

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a White House Brunch Celebrating Black Excellence
September 13, 2024

The President. Good afternoon. And welcome—welcome—to the first-ever White House brunch to—in celebration of Black excellence.

Audience members. Thank you, Joe! Thank you, Joe! Thank you, Joe!

The President. Thank you.

Audience members. Thank you, Joe! Thank you, Joe! Thank you, Joe!

The President. Marsai, thank you for that introduction. You just shared something that so many of us can relate to. My dad taught me—and I mean this. My sister was here earlier today. Our dad taught us that family is the beginning, the middle, and the end. It's everything.

And thank you and—to all the participants of Saint Augustine Choir—Gospel Choir. Are they still here? Give them a round of applause. They've been with me—they've been with me since I was Vice President.

Trell Thomas, thank you for creating space for fellowship and community, kid.

Grammy Award–winning singer Monica, who will perform shortly, I might add.

And I want to thank you for our renowned Chef Kwame and the amazing food you're eating—or get to—I hope you got to eat it or will eat it.

And thank you, Shalanda and Karine, who are part of the most diverse administration in American history that taps into the full talents of our Nation. I made a commitment: My administration would look like America, and it does.

I want to today take a moment to say something like—so many Americans, like Karine, as you pointed out, a proud Haitian American, a community that's under attack in our country right now. It's simply wrong. There's no place in America. This has to stop, what he's doing. It has to stop.

And thank you all for being here on this historic day.

Today we recognize that this nation would not exist—and this is literal—without the blood, sweat, and tears, without the determination, dreams, and contributions of Black Americans. That's a fact.

[At this point, the President gestured behind him toward the White House.]

This place wouldn't exist.

And it's a fitting event during this fantastic Congressional Black Caucus week. All the members of the Black Caucus that are here today, stand up. I want to see you all. Come on. They're the best.

I wanted to host this lunch for a few reasons. First, to show my personal gratitude. Growing up, I'd walk into the kitchen at my grandpop's house in Scranton, and he and the adults would be having the conversation about what's going on in the neighborhood, what's going on in the world. And they'd let me sit down.

I got involved in public life because of civil rights when I moved from Scranton to Delaware, which was segregated by law. Throughout my career, I'd attend morning Mass at my

Catholic church and then attend Sunday services at an AME church in Wilmington, planning the desegregation efforts in my State that had been segregated by law.

You know, I'd be home for our own Sunday dinners. Those conversations, those sermons shaped who I became. The bottom line is, the Black community has always had my back, and I've always had yours. So thank you for all you've taught me. Thank you for all the love you've extended to me.

I also wanted to host this brunch because we have progress to celebrate. Together, we're making the most significant investments in Black America in all of American history. We've centered racial equity as the center of everything we do.

With your help, in just 3½ years, we've created over 2 million new Black jobs for Black—*[laughter]*—Black Americans and Black—*[laughter]*. By the way, the next Black job to be filled is as President of the United States of America. *[Applause]* Oh, I—watch me.

We have the lowest Black unemployment rate on record. More Black Americans have health care than at any time. There's a historic \$18 billion to HBCUs. Everybody said, why am I doing that? Anyone at an HBCU is qualified to do anything we need to be done in America, but you don't have the endowments, they don't have the laboratories, they don't have all the—now they do.

More than 4 million people received student debt relief under my plan, a significant number of whom are Black borrowers. The racial wealth gap is the smallest in 20 years. We're removing poisonous lead pipes in every American—every American—pipe in America—lead pipes so people can drink clean water without brain damage. We're delivering high-speed affordable internet to every American, which today is as essential as electricity was when FDR delivered it in his term.

On this very lawn, in front of the White House built by enslaved people, we hosted the first-ever Juneteenth concert after I made Juneteenth a Federal holiday. And, on this lawn, we celebrated the first Black woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court—the best decision I made—Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

And today we honor a long line of patriots throughout our history—throughout our history—who have made the promise of America real for all Americans. All of you—all of you—has pushed us forward to be the country that we say we are. We say we are a country that values freedom, justice, equality, and dignity for all.

Today we honor this simple truth: Black history is American history. Black excellence is American excellence.

And, folks, we don't erase history, like others are trying to. We make history.

I know it because I've seen it. I've been Vice President to the first Black President in American history, a President to the first Black Vice President in—and, God willing, to the first female Black President in American history.

Kamala wanted to be here today, but she's traveling, and she couldn't be here. But she's always there with us, and we'll always be there for her.

On this day we celebrate Black excellence, let us remember: History is in our hands. It's literally in our hands. The power to drive positive change is in our hands. The future is in our hands. It really is.

That's—if you go to my Oval Office, you'll see I have a whole wall on both sides of Frederick Douglass about—paintings of Frederick Douglass. He said, "If there is no struggle,

there is no progress." Well, Lord knows we've been struggling. [Laughter] But there's been progress. And there's excellence, and that's all of you.

We just have to remember who we are. We keep forgetting. We're the United States of America. There is nothing beyond our capacity—nothing beyond our capacity—when we act together.

I'm sorry I can't stay longer, but I'm hosting a second consequential event today at the White House. The great—the Prime Minister of Great Britain asked if he could come and see me. He's on his way here, and I'm going to be seeing him shortly. So I'm not going to be able to stick around with you a long time.

But I want to say God bless you all. We're changing America for all Americans—not just Black Americans, for all Americans, for Hispanic Americans—for all Americans.

Folks, this is who we are. Let's remember. I get so tired of the other guy talking about we're a "failing nation." We are the greatest nation in the history of the world. That's a fact. And you're making it greater, and there's nothing going to stop us.

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

I'm this way? I'm here? All right.

Thanks, everybody. Enjoy the day.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:42 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to actor and producer Marsai Martin; Trell Thomas, founder and chief executive officer, Black Excellence Brunch; musician Monica D. Arnold; chef and restaurateur Kwame Onwuachi; Director of the Office of Management and Budget Shalanda D. Young; White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre; former President Donald J. Trump, in his capacity as the 2024 Republican Presidential nominee; former President Barack Obama; Vice President Kamala D. Harris, in her capacity as the 2024 Democratic Presidential nominee; and Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom. He also referred to his sister Valerie Biden Owens.

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