including unfair sentencing laws, that need to be reformed.

We know that simply locking people up doesn't make communities safer. It doesn't deal with the conditions that lead people to criminal activity in the first place or to return to prison later. After all, there's evidence that a 10-percent increase in the high school graduation rate leads to a nearly 10-percent decrease in arrest rates. A 10-percent wage increase for men without a college degree lowers crime by as much as 20 percent. And a growing body of research suggests that the longer people stay in jail, the more likely they are to commit another crime once they get out.

Here's why this matters. Every year, more than 600,000 people are released from prison. We need to ensure that they are prepared to reenter society and become productive, contributing members of their families and communities and maybe even role models.

That's why we've been working to make our criminal justice system smarter, fairer, less expensive, and more effective. This week, the Department of Justice will highlight how strong reentry programs can make communities safer. My administration will announce new actions that will build on the progress we've already made. We'll release more details about how we are taking steps to ensure that applicants with a criminal history have a fair shot to compete for a Federal job. We're issuing a new report that details the economic costs of our high rates of incarceration. And we're calling on businesses to commit to hiring returning citizens who have earned a second chance.

These are just a few of the steps we're taking. But there's much more to do: disrupting the pipeline from underfunded schools to overcrowded jails; addressing the disparities in the application of criminal justice, from arrest rates to sentencing to incarceration; investing in alternatives to prison, like drug courts and mental health treatment; helping those who have served their time get the support they need to become productive members of society.

Good people from both sides of the aisle and across all sectors are coming together on this issue. From businesses that are changing their hiring practices to law enforcement that's improving community policing, we're seeing change. Now we need a Congress that's willing to send a bipartisan criminal justice reform bill to my desk. This isn't just about what makes economic and practical sense. It's about making sure that we live up to our ideals as a nation.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:35 a.m. on April 15 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on April 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 23. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Young Leaders of the United Kingdom Town Hall Meeting in London, United Kingdom
April 23, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello! Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Have a seat. Have a seat. Well, hello, London. It is good to be back in the U.K. Thank you, Khadija, for that wonderful introduction. She—I was saying backstage, I'd vote for her for something. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank our U.S. Ambassador, Matthew Barzun, for all the great work that he's doing.

And it is wonderful to see all of you. I guess you all know why I came this week. It's no secret. Nothing was going to stop me from wishing happy birthday to Her Majesty. [*Laughter*] And meeting George. [*Laughter*] Who was adorable. [*Laughter*] Michelle and I had the privilege to visit with Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh yesterday. I can't tell you what we talked about. I can tell you that I hope

I am such a engaging lunch partner when I am 90. [*Laughter*] And I'd like to thank Her Majesty for letting us use one of her Horticultural Halls for this town hall.

I also just came from touring Shakespeare's Globe, which is a good way to start your Saturday morning. Today is the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. And as he once wrote, "Brevity is the soul of wit," so I will try to be brief on the front end so we have time for a conversation.

These are some of the favorite things that I do when I travel around the world, is just have a chance to meet with young people and hear from them directly. It's inspiring to me. It gives me new ideas and, I think, underscores the degree to which young people are rising up in every continent to seize the possibilities of tomorrow.

Now, whenever I get together with leaders of the United States and U.K., you hear a lot about the special relationship and the shared values and interests that bind us together and the way that our cooperation makes the world safer and more secure and a more just and prosperous place. And all of that is true. We go back a pretty long way, the U.K. and the U.S. We've had our quarrels. There was that whole tea incident and—[*laughter*]—the British burned my house down. [*Laughter*] But we made up. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. It was for the tea.

The President. It was for the tea. [*Laughter*]

Ultimately, we made up and ended up spilling blood on the battlefield together, side by side, against fascism and against tyranny, for freedom and for democracy. And from the ashes of war, we led the charge to create the institutions and initiatives that sustained a prosperous peace: NATO, Bretton Woods, the Marshall Plan, the EU. The joint efforts and sacrifices of previous generations of Americans and Brits are a big part of why we've known decades of relative peace and prosperity in Europe, and that, in turn, has helped to spread peace and prosperity around the world.

And think about how extraordinary that is. For more than 1,000 years, this continent was darkened by war and violence. It was taken for granted. It was assumed that that was the fate of man. Now, that's not to say that your generation has had it easy. Both here and the United States, your generation has grown up at a time of breathtaking change. You've come of age through 9/11 and 7/7. You've had friends go off to war. You've seen families endure recession. The challenges of our time—economic inequality and climate change, terrorism and migration—all these things are real. And in an age of instant information, where TV and Twitter can feed us a steady stream of bad news, I know that it can sometimes seem like the order that we've created is fragile, maybe even crumbling; maybe the center cannot hold.

And we see new calls for isolationism or xenophobia. We see those who would call for rolling back the rights of people; people hunkering down in their own point of view and unwilling to engage in a democratic debate. And those impulses I think we can understand. They are reactions to changing times and uncertainty.

But when I speak to young people, I implore them and I implore you to reject those calls to pull back. I'm here to ask you to reject the notion that we're gripped by forces that we can't control. And I want you to take a longer and more optimistic view of history and the part that you can play in it. I ask you to embrace the view of one of my predecessors, President John F. Kennedy, who once said: "Our problems are man made. Therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants."

That's how, since 1950, the global average life expectancy has grown by 25 years. Since 1990, we've cut extreme poverty around the world in half. That's how, over the past hundred years, we've come from a world where only a small fraction of women could vote to one where almost every woman can. That's how, since just the year 2000, we've come from a world without marriage equality to one where it's a reality in nearly two dozen countries, including here and in the United States.

Every few months, I speak with a new group of White House interns. They're roughly your age. They come in for 6 months; they are assigned to various aspects of the White House.

And I often talk to them about the fact that if you could choose one moment in history in which to be born, and you didn't know ahead of time what you were to be—you didn't know whether you were a man or a woman, what nationality, what ethnicity, what religion, who your parents were, what class status you might have—if you could choose one time in history where the chances that you led a fulfilling life were most promising, you'd choose right now, this moment. Because the world, for all of its travails, for all of its challenges, has never been healthier, better educated, wealthier, more tolerant, less violent, more attentive to the rights of all people than it is today.

Now, that doesn't mean we don't have big problems. That's not a cause for complacency, but it is a cause for optimism. You are standing at a moment where your capacity to shape this world is unmatched. What an incredible privilege that is. And you've never had better tools to make a difference, to forge a better U.K. and a better Europe and a better world.

So my primary message today is going to be to reject pessimism and cynicism; know that progress is possible, that our problems can be solved. Progress requires the harder path of breaking down barriers and building bridges and standing up for the values of tolerance and diversity that our nations have worked and sacrificed to secure and defend. Progress is not inevitable, and it requires struggle and perseverance and discipline and faith. But that's the story of how we won voting rights and women's rights and workers' rights and civil rights and immigration rights and gay rights: because of those who came before us, often risked their lives to give us the chance to know something better.

That's what gives me so much hope about your generation. So many of you are driven by that same impulse. You are a generation that has seen integration and globalization not as threats but as opportunities—for education and exploration and employment and exchange. You're a generation who sees differences of pluralism and diversity not as a curse, but as a great gift.

And that's one of the reasons why the United States has invested in young leader initiatives around the globe: in Africa and Latin America, Southeast Asia, and right here in the U.K.

So last summer, we launched Young Leaders U.K. And it's grown from four students in Plymouth to more than 1,000 nationwide, a diverse group of Brits aged 18 to 30, from government and NGOs and the private sector, including many of you here today. I know Ambassador Barzun has held town hall workshops at more than 100 high schools, with more than 14,000 sixth-formers. He's worked to create more of the U.S. Embassy exchange programs that have graduated alumni like Margaret Thatcher and Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. Because we want you to have the tools, connections, and resources that you need to make yourselves change agents, the change that you are looking for in the world.

So you're young leaders like Michael Sani, who's here today—where is Michael?

Bite the Ballot Founder Michael Sani. Behind, sir.

The President. Right behind. [*Laughter*] There he is. Michael was inspired by America's "Rock the Vote" voter registration initiative, so he started his own "Bite the Bullet"—"Bite the Ballot"—excuse me—[*laughter*]—initiative here in the U.K. And he spent time in Greensboro, North Carolina, where he learned about our civil rights movement. And he said: "I have a new understanding of the meaning of perseverance, resilience, and delayed gratification—about fighting for change you may not live to see, but your children will live to see."

Fighting for change that you may not live to see, but your children will live to see. That's what this is all about. That's what we are all about. Whether in the cold war or world war, movements for economic or social justice, efforts to combat climate change, our best impulses has always been to leave a better world for the next generation.

Maryam Ahmed is here today. Where is Maryam? Where are you? Are you also behind me? [*Laughter*] There's Maryam up top. It's that impulse that compels a young leader like Maryam to say, I may have grown up one of

eight in a small West London house, but I'm going to use the education I got at Oxford to help any child have the same opportunities that I have.

And Ali Hashem is here. Where is Ali? Right there. It's the same impulse that's led Ali to say, I may have fled Syria as a child, but now that I'm in elective office, I'm going to use my power to help other refugees like me.

And Becca Bunce is here today. Where is Becca? There's Becca. It's that impulse that compels a young leader like Becca to say that, as a woman with a disability, I may have fallen down at times, but people who believed in me picked me up. And I'm going to pay it forward by fighting for people with disabilities and against violence against women, because I believe the world can be a better place.

You can't help but be inspired by the stories of young people like these, both in the United States and the United Kingdom. And think of all the good that we can do together. Think of all the good that we have yet to accomplish. There is not a challenge on this planet that our two countries don't take on together. And as long as your generation nurtures that special relationship and learns from one another and stands together, I'm confident the future is brighter than the past and that our best days are still ahead of us.

So with that, let's have a conversation. All right, well, you guys were ready, I guess. [*Laughter*] Here's what we're going to do. I am going to go boy, girl, boy, girl—[*laughter*]—to make sure that it's fair. And I'll try to get as many questions as I can. Introduce yourself. We have mikes. Right there. And tell me who you are and where you're from and then try to keep your question or comment relatively brief so I can get as many as possible. All right?

And we will start right here.

Northern Ireland/Peace and Reconciliation Efforts

Q. Mr. President, my name is Keona McCarney from Belfast, Northern Ireland. And the special relationship is felt nowhere stronger than in Northern Ireland, where America has played a really important role in our peace process. How will your predecessor and those to come after you help to foster that?

The President. Well, in Northern Ireland is a story of perseverance. And the fact that your generation—how old are you now?

Q. Twenty-one.

The President. Twenty-one. I mean, your experience has been entirely different than your parents'. There are still huge problems there, some of them political, some of them economic. But every year, we have, on St. Patrick's Day, folks from Ireland come. And we had both the—your First Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister come. And folks are working these issues through.

And what's interesting is the degree to which the example of peacemaking in Northern Ireland is now inspiring others. So, in Colombia, Latin America right now, they're trying to undergo a peace process. And they've actually brought people from Northern Ireland to come and describe how do you overcome years of enmity and hatred and intolerance and try to shape a country that is unified.

You know this better than I do, but one of the things that you see in Northern Ireland that's most important is the very simple act of recognizing the humanity of those on the other side of the argument, having empathy and a sense of connection to people who are not like you. That's taken time, but you're now seeing that. And I think among young people who are interacting more, you're seeing that.

It requires also forging a new identity that is about being from Northern Ireland as opposed to being Unionist or Sinn Fein or—and just deciding the country as a whole is more important than any particular faction or any particular flag.

But this is a challenging time to do that. Because there is so much uncertainty in the world right now, because things are changing so fast, there is a temptation to forge identities, tribal identities that give you a sense of certainty, a buffer against change. And that's something that our young people—we have to fight against. Whether you're talking about Africa or the Middle East or Northern Ireland or Burma, the forces that lead to the most violence

and the most injustice typically spring out of people saying, I want to feel important by dividing the world into "us" and "them." And "them" threatens me, and so I've got to make sure that my tribe strikes out first.

And fighting that mentality and that impulse requires us to begin very young, with our kids. One of the most encouraging things I've seen in Northern Ireland is children starting to go to school together. Right? And having a sense of—that we're all in this together, as opposed to, it's "us" against "them."

But it's going to take some time. It will depend on leaders like you to make it happen, all right? No pressure. You're going to be fine. [*Laughter*] You're going to do it. All right, good question.

All right, it's a gentleman's turn. That gentleman right there. Yes, you. No, yes—there's nobody behind you, right there. No, no, no. [*Laughter*] You. Hold on a second. I was pointing down here——

Q. Oh, right.

The President. ——but go ahead, and I'll call on him next. Go ahead.

Counterterrorism Strategy/Iran/Global Economic Development/Education

Q. Hi, I'm Peter from London.

The President. Hi, Peter.

Q. I—thank you. [*Laughter*] So I always imagine in the future, so if your successor comes to you and she says, so—[*laughter*]—suppose it could be Bernie. [*Laughter*] And she says, oh, we need to prioritize education, health care, and defense. These are three issues we've got; we've got a limited budget. And what's your priority, and how do you think about ranking those? And what do you think—what would you like to see as your core priorities there?

The President. For the next President?

Q. And ongoing, and for yourself as well. But, yes, so——

The President. Well, one of the things that I've learned as President is, I don't always have the luxury of just choosing one or two things. Turns out that how well we do in the United States and how well the globe does depends on a lot of things.

My first priority is to keep the American people safe. Just like I'm sure Prime Minister Cameron, if you asked him, "What is your first priority?" it's keeping the United Kingdom safe. So security is always going to be a top-of-the-list item.

And the threats from ISIL and transnational terrorism are absolutely critical to address. But how we address them is important. And recognizing that security is not just a matter of military actions, but is a matter of the messages we send and the institutions that we build and the diplomacy that we engage in and the opportunities that we present to people. That is going to be important for the next President of the United States and any global leader to recognize.

I mean, I am in awe of our respective militaries, the men and women in uniform who serve their country and make such extraordinary sacrifices. But we do them a disservice if we think that the entire burden of keeping the world safe is just placed on those who are in uniform. That's where diplomacy comes in.

You look at something like Iran, where obviously, the United States and Iran has had a terrible relationship since 1979; the theocracy there has engaged in all kinds of very dangerous and provocative behaviors, and they were on the path to obtain a nuclear weapon. The hard, diplomatic work that we did, along with the U.K. and the EU and members of the Security Council, to forge an agreement where they are no longer on the path to get a nuclear weapon—we never engaged in a military strike to do it, but it resulted in a much safer world.

And the same is true when you think about development in sub-Saharan Africa. An organization like Boko Haram is ideologically driven, and we have to help countries like Nigeria fight against the brutality and the rape and the pillage that they engage in. But if there are communities where children can't read or feed themselves, they are much more vulnerable to fostering these kinds of demented ideologies.

So I think it's not an either-or question, and I—and it's important for young people who—

very many thoughtful young people, I think, instinctually are suspicious of military action because too often it's been used as a knee-jerk response to problems as opposed to part of a broader set of solutions. But we have to do both, and we can do both.

In terms of the United States right now, I would love to see a focus on early childhood education as a—as the next step in filling out our social safety net. We don't yet have institutions that are fully adapted to the fact that, guess what, women work and support families, and they need things like paid family leave and high-quality childcare. And we know that when we invest in children between the ages of zero and 3 that the outcomes in terms of them getting effective educations and having thriving lives are enormous. We ended up saving huge amounts of money from reduced crime and poverty, if we just make that early investment. That's something that some countries do better than others, and we can learn from other countries along those lines.

Across the board, across the developing world right now, I think we have to attend to issues of inequality. And to do—one of the places to start addressing these issues of inequality is making sure that every child is getting a decent education. And a lot of our countries are not doing as well as they should on that front.

So, all right, who is next? All right. Young lady right there. Right—you, yes, you. [*Laughter*]

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership/Trans-Pacific Partnership/Vietnam

Q. Hi, my name is Fatima, and my question is, do you think signing the T–TIP agreement will have a negative impact on the EU, due to the standards of regulation enforced?

The President. For those of you who are not aware, T–TIP, as we call it, is the trade deal that is being negotiated between the United States and the European Union. We're—we haven't gotten it done yet. The truth is, is that the United States and Europe already have enormous amounts of trade, but there are still barriers that exist that prevent businesses and individuals that are providing services to each other to be able to do so seamlessly. And if we are able to get this deal done, it's estimated that it will create millions of jobs and billions of dollars of benefits on both sides of the Atlantic.

But getting trade deals done is tough, because each country has its own parochial interests and factions. And in order to get a trade deal done, each country has to give something up. So it's a time-consuming process. And people, right now, are especially suspicious of trade deals because trade deals feel as if they are accelerating some of these globalizing trends that have weakened labor unions and allowed for jobs to be shipped to low-wage countries. And some of the criticism in the past of trade deals are legitimate. Sometimes, they have served the interests of large corporations and not necessarily of workers in the countries that participate in them.

But we've just gone through this exercise between the United States and Asia, where we organized a large regional trade deal with 11 countries, and part of the argument that I'm making in the United States is that the answer to globalization and income inequality and lack of wage growth is not to try to pull up the drawbridge and shut off trade. The idea is to make sure that in these trade deals we are embedding standards and values that help lift workers' rights and help lift environmental standards and help fight against things like human trafficking and child labor. And our values should be embedded in how countries trade with each other.

So, for example, Vietnam was one of the countries that is part of this Trans-Pacific Partnership, and we said to Vietnam, if you want access to our markets—we understand you have a different political system than us, but if workers have no rights and there's no possibility of organizing labor unions, we're not going to let you sell a bunch of sneakers and T-shirts into our country because by definition you're going to be undercutting the standards of living of folks in our country. And so for the first time, the Government of Vietnam has started to change its laws to recognize labor unions. Now, they're still suppressed. Those standards are not where they are in the United States or

the U.K. But it gives us a lever by which to begin to raise standards all around the world.

Now, that's less of an issue between the United States and Europe. Main thing between the United States and Europe is trying to just break down some of the regulatory differences that make it difficult to do business back and forth. Plus, making sure those light sockets are all matched up. [*Laughter*] I mean, those light sockets are really irritating. [*Laughter*]

Let's see. Oh, I promised I was going to call on this gentleman back here. Yes, sir. No, no, right here. You keep passing by this poor guy. [*Laughter*]

The President's Achievements/Civil Rights/Social Change

Q. My name is Elijah—[*inaudible*]—and I'm from London. After 8 years, what would you say you want your legacy to be?

The President. Well, I mean I have—I still have a few more months, so—[*laughter*]. I—[*applause*]—no, no, no, that's—actually, 8 months and 52 days or—not that I'm counting. [*Laughter*] I just made that up, I actually don't know. [*Laughter*] It's roughly something like that.

Yes, it's interesting, when you're in the job, you're not thinking on a day-to-day basis about your legacy, you're thinking about how do I get done what I'm trying to get done right now. And I don't think that I'll have a good sense of my legacy until 10 years from now, and I can look back with some perspective and get a sense of what worked and what didn't.

There are things I'm proud of. The basic principle that in a country as wealthy as the United States, every person should have access to high-quality health care that they can afford, that's something I'm proud of, I believe in. Saving the world economy from a Great Depression, that was pretty good. [*Laughter*]

The first time I came to London was April of 2009, and the world economy was in a free fall, in part because of the reckless behavior of folks on Wall Street, and—but in part because of reckless behavior of a lot of financial institutions around the globe. For us to be able to mobilize the world community to take rapid action to stabilize the financial markets, and then in the United States, to pass Wall Street reforms that make it much less likely that a crisis like that can happen again, I'm proud of that.

I think on the international stage, the work that we did to get the possible nuclear weapons that Iran was developing out of Iran, and doing so without going to war, is something I'm very proud of.

There are things that people don't pay a lot of attention to now, but the response to the Ebola crisis: For about 3 weeks, everybody sure—was sure that everybody was going to die—we're all going to get Ebola, we're all going to die. [*Laughter*] And there was sort of hysteria about it. And then, everybody forgot about it. And the reason everybody forgot about it was because we mounted what was probably one of the most effective, if not the most effective, international public health responses in the history of the world and saved hundreds of thousands of lives.

So I don't know, I'll look at a scorecard at the end. [*Laughter*] And I'm proud about the fact that I think that I have been true to myself during this process. I don't—sometimes, I look back at what I said when I was running for office and what I'm saying today, and they match up. So there's, I think, a certain core integrity to what I've been trying to do. We've had failures, and we've—occasionally, we've been blocked, but this goes back to one of the themes of my opening statement, and it's important for all the young people here to remember: Change takes time, and oftentimes, what you start has to then be picked up by your successors or the next generation.

If you think about the gap between—well, something I'm most familiar with, the American civil rights movement. You had abolitionists in the 1700s who were fighting against slavery and for a hundred years built a movement that eventually led to a Civil War and the amendments to our Constitution that ended slavery and called for equal protection under the law. It then took another hundred years for those rights that had been enshrined in the Constitution to actually be affirmed through

the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And then it's taken another 50 years to try to make sure that those rights are realized. And they're still not fully realized. Well, there's still discrimination in aspects of American life, even with a Black President.

And in fact, one of the dangers has been that by electing a Black President, people have then said, well, there must be no problems at all. And obviously, you see Ferguson and some of the issues that we've seen in the criminal justice system indicating the degree to which that was always false.

So does that mean all the work that was done along the way was worthless? No, of course not. But it does mean that if any of you begin to work on an issue that you care deeply about, don't be disappointed if a year out, things haven't been completely solved. Don't give up and succumb to cynicism if, after 5 years, poverty has not been eradicated and prejudice is still out there somewhere and we haven't resolved all of the steps we need to take to reverse climate change. It's okay.

Dr. King said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." And it doesn't bend on its own. It bends because we pull it in that direction. But it requires a series of generations working and building off of what the previous one has done.

And so, as President, I think about it in those ways. I consider myself a runner, and I run my leg of the race. But then, I've got a baton, and I'm passing it on to the next person. And hopefully, they're running in the right direction—[*laughter*]—as opposed to the wrong direction. [*Laughter*] And hopefully, they don't drop the baton. And then, they go, and then they pass it on to somebody else. Right? And that's how I think you've got to think about change generally. Okay.

All right. It is a young woman's turn. Yes, right here, in the red. Yes, you. No, no, that's you. You're wearing red. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Same-Sex Marriage/Black Lives Matter Movement/Political Activism/Climate Change

Q. Thanks. Hi, I'm Louisa. I'm a climate change campaigner, and I wanted to thank you for your smart and creative way to try and sort of get a grip on the problem.

The President. Yes.

Q. And given you've been talking about the value of social movements, I was wondering which campaigns have made you change your mind while you've been in office and inspired you to do things and where you think we need more external pressure from campaigns to create meaningful change.

The President. Well, that's an interesting question. And are you talking about climate change, in particular? Or are you talking about just generally, on a whole spectrum of issues? That's interesting. It's interesting because I started as a community organizer trying to pressure politicians into getting things done. And then—now I'm on the other side—[*laughter*]—and so what has worked and what hasn't?

Well, in the United States, what's been remarkable is the rapidity with which the marriage equality movement changed the political landscape and hearts and minds and resulted in actual changes in law. It's probably been the fastest set of changes that—in terms of a social movement that I've seen.

On issues of LGBT rights generally, I didn't need a lot of pressure. I came in working on ending a policy called "don't ask, don't tell," that was preventing LGBT citizens from serving in our military openly. We did that very systematically. Policies in terms of those who had HIV/AIDS being able to emigrate to our country, hospital visitations—there were a whole host of things that we were already doing.

But on marriage equality, I was in favor of what's called civil unions. My notion was initially that labeling those partnerships as marriage wasn't necessary as long as people were getting the same rights, and it would disentangle them from some of the religious connotations that marriage had in the minds of a lot of Americans. And that's where I think—now, I have to confess, my children generally had an impact on me. People I loved who were in monogamous same-sex relationships explained to me what I should have understood earlier, which is, it was not simply about legal rights, but about a sense of stigma, that if you're

calling it something different, it means that somehow it means less in the eyes of society.

I believe that the manner in which the LGBT community described marriage equality as not some radical thing, but actually reached out to people who said they care about family values, and said, if you care about everything that families provide—stability and commitment and partnership and—then this is actually a pretty conservative position to take, that you should be in favor of this. I thought there was a lot of smarts in reaching out and building and framing the issue in a way that could bring in people who initially didn't agree with them.

As a general rule, I think that what, for example, Black Lives Matter is doing now to bring attention to the problem of a criminal justice system that sometimes is not treating people fairly based on race or reacting to shootings of individuals by police officers has been really effective in bringing attention to problems.

One of the things I caution young people about, though, that I don't think is effective is, once you've highlighted an issue and brought it to people's attention and shined a spotlight, and elected officials or people who are in a position to start bringing about change are ready to sit down with you, then you can't just keep on yelling at them. And you can't refuse to meet because that might compromise the purity of your position.

The value of social movements and activism is to get you at the table, get you in the room, and then to start trying to figure out how is this problem going to be solved. You, then, have a responsibility to prepare an agenda that is achievable, that can institutionalizes the changes you seek, and to engage the other side and occasionally to take half a loaf that will advance the gains that you seek, understanding that there's going to be more work to do, but this is what is achievable at this moment.

And too often, what I see is wonderful activism that highlights a problem, but then people feel so passionately and are so invested in the purity of their position that they never take that next step and say, okay, well, now I've got to sit down and try to actually get something done.

So the Paris Agreement that we just negotiated and that a number of countries just signed yesterday on Earth Day, the agreement we shaped is not going to, by itself, solve climate change. The science argues that the world is going to be—going to need to do a lot more in order for us to prevent catastrophic climate change. But my strategy from the start has been, all right, if I can get the Chinese to agree with us, as the two largest emitters, that we have to do something, and lock in China with us for the first time to take some serious steps around reducing carbon emissions, and if by getting the two largest emitters, I can now leverage all the other smaller countries to also put in their own targets for emissions, and if we can set up an architecture that recognizes the need for carbon reduction and has—and can allow people to—or allow countries to hold each other accountable, then that's a start. And we can now start turning up the dial as our science and our understanding improves, as technology improves, so that poor countries don't feel that they have to choose between development and carbon reductions. And there are all kinds of compromises in that. But it's a start.

Now, there are some climate activists who, after the Paris Agreement was signed, said, ah, this is not enough! But they're not in a conversation, apparently, with Prime Minister Modi of India, for example, who's thinking, I've still got several hundred million people without electricity, and I have some obligation to try to relieve them of their poverty and suffering, so I've got to balance those equities against the imperatives of the planet as a whole.

And so—now, but the good news is, is that most of the groups that have been involved in this process have been pretty sophisticated. But that's a general principle that I think all of you should consider. Make noise and occasionally you can act a little crazy to get attention, to shine a spotlight on the issue, to highlight it. But once people who are in power and in a position to actually do something about it are prepared to meet and listen with you, do your homework, be prepared, present a plausible

set of actions, and negotiate and be prepared to move the ball down the field even if it doesn't get all the way there. All right?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No. You do, but it wouldn't be fair if you just start yelling out a question and I—because it's a guy's turn also, so you—[*laughter*].

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. The—all right, go ahead. And——

Somalia

Q. Thank you, President, firstly, for all you did for the world and for mankind. I think you made a great contribution, and you inspire a lot of young people across the world. But my question is slightly—on East Africa.

The President. Okay.

Q. Since you said, and—you can ask me any question. Just last week, 400 young boys has died in the Mediterranean Sea in trying to seek a better life. Mostly left in Somalia. And those young boys has lost their livelihoods. Since, there is a international ships coming to the Somali territorial water, and those ships has been trying to protect the international ships from the piracy. But at the same time, they have been dumping, there has been a lot of proven cases that they have been dumping a waste in Somali Sea. And also there is a proven cases within the coast cities that children are dying with very strange diseases that they've never seen, that is these things are coming to the coast that came out from the sea.

So today I have the opportunity to ask you, while you're here for the next 8 or 9 months that you have, can you kindly use your leverage within the international arena to galvanize the international community to look at this issue? And can you share some practical steps that you can share—that you can take to ensure this doesn't happen.

The President. Well, I'll be honest with you. I'm not fully familiar with some of the issues you referred to. I'm certainly familiar with the challenges that Somalia has been going through. And we've been working aggressively to try to help Mogadishu develop a functioning state that can protect its people and that can get an economy moving that gives young people opportunity.

I'm certainly familiar with the issues of privacy—of piracy and the international concerns that led to many of these ships patrolling these areas. I'm less familiar with some of the issues that you discussed. So what I'll do is, after this meeting, as we're shaking hands, I'll try to get some additional information from you. One of the things I've learned as President is, although you can always fake your way through an answer, sometimes, it's really good just to say, you know what, I don't know all the answers on this one. So I will—I'll find out more about the specifics that you're talking about.

All right. I will, I—see, now since you've raised your hand and you didn't continue to act crazy, I'm going to go ahead and call on you. Go ahead. [*Laughter*]

Q. First of all, sincerest apologies.

The President. That's okay.

Q. I guess I got overwhelmed.

The President. You got excited.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights

Q. My name is Maria Munir. And you've been speaking a lot about how we have to become the change that we want to see.

The President. Right.

Q. And you've spoken about progress, about human rights, and about how we in the U.S. and the U.K. need to lead in terms of civil rights movements and LGBTQ issues. Now I'm about to do something terrifying, which is I'm coming out to you as a nonbinary person, which means that I don't fit within—I'm getting emotional, I'm so sorry.

The President. That's okay.

Q. Because I come from a—I'm from a Pakistani Muslim background, which inevitably has cultural implications. And I know that in North Carolina, recently, with the bathroom bill, people are being forced, obviously, to produce birth certificates to prove their gender in order to go to a toilet. In the U.K., we don't recognize nonbinary people under the Equality Act, so we literally have no rights. So if there was any discrimination, there's nothing we can do.

I've been working for the last 9 months with the U.K. Civil Service Fast Stream with Gillian Smith in order to do what I can, even though I'm still at university and running for local election at the same time in Watford. I've managed to get them to respect pronouns. I've managed to get them to commit to gender-neutral toilets. And these are thing I've done as a student. And I really, really wish that yourself and David Cameron would take us seriously as transgender people. And perhaps you could elucidate as to what you can do to go beyond what has been accepted as the LGBTQ rights movement, in including people who fit outside the social norms.

The President. Well, look, I think that—[*applause*]. First of all, that wasn't that crazy. I thought you were going to ask to come up here and dance with me or something. [*Laughter*] But, I mean, look, I'm incredibly proud of the steps it sounds like you've already taken to speak out about your own experience and then to try to create a social movement and change laws. It sounds to me like you're on the right track.

I can't speak for David Cameron, although I will say that on LGBT issues, I think David's been ahead of the curve relative to a lot of other leaders around the world and even here in the U.K. I can say from my perspective that we're taking a lot of serious steps to address these issues within the Federal Government.

The challenge we've had is, North Carolina, the law that comes up, for example, that's a State law. And because of our system of government, I can't overturn, on my own, State laws unless a Federal law is passed that prohibits States from doing these things. And with the Congress I currently have, that's not likely to happen. [*Laughter*]

But we're doing a lot of work administratively. And as I said, you should feel encouraged just by virtue of the fact that I think social attitudes on this issue have changed faster than I've seen on any other issue. It won't—it doesn't feel fast enough for you or for those who are impacted. And that's good. You shouldn't feel satisfied. You should keep pushing. But I think the trend lines are good on this. We're moving in the right direction and, in part, because of courageous and active young people like yourself. So stick with it.

All right. Let's see. Gentleman in the green here.

Political Compromise

Q. Thank you much. I'm Alex Clements from Manchester. I agree with everything you've said so far about compromise. But in an age of polarized politics, how do you inspire people to commit to compromise and fighting for the middle ground?

The President. I think that's a great question. It's something that I wrestle with. I would distinguish between compromising on principles and compromising in getting things done in the here and now. And what I mean by that is, I am uncompromising on the notion that every person, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, has a dignity and worth and have to be treated equally. So I'm uncompromising in that basic principle.

And I'm also of the belief that in order to realize that principle, every child has to have true opportunity; that every child is deserving of a decent education and decent health care and the ability to go to college and—so that they can make of themselves what they will. So that's a powerful principle in me. That drives my politics.

But if I'm sitting with Congress, and I have the opportunity to get half a million more kids into an early childhood education program, even though I know that that will leave 2 million who need it out of the program, but the alternative is none, I'll take half a million, right? And I can wake—I can look at myself in the mirror and feel good about the 500,000 that I'm helping, knowing that the next round of budget negotiations that we have, I'm going to go for another half a million, and I'm going to go for another half a million after that.

So I think it's important for everyone to understand that you—you'd have to be principled, you have to have a north star, a moral compass. There should be a reason for you getting involved in social issues other than vanity or just trying to mix and mingle and meet cute

people of—[*laughter*]—that you're interested in—although that's not a bad reason for—[*laughter*]. But you have to recognize that, particularly in pluralistic societies and democratic governments like we have in the United States and the U.K., there are people who disagree with us. They have different perspectives. They come from different points of view. And they're not bad people just because they disagree with us. They may, in fact, assert that they've got similar principles to ours, but they just disagree with us on the means to vindicate those principles.

And you are absolutely right that we are in this age now—partly because of what's happened with our media—in which people from different political parties, different political orientations, can spend the bulk of their day only talking to and listening to and hearing the perspectives of people who already agree with them. I know less about the U.K. media, but in the United States, it used to be, we had three television stations. And people might complain about the dominance of these three television stations, but there was one virtue to them, which was, everybody was kind of watching the same thing and had the same understanding of what the facts were on any given issue. And today, you have what, 500 television stations, and the Internet will give you a thousand different sources of information. And so what's increasingly happening in the United States is, is that if you're a conservative, then you're watching Fox News or you're reading a conservative blogpost. If you're a liberal, then you're reading the Huffington Post or reading the New York Times. And there's this massive divergence that's taking place in terms of just what the agreed-upon facts and assumptions are that we're talking about. And that does make it harder to compromise.

And there have been some interesting studies that have been done showing that if you spend time with people who just agree with you on any particular issue, that you become even more extreme in your convictions because you're never contradicted and everybody just mutually reinforces their perspective. That's why I think it is so important for all the young people here to seek out people who don't agree with you. That will teach you to compromise. It will also help you, by the way, if you decide to get married. [*Laughter*]

So—but the most important thing is understanding that compromise does not mean surrendering what you believe, it just means that you are recognizing the truth, the fact that these other people who disagree with you or this other political party or this other nation, they have—that they have dignity too, that they have worth as well, and you have to hear them and see them. And sometimes, we don't. We just——

All right, how much time do I have, by the way, people? One more question? I'll make it two. [*Laughter*] I'll make it two. All right. Let's see. Let's see. [*Laughter*] All right, well, this young lady right there. Go ahead.

Q. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Good morning.

Q. I'm losing my voice, so I apologize.

The President. That's okay.

Leadership

Q. My name is Helen Vaughan-Evans, and my question for you is, what leadership skills have you found yourself relying on most during your time in office, and why?

The President. A thick skin—[*laughter*]—is very helpful. I was just talking about this, actually, with the Ambassador, wasn't I, last night? Where is Matthew? I think I was just talking about this. Yes, I think I was just talking—we were just talking about this.

Two things I'm pretty good at. I mean—well, let me say this. One of the things that happens as you get older is, you are, hopefully, more aware of and honest with yourself about what your strengths are and what your weaknesses are. I could list my weaknesses, but you asked me about what things I've found useful—[*laughter*]—so I'll skip over that.

Two things I'm pretty good at: One is attracting talent. And anybody who wants to be a leader, I would advise you to spend a lot of time thinking about, how am I helping other people do great things? Because, as President of the United States, I am dealing with so

many issues, and I can't be expert on everything, and I can't be everywhere. And the one thing I can do is assemble a team of people who are really good and really smart and really committed and care about their mission and have integrity and then give them the tools or get rid of the barriers or help coach them so that they can do a great job.

And I think leaders who think that their primary job is to make everybody do exactly what they want, as opposed to helping to organize really talented people to collectively go to where we need to go, typically stumble. You should be predisposed to other people's power: How can I make the people around me do great things? If they do, then, by definition, I'll succeed, because that's my job, is to get this team moving in the right direction.

So that's one. Second thing, I'm pretty good at setting a course, a general direction, and being able to, hopefully, unify that team around that general direction. Oftentimes, I have to rely on other people to implement and execute to get there, but setting a direction requires also listening to what is it that's important to people.

And the third thing is synthesizing. I think it's very useful as a leader to be able to—particularly on complex issues—to sit around a table and hear a lot of different points of view and be able to get to what's the nub of the issue, what's the heart of the problem, what's the essential conflict that we're trying to resolve, and get everybody to see the problem the same—see what the problem is.

Because I see a lot of organizations that spend a lot of time doing a lot of work, but they're working on the wrong thing or they're distracted from the essential issue. Somebody once said, it's more important to do the right thing than to do things right. And what they meant was you can hack away and build this amazing path through the jungle, but if you're headed in the wrong direction, then it's a waste of time. So you've got to make sure that people understand what it is that we're trying to solve.

Yes, that's enough. [*Laughter*]

I've got time for one more. All right. The Sikh gentleman. Yes.

Racial Profiling/Transportation Security Administration/Terrorism/Anti-Muslim Discrimination

Q. Hello. So my issue is also—my question is related to an issue which minorities face in the U.S.A. We see many times Sikhs being discriminated against, as Muslims. And even if we were Muslims, that still doesn't give the right for anyone to be Islamophobic to us. So my question is, why isn't a firm stand being taken on issues such as airport security, where there's a lot of issues with the TSA? Since your neighbors in Canada—Justin Trudeau, he recently said that he's going to apologize for an issue which happened 102 years ago, and he has recently become Prime Minister, so why is it that he is taking a firm stand on an issue which happened so long ago, whereas countries such as the U.S.A. aren't taking a stand against discrimination when it is 2016? [*Applause*]

The President. Well, the—hold on. Before everybody starts applauding that question—[*laughter*]—let's make sure that we're on the same wavelength in terms of facts. I have taken an adamant stand against making sure that we're not racially profiling in airports. And it is explicit TSA policy not to racially profile.

Now, does that mean that out of the hundreds of airports and thousands of TSA officials that there has not been times where a Sikh is going through the airport and somebody targets them for secondary screening because of what they look like? Of course, that's happened. But that's not my administration's policy. And I'm happy to provide you with chapter and verse as to why we have taken an explicit stand against this.

It does raise a broader issue that you're mentioning, which is that in pluralistic societies like the United States, like the U.K., in diverse societies, one of our biggest challenges is going to be how do we approach keeping people safe and preventing terrorist acts. There was a time when terrorism was—here in the U.K.—was largely emanating from the IRA. So this is not unique—a uniquely Muslim problem. What is also true is, today, there are a tiny subset of groups that are—have perverted Islam in justifying killing innocent people. And

how we do that in a way that is consistent with our values and consistent with pluralism and respect for religion is vitally important.

And I, about 4 months ago, visited a mosque in the United States precisely to send a message that our greatest allies in this process are the incredible Muslim Americans who are, historically, fully integrated into our society; that economically are actually doing better than the average American in many measures; that are fighting in our Armed Forces; that are defending our people in all sorts of ways; and that if we engage in Islamophobia, we are not only betraying what is essential to us, but just as a practical matter, engaging in self-defeating behavior if we're serious about terrorism.

And so the language that we use, the tactics and approaches that we take, the respect that we show all people—those are security matters. They're not—it's not just feel-good, liberal political correctness. It's a matter of what is it that we're fighting for, and how are we going to win this fight against people who are so blocked off from the reality of others who don't—they don't agree with that they'd be willing to blow themselves up and kill hundreds of people. It's the extreme of what I was just talking to this gentleman about, about the inability to compromise and recognize difference and feel comfortable with that.

So look, this is going to be a challenging issue for some time to come. But I'm confident that it is an issue that we can succeed at, as long as young people like you are committed to not just believing the right thing and feeling the right ways, but fighting for it; and so long as you're engaged and active and speaking out and listening. And if you do that, I feel pretty good about our futures. I feel good about our chances. All right?

You guys inspire me. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Thank you!

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:27 a.m. in Lindley Hall at the Royal Horticultural Halls. In his remarks, he referred to Khadija Najefi, student, King's College London; Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom and her husband Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; Prince William and Catherine, Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, and their son Prince George of Cambridge; former Prime Ministers Gordon Brown and Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Ali Hashem, North End ward councillor, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham; Rebecca Bunce, cofounder, IC Change campaign; and First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister J. Martin P. McGuinness of Northern Ireland. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Participants referred to former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates; and Gillian Smith, head of human resources, Independent Living Fund.

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in Hannover, Germany
April 24, 2016

Chancellor Merkel. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to bid a very warm welcome to the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, here to Germany on this fifth visit, this time to Hannover. And let me tell you that I am delighted to have an opportunity not only to continue our talks, but today is going to be very remarkable day, because we're going to open the Hannover fair together. And the United States of America, this year will be the—or are the partner country.

These are turbulent times. I think we would both agree. And we have an opportunity to talk about the whole spectrum of international issues. Our bilateral relations are excellent. We don't need to spend too much time on this.

But let me tell you, Barack, that I very much value our candid, open talks that are always based on mutual trust. And we talk about the