

the work, and he also was concerned that he wouldn't get the support that he needed.

And he was wrong on both fronts. His professors not only helped him transition from the military—even as he continued to serve in the Michigan Air National Guard—but also helped him to earn his associate's degree with honors. Then he transferred to the University of Michigan—go Blue!—[*laughter*]—where he graduated just a few weeks ago. And while he was there, he cofounded Student Veterans of America to help returning veterans like himself. So congratulations, Derek.

Or we can look to the example set by Albert Ojeda, who just spoke to you. He didn't have any advantages in life; grew up in a tough neighborhood in Phoenix, lost his father to violence, lost his mother to prison. But that didn't stop him from pursuing an education. It didn't stop him from attending community college, become an honor student, become the first member of his family to graduate from college.

There are so many folks out there like Derek and Albert. And I think about the many community college students who've written letters to me or e-mails through [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov) about how important community college has been to them. One person said he had been laid off and decided to return to school after 17 years. And attending community college “literally helped

save my life”—that's what he said. “I can not only see an associate's degree next year, but a new future filled with possibilities for the first time.”

A new future filled with possibilities. That's why we're here today. That's the promise of an education not just for any one student, but for our entire country. And that's why it's so important that we work together on behalf of community colleges and an education system that harnesses the talents and hard work of every single American.

So thank you for the incredible work that each and every one of you do out there in schools, business folks who are supporting these community colleges, the students who are doing so much to contribute to our country. Let's get busy. Thank you very much.

Note: The President spoke at 12:17 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Albert Ojeda, student, Arizona State University; Penny S. Pritzker, chairman and founder, Pritzker Realty Group; Walter Isaacson, president and chief executive officer, Aspen Institute; and Melinda French Gates, co-chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

## Remarks at a Reception Honoring World Ambassadors

October 5, 2010

Hello, everybody. Good afternoon, and welcome on behalf of Michelle and myself. We are thrilled to have you at the White House. It's good to see all of you, including the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, from Djibouti, Ambassador Olhaye. It's wonderful to see you again.

Like our reception last year, this is an opportunity to thank you for your partnership, for the cooperation between our nations, and for the hospitality that your countries show our diplomats each and every day.

As Ambassadors, I know you all have a very difficult job. You have to understand the com-

plexities of other cultures and countries—unlike diplomats of a century ago who—for example, there was a diplomat who, when planning an international ceremony, invited Switzerland to send its navy. [*Laughter*]

You have to adapt to quickly changing events around the world—unlike President Jefferson, who said of an American Ambassador to Europe: “We haven't heard from him in 2 years. If we don't hear from him next year, I'll have to write him a letter.” [*Laughter*]

Today, our nations and peoples are more interconnected than at any time in human history.

We've got extraordinary opportunities to advance our national interests and our common interests, which can reinforce each other. We can advance the aspirations of our people, who, despite any differences, basically seek the same things: to live in security and dignity, to seek progress and justice, and to realize a better future for their children.

And that's why, since I've taken office, I've pursued a new era of engagement with the world, a new commitment to diplomacy and partnership based on mutual interest and mutual respect. Today I want to thank you and your countries for joining us and for the progress that we've made together.

Together, we've strengthened old alliances, we have forged new partnerships, we have pursued an international order where the rights and responsibilities of all nations are upheld. We've put the global economy back on the path of growth so we can create jobs and opportunity for all of our people.

Together, we're working to confront violent extremism, to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, and to secure vulnerable nuclear materials. We're engaged in the hard work of pursuing peace, from the Middle East to Sudan, and promoting development to give people and nations a path out of poverty. In short, we are doing together what none of us can achieve by ourselves.

But as I've said in my visits around the world, building the future we seek cannot be the work of governments and diplomats alone. It must also be the work of our societies and our people. That's why we're expanding partnerships and exchanges between our business leaders and entrepreneurs, students and scientists, civil society and faith communities.

And it's why I am so pleased that many of you are embracing the opportunity to experience America beyond Washington, visiting cities and towns across our country, like Atlanta next week, just like I understand that you visited my hometown of Chicago. I understand that you took in the incredible architecture, the culture,

the people, even our world-famous Chicago-style hot dogs. [*Laughter*] They are hard to resist. I noticed, though, that you did not go in January to experience our wonderful January weather in Chicago. [*Laughter*] That is easy to resist. [*Laughter*]

The spirit you felt across America is the spirit we need in our work: the idea that no matter where you come from or who you are, we can come together and work together. It's the same spirit I've seen in all the young people that I've met, from Strasbourg to Ankara to Cairo to Shanghai; in civil society leaders in Moscow and the extraordinary young African leaders that I welcomed to this very room here in the White House.

One of them—a young woman—stood up and looked at me and asked just how committed the United States is to this new era of partnership. I want to conclude by telling you exactly what I told her. I said, yes, as President of the United States, my first responsibility is to look out for the people and interests of the United States. And I always will. But I also said America wants all of you to succeed as well, whether it's in Africa or in Latin America, in Europe or in Asia, because when your nations and people succeed and prosper, it's not only in your interests, it's in America's interests. And that's why our commitment to this new era of engagement will remain a cornerstone of my foreign policy.

So in that spirit, Michelle and I are honored to welcome all of you. I'm mindful of that old saying about diplomacy, that sometimes more can be accomplished at 1 party than 20 serious conversations. [*Laughter*] So have a wonderful evening, have a wonderful party, and I look forward to all that we can accomplish together, tonight and beyond.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Shamima Muslim, a participant at the White House Young African Leaders Forum.

## Remarks at the Fortune Most Powerful Women Summit October 5, 2010

*The President.* Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody. Please, please have a seat. Thank you.

Well, I am just thrilled to be here tonight with some of the most brilliant, accomplished, influential women in this country. As Michelle Obama's husband, I feel very much at home. [Laughter]

I have three tall, good-looking, strong-willed women. That's just on the second floor. Then I've got my mother-in-law on the third floor. [Laughter]

So it's a thrill to be here. I want to thank Ann for that kind and brief introduction—[laughter]—and for her extraordinary leadership. And I want to thank all the people who helped to organize this spectacular event.

And I'm especially pleased to see the young people who are here. We are thrilled to have you.

I also see that my friend Warren Buffett is here. I understand that even though he is a man, he has been invited back year after year—[laughter]—because he knows that the surest path to success is to surround yourself with brilliant women. He's a smart guy.

I happen to share that belief. And I'm pleased to see some of the extraordinary women in my administration who are also here tonight, because I rely on their wise advice every single day, and I'm tremendously grateful for their service.

But being here isn't just meaningful to me as President. It's also meaningful to me personally. As some of you know, I was raised in part by my grandmother. She just passed away a couple of years ago. When I was born, she got a job as a secretary to help provide for our family. Now, she only had a high school education. She had grown up in a generation where women weren't necessarily encouraged to pursue a college degree, and certainly not after they had gotten married and had had a child. But she had an incredible mind and sound judgment. And so over the years she worked her way up—without a college degree, just a high school degree—to

become one of the first woman bank vice presidents in the State of Hawaii. And that was an amazing accomplishment, but that position was also her glass ceiling. For nearly two decades, she watched as men no more qualified than she was—in fact, usually men who she had trained—would get promoted up the corporate ladder ahead of her.

Now, I know that if given the chance, she would have run that bank better than anybody. But she never got that opportunity. And she never complained. She hardly ever took a vacation. She just kept getting up and giving her best every single day.

So tonight I'm inspired to be with so many women who have reached the pinnacles of their professions. That's a credit to all of you, and your individual drive and fortitude, because I know you've overcome plenty of obstacles of your own. And while we still have a ways to go, it's also a testament to the progress that we've made as a country, certainly since my grandmother was a young woman.

The 75 young leaders who are here tonight are another testament to that progress, because as you know, these young women went through a citywide selection process to attend this event. And on their applications, they were asked to list their career aspirations. And I've got a list of what they said. See, we've got "cultural anthropologist"—

*Audience member.* Woo!

*The President.* That's a good choice. My mother was an anthropologist, so thumbs up on that. "Classical singer."

*Audience member.* Woo! [Laughter]

*The President.* "U.S. Senator."

[At this point, there was modest applause.]

*The President.* Oh, were there some people who were saying like, "Oh, I don't know." [Laughter] "Professional race car driver." One stated that she intends to become "the next Bill Gates." I don't know why Buffett was skipped over, but—[laughter].