

**Remarks at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Phoenix Awards Dinner**  
*September 14, 2024*

Hello, CBC. Hello, hello, hello.

Please have a seat. I'm honored to be with so many friends. The CBC, you put your trust in me. You've always had my back, and I'd never forget it.

CBC's chairman, Steven Horsford; Terri Sewell, CBC founding chair—foundation chair; and Leader Hakeem Jeffries. This evening's performer and hosts: Fantasia, Sherri Shepherd, Roy Wood, Jr.—Roy has become a friend. He did the White House Correspondents' Dinner together, and he hosted the White House Juneteenth event.

Yesterday I was proud to host—and very proud, I mean it sincerely—the first-ever White House brunch celebration of Black excellence for—[*applause*]*—*more than 1,000 of you attended in this CBC week.

And tonight I'm honored to join your dinner tonight. Congratulations to tonight's honorees. And thank you to all the CBC members, staff, and alumni, including those who serve across my administration, including the former chair and former HUD Secretary, Marcia Fudge, and especially—and especially—our incredible Vice President, Kamala Harris. Best decision I made.

We also keep in our prayers CBC titans most recently lost: Eddie Bernice Johnson, Donald Payne, Jr., Sheila Jackson Lee. Their memories and their legacies, the legacy of the CBC, remind me of a parable in scripture: With just the smallest amount of faith the size of a mustard seed, anything—anything—is possible. Our dreams—our wildest dreams of our ancestors can take root and grow into a bountiful and beautiful harvest to come. That's what I want to talk to you about very briefly tonight—what I see in all of you.

As I've said before, we face an inflection point. It comes around every five or six generations, one of those rare moments in history when the decisions we make now will determine—literally determine—the fate of the Nation and the world for decades to come. We're—continue to be in the battle for the very soul of America.

In 2020, I ran for President to redeem the soul of America, to restore decency and some dignity to the office of the Presidency. I ran to rebuild the backbone of America: the middle class. And I ran to unite the country and remind ourselves, when we're together, we—not a damn thing we can't do.

Together, in 2020, we started that work by protecting our democracy. Kamala and I received 81 million votes in 2020—the most ever, led by Black voters all across America. And Donald Trump lost and became a defeated President.

In the past 4 years, we showed democracy can deliver for our people. Donald Trump's failed Presidency eroded trust in whether democracy could meet the needs in the Nation. We know that trust was eroding long before he took office.

What's democracy if justice, opportunity, freedom are denied to too many people for too long?

But Kamala and I made a commitment to you to prove that democracy is the way, to reject the zero-sum view of America that says, "If you win, I lose. If you succeed, I fail. If you get ahead, I fall behind"—maybe worst of all, "If I hold you down, I lift myself up"—instead of embracing the bigger and broader view of America: If any one of us do well, we all do well.

With the help of the CBC, we went big and we went bold. And yes, the result—yes, we are better off today than we were 4 years ago.

And I'm being very sincere when I say a big reason why: The Congress boasts the highest number of Black Members in American history. Together, we've delivered one of the most extraordinary 4 years of progress ever—a future harvest of endless possibilities.

COVID no longer controls our lives. Together, we spearheaded the most equitable economic recovery in American history, historic low Black unemployment, record growth in Black small businesses. We put more money in the pockets, and we cut back on child poverty for Blacks in half.

The racial wealth gap is the smallest in 20 years. And we're finally—I've been fighting for this a long, long time—we're finally reconnecting Black neighborhoods that were cut off by old highways and disinvested decades ago.

We're removing every poisonous lead pipe in America so every child in America can drink clean water without fear of brain damage. We're delivering affordable high-speed broadband so no child has to do their homework outside a McDonald's parking lot. We're protecting and expanding Obamacare.

And after all the years, I finally beat Big Pharma and significantly lowered drug prices for seniors. And before—before we—too long, we're going to make sure that's available to every single person in America, not just seniors.

We're putting homeownership within reach. That's how we build generational wealth.

We're making the most significant investment ever in climate, including the most significant action on environment ever.

We've relieved student debt for 5 million borrowers and a significant number of Black borrowers. When I set out to do this a long time ago, finally got it done: We're investing a record \$17 billion in HBCUs.

We took executive action on police reform and continue calling for the law to be written as the law of the land. We've started the process for reclassifying marijuana and pardoned thousands of convictions for mere possession, because no one should be jailed for simply—simply using marijuana or have a barrier to a job, housing, loans, or other opportunities because of that.

And something I'm really proud of: Together, we put the first Black woman on the Supreme Court of the United States, as I promised I would.

I'm excited to announce tonight that we've selected the first class of Fulbright-John Lewis Civil Rights Fellows, who will learn how to establish and protect freedom and justice and equity not just at home, but around the world.

There's so much more we're doing to help people walk into a life of generational wealth, to be the providers for their families, leaders in their communities, dreamers and doings—doers of our Nation.

In fact, in just 4 years, with the leadership of the CBC, we're making the most significant investments in Black America ever in all of American history.

But let's be clear. There are old ghosts in new garments trying to seize your power and extremists coming for your freedoms, making it harder for you to vote and have your vote counted; closing doors of opportunity; attacking affirmative action and the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion; banning books; erasing history.

My predecessor calls the insurrectionists who stormed the Capitol on January 6 "patriots." But when peaceful protestors march for justice for George Floyd, Trump wanted to send in the military, but they wouldn't go. He says immigrants—Black and Brown immigrants "poison the blood" of our country.

Right now his running mate is attacking Haitian Americans in Ohio. It's wrong. It's got to stop. Any President should reject hate in America and incite—not incite it.

Folks, to win this battle for the soul of the Nation, we have to preserve our democracy. We must speak out against lies and hate told for power and profit. We must show up. We must look to the future.

And I'm looking to you to help lead the way. You've helped push us forward to be the country we say we are—a country of freedom, justice, and equality—proving that Black history is American history and Black excellence is American excellence.

Let me close with this. The Psalms teach us, and I quote, "I've been young, and now I'm old"—which is true—[laughter]—"and yet, I have not seen the righteous forsaken." "I have not seen the righteous forsaken."

In 1971, as a 28-year-old kid, I decided to run for the United States Senate because of segregation in my city—my State. Thirteen Black Members of Congress came together then to establish the Congressional Black Caucus. That same year, a founding member of the CBC began exploring a historic run for President.

I knew Shirley Chisholm. I served with her. She was righteous. She planted bushes full of mustard seed of faith. In the course of the last 50 years, I've seen those seeds weather storm and strife and blossom into something amazing.

I've served as Vice President with the first Black President and a former CBC member. I am President alongside the first Black President [Vice President; White House correction] and former CBC member. And God willing, she will become the first woman of the United—President of the United States of America. And Hakeem will become the first Black Speaker of the House.

But, folks, we have work to do. So my challenge to you is to keep the faith and do the work. Because we know faith without works is dead.

In this moment, I think of what Shirley said. She said, quote, "Freedom is an endless horizon, and there are many roads that lead to it."

For the last 4 years, I've been honored to stand by a true partner who has helped us lead to the horizon of freedom, a journey where character in public life still matters in America.

Kamala Harris meets the highest standards of character. I've served with her. I know her. I trust her. And I'll be proud to stand on the steps of the United States Capitol and watch her take the oath of office as President of the United States of America.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Kamala Harris, for the people.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:37 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to musician and actor Fantasia M. Barrino-Taylor; actor and comedian Sherri E. Shepherd; comedian and actor Roy N. Wood, Jr.; Supreme Court Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson; Sen. James D. "J.D." Vance, in his capacity as the 2024 Republican Vice Presidential nominee; and former President Barack Obama. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 16.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Phoenix Awards Dinner.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Barrino-Taylor, Fantasia M.; Fudge, Marcia L.; Harris, Kamala D.; Horsford, Steven A.; Jackson, Ketanji Brown; Jeffries, Hakeem S.; Obama, Barack; Sewell, Terrycina A.; Shepherd, Sherri E.; Trump, Donald J.; Vance, James D."J.D."; Wood, Roy N., Jr.

*Subjects:* 2021 civil unrest and violence at U.S. Capitol; 2024 Presidential election; Affirmative action programs in higher education; Broadband and wireless technologies; Climate change; Congressional Black Caucus; Congressional Black Caucus Foundation; COVID–19 pandemic; Economic improvement; Federal student loans, partial forgiveness; Health insurance, access and availability; Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Home ownership, access and affordability; House minority leader; Lead service lines, replacement efforts; Marijuana, decriminalization efforts; Poverty reduction efforts; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; Small businesses, promotion efforts; Supreme Court Associate Justice; Unemployment rate; Vice President.

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