

I know it's tempting to believe that. But remember what I always used to say during the last campaign, including that night at Grant Park. I said, real change, big change, is always hard. It's always hard. The civil rights movement was hard. Winning the vote for women was hard. Making sure that workers had some basic protections was hard. Around the world, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, what they did was hard. It takes time. It takes more than a single term. It takes more than a single President. It takes more than a single individual. What it takes is ordinary citizens who keep believing, who are committed to fighting and pushing and inching this country closer and closer to our highest ideals.

And I said in 2008 that I am not a perfect man and I will not be a perfect President. But I promised you—[laughter]—I promised you back then that I would always tell you what I believed, I would always tell you where I stood, and that I would wake up every single day thinking about you and fight for you as hard as

I could and do everything possible to make sure that this country that has given me and Michelle and our kids so much, that that country is there for everybody. And you know what, I have kept that promise.

So, if you're willing to work with me and push through the obstacles and push through the setbacks and get back up when we get knocked down, and if you're willing to hold that vision that we have for America in your hearts, then I promise you change will come. And if you're willing to work as hard as you did in the last election in this election, then we will finish what we started and remind the world just why it is that America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 p.m. at ABC Carpet & Home. In his remarks, he referred to former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in New York City March 1, 2012

The President. Hello, New York? Hello, New York!

So let me start off by thanking Michael and James. They could not be better friends. And for them to open up their home to us just means so much.

It is a special treat for me because, as some of you know, Michael has been redesigning the White House. [Laughter] And he has some strong opinions. [Laughter] And sometimes doesn't always agree with my taste. And so it is good to come to his house and critique it. [Laughter] I don't know about this whole thing right here. [Laughter] Actually, he has done a remarkable job, despite me. So I'm grateful to him.

I see a lot of friends here, people who've supported me for a long time, and I just want to begin by saying thank you. I also want to announce because John Legend is here, I will not sing tonight. [Laughter]

Musician John Legend. Don't steal my job. [Laughter]

The President. Three years ago—a little over 3 years ago now, when I took office, America was in a place that I think some of us don't fully appreciate. We had lost 800,000 jobs the month I was sworn in. The banking system was locked up. There was worldwide panic. The stock market was about half what it is right now. And when I reflect back over the last 3 years, all the battles, all the challenges, what is remarkably encouraging is just how resilient America has proven to be.

That instead of losing 800,000 jobs, last month we gained 250,000. Over the last 2 years, we've created over 3.5 million jobs just in the private sector. Manufacturing is stronger than it's been since the 1990s. We've now had 10 consecutive quarters of growth. Slowly, businesses are recovering. Slowly, families are recovering. And the auto industry is back. GM

is once again the number-one automaker in the world.

The trend lines are moving in the right direction. But there are still a lot of folks out there who are hurting: a lot of people who are still looking for jobs, lot of people whose homes are still underwater, a lot of small businesses that shuttered and haven't reopened.

And so when I think about why I ran in 2008, it wasn't simply to rescue the country from a great depression, because at that—at the time I announced, didn't know we were going into a great depression. It wasn't to save an auto industry. It wasn't to just get back to the status quo. The reason I ran was because there were challenges that had been building up for decades that were preventing America from being the America we dream about and we believe in. An America where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody does their fair share and everybody is playing by the same set of rules, an America where everybody, no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, no matter what you believe, no matter who you love, you've got a chance to make it in this country.

And that's why I ran. And so as much satisfaction as I take from what we've accomplished over the last 3 years, we've got so much more to do.

It's part of the reason why, even as we restored the economy, even as we focused on making sure that we didn't spill into a depression, we also focused on the things that were going to matter in fulfilling that original vision: making sure that people don't go bankrupt when they get sick, making sure that we're investing in education so that young people can afford to go to college and that young people have the skills to go to college, making sure that we get rid of things like “don't ask, don't tell” that prevent people who love this country from serving this country just because of who they love or having to hide who they are. Making sure that we end things like torture and that we project an image around the world that is based on our values and what we care about and rejecting this notion that somehow we

have to choose between our security and our values.

Making sure that, in a country like America, that we are investing in not just now, but the future, and we're rebuilding our roads and our bridges, and we're investing in science and basic research. That we're thinking about how to not only reduce gas prices here and now, but also, how are we transitioning to a new economy that's not dependent on foreign oil and doubling fuel efficiency standards on cars and investing in clean energy and creating whole new industries in advanced battery manufacturing so that the cars of the future can get 100 or 200 miles a gallon or maybe at some point not have to use any oil.

So what we've tried to do is deal with immediate crises, but also make sure that we're keeping our eye on that long-term vision that got me into this campaign in 2008 and got many of you to support that campaign in 2008.

Now, the good news is, we've made incredible progress. The bad news is, is that we haven't had much cooperation from the other side. And I won't make this too sharply political. If you're wondering what I'm talking about, I recommend you watch the recent debates. We're thinking about just running those as advertisements—[laughter]—little snippets, without commentary. We'll just sort of—here you go, this is what they said a while back. [Laughter]

But I think what you're seeing now in the Republican primary underscores what's at stake in this election. There is a fundamental choice here about who we are. Do we have a vision of America that is big and bold and generous and inclusive and is built on hope? Or do we prefer a vision for America that is narrow and cramped and says there's an “us” and a “they” and is satisfied if a few people are doing very, very well at the very top and everybody else is struggling?

And that's going to apply to every issue that comes up, everything that we've done in the past, but also things that are not yet finished. For example, I believe that we've got to reform our immigration system, because it's not right if we've got 10 million people in this country

who are living in the shadows, working for us, looking after our children in some cases, whose kids are U.S. citizens, playing with our kids, and somehow we can't figure out a way to give them some pathway to be a full part of this community or somehow we're afraid of attracting a talent from around the world. I mean, this is a nation of immigrants. When did we lose that sense that we welcome the "huddled masses"? Because it enriches us, it makes us who we are.

On deficits and debt, unlike Greece, even unlike England, our deficits and debts actually are entirely manageable if we make some sensible decisions. And the question is, are we going to cut education by 30 percent or Medicare by 30 percent or basically eliminate NIH funding or NSF funding or other basic research because the people in this room, we can't just pay just a little bit more in taxes? Or are we going to solve that problem in a balanced way where everybody is doing their part?

And so yes, we're reforming programs like Medicare and Medicaid, but we're also saying to ourselves we can step up and do a little bit more because we figure we're going to do better and our kids are going to do better if our neighbors have a shot as well. That's what built America.

On energy, right now, obviously, this happens every year—gas prices come up and somebody starts yelling, "Drill, drill, drill." And they want to drill in the South Lawn, and they want to drill in—[laughter]—have a drill every—have a rig every 2 miles along the California coast. And the fact of the matter is we've actually—oil production has been—is higher now than it's been in 8 years, and our dependence on foreign oil is lower than it's been in 16. We've got more rigs and more drilling in this country than all other countries combined.

And we welcome that. It's good that we develop the resources that we have. But the notion that with 2 percent of the world's reserves consuming 20 percent of the world's oil, that you don't hear just a smidgen of an idea from the other side about how we might want to enhance energy efficiency, how we might want to develop new sources of energy, how we might

want to restore our buildings so they're energy efficient or create more energy-efficient cars—not even a mention of it. In fact, somehow that's weak. It's un-American.

On every one of these issues, we've got a really sharp, stark choice. And the fact is they're wrong. They're wrong about what's going to ensure we've got the kind of future we want.

So the bottom line is that, as exciting and fun as 2008 was, at least in retrospect—[laughter]—I know I was younger then. I didn't have gray hair. It was cooler, it was trendier. There was posters and—[laughter]—you know. What's at stake this time is even more profound than what was at stake in 2008.

In 2008, I was running against a general election candidate who believed in banning torture, believed in doing something about climate change, somebody who, frankly, could never get a nomination in the Republican Party this time out, would be considered too liberal, right?

So the stakes are higher this time. And the question then is going to be, given that I'm a little older and it's not as trendy, are we able to summon the same kind of energy and the same kind of determination that's required to finish what we started?

And I'm just here to report that I'm ready. I've got the energy, I've got the determination. I've never been more convinced about what is possible in this country if we stick with it. There are times when people say, how did you get such a fine woman as Michelle to marry you? [Laughter] And my main response is, "Persistence." I stick to it if I believe in something. And I fight for it. And I believe in the America that the people in this room believe in, and it's worth fighting for. So I hope you'll join me.

Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:49 p.m. at the residence of Michael S. Smith and James Costos. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. John S. McCain III, in his capacity as the 2008 Republican Presidential nominee. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.