

Patti LaBelle; E. John Rice, Jr., brother of Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations; civil rights

activist Jesse L. Jackson; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in New York City March 29, 2011

Everybody, have a seat. Thank you. Thank you so much. You guys are applauding the cornbread—[laughter]—which is basically cake. So those of you who think that you're passing on dessert but are having two pieces of cornbread, I know those tricks. [Laughter]

Look, it's wonderful to see all of you. I'm going to be coming from table to table, so I'm not going to give a long speech. The first thing I want to do—there has been some speculation about our DNC chair plunging back into the hurly-burly of electoral politics. I don't know if these rumors are true, but what I do know is that I cannot imagine somebody who has been a better partner to me and a better friend to me than our DNC chair, Tim Kaine.

And since he happened to be a really great Governor for the Commonwealth of Virginia, I suspect that, should he choose to do so, he would also be an outstanding Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia. But whatever decisions he makes, I just want everybody here to know that he has done an outstanding job for me and an outstanding job for the country. And so I could not be prouder of him.

The second thing I want to say is, obviously, we gather in this wonderful setting, in historic Harlem, on a day in which we're all thinking about our troops overseas and some very difficult challenges around the world. On one side of the world we've got one of our closest allies that's going through just an unbelievable catastrophe, and we are doing everything we can to help them. Then in the Middle East and North Africa we are seeing the kind of transformative moment that typically only comes once in a generation, and we are having to make sure that we help to bend history in a way that is good for the people there and ultimately good for the American people.

And so this is a challenging time. And I could not do what I do, which is get up every morning and make the best possible decisions that I can on behalf of the American people, if I didn't know that I had a lot of people out there rooting for me and a lot of friends supporting me. And each and every one of you in one way or another have been enormously supportive of our efforts.

And so, collectively, I want you all to know that I am very, very grateful for your friendship, grateful for your advice and good counsel, grateful for your prayers, and I want to let all of you know that I'm extraordinarily confident that as difficult as these days sometimes seem, that we're going to emerge on the other side of these moments and on the other side of my Presidency, being able to look back and say that we did right by our children and our grandchildren and we've made this country and the world more prosperous and more secure.

So thank you for the great work that you guys have done. And with that, let me join your tables. I will not be eating because I was sneaking a little something in the back. [Laughter] All right? But that also leaves me time to actually answer your questions. And hopefully, I'll be able to spend enough time—when you see somebody hovering over my shoulder that means I'm getting the hook. We're only a few blocks away from the Apollo so—they won't actually have a literal hook—[laughter]—I won't get gonged or anything. But that does mean I've got to move over to the next table.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:52 p.m. at the Red Rooster Restaurant.