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The Honorable Barack Obama
44th President of the United States
Democratic National Convention
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Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Hello, Chicago! It is good to be home.

I don't know about you, but I'm feeling fired up! I'm feeling ready to go—even if I'm the only person stupid enough to speak right after Michelle Obama.

I'm feeling hopeful because this convention has always been pretty good to kids with funny names who believe in a country where anything is possible. Because we have the chance to elect someone who's spent her whole life trying to give people the same chances America gave her. Someone who sees you and hears you and will get up every single day and fight for you: the next president of the United States of America, Kamala Harris.

It's been 16 years since I had the honor of accepting this party's nomination for president. I know it's hard to believe since I haven't aged a bit, but it's true. And looking back, I can say without question that my first big decision as your nominee turned out to be one of my best—and that was asking Joe Biden to serve by my side as vice president.

Other than some common Irish blood, Joe and I come from different backgrounds. But we became brothers. And as we worked together for eight years, what I came to admire most about Joe wasn't just his smarts and experience, but his empathy and his decency, his hard-earned resiliency, and his unshakable belief that everyone in this country deserves a fair shot.

Over the last four years, those are the values America has needed most.

At a time when millions of our fellow citizens were sick and dying, we needed a leader with the character to put politics aside and do what was right. At a time when our economy was reeling, we needed a leader with the determination to drive what became the world's strongest recovery—with 15 million jobs, higher wages, and lower health care costs. And at a time when the other party had turned into a cult of personality, we needed a leader who was steady, and brought people together, and was selfless enough to do the rarest thing there is in politics: putting his own ambition aside for the sake of the country.

History will remember Joe Biden as a president who defended democracy at a moment of great danger. I am proud to call him my president, but even prouder to call him my friend.

Now the torch has been passed. Now it's up to all of us to fight for the America we believe in. And make no mistake: it will be a fight. For all the incredible energy we've been able to generate over the last few weeks, this will still be a tight race in a closely divided country—a country where too many Americans are still struggling, and don't believe government can help.

And as we gather here tonight, the people who will decide this election are asking a very simple question: Who will fight for me? Who's thinking about *my* future; about my *children's* future—about *our* future together?

One thing is for certain: Donald Trump is not losing sleep over these questions. This is a 78-year-old billionaire who hasn't stopped whining about *his* problems since he rode down his golden escalator nine years ago. It's been a constant stream of gripes and grievances that's actually gotten worse now that he's afraid of losing to Kamala. The childish nicknames and crazy conspiracy theories and weird obsession with crowd size. It just goes on and on. The other day, I heard someone compare Trump to the neighbor who keeps running his leaf blower outside your window every minute of every day.

From a neighbor, that's exhausting. From a president, it's just dangerous. The truth is, Donald Trump sees power as nothing more than a means to *his* ends. He wants the middle class to pay the price for another huge tax cut that would mostly help *him* and his rich friends. He killed a bipartisan immigration deal that would've helped secure our southern border because he thought trying to actually solve the problem would hurt *his* campaign. He doesn't seem to care if more women lose their reproductive freedoms since it won't affect *his* life.

Most of all, Donald Trump wants us to think that this country is hopelessly divided between us and them; between the real Americans who support him and the outsiders who don't. And he wants you to think that you'll be richer and safer if you just give *him* the power to put those "other" people back in their place.

It's one of the oldest tricks in politics—from a guy whose act has gotten pretty stale. We don't need four more years of bluster and chaos. We've seen that movie—and we all know that the sequel's usually worse.

America is ready for a new chapter. America's ready for a better story.

We are ready for a *President* Kamala Harris.

And Kamala Harris is ready for the job. This is a person who has spent her life fighting on behalf of people who need a voice and a champion. As you heard from Michelle, Kamala wasn't born into privilege. She had to work for what she's got, and she actually cares about what other people are going through. She's not the neighbor running the leaf blower—she's the neighbor rushing over to help when you need a hand.

As a prosecutor, Kamala stood up for children who had been victims of sexual abuse. As Attorney General of the most populous state in the country, she fought big banks and for-profit colleges, securing billions of dollars for the people they had scammed. After the home mortgage crisis, she pushed me and my administration hard to make sure homeowners got a fair settlement. Didn't matter that I was a Democrat or that she had knocked on doors for my campaign in Iowa—she was going to fight to get as much relief as possible for the families who deserved it.

As Vice President, she helped take on the drug companies to cap the cost of insulin, lower the cost of health care, and give families with kids a tax cut. And she's running for president with real plans to

lower costs even more, protect Medicare and Social Security, and sign a law to guarantee every woman's right to make her own health care decisions.

Kamala Harris won't be focused on *her* problems—she'll be focused on yours. As president, she won't just cater to her own voters and punish those who refuse to bend the knee. She'll work on behalf of every American.

That's who Kamala is. And in the White House, she will have an outstanding partner in Governor Tim Walz.

I love this guy. Tim's the kind of person who *should* be in politics—somebody who was born in a small town, served his country, taught kids, coached football, and took care of his neighbors. He knows who he is and what's important. You can tell those flannel shirts he wears don't come from some consultant, they come from his closet, and they've been through some stuff.

Together, Kamala and Tim have kept faith with America's central story—a story that says we're all created equal, that everyone deserves a chance, and that, even when we don't agree with each other, we can find a way to live with each other.

That's Kamala's vision. That's Tim's vision. That's the Democratic Party's vision. And our job over the next 11 weeks is to convince as many people as possible to vote for that vision.

It won't be easy. The other side knows it's easier to play on people's fears and cynicism. They'll tell you that government is corrupt; that sacrifice and generosity are for suckers; and that since the game is rigged, it's ok to take what you want and look after your own.

That's the easy path. We have a different task. Our job is to convince people that democracy can actually deliver. And we can't just point to what we've already accomplished or only rely on the ideas of the past. We need to chart a new way forward to meet the challenges of today.

Kamala understands this. She knows, for example, that if we want to make it easier for more young people to buy a home, we need to build more units, and clear away some of the outdated laws and regulations that have made it harder to build homes for working people in this country. And she's put out a bold new plan to do just that.

On health care, we should all be proud of the enormous progress we've made through the Affordable Care Act—providing millions of people access to affordable coverage and protecting millions more from unscrupulous insurance practices. But Kamala knows we can't stop there, which is why she'll keep working to limit out-of-pocket costs.

Kamala knows that if we want to help people get ahead, we need to put a college degree within reach of more Americans. But college shouldn't be the only ticket to the middle class. We need to follow the lead of governors like Tim Walz who've said that if you've got the skills and the drive, you shouldn't need a degree to work for state government. And in this new economy, we need a president who actually cares about the millions of people all across this country who wake up every day to do the essential, often thankless work to care for our sick and clean our streets and deliver our packages and stand up for their right to bargain for better wages and working conditions.

Kamala will be that president.

A Harris-Walz administration can help us move past some of the tired old debates that keep stifling progress, because at their core, Kamala and Tim understand that when everybody gets a fair shot, we're all better off. They understand that when every child gets a good education, the whole economy gets stronger; that when women are paid the same as men, all families benefit. We can secure our border without tearing kids away from their parents, just like we can keep our streets safe while also building trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Donald Trump and his well-heeled donors don't see the world that way. For them, one group's gain is another group's loss. For them, freedom means that the powerful can do what they please, whether it's fire workers trying to organize a union or poison our rivers or avoid paying taxes like everybody else has to do.

We have a broader idea of freedom. We believe in the freedom to provide for your family if you're willing to work; the freedom to breathe clean air and drink clean water and send your kids to school without worrying if they'll come home. We believe that true freedom gives each of us the right to make decisions about our own life—how we worship, what our family looks like, how many kids we have, who we marry. And we believe that freedom requires us to recognize that other people have the freedom to make choices that are different than ours.

That's the America Kamala Harris and Tim Walz believe in. An America where "We the People" includes everyone. Because that's the only way this American experiment works. And despite what our politics might suggest, I think most Americans understand that. Democracy isn't just a bunch of abstract principles and dusty laws. It's the values we live by, and the way we treat each other—including those who don't look like us or pray like us or see the world exactly like we do.

That sense of mutual respect has to be part of our message. Our politics has become so polarized these days that all of us, across the political spectrum, seem quick to assume the worst in others unless they agree with us on every single issue. We start thinking that the only way to win is to scold and shame and outyell the other side. And after a while, regular folks just tune out, or don't bother to vote at all.

That approach may work for the politicians who just want attention and thrive on division. But it won't work for us. To make progress on the things we care about, the things that really affect people's lives, we need to remember that we've all got our blind spots and contradictions and prejudices; and that if we want to win over those who aren't yet ready to support our candidate, we need to listen to their concerns—and maybe learn something in the process.

After all, if a parent or grandparent occasionally says something that makes us cringe, we don't automatically assume they're bad people. We recognize the world is moving fast, and that they need time and maybe a little encouragement to catch up. Our fellow citizens deserve the same grace we hope they'll extend to us.

That's how we can build a true Democratic majority. And by the way, that doesn't just matter to people in this country. The rest of the world is watching to see if we can actually pull it off.

No nation, no society, has ever tried to build a democracy as big and diverse as ours before—one where our allegiances and our community are defined not by race or blood, but by a common creed. That's why when we uphold our values, the world's a little brighter. When we don't, the world's a little dimmer, dictators and autocrats feel emboldened, and over time we become less safe. We shouldn't be the world's policeman, and we can't eradicate every cruelty and injustice in the world. But America can be, must be, a force for good—discouraging conflict, fighting disease, promoting human rights, protecting the planet from climate change, defending freedom. That's what Kamala Harris believes—and so do most Americans.

I know these ideas can feel pretty naive right now. We live in a time of such confusion and rancor, with a culture that puts a premium on things that don't last—money, fame, status, likes. We chase the approval of strangers on our phones; we build all manner of walls and fences around ourselves and then wonder why we feel so alone. We don't trust each other as much because we don't take the time to know each other—and in that space between us, politicians and algorithms teach us to caricature each other and troll each other and fear each other.

But here's the good news. All across America, in big cities and small towns, away from all the noise, the ties that bind us together are still there. We still coach Little League and look out for our elderly neighbors. We still feed the hungry, in churches and mosques and synagogues, and share the same pride when our Olympic athletes compete for the gold. Because the vast majority of us don't want to live in a country that's bitter and divided. We want something better. We want to *be* better. And the joy and excitement we're seeing around this campaign tells us we're not alone.

I've spent a lot of time thinking about this these past few months because, as Michelle mentioned, this summer we lost her mom.

I don't know that anybody has ever loved their mother-in-law any more than I loved mine. Mostly it's because she was funny and wise and maybe the least pretentious person I knew. That, and she always defended me with Michelle when I messed up.

But I also think one of the reasons we became so close was she reminded me of my grandmother, the woman who raised me as a child. On the surface, the two of them didn't have a lot in common—one was a Black woman from Chicago, the other a White woman born in a tiny town called Peru, Kansas. And yet they shared a basic outlook on life—strong, smart, resourceful women full of common sense who, regardless of the barriers they encountered, went about their business without fuss or complaint and provided an unshakable foundation of love for their children and grandchildren.

In that sense, they both represented an entire generation of working people who, through war and depression, discrimination and limited opportunity, helped build this country. Many of them toiled every day at jobs that were often too small for them and willingly went without just to give their children something better. But they knew what was true and what mattered. Things like honesty and integrity, kindness and hard work. They weren't impressed with braggarts or bullies and they didn't spend a lot of time obsessing about what they didn't have. Instead, they found pleasure in simple things—a card game with friends, a good meal and laughter around the kitchen table, helping others, and seeing their children do things and go places that they would have never imagined for themselves.

Whether you're a Democrat or a Republican or somewhere in between, we've all had people like that in our lives. People like Kamala's parents who crossed oceans because they believed in the promise of America. People like Tim's parents who taught him about the importance of service. Good, hardworking people who weren't famous or powerful but who managed, in countless ways, to leave this country a little better than they found it.

As much as any policy or program, I believe that's what we yearn for—a return to an America where we work together and look out for each other. A restoration of what Lincoln called, on the eve of civil war, "our bonds of affection." An America that taps what he called "the better angels of our nature." That's what this election is about. And I believe that's why, if we each do our part over the next 77 days—if we knock on doors and make phone calls and talk to our friends and listen to our neighbors—if we work like we've never worked before, we will elect Kamala Harris as the next president of the United States, and Tim Walz as the next vice president of the United States. We'll elect leaders up and down the ballot who will fight for the hopeful, forward-looking America we believe in. And together, we too will build a country that is more secure and more just, more equal and more free.

So let's get to work. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

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