

care of his grandparents. By age 14, he was in the foster care system. Three years after that, Leland enrolled in Morehouse. And today he is graduating Phi Beta Kappa on his way to Harvard Law School. But he's not stopping there. As a member of the National Foster Care Youth and Alumni Policy Council, he plans to use his law degree to make sure kids like him don't fall through the cracks. And it won't matter whether they're Black kids or Brown kids or White kids or Native American kids, because he'll understand what they're going through. And he'll be fighting for them. He'll be in their corner. That's leadership. That's a Morehouse man right there.

That's what we've come to expect from you, Morehouse, a legacy of leaders, not just in our Black community, but for the entire American community: to recognize the burdens you carry with you, but to resist the temptation to use them as excuses; to transform the way we think about manhood and set higher standards for ourselves and for others; to be successful, but also to understand that each of us has responsibilities not just to ourselves, but to one another and to future generations. Men who refuse to be afraid. Men who refuse to be afraid.

## Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Atlanta May 19, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Everybody, please have a seat. Please have a seat.

Let me begin by saying that you just heard from one of the finest Senators we've got in this country and an example of the kind of young national leadership that we are seeing, Michael, who was a superintendent in schools, cares about policy, cares about education, and he's doing a great job in the Senate. And so I couldn't be prouder to call him a friend. Please give Michael Bennet a big round of applause.

And, Michael, if it makes you feel any better, what—the feeling you described is exactly how I feel every time I precede Michelle on the podium. [Laughter] She—people want to get rid of me quick too. [Laughter]

I also want to acknowledge one of the finest young mayors that we've got in the country,

Members of the class of 2013, you are heirs to a great legacy. You have within you that same courage and that same strength, the same resolve as the men who came before you. That's what being a Morehouse man is all about. That's what being an American is all about.

Success may not come quickly or easily. But if you strive to do what's right, if you work harder and dream bigger, if you set an example in your own lives and do your part to help meet the challenges of our times, then I am confident that, together, we will continue the never-ending task of perfecting our Union.

Congratulations, class of 2013. God bless you, God bless Morehouse, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:06 p.m. on Century Campus. In his remarks, he referred to John Silvanus Wilson, president, Betsegaw Tadele, 2013 valedictorian, and Tobe Johnson, professor of political science, Morehouse College; filmmaker Spike Lee; and Chester C. Davenport, managing director, Georgetown Partners, LLC.

Kasim Reed in the house. And the person primarily responsible for Kasim's success, his mother, who, of course, looks too young to be his mother, but is his mother. [Laughter]

And I want to thank Arthur Blank for hosting us. Speaking of people responsible for our success, Arthur's mom is here. She is celebrating her 98th birthday today, and so we've got to give her a big round of applause. Happy birthday. [Applause] Happy birthday. And Arthur's promised, for your birthday, that the Falcons will win the Super Bowl this year. [Laughter] That's a promise.

I just had the pleasure of speaking at the Morehouse commencement. And it was a spectacular gathering, a very wet gathering because there were thunderstorms, but people were undaunted. And you had 500-plus

incredible young men and their families there. The valedictorian was a young man, an immigrant from Ethiopia, who, like me, was skinny, and initially at least, it was very hard to pronounce his name. And he's now going to be going off to Microsoft to help do program design at Microsoft's head office.

During the course of the address that I gave I had the opportunity to address a young man who had been taken away from his mother when he was 4, lived with his grandparents, but then had some issues there, ended up in the foster system, and 3 years after he entered into the foster care system, was admitted to Morehouse and is now on his way to Harvard Law School, where he intends to practice law in the child welfare system and is already on the national advisory board for children's welfare.

And I tell these stories because all around the country, I get a chance to meet young people who are simply remarkable, who have overcome the biggest odds, who are doing things that I could not ever dream of doing. And it makes you so optimistic about the future of America. There is a spirit of innovation and a spirit of determination, and there is an awareness of the environment and social equity and a belief that there's nothing that can stop America when people are pulling together. And you see it in these young people, and it just makes you ready to go out there and fight the good fight.

And the challenge is, is that all too often, that same spirit isn't as evident as it needs to be in Washington. Sometimes, you feel as if Washington is impeding rather than advancing the possibilities that these young people represent.

And so, for the last 4 years, I've been fairly busy—[laughter]—ending a war; winding down another war; making sure that we went after Al Qaida and those who attacked us on 9/11; recovering from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression; saving an auto industry; stabilizing the banking system; making sure that we have a system in place that every American has access to health care; ensuring that we begin on the road to energy independence; deal with issues like climate change;

double our fuel efficiency on cars; double our production of clean energy; make sure that our education system is on a solid path of reform; and making sure that college is affordable so that those young people that I saw at Morehouse, that more of them are able to graduate without a mountain of debt.

And all of that progress is because of you. Couldn't have done it had it not been for the incredible support of so many people in this room. But what I think we're all aware of is that our job is not finished, that those Morehouse graduates that we just saw, they're entering into a job market that is still challenging, and because of some policies in Washington like the sequester, growth may end up slowing and we may start seeing once again the job market stall in ways that makes it a lot harder for them to realize their full potential.

We know that we've still got a lot of work to do when it comes to education. One of the things that I talked about during the State of the Union is making sure that we've got early childhood education in place. The last time I was in Georgia, I was out at Decatur. It's got a wonderful model program for early childhood education. You've got kids who are poor alongside kids who are middle class and alongside disabled kids, all of them coming together with outstanding teachers who have teacher-coaches.

And we can document, every dollar we spend on early childhood education, we get \$7 back in fewer dropouts, in fewer teen pregnancies, in fewer incarcerations. It pays off. But what those kids in Decatur experience, there are a lot more kids out there who don't have that same chance, don't have that same shot.

We know that we've still got a lot—to do a lot more work when it comes to energy. We are sitting on this revolution in the energy sector. Probably in 5, 6, 7 years, America will be a net exporter of natural gas. And we will be able to say, probably in 15 years or so, that we are about as close as you can be to energy independent as America has ever been. But despite that, what we also know is, is that the energy sources of the future are not going to be enough—or the past are not going to be

enough. We've got to look at the energy source of the future.

And there's still a lot more work to be done to make our economy more energy efficient, to make sure that we're dealing with serious issues like climate change. When I look at Arthur's incredible kids and grandkids, I'm thinking—just like I'm thinking about when I see Malia and Sasha—I want to make sure that 30 years from now, 40 years from now, when they're with their kids and their grandkids, that they've got a planet that isn't in chaos because of decisions that we made or decisions that we failed to make. So we've got a lot more work to do there.

We've still got to implement health care. We've actually seen health care costs increase at the slowest rate that we've seen in decades, and it's now—we've seen this over the last 3, 3½ years. So we're making real changes in terms of health care delivery to improve quality and reduce costs. But unfortunately, for a lot of people, they're not seeing those savings because costs are being passed on to them from their employers. And it's still the biggest driver of our deficits. It's still a source of concern when it comes to Medicare and Medicaid. So we're going to have to do a lot of work on that front.

Infrastructure: We've got about \$2 trillion of deferred maintenance. And I haven't gone through the Atlanta airport recently—[laughter]. I don't have to take off my shoes, generally, when I fly. [Laughter] But my assumption is, is that there's some reworking that we could be doing: roads, bridges, ports all across the Gulf. I was down in Costa Rica meeting with the Central American Presidents, and I was reminded once again, Panama is revamping its canal; they're going to be bringing in these mega-container cargo ships. And right now a bunch of those ships can't dock in our ports all along the Gulf—Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana. And if we don't revamp those, we're going to lose business.

So the good news is, every single item that I just mentioned, we've got good, commonsense solutions that we can implement right now.

The bad news is, is that there's a shortage of common sense in Washington. [Laughter]

And so part of the reason that what you're doing here today is so important is because it gives us the opportunity to elect more people like a Michael Bennet, who are not ideological, who don't come at this thinking there's just one way of doing things, who are interested in data and are interested in facts and are interested in figuring out what works. And that kind of approach to governance—if we get a critical mass in the Senate and we can potentially get a critical mass of folks like that in the House—means that the sky is the limit. Nothing can stop us.

I travel all around the world, and the one thing I have to tell you is there's not a country that would not gladly trade places with the United States of America. All right? I mean, you're seeing tremendous changes everywhere. Obviously, in a place like China, we've seen more people rise out of poverty than any time in human history. That is a good thing. We shouldn't feel threatened by that, we should welcome that by—first of all, because our humanity demands that we welcome people being out of dire poverty, and if it's managed properly, it means that China is more likely to be peaceful, and it means those are big markets for our companies.

But what it also means is that, sometimes, people get worried, are we being overtaken? Is America falling behind?

[At this point, an audience member sneezed.]

Well—bless you. [Laughter] Let me tell you, you talk to Chinese leaders; they look at what we've got in terms of our network of universities and the dynamism and talent of our businesses and our strong middle class, and they would love to have our problems. Would love to have our problems. India, same thing. Brazil, same thing. What's holding us back is a tendency in Washington to put politics ahead of policy, to put the next election ahead of the next generation. And that mindset is what we need to change.

And that's what Michael Bennet represents, and that's what your efforts represent here: our capacity to get beyond the kind of short-term

tactical, partisan thinking that has come to so dominate Washington and to start moving in a direction in which we're just trying to get stuff done.

Which doesn't mean that there aren't going to be politics involved; it doesn't mean that there are not going to be some rough and tumble. And one thing that I think folks like myself and Michael and Kasim and others learned is that if you get in this business, folks are going to take their shots at you. And I've got the gray hair to prove it. [Laughter] But that kind of stuff doesn't bother me, and I know it doesn't bother others who are in elected office, if we feel like we're getting stuff done. If we feel that, at the end of the day, when we look back on our public service, we can say, you know what, this country is stronger, better positioned for the future than it was before.

And I think we have that possibility. And you're starting to see in Washington some sense, even among the most partisan folks there, that we've, kind of—the balance has tipped too far away from getting stuff done. And that's why, for example, I'm optimistic about our capacity to get immigration reform done. Michael is one of the group of eight that's been putting this together, seeing four Democrats, four Republicans, who are sitting down and methodically, systematically just trying to fix a broken system because they understand that it needs to get done and that if, in fact, we're able to preserve our identity as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, our economy is going to be strong, and we're going to be better positioned to compete all around the world.

So the upshot is this: Despite sometimes the doom and gloom of what you hear emanating out of Washington, you should be optimistic about this country. I sure am. I think that we are on track with just a few important decisions that are well within our capacity to make sure that the 21st century is the American century just like the 20th century was.

But we can't do it alone. What I told those young Morehouse men is that it's not enough that you now have succeeded individually, you now have a broader obligation to this country and to the world. And all of you who, in this room, have been so successful in so many different walks of life, I hope you still feel that sense of obligation, that sense of citizenship, that sense of giving back. That's what built this country. That's its essence. And with your help, that's the kind of spirit that Michael and I and others want to continue to bring to Washington for as long as we can. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. at the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Michael F. Bennet, in his capacity as chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Sylvia Reed, mother of Mayor M. Kasim Reed of Atlanta, GA; Arthur M. Blank, owner, National Football League's Atlanta Falcons, and his mother Molly Blank; Betsegaw Tadele and Leland Shelton, 2013 graduates, Morehouse College; and Sens. Marco A. Rubio, Jeffrey L. Flake, John S. McCain III, Lindsey O. Graham, Richard J. Durbin, Robert Menendez, and Charles E. Schumer.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With President Thein Sein of Burma May 20, 2013

*President Obama.* I want to welcome President Thein Sein to the United States of America and to the Oval Office.

Last year, I was proud to make a historic visit to Myanmar as the first U.S. President ever to visit that country. And now President Sein is able to return the favor by making a visit to the

United States, and my understanding is that this is the first visit by a leader of Myanmar in almost 50 years.

Obviously, during this period in between, there have been significant bilateral tensions between our countries. But what has allowed this shift in relations is the leadership that