

ahead of our adversaries and to keep our country safe.

I have never been more proud or more confident in you than I am today, not just because this extraordinary success, but because it reminds us of who we are as a people and as a nation. You reminded us that when we Americans set our mind to something, when we are focused and when we are working together, when we're not worried about who's getting the credit and when we stay true to our values, even if it takes years, there is nothing we cannot do.

That's why I still believe in what I said my first visit here 2 years ago: Your greatest days are still to come. And if any of you doubt what this means, I wish I could have taken some of you on the trip I made to New York City, where we laid a wreath at Ground Zero, and I had a chance to meet firefighters who had lost an entire shift; police officers who had lost their comrades; a young woman, 14 years old, who had written to me because her last memory of her father was talking to him on the phone while her mother wept beside her, right before they watched the tower go down.

And she and other members of families of 9/11 victims talked about what this meant.

The President's Weekly Address *May 21, 2011*

This week, I went to Memphis, Tennessee, where I spoke to the graduating class of Booker T. Washington High School. Graduations are always happy occasions, but this commencement was especially hopeful because of just how much the kids at Booker T. Washington High School had overcome.

This is a school in the middle of a tough neighborhood in South Memphis. There's a lot of crime; there's a lot of poverty. And just a few years ago, only about half of the students at the school graduated. Just a handful went off to college each year.

But folks came together to change all that. Under the leadership of a dynamic principal and devoted teachers, they started special academies for ninth graders, because they

And it meant that their suffering had not been forgotten and that the American community stands with them, that we stand with each other.

So most of you will never get headlines for the work that you do. You won't get ticker-tape parades. But as you go about your work with incredible diligence and dedication every single day, I hope all of you understand how important it is, how grateful I am, and that you have the thanks of a grateful nation.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. at CIA Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization, who was killed in a U.S. Navy SEALs counterterrorism operation in Abbottabad, Pakistan, on May 1; and Payton Wall, whose father Glen Wall was killed in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and her mother Diane. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper, Jr., and Director of Central Intelligence Leon E. Panetta, who introduced the President.

found that that's when a lot of kids were lost. They made it possible for students to take AP classes or vocational courses. Most importantly, they didn't just change the curriculum; they created a culture that prizes hard work and discipline and that shows every student that they matter.

Today, four out of five students at the school earn a diploma. Seventy percent continue their education, many the first in their families to go to college. So Booker T. Washington High School is no longer a story about what's gone wrong in education. It's a story about how we can set it right.

We need to encourage this kind of change all across America. We need to reward the reforms that are driven not by Washington, but

by principals and teachers and parents. That's how we'll make progress in education, not from the top down, but from the bottom up. And that's the guiding principle of the Race to the Top competition my administration started 2 years ago.

The idea is simple: If States show that they're serious about reform, we'll show them the money. And it's already making a difference throughout the country. In Tennessee, where I met those students, they've launched an innovative residency program so that new teachers can be mentored by veteran educators. In Oregon, Michigan, and elsewhere, grants are supporting the work of teachers who are lengthening the school day, offering more specialized classes, and making the changes necessary to improve struggling schools.

Our challenge now is to allow all 50 States to benefit from the success of Race to the Top. We need to promote reform that gets results, while encouraging communities to figure out what's best for their kids. That's why it's so im-

portant that Congress replace No Child Left Behind this year, so schools have that flexibility. Reform just can't wait.

And if anyone doubts this, they ought to head to Booker T. Washington High. They ought to meet the inspiring young people who overcame so much and worked so hard to earn their diplomas in a school that believed in their promise and gave them the opportunity to succeed. We need to give every child in America that chance. That's why education reform matters.

Thanks for listening, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:15 p.m. on May 20 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on May 21. In the address, the President referred to Alisha Kiner, principal, Booker T. Washington High School in Memphis, TN. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 20, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 21.

Remarks at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee Policy Conference May 22, 2011

The President. Good morning. Thank you very much. Please have a seat. Thank you. What a remarkable, remarkable crowd. Thank you, Rosy, for your very kind introduction. I did not know you play basketball. [Laughter] I will take your word for it. [Laughter] Rosy, thank you for your many years of friendship. Back in Chicago, when I was just getting started in national politics, I reached out to a lot of people for advice and counsel, and Rosy was one of the very first. When I made my first visit to Israel, after entering the Senate, Rosy, you were at my side every step of that profound journey through the Holy Land. So I want to thank you for your enduring friendship, your leadership, and for your warm introduction today.

I also want to thank David Victor, Howard Kohr, and all the board of directors. And let me say that it is wonderful to look out and see so many great friends, including a very large delegation from Chicago: Alan Solow, Howard Green. Thank you all.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are joining you today, who do so much to sustain the bonds between the United States and Israel, including Eric Cantor, Steny Hoyer, and the tireless leader I was proud to appoint as the new chair of the DNC, Debbie Wasserman Schultz.

We're joined by Israel's representative to the United States, Ambassador Michael Oren. And we're joined by one of my top advisers on Israel and the Middle East for the past 4 years and who I know is going to be an outstanding Ambassador to Israel, Dan Shapiro. Dan has always been a close and trusted adviser and friend, and I know that he will do a terrific job.

And at a time when so many young people around the world are standing up and making their voices heard, I also want to acknowledge all the college students from across the country who are here today. No one has a greater stake in the outcome of events that are unfolding today than your generation, and it's inspiring to