

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Democratic Presidential Nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton in Fayetteville, North Carolina

November 4, 2016

The President. Hello, Broncos! Oh, it is good to be back in North Carolina! I'm spending a lot of time in North Carolina. It's good to be at Fayetteville State University! Are you fired up?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you ready to go?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Can everybody please give Donovan a big round of applause for that great introduction? Few other people I want to thank, a couple friends of mine. Number one, your next attorney general, Josh Stein. Your next North Carolina Supreme Court associate justice, Judge Mike Morgan. Your next Lieutenant Governor, Linda Coleman. Your next Governor, Roy Cooper. Your next United States Senator, Deborah Ross.

Four days, North Carolina. Four days.

Audience member. We're ready!

The President. Are you ready?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. We've got 4 days to decide the future of this country.

Now I'm going to invite those of you with seats to go ahead and sit down, because I'm going to talk for a while. I've got some things to say. We've got some business to do. I want you to settle in here because I just want to—I want us to focus.

We've got 4 days to decide the future of this country. The good news is, you actually don't have to wait till election day to vote. You, here in North Carolina, can vote right now. If you are not registered, you have until tomorrow to register and vote at any one-stop location in your county. And there is one less than half a mile from here, at the Smith Recreation Center. It is very close by. Half a mile, that's like a 15-minute walk. That's across the street. It's—you just have to cross the street and you can vote.

There are volunteers here who will get you there. If you—see these folks, they will walk you over there if you don't know how to cross the street. *[Laughter]* You've got no excuse. And to find other one-stop locations near you, you can go to iwillvote.com. I need you to vote. America needs you to vote, because we have to finish what we started 8 years ago.

Now, think about where we were when I visited Fayetteville in the final days of the 2008 campaign. First of all, some of you all don't remember because you were like 8. *[Laughter]* So I am now feeling a little old, because there are college students who were watching Nickelodeon and not really focused on the election. So I need to remind you what was going on.

We were living through two long wars. We were about to enter into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Eight years later, because of the hard work of the American

people, we've turned the page. Today, an America that was on the edge of depression has battled back.

Last year, incomes rose faster than any time since 1968. Poverty fell faster than any time since 1968. Businesses have created 15 1/2 million new jobs. The unemployment rate is 4.9 percent, a 9-year low. Twenty million Americans have health care that didn't have it before.

We kicked our addiction to foreign oil, and by the way, gas prices are two bucks a gallon. Back in '08, the folks who were running against me said you elect Obama it's going to be \$6. It's \$2. You notice, by the way, they don't say, oh, we were wrong, thank you, Obama. [Laughter] They don't say that. But I thought—I just thought I'd stick that in there to remind you—\$2 a gallon.

Meanwhile, we've doubled our production of renewable energy. We've become the world leader in fighting climate change. We've brought home more of our men and women in uniform, including many of the proud servicemembers who had to travel out of Fort Bragg to go into harm's way. We took out Usama bin Laden. We've got ISIL on the run. We're more respected around the world than we were when I came in.

Meanwhile, here at home, high school graduation rates at an alltime high; college graduation, alltime high. Millions of young people are able to get Pell grants who weren't getting them before.

We've made sure that we reinvigorated the voting rights division of the Justice Department, working on criminal justice reform. Made sure that in all 50 States, people have the freedom to marry who they love.

And it's been hard work. And there have been times where we've had setbacks, and there have been times where some of you may have felt discouraged. But I tell you why I didn't get discouraged. I didn't get discouraged because of you. I didn't get discouraged because over these 8 years, I traveled across all 50 States. I went to big cities. I went to small towns. I went to suburbs and rural areas. I met people from every background and every faith and every party, and I saw what makes America great: I saw you. I saw you. And I saw you working together in neighborhoods and in your towns, in your cities, in your churches, in your congregations.

I saw young and old, men and women, Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, people with disabilities, gay and straight, all pledging allegiance to the red, white, and blue. That's the America I know.

And there is only one candidate in this race in 2016 who has devoted her life to helping to build that better America, and that's the next President of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

But we can't take it for granted. We can't be complacent. All the progress that we've made these last 8 years goes out the window if we don't win this election. So we've got to work our hearts out this week, these last 4 days, as if our future depends on it, because our future depends on it.

And I know sometimes at the end of campaigns, there are so many negative ads on TV, there is so much noise, so much distraction, a lot of okey-doke out there. [Laughter] They want to bamboozle you. [Laughter] I want you to tune all that out, and I want you to focus on the choice that we actually face in this election. Because if you just focus, if you just think about it, the choice could not be simpler, it could not be clearer.

There is a reason that so many Republicans, so many conservatives have denounced the nominee of their party. It's never happened before. You've never seen a situation in which folks are denouncing the person who's nominated as their party leader. And it's because Donald Trump is uniquely unqualified to be President. He is temperamentally unfit to be Commander in Chief.

Listen, if you want to keep our military the greatest fighting force that the world has ever known, if you want America to stay strong and respected, then we can't have a Commander in Chief who suggests that it's okay to torture people, that suggests that we should ban entire religions from our country.

We can't afford a Commander in Chief who insults POWs or attacks——

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

The President. No, wait, wait, wait. Hold up. Hold up. Hold up. Hey, hold up! Hold up! Hold up! No, it's okay. Hey! Hold up! Hold up! Hold up!

Audience members. Hillary! Hillary! Hillary!

The President. Hey, listen, listen, listen——

Audience members. Hillary! Hillary! Hillary!

The President. Hey, hey, hey, listen up! Hey, everybody! Everybody! Hey! Hey! Listen up! Hey! I told you to be focused, and you're not focused right now! Listen to what I'm saying. Hold up! Hold up! Hold up! Everybody sit down and be quiet for a second. Everybody sit down and be quiet for a second.

Now, listen up! I'm serious, listen up. You've got an older gentleman who is supporting his candidate. He's not doing nothing. You don't have to worry about him. You should—this is what I mean about folks not being focused.

First of all, we—hold up! Hold up! First of all, we live in a country that respects free speech. So, second of all, it looks like maybe he might have served in our military, and we've got to respect that. Third of all, he was elderly, and we've got to respect our elders. And fourth of all, don't boo.

Audience members. Vote!

The President. Vote! Don't boo, vote! Come on.

Now, I want you to pay attention. Because if we don't—if we lose focus, we could have problems. This is part of what's happened here during this election season. We just get stirred up for all kinds of reasons that are unnecessary. Just relax. *[Laughter]*

Now, I want to remind you what I was saying. We can't afford a Commander in Chief who insults POWs, who attacks a Gold Star mother, who actually talks down our troops, says he knows more than our generals. Even a Republican Senator said we can't afford to give somebody like that the nuclear codes, somebody so erratic. I want you to think about that.

When I was sworn in as President, the next day I'm sitting down—actually not the next day, that, just right afterwards—I had to sit down with somebody who explained this whole nuclear thing. It will sober you up. *[Laughter]* It's serious business. We can't have somebody like that handling our nuclear codes. We can't have somebody who gets upset because "Saturday Night Live" does a skit about him—*[laughter]*—and starts tweeting at 3 o'clock in

the morning. That's not the temperament that you want for somebody who has got the nuclear codes.

So if you believe that America is stronger when everybody does their part, if you believe that America is stronger when everyone pays their fair share, then we can't elect the first candidate in decades who refuses to release any tax returns, admits he has not paid Federal income tax in years; somebody who stiffes small businesspeople who do work for him or workers who've done work for him and he owes them.

But he says, I won't pay you because, you know what, I've got more lawyers than you. The notion that somebody like that is going to be the champion of working people—somebody who exploits working people, somebody who probably doesn't know any working people except the person who cleans up and the person who mows the fairway at his golf course—how can that person be a champion for working people?

If you cherish our Constitution, we can't elect a President who threatens to shut down the press when they say something he doesn't like; who threatens to throw his opponents in jail; who discriminates against people of different faiths. Our Constitution does not allow that. There are places around the world where that's acceptable, but that's not the United States of America.

If you believe we're stronger together, then we can't elect a President who vilifies minorities, mocks Americans with disabilities, calls immigrants criminals and rapists. We can't elect a President who brags that being famous allows him to get away with something that, if you read the description, qualifies as sexual assault; who calls women pigs and dogs and slobs, and grades them on a scale of 1 to 10. That's not America. This is not a Democrat or a Republican. That's not America.

Michelle and I, we've got two magnificent daughters. And they are primarily magnificent because Michelle is magnificent. And they're smart, and they're cute, just like their mama. But the thing I'm so proud of them is that they're kind and they're generous. And we've taught them to respect everybody; that nobody is higher than you, but nobody is lower than you, and you don't lift yourself up by putting somebody else down. Those values that we've taught our children, that you're teaching your children and your grandchildren, we can't have a President who every day seems to violate those basic values.

And the problem is, is that he's done it so much that it's become almost normal. It's like suddenly reality TV has entered into the race for the Presidency. It's not even "Survivor" or "The Bachelorette." I mean it's like some "Love and Hip Hop" stuff. *[Laughter]* I mean it's just—some stuff that, up until this election, we would have said is completely disqualifying. And yet somehow, everybody has gotten accustomed to it, acting like it's normal.

And we hear people justifying it and making excuses about it and saying, "Well, you know, he didn't really mean it," or, "It's locker room talk," or, "Well, maybe he did mean it, but as long as he supports tax cuts for the rich or as long as he supports doing the things we want to do, then it's okay." Come on, man. That—we can't be thinking somehow that just because he agrees with you on some policy issue, or just because you're frustrated with Government, that it's okay to display the kind of behavior he displays.

Because I want to tell you something about this office that I've been in for 8 years: Who you are, what you are does not change once you become President. It will magnify who you are. You have more power so as a consequence, folks will enable you to be more who you are. It will shine a spotlight on who you are.

But if you disrespected women before you were in office, then you will disrespect women once you take office. If you accept the support of Klan sympathizers, if you don't denounce them right away because you're kind of not sure, well, that's what you're going to do when you're in office. If you disrespect the Constitution when you're running for President, then not only will you disrespect it once you become President, but you actually might be able to violate the Constitution once you're President.

And the reason I say all this is because, yes, I am a proud Democrat, but we're not Democrats or Republicans first. We're children of God first. We are Americans first. We are human beings first. I've got Republican friends who don't think or act the way Donald Trump is acting, and as a consequence, they're not voting for him, even if they disagree with Democratic policies. This is somebody different, uniquely unqualified to do the job.

But the good news is, North Carolina, all of you are uniquely qualified to make sure he doesn't get the job. You just have to vote. You just have to vote. And the good news is you don't have to just vote against somebody, you can vote for somebody. Because there is somebody who's smart, and who's steady, and who's tested; somebody who I believe is as qualified as any person ever to run for this office. She is my friend. I trust her. She will be an outstanding President. And her name is Hillary Clinton, and I need you to vote for her.

This is somebody who has dedicated her life to making this country better. Think about how she got started. At the same time, Donald Trump and his developer father were being sued by the Justice Department for denying housing to African American families, Hillary was going undercover from school to school to make sure minority kids were getting an equal shot at a good education. That's who she is. That's her values. And she has not stopped fighting for justice and equality ever since.

Her heart has always been in the right place. But it's not just her heart. She's smart. She does her homework. She works hard every single day. I know. She worked hard when she was running against me. *[Laughter]* Then I said, boy, that woman worked so hard, I need her to work for me. *[Laughter]* And I saw up close her outstanding work. She was in the Situation Room making arguments to go after bin Laden when it was a risky proposition. She circled the globe again and again as Secretary of State, earned the respect of world leaders.

She was outstanding in her job. She was loyal to me. Her efforts were not flashy. They weren't always fully appreciated. That happens sometimes to women. You know, you go up into some church here in Fayetteville, tell you, look who's doing the work. They're not always out front, but you know who's doing the work.

She made me a better President. She actually understands the world, understands the challenges we face; doesn't have to have somebody explain to her the difference between a Sunni and a Shia. *[Laughter]* Doesn't have to have somebody explain the difference between Ukraine and Lithuania. *[Laughter]* She can find them on a map.

And by the way, when things don't go her way, she doesn't whine. She doesn't complain. She doesn't blame somebody else. She doesn't say the game is rigged. She just works harder, comes back stronger. Gets up when she gets knocked down, dusts herself off, keeps on going. She will be a smart and a steady President.

And by the way, Deborah Ross will be the same kind of Senator if you give her the chance. She has heard your stories. She has fought on behalf of working families, and she'll keep fighting so they get a fair shot, so kids get a great education, so seniors get the secure

retirement they've earned. And by the way, unlike her opponent, she doesn't support Donald Trump.

She's running against Senator Richard Burr. Now, I know Richard Burr. He and I came into the Senate together. And we worked out sometimes at the gym. We'd be there at the same time. He's a perfectly nice guy to talk to. But he seems to be willing to say anything just to get elected.

So he said the other day, there is not a separation between me and Donald Trump. Now, that's a problem. So either he's telling the truth, and that's a problem, or he's just saying it because he thinks it will help him get elected. That's still a problem. *[Laughter]*

And he started to—he's been starting to adopt some of the habits of Donald Trump, like he actually joked about violence against Hillary. We've been hearing a lot of that lately—just some loose talk that's dangerous. He apologized, but the problem is, is that the fact that he said it in the first place means that he has become part of this whole kind of reality TV—say anything, do anything, insult anybody, whatever-it-takes-to-get-elected kind of attitude. And you know what, that's not what North Carolina is about.

Audience members. No!

The President. That's what—that's not what America is about. I always say, when I come to North Carolina, the thing I love about North Carolina, even the folks who don't vote for me are nice. *[Laughter]* Because folks got some good home training. You don't go around making jokes like that.

So the bottom line is, is that Deborah needs to get elected right alongside of Hillary. Because for Hillary to continue to make the progress that we've made, she's got to have allies like Deborah Ross in the Senate. You cannot elect Hillary and then stick her with the kind of Congress that's behaving the way they've been behaving.

They did not work with me when I took office, even though we were in the middle of a great recession, would not lift a finger. They decided it's better for our politics just to say no. And now they're promising more dysfunction. I don't know how you could have more dysfunction than you've got right now out of them, but they're promising more. They're going to try to come up with something. So they're already saying, we're going to have years of hearings and investigations of Hillary. We're going to have more shutdowns, more obstruction, more repeal votes of the health care act.

Audience member. Wasting our tax dollars!

The President. Wasting our tax dollars. Who said that? That's what you said?

Richard Burr, Deborah's opponent, said that if Hillary wins, he will do everything he can to block all Supreme Court nominations. Now, keep in mind, 11 years ago, he said a Supreme Court without nine justices wouldn't work. Well, what changed? Only Republican Presidents get to nominate judges now?

Some Republicans are suggesting that they might start impeachment hearings against Hillary. She's not even elected yet. Come on. You can't do that. That ain't right. Not only is it not right, but it ain't right!

Listen, listen, gridlock—you hear a lot about gridlock. Gridlock is not some mysterious fog that just kind of drops down on Washington. Gridlock is not the Democrats and the Republicans just both being equally unreasonable. Gridlock is happening, has happened, will

happen when Republican politicians like Richard Burr decide they will oppose anything that's good for the country just because a Democrat proposes it.

So if you think "Endless gridlock" is a good slogan, then you should vote for Richard Burr. You should vote for Republicans. But if you believe America can do better, if you care about creating jobs for families here in Fayetteville, if you think that we should help a single mom get affordable childcare so she can go to work, if you think women should be paid the same as men for doing the same job, if you think we should be able to raise the minimum wage so working people get a fair shake, if you think that people who are working hard deserve respect—then you've got to vote for the Democrat up and down the ticket. You've got to vote for Hillary. You've got to vote for Deborah Ross. You've got to vote for Roy Cooper. You've got to vote for people who put you ahead of politics and are ready to move the country forward.

So, North Carolina, let me close by saying——

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you, too. But let me—I do. You know I do. But let me finish up by just saying this.

Audience member. We love you.

The President. I do too.

But listen, there is something—hold on a second. There is something more fundamental at stake in this election than just politics. This election is going to say something about who we are as a country. Hillary tells me when she was young, her mom taught her the Methodist creed: "Do all the good you can, for all the people you can, in all the ways you can, as long as you can." That's her values. That's her north star—the idea we can summon what's best in each of us to make this country better for all of us.

That's what America is about. We are a country like no other; a place founded for the sake of an idea. It's not because we have the biggest buildings or we've got the most powerful military. It's because we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal. That we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights.

We don't have to be rich, don't have to be privileged, don't have to look a certain way or have a certain name in order to make a contribution. Which is why patriots fought against tyranny to create this country, why our GIs defeated fascism. It's what gave women the courage to reach for the ballot and marchers to cross a bridge in Selma. It's what allowed workers to organize for better wages and better benefits. That's what's made America exceptional. That's what makes America great.

And it hasn't happened because somebody did it for us. When I ran in '08, I didn't say, "Yes, I can." What did I say?

Audience members. "Yes, we can!"

The President. I said, "Yes, we can." This is about what we can achieve together. Us. Through self-government. And Hillary understands that. She knows we've got a big country and a diverse country and not everybody is going to agree all the time. But we don't demonize each other. She knows issues aren't always black and white, so we've got to compromise sometimes, even when you think you're right. She knows none of us are perfect, including our Presidents, but we should at least try to conduct ourselves with some basic decency, some basic consideration for others.

So I know a lot of you sometimes may feel cynical and fed up about politics. And there's a lot about this election that might give you a reason to be cynical. But I am telling you right now—and especially the young people I'm talking to right now—you know, it isn't that often where, in your life, you've got a chance to move history. It's not that often where you have the chance to bend the arc of history in the direction of justice. It's not that often where you know you can make a difference. This is one of those moments.

Right now you can reject the mean-spirited politics that would take us backwards. Right now you can elect a leader who has spent her entire life trying to move this country forward. Our first female President: an example for our daughters and our sons.

You have a chance to shape history. Don't let that slip away. Don't fall for the easy cynicism that tells you politics doesn't matter, my vote doesn't matter, everybody—all, they're all crooked, it's all the same. That's what those who have been opposed to me and now oppose Hillary, they want you to think that way so you don't vote. And by the way, here in North Carolina, there have been Republican politicians who have actually been trying to keep you from voting.

A few years ago, Roy Cooper's opponent, Governor McCrory, signed a law that made it harder for African Americans to vote. And, look, I'm not—this is me—this is not me just opining. A Federal judge looked at all the evidence, said this law targeted Black voters with "surgical precision." That's a quote. One of the worst voter suppression laws in the country. Right now, Donald Trump is calling on his supporters to monitor "certain areas" on election day. I don't know what "certain areas" he's talking about, but you do. No wonder Governor McCrory calls Donald Trump a role model.

This is not an accident. Think about—I want you to think about a woman I know named Grace Bell Hardison. She lives in Belhaven, North Carolina. She's lived there her entire life—she's a hundred years old. A few weeks ago, Republicans challenged her voter registration status, trying to remove her from the voter rolls. She has never left the county in a hundred years—a hundred years. The list of voters Republicans tried to purge was two-thirds Black and Democratic. And it was happening in counties across the State.

So, young people, I want you to understand this. There was a time when systematically denying Black folks the right to vote, that, too, was considered normal. It wasn't that long ago when folks had to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar, the number of bubbles on a bar of soap. It wasn't long ago when folks were beaten trying to register voters in Mississippi. So the idea that you would give your vote away, that you would sit there and not even take the 15 minutes to walk across the street and vote.

Yesterday, Grace Bell Hardison sent me a letter, and I want you to know what she wrote. "Dear Mr. President, at a hundred years old, you can believe I have seen it all. [*Laughter*] It is by God's grace that I am still able to be here with my family. . . . I lived through the civil rights era. I know the blood that was shed in the name of the right to vote. I remember how hard Dr. King and many civil rights lawyers fought for the right to vote. I remember the victories they won for me and the generations after me. I can assure you, Mr. President, that I will keep fighting on. If I haven't stopped fighting at 100 years old, then neither can you."

Now, Miss Hardison got her voter registration reinstated. You better believe she's going to vote. They targeted the wrong woman—hundred years old, could be our great-grandmother; great-great-grandmother. It's bad enough she was disrespected. Are we now also going to disrespect her because we're not voting when she fought so hard to make sure she can vote? If

she hasn't stopped fighting at a hundred years old, neither can we. If she's not tired, I'm not tired. If she's not tired, then I can keep on working to make sure everybody votes.

If you've been marching for criminal justice reform, that's great, but you still need to vote! If you care about the environment, that's great, but you need to vote! If you care about making sure our veterans get treated fairly and get the benefits they've earned, that's great, but you need to vote!

You need to vote. Because I know this: that if you vote, we'll win North Carolina. And if we win North Carolina, Hillary Clinton will be President. And Deborah Ross will be Senator. And Roy Cooper will be Governor.

Understand the stakes. Understand the stakes here. My name is not on the ballot. But everything we've worked for is on the ballot. Justice is on the ballot! Equality is on the ballot! Jobs are on the ballot! Health care is on the ballot! Criminal justice reform is on the ballot! Democracy is on the ballot!

I need you to vote! Don't choose fear, choose hope. Don't choose fear, choose hope. Don't choose fear, choose hope. Go out there and vote. And if you do, we'll remind the entire world why America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:20 p.m. in the Felton J. Capel Arena at Fayetteville State University. In his remarks, he referred to Donovan Livingston, assistant director for tutoring services and graduate student, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, who introduced the President; Ghazala Khan, mother of Capt. Humayun Khan, USA, who was killed in Iraq on June 8, 2004; Sen. Marco A. Rubio; and Judge Diana Gribbon Motz, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

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Locations: Fayetteville, NC.

Names: Burr, Richard M.; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Coleman, Linda; Cooper, Roy A., III; Hardison, Grace Bell; Khan, Ghazala; Livingston, Donovan; Marco, Rubio A.; McCrory, Patrick L; Morgan, Michael R.; Motz, Diana Gribbon; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Ross, Deborah Koff; Stein, Josh; Trump, Donald J.

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