

we commit ourselves—as nations, as one world—to the urgent work that must be done: to standing with families like Eva’s as they work and strive for a better life; to ending the injustice of extreme poverty; to upholding the inherent dignity of every human being, whatever it takes. We cannot let them down. And with your help, we won’t.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:04 p.m. in the General Assembly Hall at United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations.

Remarks at the Democratic National Committee LGBT Gala in New York City September 27, 2015

Hello, New York! Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Democrats! Thank you, New York! Thank you. Everybody, sit down. Obergfell. Just to be clear. It is good to be in New York. Although, I do apologize. This week is rough for you guys. [Laughter] I mean, traffic is bad enough during UNGA, but you add the Pope to it—[laughter]—and that’s serious traffic.

Give it up for Betty Who! And give it up for Jim for not just the terrific introduction, but Jim represents all the trailblazers and pioneers and activists whose courage and persistence have made America a better place. Please give him a big round of applause. We’re very proud of him.

We’ve got some outstanding Members of Congress and elected officials who are here tonight, including the chair of the DNC, Debbie Wasserman Schultz. It is Debbie’s birthday today. You threw her quite a party. We’ve also got DNC treasurer, Andy Tobias. Senator Tammy Baldwin. New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman is here. Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey is here. And of course, all of you are here.

Seven years ago we came together not just to elect a President, but to reaffirm our faith in that most American of ideals: the notion that people, no matter where they come from, what they look like, what their last name is, or who they love can change this country. And from the beginning, that faith was tested, by a great recession, by political obstruction, by established barriers and everyday indignities, all of which reminded us that our march toward equality was unfinished.

And time after time, the cynics told us that we were foolish to keep believing, that we were naive to hope, that change was too messy or not possible at all. And if you admit it, there were some in this room here who were skeptical that everything that needed to happen would happen. The cynics were wrong. Tonight we live in an America where “don’t ask, don’t tell” is something that “don’t exist.”

We live in an America where all of us—LGBT or not—are protected by a hate crimes law that bears Matthew Shepard’s name. We live in an America where a growing share of older generations recognize that love is love and younger generations don’t even know what all the fuss was about. And tonight, thanks to the unbending sense of justice passed down through generations of citizens who never gave up hope that we could bring this country closer to our founding ideals—that all of us are created equal—we now live in America where our marriages are equal as well.

It’s getting better for all of us. Our businesses have created 13 million new jobs in the past 5½ years. In 2012, the Republican nominee for this office promised to get the unemployment rate down to 6 percent by the end of next year. [Laughter] We moved that up a little bit and got it down to 5 percent right now. We were told that Obamacare would kill jobs, explode the deficits, destroy freedom. Today, we’ve seen 66 consecutive months of private sector job growth, a streak that just happened to begin the month I signed Obamacare into law. Meanwhile, we’ve cut our deficit by two-thirds, and over 17 million Americans have health insurance because of Obamacare. And along

with the 17 million who've got health insurance through Obamacare, there are tens of millions more—all of you if you've got health insurance—who now know that in this country, you can't be discriminated against just because you get sick. Those days are in the past.

Reading scores are up. College attendance is up. High school graduations are up. We've doubled the production of clean energy. We are making incredible progress when it comes to climate change. On every metric, by every standard, we've made progress.

Now, you would not know this—[laughter]—if you were listening to the busload of Republicans fighting each other for this job. [Laughter] It somehow doesn't come up in debate. [Laughter] In their world, everything was terrific back in 2008—[laughter]—when we were in the midst of a spiral into the worst financial crisis and economic crisis since the Great Depression, when unemployment and uninsured rates were rising and when our economy was shedding jobs each month, and we were mired in two wars, hopelessly addicted to foreign oil, and bin Laden was still at large. Those were the golden years, apparently. [Laughter] And then, I came in and messed it all up.

I have to say, I don't pay attention to much of this stuff. [Laughter] But you got to give these folks credit for chutzpah. [Laughter] I mean, they maintain a straight face when they're saying this. And then, in interviews, the reporters are, like, just kind of letting them talk as if what they were saying was true. [Laughter]

And so, since everything was doing so well back in 2007, 2008, now if we can just repeal Obamacare and gut Wall Street reform and shut down our Government over women's access to health care and deny that the planet is getting warmer, they've got a plan to get us back on track. [Laughter]

Now, the good news is, they probably won't use marriage equality as a wedge issue like they did in 2004 because the country has come too far. In fact, America has left the leaders of the Republican Party behind. One of their leading candidates argued that going to prison turns you gay. [Laughter] Well, you think I'm—I shouldn't

go into this? [Laughter] No, I mean, I'm just stating the facts. Another candidate boasts that he introduced an amendment to end nationwide marriage equality, which isn't even an accomplishment at all. [Laughter] A third says Americans should just disobey the Supreme Court's ruling entirely. I'm sure he loves the Constitution, except for Article III. [Laughter] And maybe the Equal Protection Amendment. And 14th Amendment, generally. [Laughter]

Now, look, for some Americans, there's no doubt that this change has been a whirlwind. And we believe that these changes have been for the better. But we have to recognize—and in fact, I know the people in this room do because they felt it in their own family sometimes or in the workplace—that with change, with any progress, comes some unease. And as Americans, I think we have to acknowledge that. I think that it's important for us to recognize that there are still parts of the country that are getting there, but it's going to take some time.

We affirm that we cherish our religious freedom and are profoundly respectful of religious traditions. But we also have to say clearly that our religious freedom doesn't grant us the freedom to deny our fellow Americans their constitutional rights. And that even as we are respectful and accommodating genuine concerns and interests of religious institutions, we need to reject politicians who are supporting new forms of discrimination as a way to scare up votes. That's not how we move America forward.

So, to secure the gains this country has made requires continued vigilance, not complacency. This country has come too far, and people of good will in both political parties are too plentiful to turn back now. We've made sure that Federal contractors can't fire a worker just for being gay. We should make sure that no American lives in fear of being fired just because of who they love. We've come a long way in changing hearts and minds so that trans men and women can be who they are, not just on magazine covers, but in workplaces and schools and communities. And to build on that

progress, we should support efforts to ban so-called conversion therapy for minors.

So we've got to keep striving every day to treat each other the way I believe God sees us, as equal in His eyes. Harvey Milk once said, "If a gay person makes it, the doors are open to everyone." But to those of us who've made it through those doors, we've got a unique obligation to reach back and make sure other people can make it through those doors too. We have a responsibility to stand up to bigotry, not just against us, but against anybody, anywhere. We have a responsibility to stand up for freedom, not just our own freedom, but for everybody's freedom. We speak up to condemn hatred against anybody—gay or straight, Black or White, Christian, Muslim, Jew, nonbeliever, immigrant—because we remember what silence felt like when hatred was directed at us, and we've got to be champions on behalf of justice for everybody, not just our own.

That's what makes us human. And that's America at its best: our ability to connect, our ability to see ourselves in somebody else. To be an ally to the marginalized, to the dispossessed, to the discriminated against. To recognize our joy and our struggles and our fears and our hope and our love in somebody else.

Maybe it's the trans activist demanding dignity. Maybe it's the immigrant hoping to contribute, or the middle class kid struggling to pay for college. Maybe it's the woman denied equal pay, the African American denied the right to vote, the worker denied a living wage. Their stories may not be ours, but surely we can see our stories in theirs. We can make their fight our own.

And in the end, that's what makes me proudest to be a Democrat. I think we're right on most policy issues. I think that we have the better argument in economics and foreign affairs. But at the core of this party today as it's currently constituted—and we have to remind ourselves that it hasn't always been that way. There have been times where the Democratic Party stood in the way of progress. And there have been times where Republicans, like Abraham Lincoln and Everett Dirksen, stood on the right side of change.

Right now what makes me proudest about being a Democrat is, is that at our core, we really do believe in everybody having a shot. At our core, we really do believe that that's not just a theoretical assertion, but it's an obligation. It compels us. It's part of one American family: to fight on behalf of those who haven't had the same kind of chances that we do; to make sure that everybody has dignity and respect and that every kid out there is able to live out their dreams.

We mean it when we say that all are created equal. And we understand that that has to be operative in our own individual lives, but we also have to express it through the common enterprise called government. We mean it when we say that in this country, of all countries, everyone deserves an equal shot.

And so, Democrats, over the next 14 months, we have to work even harder than we did when I was first on the ballot. We're going to have to work harder to protect the gains that we've made. We're going to have to work harder to widen the circle of opportunity for all who strive for it. It will not be easy. There's always a contest in this country since its founding between hope and fear. What makes America special is, is that though sometimes we zig and zag, eventually, hope wins out. But it only wins out because folks like you put your shoulder behind the wheel and push it in that direction.

That was true in the past. That will be true in the future. I look forward to working with you to make sure it happens in this election cycle.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:57 p.m. at Gotham Hall. In his remarks, he referred to James Obergefell, plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which ruled in favor of marriage equality for same-sex couples; musician Betty Who; 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; and 2016 Republican Presidential candidates Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz, and former Gov. Michael D. Huckabee of Arkansas.