accountability, try to change the rules to entrench their power further. And, they appeal to “racial nationalism”(5) that's barely veiled, if veiled at all.

Sound familiar? Now, understand, this is not just a matter of Democrats *versus* Republicans or liberals *versus* conservatives. At various times in our history, this kind of politics has infected both parties. Southern Democrats were the bigger defenders of slavery. It took a Republican President (Abraham Lincoln!) to end it. “Dixiecrats” filibustered anti-lynching legislation, opposed the idea of expanding civil rights, and although it was a Democratic President and a majority Democratic Congress - spurred on by young marchers and protestors - that got the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act over the finish line. Those historic laws also got passed because of the leadership of Republicans like Illinois' own Everett Dirksen. (6)

So, neither party has had a monopoly on wisdom, neither party has been exclusively responsible for us going backwards instead of forwards. But I have to say this because sometimes we hear, oh, “a plague on both your houses”.

Over the past few decades, it wasn't true when Jim Edgar was governor [here in Illinois] or, When Jim Thompson was governor. I've got a lot of

good Republican friends here in Illinois. **But, over the past few decades, the politics of division, of resentment and paranoia has - unfortunately - found a home in the Republican Party.**

This Congress (115th United States Congress) has

- a) championed the unwinding of campaign finance laws (7) to give billionaires outsized influence over our politics;
- b) systemically attacked voting rights to make it harder for the young people, the minorities, and the poor to vote.
- c) Handed out tax cuts without regard to deficits.
- d) Slashed the safety net wherever it could.
- e) Cast dozens of votes to “take away” health insurance from ordinary Americans.
- f) Embraced wild conspiracy theories, like those surrounding Benghazi, or my birth certificate.
- g) Rejected science,
- h) rejected facts on things like climate change.
- i) Embraced a rising absolutism – from: a willingness to default on America's debt by not paying our bills, to a refusal to even meet, much less consider, a qualified nominee for the Supreme Court - because he happened to be nominated by a Democratic President.

None of this is conservative. I don't mean to pretend - I'm channeling Abraham Lincoln now – but, that's not what he had in mind, I think, when he helped form the Republican Party.

It's not conservative. It sure isn't normal. It's radical. It's a “vision” that says: the protection of our power and those who “back us” is all that matters, even when it hurts the country. It's a “vision” that says: the few who can afford a high-priced lobbyist and unlimited campaign

contributions set the agenda. And, over the past two years, this vision is now nearing its logical conclusion.

So that - with Republicans in control of Congress and the White House - without any checks or balances (whatsoever), they've provided another \$1.5 trillion -dollars - (in tax cuts) to people (like me) who, I promise, don't need it – and, don't even pretend to pay for them.

It's supposed to be the party, supposedly, of fiscal conservatism. Suddenly deficits do not matter, even though, just two years ago, when the deficit was lower, they said, I couldn't afford to help working families or seniors on Medicare because the deficit was an existential crisis. **What changed?** -- What changed? -- They're [THE REPUBLICANS ARE]

- 1) subsidizing corporate polluters with taxpayer dollars,
- 2) allowing dishonest lenders to take advantage of veterans and students and consumers again.
- 3) They've made it so (that) the only nation on earth to pull out of the global climate agreement, it's not North Korea, it's not Syria, it's not Russia or Saudi Arabia. It's us! [THE usa] The only country. There are a lot of countries in the world. We're the only ones.
- 4) They're undermining our alliances,
- 5) cozying up to Russia.

What happened to the Republican Party? Its central organizing principle - in foreign policy - was the fight against Communism, and now they're cozying up to the former head of the KGB, actively blocking legislation that would defend our elections from Russian attack.

What happened? Their sabotage of the Affordable Care Act has already

cost more than three million Americans their health insurance. And, if they're still in power next fall, you'd better believe they're coming at it again. They've said so.

In a healthy democracy, there's some checks and balances on this kind of behavior; this kind of inconsistency. but right now there's none.

Republicans who know better in Congress -- and they're there, they're quoted saying, "Yeah, we know this is kind of crazy." [they] --are still bending over backwards -- to shield this behavior from scrutiny, or accountability, or consequence. [THEY] Seem utterly unwilling to find the backbone to safeguard the institutions that make our democracy work.

And, by the way, the claim that "everything will turn out okay – because, there are '*people*' - inside the White House - who secretly aren't following the President's orders" ... That is not a check.

I'm being serious here – that is not how our democracy is supposed to work. These "people" aren't elected. They're not accountable. They're not doing us a "service" by - actively promoting 90 percent of the crazy stuff that's coming out of this White House - and then saying, don't worry, we're preventing the other 10 percent. That's not how things are supposed to work. This is not normal.

So, these are extraordinary times. And they're dangerous times.

But here's the good news. In two months, we have the chance, not the certainty but the chance, to restore some semblance of sanity to our politics.

Because there is actually only one real check on bad policy and abuses of power, and that's you. **You and your vote.**

Look, Americans will always have disagreements on policy. This is a big country. It is a raucous country. People have different points of view.

I happen to be a Democrat. I support Democratic candidates. I believe:

- our policies are better
- and that we have a bigger, bolder vision of opportunity and equality and justice and inclusive democracy.
- We know there are a lot of jobs young people aren't getting a chance to occupy
- or aren't getting paid enough
- or aren't getting benefits like insurance.
- It's harder for young people to save for a rainy day, let alone retirement.

So, Democrats aren't just running on “good old ideas” like a higher minimum wage. [Democrats] they are running on “good new ideas” like:

- 1) Medicare for all,
- 2) giving workers seats on corporate boards,
- 3) reversing the most egregious corporate tax cuts (to make sure college students graduate debt-free).

We [DEMOCRATS] know that people are tired of toxic corruption, and that democracy depends on transparency and accountability.

So, Democrats aren't just running on good old ideas - like requiring presidential candidates to release their tax returns, and barring lobbyists from making campaign contributions, but on good new ideas like barring lobbyists from getting paid by foreign governments.

We [Democrats] know that climate change isn't just coming. It is here!

So, Democrats aren't just running on good old ideas - like increasing gas

mileage in our cars -- which I did; and which, Republicans are trying to reverse -- but on good new ideas - like putting a price on carbon pollution.

We [DEMOCRATS] know that in a smaller, more connected world, we can't just put technology back in a box; We can't just put walls up - all around America. "Walls" don't keep out threats - like terrorism or disease; And, that's why - we propose: [A] leading our alliances and [B]helping other countries develop, and [C] pushing back against tyrants.

And, Democrats talk about "reforming our immigration" - so, yes, it is orderly – and, it is fair – and, it is legal; But it [THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM] continues to welcome "strivers" and "dreamers" -- from all around the world.

That's. That's why I'm a Democrat! That's the set of ideas that I believe in!

Oh, I am here to tell you (that) even if you don't agree with me [or Democrats] on policy; Even if you believe in more "Libertarian economic theories", even if you are an "evangelical" – and, our position on certain social issues is a "bridge too far"; Even if you think my assessment of immigration is mistaken and that Democrats aren't serious enough about immigration enforcement;

I'm here to tell you (that) you should still be concerned with our current course and [YOU] should still want to see a restoration of: honesty and decency and lawfulness in our government.

It should not be "Democratic" or "Republican". It should not be a partisan issue to say (that) we do not pressure the Attorney General -

or the FBI - to use the criminal justice system as a cudgel to punish our political opponents. (8)

Or, to explicitly call on the Attorney General to protect members (of our own [REPUBLICAN] party) from prosecution because an election happens to be coming up. **I'm not making that up.** That's not hypothetical. It shouldn't be Democratic or Republican to say that we don't threaten the freedom of the press because -- they say things or publish stories we don't like.

I complained plenty about Fox News. But, you never heard me threaten to “shut them down” – or, call them “enemies of the people”.

It shouldn't be “Democratic” or “Republican” to say: “We don't target certain groups of people - based on what they look like – or, how they pray. We are Americans! We're supposed to stand up to bullies! Not follow them! We're supposed to stand up to discrimination! And, we're sure as heck supposed to stand up, clearly and unequivocally, to Nazi sympathizers.

How hard can that be? Saying that Nazis are “bad”. I'll be honest, sometimes I get into arguments with “progressive” friends -- about what the current political movement requires.

There are well-meaning folks passionate about social justice, who think things have gotten so bad, the lines have been so starkly drawn, that we have to fight fire with fire, we have to do the same things to the Republicans that they do to us, adopt their tactics, say whatever works, make up stuff about the other side.

I don't agree with that. It's not because I'm soft. It's not because I'm

interested in promoting an “empty bipartisanship”. I don't agree with it - because -- “eroding our civic institutions and our civic trust and making people angrier and yelling at each other and making people cynical about government” -- that always works better for those who don't believe in the power of “collective action”. (9)

You don't need an “effective government” or a “robust press” or “reasoned debate” to work - when all you're concerned about - is maintaining power.

In fact, the more cynical people are about government and the angrier and more dispirited they are about the prospects for change, the more likely the powerful are able to maintain their power.

But, we [DEMOCRATS] believe – [that] in order to move this country forward; to actually solve problems and make people's lives better, we need a “well-functioning government”, we need our civic institutions to work. We need cooperation among people of different political persuasions. And, to make that work, we have to restore our faith in democracy. We have to bring people together -- not tear them apart. **We need majorities in Congress and state legislatures who are serious about governing and want to bring about real change and improvements in people's lives.**

And we won't win people over by calling them names, or dismissing entire chunks of the country as racist, or sexist, or homophobic.

When I say bring people together, I mean all of our people. You know, this whole notion that has sprung up recently about Democrats need to choose between trying to appeal to the “white working-class voters”, or

voters of “color”, and *women* and “LGBT Americans”, that's nonsense.

I don't buy that. I got votes from every demographic. We won by “reaching out” to everybody and competing everywhere and by fighting for every vote.

And that's what we've got to do - in this [UPCOMING] election - and every election after that.

And, we can't do that -- if we immediately disregard what others have to say (from the start) because they're not like us; Because they're not ... -- because, they're white or they're black or they're men or women; or, they're gay or they're straight;

If we think (that somehow) there's no way they can understand how I'm feeling; And therefore, [THEY] don't have any “standing” - to speak on certain matters because we're only defined by certain characteristics.

That doesn't work. [NOT] if you want a healthy democracy. We can't do that - if we traffic in “absolutes” when it comes to policy. You know, to make democracy work, we have to be able to: get inside the reality of people who are different, have different experiences, come from different backgrounds. We have to “engage” [with] them - even when it is frustrating; We have to listen (to them) - even when we don't like what they have to say; We have to hope that we can change their minds; and, we have to remain open to them changing ours.

And that doesn't mean, by the way, abandoning our principles - or caving to bad policy (in the interests of maintaining some phony version of "civility.")

That seems to be, by the way, the definition of civility offered by too many Congressional Republicans: ***"...We will be polite as long as we get a hundred percent of what we want and you don't call us out on the various ways that we're sticking it to people. And, we'll click our tongues and issue vague statements of disappointment - when the President does something outrageous; But, we won't really actually do anything about it. ..."*** ~ That's not civility! That's abdicating your responsibilities.

But again, I digress. Making democracy work means "... holding on to our principles, having clarity about our principles, and then having the confidence to get in the arena and have a serious debate. ..." And, it also means: "... appreciating that progress does not happen all at once. But, when you put your shoulder to the wheel, if you're willing to fight for it, things do get better. ..." And, let me tell you something, particularly young people here: **"Better" is good.**

I used to have to tell my young staff this (all the time) in the White House. **"Better" is good.** That's the history of progress in this country. Not perfect. "Better." The Civil Rights Act didn't end racism; But, it made things "better". Social Security didn't eliminate all poverty for seniors, but it made things "better" for millions of people.

Do not let people tell you "the fight's not worth it because you won't get everything that you want." The idea that, "well, you know there's racism in America – So, I'm not going to bother voting. No point." That makes no sense. You can make it "better". Better is always worth fighting for! That's how our founders expected this system of self-

government to work; that, through the testing of ideas - and the application of reason - and evidence - and proof -- we could sort through our differences. And [ALTHOUGH] nobody would get exactly what they wanted – but, it would be possible to find a basis for “common ground.” (10)

And that common ground exists. Maybe it's not fashionable to say that right now. It's hard to see it with all the nonsense in Washington. it's hard to hear it with all the noise. But “common ground” exists. I have seen it. I have lived it. I know there are white people who care deeply about black people being treated unfairly. I have talked to them and loved them. And I know there are black people who care deeply about the struggles of white rural America. I'm one of them - and I have a track record to prove it

I know there are evangelicals who are deeply committed to doing something about climate change. I've seen them do the work. I know there are conservatives who think there's nothing compassionate about separating immigrant children from their mothers. I know there are Republicans who believe government should only perform a few “minimal functions”; but, that one of those functions should be making sure nearly 3,000 Americans don't die in a hurricane and its aftermath.

Common ground is out there! I see it every day. Just how people interact. how people treat each other. You see it on the ball field. You see it at work. You see it in places of worship. But to say that a “common ground” exists - doesn't mean it will inevitably win out. History shows the power of fear. And the closer that we get to Election

Day [Now, 62 days away: November 7, 2018] the more those “invested” in the politics of fear and division will work. [THEY] will do anything to hang on to their recent gains.

Fortunately, I am hopeful - because out of this political darkness - I am seeing a great awakening of “citizenship” all across the country.

I cannot tell you how encouraged I've been by watching so many people get involved for the first time; or, the first time in a long time.

They're marching and they're organizing and they're registering people to vote; And, they're running for office - themselves.

Look at this crop of Democratic candidates: Running for Congress; And, running for governor; Running for the state legislature; Running for district attorney; Running for school board. It is a movement of citizens - who happen to be younger and more diverse and more female - than ever before - and that is really useful.

We need more women in charge! But, we've got “first-time candidates”. We've got veterans (of Iraq and Afghanistan); Record numbers of women. Americans, who previously maybe didn't have an interest in politics - as a career. But, laced up their shoes and rolled up their sleeves and grabbed a clipboard – because, they too believe, this time's different; This moment's too important to sit out. And, if you listen to what these candidates are talking about, in individual races across the country, you'll find they're not just running against something, they are running for something. They're running to expand

opportunity -- and they're running to restore the honor and compassion that should be the essence of public service.

And, speaking as a Democrat: That is when the Democratic Party has always made the biggest difference in the lives of the American people; When, we led with conviction and principle and bold new ideas.

The antidote to a government -controlled by a powerful fear - a government that “divides” – is, a government by: the organized, energized, inclusive many.

That's what this moment's about. That has to be the answer. You cannot sit back and wait for a savior. You can't “opt out”- because you don't feel sufficiently inspired by this or that particular candidate. This is not a rock concert, this is not Coachella. (11) You don't need a messiah. All we need are decent, honest, hardworking people who are “accountable” – and, who have America's best interests at heart.

And they'll step up and they'll join our government and they will make things better - if they have support. One election will not fix everything that needs to be fixed, but it will be a start. And, you have to start it. What's going to fix our democracy is YOU!

People ask me: “What are you going to do for the election?” No, the question is: **What are you going to do?** You're the antidote!

Your participation and your spirit and your determination, not just in *this* election but in every subsequent election, and in the days between elections.

Because, in the end, the threat to our democracy doesn't just come from: “Donald Trump” – or, the current batch of Republicans in Congress; Or, the Koch Brothers and their lobbyists; Or too much compromise from Democrats; Or Russian hacking.

The biggest threat to our democracy is indifference. The biggest threat to our democracy is cynicism. A “cynicism” that's led too many people to turn away from politics and stay home on Election Day.

To all the young people who are here today: There are now more “eligible” voters in your generation than in any other; Which means: Your generation now has more power - than anybody - to change things.

If you want it, YOU can make sure America gets out of its current funk. If YOU actually care about it, YOU have the power to make sure we seize a brighter future! But, to exercise that clout, to exercise that power, you have to show up.

In the last “midterms election”, [in 2014], fewer than one in five young people voted. **One in five!** Not two in five; Or, three in five. One in five! Is it any wonder [then] this Congress [the 115th] doesn't reflect “your values” and “your” priorities? Are you surprised by that?

This whole project of “self- government” only works -- if everybody's doing their part. Don't tell me your vote doesn't matter. I've won states (in the presidential election) because of five, ten, twenty votes - per precinct. And, if you thought elections “don't matter” -- I hope these last two years have corrected that impression. [The “Trump

Administration” was inaugurated on Jan. 20, 2017. At this speech date (-9-7-2018) – about, two years had passed.]

So, if you don't like what's going on right now -- and you shouldn't -- do not complain. Don't “hashtag”. Don't get anxious. Don't retreat. Don't binge on whatever it is you're bingeing on. Don't lose yourself in “ironic detachment”. Don't put your head in the sand. Don't “boo”. Vote!

Vote! If you are really concerned about how the criminal justice system treats African-Americans, the best way to protest is to vote! Not just for Senators and Representatives, but for mayors and sheriffs and state legislators.

Do what they just did in Philadelphia and Boston; and, elect state's attorneys and district attorneys who are looking at issues in a new light. [People] who realize that the vast majority of law enforcement “do the right thing” -- in a really hard job; And, we just need to make sure that all of them do!

If you're tired of politicians who offer nothing but "thoughts and prayers" after a mass shooting, you've got to do what the Parkland kids are doing. Some of them aren't even eligible to vote, yet they're out there working to change minds and registering people, and they're not “giving up” until we have a Congress that sees YOUR lives as more important than a campaign check from the NRA.

You've got to vote!

If you support the MeToo movement! [IF] you're outraged by stories of “sexual harassment” – and, assault (inspired by the women who shared

them) – YOU have got to do more than “retweet a hashtag”. You've got to vote!

Part of the reason women are more vulnerable in the workplace, is because not enough women are bosses in the workplace! Which, is why we need to strengthen and enforce laws that protect women in the workplace; not just from harassment; but, from discrimination in hiring and promotion! And, not getting paid the same amount - for doing the same work! That requires laws! Laws get passed by “legislators”.

You've got to vote!

When you vote, you've got the power to make it easier to afford college – and, harder to shoot up a school.

When you vote, you've got the power to make sure -- a family keeps its health insurance. YOU! could save somebody's life.

When you vote, you've got the power to make sure “white nationalists” don't feel emboldened - to march with their hoods off - or their hoods on - in Charlottesville - in the middle of the day.

Thirty minutes. Thirty minutes of your time. Is democracy worth that?

We have been through much darker times than these; And, somehow - each generation (of Americans) carried us through to the other side. Not by sitting around and waiting for something to happen! Not by leaving it to others to do something! But, by leading that movement for change - themselves.

And, if you do that. IF you get involved. And, you get engaged; And, you knock on some doors! And, you talk with your friends; And, you argue with your family members; And, you change some minds.
And, you vote! **Something powerful happens.**

Change happens! Hope happens! Not “perfection”. Not every bit of cruelty - and sadness - and poverty - and disease [will be] suddenly stricken from the earth. There will still be problems.

But, with each new candidate (that surprises you with a victory!) - that you supported - a spark of hope happens.

With each “new law” - that helps a kid read – or, helps a “homeless family” find shelter; Or, helps a veteran get the support he or she has earned. Each time that happens -- hope happens.

With each new step we take in the direction of fairness and justice and equality and opportunity - hope spreads.

And, that can be the legacy of your generation. YOU can be the generation (that) at a critical moment “stood up” and reminded us - just how precious this “experiment in democracy” really is. Just how “powerful” it can be when we fight for it; When we believe in it.

I believe in YOU!

I believe you will help lead us in the right direction. And, I will be right there with you - every step of the way. Thank you, Illinois! God bless. God bless this country we love. Thank you!

NOTES:

1. <https://www.thechampaignroom.com/2018/9/7/17831338/barack-obama-leads-ill-chant-speaks-at-university-of-illinois-fighting-illini-ncaa-big-ten>
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Douglas
3. Note: President Obama is speaking to college-age students.
4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bread_and_circuses
5. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/donald-trump-proves-racial-nationalism-is-alive-and-well/article29805755/>
6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Everett_Dirksen
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8. <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cudgel>
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11. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coachella_Valley_Music_and_Arts_Festival
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