

The President's Weekly Address

May 16, 2015

Hi, everybody. Everything we've done over the past 6 years has been in pursuit of one overarching goal: creating opportunity for all. What we've long understood, though, is that some communities have consistently had the odds stacked against them. That's true of rural communities with chronic poverty. It's true of some manufacturing communities that suffered after the plants they depended on closed their doors. It's true of some suburbs and inner cities, where jobs can be hard to find and harder to get to.

And that sense of unfairness and powerlessness has helped to fuel the kind of unrest that we've seen in places like Baltimore and Ferguson and New York. It has many causes, from a basic lack of opportunity to groups feeling unfairly targeted by police, which means there's no single solution. But there are many that could make a difference and could help. And we have to do everything in our power to make this country's promise real for everyone willing to work for it.

That's why last Tuesday, at a summit organized by Catholics and evangelicals, I sat down with a conservative scholar and a poverty expert for a discussion on what it takes to open more doors of opportunity. We know our efforts matter: Since 1967, we've brought poverty down by about 40 percent, thanks in part to programs like Social Security and the earned-income tax credit for working families. And we know that there are folks from all faiths and across the ideological spectrum who care deeply about "the least of these." So I hope this conversation continues, not as a question of whether, but of how, we can work together to grow opportunity. Because it's not words, but deeds that make a difference. And from expanding tax cuts for working parents to raising high school graduation rates, to helping millions of Americans secure health insurance when they didn't have it just a few years ago, our actions are making a difference.

Of course, lack of opportunity is not the only barrier between too many of our young people and the kind of future they deserve. On Monday, I'll travel to Camden, New Jersey, a city that has faced one of the highest violent crime rates in America. I'll highlight some of the innovative things they've done to help police do their jobs more safely and reduce crime in the process. And I'll highlight steps all cities can take to maintain trust between the brave law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line and the communities they have sworn to serve and protect.

Whether we are Democrats, Republicans, or Independents, whether we live in one of our poorest communities, one of our wealthiest, or anywhere in between, we all want our country to be one where hard work pays off and responsibility is rewarded. We want a place where you can make it if you try. That's the promise we make to our young people. That's the promise that makes us exceptional. And it's the promise I'll never stop fighting to keep, for my children and for yours.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:40 p.m. on May 15 in the Diplomatic Room at the White House for broadcast on May 16. In the address, the President referred to Arthur C. Brooks, president, American Enterprise Institute; and Robert D. Putnam, Peter and

Isabel Malkin Professor of Public Policy, Harvard University. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 16.

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