

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Minneapolis, Minnesota
November 1, 2023

The President. Thank you very much. Please. Please, sit down.

What generous introductions. Folks, as I was being introduced, I thought to myself how much—and you wouldn't know this necessarily—this State has meant to me and my career and, quite frankly, my emotional sanity. [*Laughter*] And I know that sounds strange, but it's true.

You know, when I first—excuse—as we used to say in the Senate, "a point of personal privilege." When I first got elected to the United States Senate, I wasn't old enough to be sworn in. I was 29 years old, and I had to wait 17 days to be eligible. [*Laughter*]

And I was down in Washington borrowing Teddy Kennedy's office, interviewing staff before I got sworn in. And I got a phone call telling me my wife and daughter were dead, and my two boys were not likely to live. And I just wanted to get out. I didn't want to be sworn in.

My brother, who was 23 at the time, was my chief fundraiser. [*Laughter*] My sister Valerie was managing my campaign. And we elected a Democratic Governor, and I knew that we'd be able to have someone with my generic views appointed to that spot. And—but along came two people who, among five, saved my sanity. And I mean it sincerely, from the bottom of my heart.

The first was Hubert Humphrey. Hubert Humphrey—Hubert Humphrey took me under his wing and almost on a daily basis would come by my office. He convinced me to stay—he and Teddy Kennedy and Fritz and—and Walter Mondale. I mean—excuse me—and the Senator from South Carolina. They all convinced me. They said, "Just stay 6 months." Because I didn't want to stay in the Senate. I just wanted to get the hell out and not do it.

And it worked all the way through. To the day that Hubert died, I never called him Hubert; I always called him "Boss." And Fritz Mondale, I remember Fitz coming by the Vice President's residence and wanted to see—I remember we walked up to the third floor where his daughter was, and he stood there—had been, and he stood there, and he filled up and started to cry because of the losses.

My generic point is that these men had heart. And so I've been coming to Minnesota just to—just—Hubert Humphrey, just to keep me occupied. I mean it sincerely. To keep me engaged. And looking back on it, I don't know that I'd be—I know I wouldn't be standing here were it not for those two men.

So—and the introductions today were just so lovely. Thank you so much. I really mean it.

Look, Ken and Stacey, you—I thank you for your support, and also—you know, I was with Tim all day today. He's—[*laughter*]—he's a hell of a guy, man. [*Laughter*]

There you are. That man is the real deal. [*Laughter*] And I tell you, I couldn't understand—fully understand until I found out he was a senior sergeant major in the United States military. [*Laughter*]

Ken, thank you very much. And I want to thank all the State and local officials for—and the Tribal leaders here today. Kamala and I are incredibly grateful for everyone here. And I mean it sincerely.

Look, normally, events like this, we talk about the accomplishments that—of our office that we—that we think we did well on. But Ken took care of all that for me. [*Laughter*]

Because even today, a lot of Americans don't know what we've done. They know, like, how many jobs—we've created 14 million jobs, more jobs than any President has created in 4 years.

We've also put the first Black woman in the United States Supreme Court. And we passed the biggest investment in the history of the world climate—to fight climate change. And if I have anything to do with it, I'm going to end up signing a law reinstating *Roe v. Wade*. And, folks—and Kamala has been essential to all of this, her leadership in so many important issues.

And, folks, tonight I want to talk about something else rather than just our accomplishments, which I think you're going to—I'm an optimist. I remember when I was a young Senator and I was—I had these horrible headaches, and I—turned out, I had a cranial aneurysm, and I had to get to the hospital. I remember the doctors rolling me down to the operating room. I look at the anesthesiologist and said, "How am I going to do?"

He said, "Oh, your—your chances are good." I said, "What are they?" He said, "Well, they're 35, 40 percent." [*Laughter*]

And I thought, "That's pretty damn good." And afterwards, I said—I was trying to figure out whether aneurysms were congenital or they were—anyway. And he—I said, "Look"—I said, "I don't need to know whether they're congenital or hereditary," but I said, "Here's the deal." I said, "Just—you just tell me what to do."

And he looked at me, and he says—true story—the nurse said, "You know your problem, Senator?" I was a Senator then. He said, "You're a congenital optimist." [*Laughter*]

Well, I am. I am. And I have—and I have enormous, enormous faith and confidence in this incredible time of change. The change—you know, about every six, eight generations, there's a—we go through a phenomenal change. What happens in the next 2, 3, 4 years is going to determine what the next four or five decades are going to look like. More change is going to occur in the next 10 years than occurred in the last 50 years, maybe even the next 5 years.

And so, folks, I want to talk about, though, what's at stake in this country.

You know, when I was Vice President at the end of the Obama-Biden administration, I had no intention of running again for public office. I had just lost the love of my life, my son Beau, who was a wonderful young man. He was a—he was attorney general of Delaware. He was going to announce for Governor; no one was even going to announce against him.

My favorite headline of all time, he got elected attorney general the year that I got reelected, and he—and the headline said "Biden, dash, Beau: Most Popular Man in Delaware." [*Laughter*] And he was a major in the U.S. Army. He—but you know—and I wasn't going to run again. I was going to write a book and set up an institute. I was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and they—the Biden institute and the domestic policy institute at the University of Delaware. And I—that's what I was going to do.

But then along came Charlottesville. Remember Charlottesville, Virginia—what happened? Well, I was about to announce that I stay—that I was staying right where I was, when I was—you know, and you remember what happened. Those folks came out of the woods in the fields with torches—torches, singing the same anti-—chanting the same anti-Semitic bile that was chanted in Germany in the early thirties, accompanied by the Ku Klux Klan. Not a joke. And a young woman bystander was killed.

And the previous President, who is seeking the job again, was asked what he thought about it. You know what he said? He said, "There are very fine people on both sides." "Very fine people on both sides."

When I heard that, I knew I couldn't—

[At this point, there was an audience disruption.]

Jewish Voice for Peace member Jessica Rosenberg. Mr. President, if you care about Jewish people, as a rabbi, I need you to call for a cease-fire right now.

Audience member. Sit down!

Audience member. Get out! Get out!

The President. No, no, no. No, let—

Ms. Rosenberg. *[Inaudible]*—Palestinians and Israelis have died. Please explain to me why.

Audience member. Ma'am, you need to leave the event.

The President. Let—if you'll be quiet, I'll answer your question.

Ms. Rosenberg. I would love for you to answer my question, please.

The President. I think we need a pause.

Ms. Rosenberg. A pause?

The President. Yes, a pause, for—

Ms. Rosenberg. What is a pause?

The President. A pause means give time to get the prisoners out. Give time—*[applause]*.

Ms. Rosenberg. *[Inaudible]* If you're clapping for a cease-fire—*[inaudible]*.

The President. No, don't—don't—look—

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

Ms. Rosenberg. Cease-fire now!

The President. No, no, no, no, no. No, it's okay. It's okay.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. It's okay. I under—I under—don't—just let her stay in.

[Ms. Rosenberg began to sing as follows.]

Ms. Rosenberg. Cease-fire now. Cease-fire now. Cease-fire now.

The President. Well, but what happened was, we ended up, when those folks came out of the woods, like I said—

[Ms. Rosenberg continued to sing.]

Ms. Rosenberg. Cease-fire now. If you care about life, sing with me. Cease-fire now. Cease-fire now. Cease-fire now.

[Ms. Rosenberg was escorted out of the event by security personnel.]

The President. Well, I understand her emotion. I really do.

And you know, I've—I'm going to say something that's both revealing and self-serving at the same time. I'm the guy that convinced Bibi to call for that cease-fire to let the prisoners out. I'm the guy that spent all the time talking to Elsisi to let him open the door into Egypt. I'm the guy who spent—*[applause]*. And I've met—and I've met with the war cabinet. I met with—and I'm one of these guys—from the very beginning, I was—for what it's worth, I was raised by what the Jews call a righteous Christian: my dad.

My dad was one of those guys who came home from work and would, before he went back to close the shop, my dad would talk about how we had—how—he didn't understand why we didn't bomb the railroad tracks into the concentration camps. My dad couldn't understand why the Jews in that boat were not allowed in. My dad talked about silence being complicity. My dad was one of those guys who was that—just that kind of man.

And you know, I learned from him. Matter of fact, you know, silence is complicity. And the fact of the matter is, from the time each of my children and grandchildren reached the age of 14, the first thing I did on their 14th birthdays—I put them on a plane, and I took them to Dachau one at a time—one at a time. Because I wanted them to see.

You walk through that gate in Dachau, saying it will "set you free." But the beautiful homes all along that fence line—the idea no one could have lived there and not known what was happening. Silence is complicity. I wanted them to understand they had to speak up.

But, folks, this is incredibly complicated for the Israelis. And it's incredibly complicated for the Muslim world as well. I support a two-state solution, and I have from the very beginning. But I can thoroughly understand the emotions, both on the Palestinian side of this argument and on the Jewish side of the argument.

But, folks, do—the fact of the matter is that Hamas is a terrorist organization, a flat-out terrorist organization.

And, well, I'm—I better talk about what I was going to talk about. *[Laughter]*

But the point is that, you know, when those folks came out of those woods, I knew I couldn't sit on the sidelines anymore. I really mean it. Because the President of the United States had just drawn a moral equivalence between those who stood for hate and those who stood against hate. That's what he did back when—in Charlottesville.

You see, I really do believe, as my father taught me, silence is complicity. And I wasn't going to be silent. So I ran.

And I'll just tell you—I hadn't planned this. I'm keeping you too long. But I decided I had to run, but then I was worried. I was a professor at a university and these two institutes.

And I had grandchildren, who, their whole lives—my son, my daughter—my living son, my living daughter, and—and my granddaughters, who were then in—one was in college at Columbia Law School. My other—I had two more at the University of Pennsylvania, and two who were in high school. And I knew it was going to be an ugly campaign.

So I—and we have a tradition of my family—I know it's going to sound strange, but maybe some of you do as well—from my dad's time. Any child can ask for a family meeting—not a joke—can ask for a family meeting if they have something important they want to talk about it. And it's honored.

So I got a phone call from my granddaughter Naomi, named after my deceased daughter, who I lost in that automobile crash. And she said, "We want to have a family meeting, Pop." And they came down, and they said, you know, "Daddy wants you to run," et cetera. And they made the case.

And they said, "We know it's going to be ugly." And my little grandson, who's now in high school—a senior in high school—junior in high school—he took out his cell phone. And there was a picture of my deceased son's casket coming out with military honors. He was a major—Bronze Star, Conspicuous Service Medal—in the United States military, and a year in Iraq.

And I had my hand on the coffin, and my hand under little—his name is Hunter, named after his uncle. And I had my hand under his chin like I used to hold Beau—like this—when I'd walk with him. And the caption said, "Biden molests another child."

And they said, "We know it's going to be mean, Pop, but you've got to do it." And that's why I—and I did. Because I ran because I thought everything in this country—what it stood for, what we believed in, everything that made America "America," our very democracy—was at risk.

And I believed that in 2020, and I wrote about that. I made the first speech I made about that.

And we're the only nation founded on idea. Every other nation is founded based on ethnicity, religion, or—we're the only one based on an idea. And that is: "We hold these truths to be self-evident. All men and women are created equal, endowed by their Creator."

Well, guess what? We've never fully met it, but we've never walked away from it. We've never walked away from that notion. And now we're not going to walk away on my watch.

I think I thought—so I made that speech at Independence Hall and then later at Gettysburg. I—people thought that I was being hyperbolic at the time. "Joe, what do you mean democracy is at risk? What do you mean we're in a battle for the soul of America?"

Well, people don't say that anymore about me. People don't anymore doubt that democracy in 2020 was at risk. Well, I think the same the case is now—in this upcoming election. It's still at risk.

Kamala and I are running because we made progress, but our democracy is still at stake. Because, folks, the same man who thought there were "very fine people on both sides," who called Hizballah "very smart," who recently on more than one occasion has made a joke about the assault on Speaker Pelosi's husband with a hammer when he was struck in the head.

Now, there are a lot of reasons Donald Trump shouldn't be President, but my—but the one that I think demonstrates the best reason of all is: Our democracy is at stake.

Folks, Kamala and I are asking the entire nation to join us in sending the strongest, clearest, most powerful message that political violence in America is never, never, never, never—never justified.

And Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans are determined to destroy this democracy. And while the MAGA Republicans in the House have been fighting among themselves, struggling to elect a Speaker, trying to shut down the Government, sowing seeds of destruction at every turn, Kamala and I are always going to defend, protect, and fight for that democracy.

That's why we're running again. That's the God's truth.

This country we live in is so special. Kamala and I don't believe America is a dark and negative nation, a nation of carnage, driven by anger, fear, and revenge.

But my opponent—likely opponent does. To his supporters, he says, quote, "I am your retribution." He said we are a "failing nation." These are his quotes. Every—"Either they win or we win. And if they win, we no longer have a country."

Did you ever think you'd hear nominee for President say those things, or a former President?

I believe we are a hopeful, optimistic, and—driven by a simple proposition that everybody deserves a fair shot.

Folks, I think that's what's at stake. I think democracy is on the ballot. And indeed, we need every one of you—every American—every American who loves democracy to join together in 2024.

If we do that, we will have done something few generations get to do and get to say. We will have saved American democracy.

So, folks, together—together, folks, I know we can do this. I've never been more optimistic about our country. Think about it. I'm not joking. Think about the possibilities we have.

You know, can you think of any circumstance we've ever been in we've gotten in a serious problem and we haven't come out stronger than when we went in? I can't think of one time in American history, as a student of American history, where that's occurred.

We have to just remember who in the hell we are. We're the United States of America. There is nothing beyond our capacity if we work together.

So I know I get criticized for wanting to work with the other team, but we have to unite this country. We must unite this country. Because I believe the vast majority of people believe that we have to do that.

And, folks, look, we're in a situation where, if you think about it, we're on the—we're—we've been able to pull together Europe and NATO in a way it's never been pulled together. Not a joke. It's there. We're moving in the direction—and Asia is a hell of a lot more united. I was able to get Japan and South Korea to finally agree after the end of World War II. They're—they understand their security rests upon whether Putin wins in Ukraine or not. They're engaged.

We're in a situation where, if you think about it, we have—an opportunity exists in Latin America to change the dynamic.

We should be the most democratic hemisphere in the world. But we're—we have a lot more to do. We're—just have to—we have a—we have a chance to change it. We have a chance to change so much for the better if we just decide that—what we're for, who we are.

And I just think that—I hope I'm up to the task of making sure that we make these united efforts.

My mother used to say, "Joey, out of everything bad, something good will come if you look hard enough for it." Well, a lot bad has happened, but I think there's so much that we can do.

So I want to tell you, I am optimistic. But I'm not optimistic because I'm naive. I have more experience than any President has in the history of United States. One of the things that comes with age, hopefully, is wisdom.

And I think we have—and here's the concluding point I'll make. Madeleine Albright wrote a book about the United States being the essential nation—we, the United States. I promise you, that's true.

The rest of the world is looking to the United States to be the organizational structure for an organized and democratic world. We have a chance to do it. So many nations are looking to us. And we can do it without engaging American troops or forces. We can do so much. But we have to maintain the democratic instincts we have.

I'll conclude by saying to that, you know, when I—when I convinced Strom Thurmond—*[laughter]*—no, I mean it—mean it sincerely—before on his—before he died to vote for the extension of the Voting Rights Act. Strom Thurmond. Strom Thurmond. *[Laughter]*

I thought, you know, you can—you can—you can defeat hate. You can bury it. But you can never kill it off. All it does is hide under rocks, until it gets some oxygen breathed under those rocks that brings it back out.

That's where we are now. We have to fight back. We have to fight back and make clear that we are the essential nation, we understand our role, and we can organize better than any other nation in the world a consensus on promoting democracy, not killing.

And so, folks, I really think that we have an enormous opportunity. But we have to step up. And we are. And all of you have allowed me to do that.

And I just warn you: If I'm reelected, I'm not going to change a whole lot—[laughter]—I think, because we have to unite the country.

When I ran the first time, I said I was running for three—three reasons, and even my own team thought I was maybe wrong for saying it. The one was I said we had to restore the soul of America, the sense of decency and honor in who we are.

And secondly—secondly—we had to understand that we were going to bring the country together. We had to unite the country again. And the press understandably said: "Well, that used to be—when Biden was in Senate, he was good at that. But that's beyond the capacity to be done anymore."

And the third thing I said was, we had to rebuild America from the middle out and the bottom up, not the top down. Because when that occurs, the poor have a chance, and the wealthy do very well.

I still believe those three things.

And I think what we've done legislatively at the outset has thus far been pretty impressive. It's going to take time for people understand all that's happened.

But in the meantime, we just have to—the rest of the world is looking to us. I promise you.

I've known almost every major head of state for the last 25 years. I've met with over 140 countries. I understand: Everywhere I go, if I walk in a room—not because of Joe Biden, because I'm President of the United States of America—they're looking to us. They're looking to us.

And there are answers. There are answers that we can afford and make better for everyone, but—[inaudible]—for the United States of America.

Sorry to ramble on with you all so much. But God bless you all, and may God protect our troops.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:09 p.m. at the Minneapolis Event Centers. In his remarks, he referred to Ken Martin, chairman, Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) Party; Stacey Mills Heins, volunteer Minnesota finance team coordinator, Biden for President; Gov. Timothy J. Walz of Minnesota; Vice President Kamala D. Harris; Supreme Court Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson; former President Donald J. Trump; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt; Paul F. Pelosi, Sr., husband of Rep. Nancy Pelosi; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. He also referred to his brother James B. Biden, sister Valerie Biden Owens, and grandchildren Naomi K. Biden Neal and R. Hunter, Natalie, Finnegan, and Maisy Biden. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 2. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign reception in Minneapolis, MN.

Locations: Minneapolis, MN.

Names: Biden Neal, Naomi K.; Biden, Ashley B.; Biden, Finnegan J.; Biden, James B.; Biden, Natalie P.; Biden, R. Hunter; Biden, R. Hunter, II; Biden, Roberta M. "Maisy"; Elsis, Abdelfattah Said; Harris, Kamala D.; Jackson, Ketanji Brown; Martin, Ken; Mills Heins, Stacey; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Owens, Valerie Biden; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Rosenberg, Jessica; Trump, Donald J.; Walz, Timothy J.

Subjects: 2024 Presidential election; Anti-Semitism; Bipartisanship; Climate change; Egypt, President; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Gaza, humanitarian situation; Gaza, safe passage for U.S. citizens and foreign nationals; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Israel, attacks by Hamas; Israel, Prime Minister; Job creation and growth; Minnesota, Democratic Party event; Minnesota, Governor; Minnesota, President's visit; Reproductive health care; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Supreme Court Associate Justice; U.S. diplomatic efforts, expansion; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Vice President; Virginia, 2017 civil unrest and violence in Charlottesville.

DCPD Number: DCPD202300970.