

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

**Remarks at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Detroit Branch Fight for Freedom Fund Dinner in Detroit, Michigan
May 19, 2024**

The President. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, Rev.

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

The President. Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Please, have a seat.

I don't feel tired. I feel inspired.

Hello, Detroit. My name is Joe Biden, and I'm a lifetime member of the NAACP. Matter of fact, the first organization I ever joined was the NAACP. Didn't get to vote until you were 21 in those days, but I got involved in civil rights when I was 15.

And, folks, look, I want to thank Reverend Anthony for that introduction. I tell you what, I measure the significance of an award based on the character and the consequence of those organizations bestowing it.

And I love Detroit for three reasons. Number one, my dad was an automobile manager. Detroit put food on our table every night. Oh, not a joke. Not a joke.

And when I was Vice President, things were kind of bad during the pandemic [recession; White House correction], and what happened was Barack said to me, "Go to Detroit and help fix it." Well, poor mayor, he spent more time with me than he ever thought he was going to have to. [Laughter] God love you.

Mayor Michael E. Duggan of Detroit. Love you.

The President. Folks, I'm humbled to receive this organization [award; White House correction], which defines the character and consequence of what we do. I'm always grateful to Derrick Johnson, the leadership for the NAACP.

Of course, thanks to all the members of the biggest NAACP branch in America—in Detroit.

And it's great to see so many friends, including Debbie Stabenow. I'm going to miss her in Washington, but she's not going to get away because I'm going to keep coming to her for advice. I'll always be your friend and seek your counsel.

And Governor Gretchen Whitmer is my cochair of my campaign. Senator Gary Peters and Mayor Mike Duggan—you know, Mike Duggan is a—I brag about him all the time. I think Mike is one of the best mayors in the entire United States of America, and you know I mean that.

All the members of the congressional—the delegation and all other local leaders.

Look, folks, I just came from Atlanta, where I delivered a commencement at Morehouse College. It was truly inspiring [inspiring; White House correction]: over 400 young Black men who will do extraordinary things. I told them I saw them, I heard them, and the Nation needs them. They're the future of this country.

And I'm here tonight to say the Nation also needs all of you. And I mean that sincerely. You matter. You matter.

Let's be clear. Because of your vote, it's the only reason I'm standing here as President of the United States of America, period. Again, that's not a joke. That's a fact. You're the reason Kamala

Harris is a historic Vice President. You're the reason Donald Trump is the defeated former President. And you're the reason Donald Trump's going to be a loser again.

You placed enormous faith in me. I've tried my best to honor the trust by doing everything in my power to get us through one of the toughest periods in our history.

We got through the pandemic. We're investing more money than ever in Black families and communities. We delivered checks to deposit in people's pockets to reduce Black child poverty.

We're reconnecting Black neighborhoods cut off by old highways and decades of disinvestment, including here in Detroit. We're removing every lead pipe so every child, particularly in neighborhoods that are on the brink, can drink clean water without fear of brain damage.

We're making the most significant investment ever in climate, including the most significant action in environmental justice ever. Every child in America deserves to breathe clean air.

We're delivering affordable high-speed internet so no child has to do their homework outside a McDonald's parking lot.

I promised we'd be the best—we'd beat—finally beat Pharma. As a Senator, I tried for years to take them on. We finally did: \$35 a month insulin for seniors instead of \$400 a month or more. And we capped the total out-of-pocket costs for seniors at \$2,000 a year, no matter how high their prescription costs are. Expensive cancer drugs can cost \$10-, \$12-, \$15,000 a year.

This year, Medicare is negotiating to lower prices for the costliest drugs on the market to treat everything from heart disease to arthritis. These reforms not only save people money and their lives, it saves the taxpayer \$160 billion because Medicare doesn't have to pay those exorbitant prices.

On my watch, more Black Americans have health insurance than ever in all of history. I protected and expanded the Affordable Care Act, saving millions of families \$800,000 in premium—\$8,000 [\$800; White House correction] in—a year in premium.

My administration has taken the most significant action to provide student debt relief ever. Over 4.5 million Americans, includes a significant number of Black borrowers, have their debts wiped out. And incidentally, it helps grow the economy. And I'm not finished yet.

We're investing a record \$16 billion in HBCUs—[applause]—\$16 billion—more than ever, because you're critical to our Nation's growth and the opportunities for African American women and men.

We're increasing access to capital to start business and loans to buy homes. We're cracking down on corporate landlords who [to; White House correction] keep rents down. Our policies are resulting in historic lows of Black unemployment. Black small businesses are starting up at the fastest rate they have in 30 years. We're opening the doors to generational wealth. In fact, the racial wealth gap is its lowest level in 20 years. But there's much more to do.

I kept another commitment: to appoint the first Black woman to the Supreme Court of the United States of America. It matters. It matters. Her name is Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

By the way, I've appointed more Black women to the Federal Circuit Courts of Appeal than every other President in American history combined.

People are now realizing how critical those Supreme Court appointments are. Overall, I've appointed nearly 200 judges to the Federal bench.

We passed the most significant gun safety law in decades. And I will not stop until I once again am able to ban assault weapons in America.

But, folks, all that progress is at risk. Trump is trying to make the country forget just how dark things were and unsettling things were when he was President.

But we'll never forget. We'll never forget him lying about how serious the pandemic was, telling Americans, "Just inject bleach." [Laughter] I think that's what he did. That's why he's so screwy. [Laughter]

Trump wants to give power back to Big Pharma, charge exorbitant prices again. He wants to take seniors back to paying \$400 a month for insulin instead of \$35. He'd eliminate the \$2,000 cap that I've set that no senior ever has to pay for—on a yearly basis more than \$2,000 for all prescriptions, including those—[inaudible]—needed drugs for cancer and many other things that can cost as much as \$14-, \$15,000 a year—the medicines you need in order to live.

Look, folks, on my watch, 20 million Americans have health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. MAGA Republicans have tried to get rid of the Affordable Care Act more than 50 times, and Trump is still determined to do it. In his words, he wants to "terminate" the Affordable Care Act, which would deny 3 million Black Americans health insurance, deny protections for preexisting conditions for millions more Americans. But we're going to deny Trump.

During his Presidency, he enacted a \$2 trillion tax cut that overwhelmingly benefited the very wealthy and the biggest corporations and exploded the Federal deficit. These Republicans talk about the debt. Well, guess what? He racked up more Federal debt than any previous Presidential term in all of American history. And now he wants to do it again.

At the same time, he's determined to cut Social Security and Medicare. Folks, I have a better tie—[idea; White House correction]. I'll protect it—Medicare and Social Security—by making the very wealthy finally begin to pay their fair share.

Look, I'm a union guy. I want to remind everybody: Wall Street didn't build America. The middle class built America. And unions built the middle class. I walked the picket line with union workers here in Michigan. At the same time, Trump went to a nonunion shop to show his disrespect for union workers.

He brags about getting *Roe v. Wade* overturned. He not only denies reproductive freedom but worsens the mortality rate for Black moms, who have [are; White House correction] nearly three times more likely to die from pregnancy complications than a White woman.

Trump openly encourages voter suppression and election subversion. He and his MAGA extremists gutted affirmative action. Let me ask you: If he's reelected, who do you think he'll put on the Supreme Court? You think he'll put anybody who has a brain?

Folks, look, as Dr. King said: "Give us the ballot. We'll put judges on the bench who will judge justly and do mercy." Reelect Kamala and me and a Democratic Congress, and we will help the NAACP. We will sign the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, the Freedom To Vote Act, and make *Roe v. Wade* the law of the land again.

Look, the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion are the core strength of America. That's why I'm proud to have the most diverse administration in history to tap into the full talents of our country. I promised you, when I was President, I would have an administration that looked like America. We have more African Americans; we have more women; we have more minorities in our administration than any other administration in all of history. That's why we're doing so damn well.

Folks, I never imagined that in 2024 there'd be folks wanting to ban books in America. What in God's name is that about? Not only that, they're trying to erase Black history, literally. They're wrong. They don't understand, Black history is American history. Not a joke.

Together, we make history; we do not erase history.

But, folks, the threat that Trump poses is greater in a second term than the first. It's clear that when he lost in 2020—and I mean this sincerely—something snapped in Trump. He just can't accept he lost, and he lost it.

That's why on January 6, what happened? Every legal avenue Trump tried to challenge the election failed, so he unleashed an insurrection. And now he's running again. And he's not only obsessed with—about losing 2020, he's clearly unhinged.

Just listen to him. He calls the irrectionists [insurrectionists; White House correction] who stormed Capitol Hill "patriots." He says, if reelected, he wants, quote, "every" one of them pardoned.

Let me ask you, what do you think he would have done on January the 6th if Black Americans had stormed the Capitol? No, I'm serious. What do you think? I can only imagine.

This time, he's telling people—he's being more honest—he said, "I'll be a dictator on day one." Asked if he thought violence would occur if he lost, he said, quote, "It depends."

How can it be that any American President cannot denounce political violence? I know I can, I will, and I have. Political violence has no place in America, period.

But that's not Donald Trump. Donald Trump has said, if he loses again in November, there will be, quote, "bloodshed" ["bloodbath"; White House correction]. What in God's name are we talking about here? This is the United States of America.

Folks, Trump isn't running to lead America. He's running for revenge. But revenge is no way to lead a country. You can't build a future on revenge. You can't build better lives through revenge.

That's why I'm running to lead America into the future, a future of promise and hope and possibilities, because that's who we are: a nation of possibilities.

Look, folks, let me close with this. On Friday, I joined the NAACP at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington. We honored the 70th anniversary of *Brown versus the Board of Education*. I spent time with the plaintiffs and their families in the Oval Office at the White House. And I also met with members of the Little Rock Nine.

One year after *Brown versus Board*, Vivian Malone and James Hood reached the doors of the University of Alabama. They were blocked by hate and the Governor of Alabama. Back in Washington, President Kennedy addressed the Nation, warning of the moral crisis, bigotry that was facing the Nation. He announced the landmark civil rights bill.

Late that night, in Jackson, Mississippi, an NAACP leader, Medgar Evers, was assassinated outside his home. Earlier this month, I posthumously awarded Medgar Evers the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our Nation's highest civilian honor. His spirit endures. The NAAC [NAACP; White House correction] spirit endures.

Folks, what is at risk in 2024 are our freedoms, our very democracy. And that's not hyperbole. That's why I need you.

Imagine the future we can build together. I see a future where we defend democracy, not diminish it. I see a future where we protect our freedoms, don't take them away. I see a future where the middle class finally has a fair shot and the wealthy begin to pay their fair share in taxes so we can pay for childcare, eldercare, paid leave, and so much more that good could—the economy could reduce the Federal deficit.

I see a future where we save the planet from a climate crisis and our country from gun violence. Above all, I see a future where the full promise of America is available to all Americans, regardless of religion, race, or background.

Folks, the idea of America is that we are all created equal and deserve to be treated equally throughout our lives. We've never fully lived up to it, but we've never fully walked away from it either.

But Trump will. I will not. I know we—you won't either. We just have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America, and there's nothing—nothing—beyond our capacity if we do it together. And there's no better outfit to do it with than the NAACP.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you.

NAACP Detroit Branch President Wendell Anthony. Hello. Ladies and gentlemen, presenting the James Weldon Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award to President Joseph R. Biden. "Let us march on till victory is won."

[At this point, Mr. Anthony presented the President with the James Weldon Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award.]

The President. Folks, I'm going to say one more thing. My State was a slave State, to its great shame. My State was segregated by law. My State needed to change. The Democratic Party in my State used to be recalcitrant, used to be more Southern than it was Northeastern.

So, when I get old enough to register to vote, I could not bring myself to register as a Republican, but I could not register as a Democrat at the time, because I joined an organization to try to change the party. And that organization, the first one I joined, I had to register as a "decline"—decline to state what you are.

But I already was part of a party that was changing the Nation and my State: the NAACP. God love you all for what you do.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. at the Huntington Place convention center. In his remarks, he referred to former President Barack Obama; Sen. Deborah A. Stabenow; and Elizabeth Eckford, Carlotta Walls, Terrence Roberts, Minnijean Brown-Trickey, and Gloria Ray Karlmark, members of the "Little Rock Nine" students who initially desegregated Central High School in Little Rock, AR, in 1957. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 20.

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movement and organized labor; Lead service lines, replacement efforts; Maternal health services, improvement efforts; Medicare and Medicaid programs; Michigan, Governor; Michigan, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Detroit Branch; Michigan, President's visit; Minority-owned businesses, promotion efforts; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Poverty reduction efforts; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Small businesses, low-interest loans; Supreme Court Associate Justice; Tax Code reform; U.S. Supreme Court Decision in Brown v. Board of Education, 70th anniversary; U.S. Supreme Court opinion overturning 1973 decision in Roe v. Wade; Unemployment rate; Vice President; Voter participation; Voting rights, protection efforts.

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