

**BARACK OBAMA'S SPEECHES AND ADDRESSES:  
A NARRATIVE AND FRAMING ANALYSIS**

ANNELIESE SANGHARA

Dr. Catherine Schryer

The Major Research Paper is submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Professional Communication

Ryerson University  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

25 August 2016

**AUTHOR'S DECLARATION FOR ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF A  
MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this Major Research Paper and the accompanying Research Poster. This is a true copy of the MRP and the research poster, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this major research paper and/or poster to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this MRP and/or poster by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my MRP and/or my MRP research poster may be made electronically available to the public.

## Abstract

This Major Research Paper analyzes four of President Obama's addresses or speeches leading up to and during the initial year in his second presidential term by asking two crucial questions that existing literature has overlooked. Scholars have primarily focused on the rhetorical strategies, themes, and techniques in Obama's speeches. First, what political, economic, and constitutive stories did Obama include in the four speeches and addresses? I rely upon Abbott's story definition along with Smith's explanation of political, economic, and constitutive stories. Second, how did Obama frame these stories? I draw upon Fairhurst and Sarr's framing techniques: metaphor, contrast, and slogan. From this analysis, it is evident that Obama carefully selects political, economic, and constitutive stories and framing techniques to convey common American experiences, provide a renewed vision for the United States of America, and empower Americans as capable agents to create a better future, ultimately moving *forward*, which is the slogan of his second presidential campaign.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thank you Dr. Catherine Schryer for being my supervisor and Dr. Frauke Zeller for being my second reader. Few students have the opportunity to learn from their Research Methods instructors beyond the course. Your insights into Obama's speeches and addresses, guidance on my sections and drafts, and words of encouragement will always be remembered.

## **Dedication**

My Major Research Paper is dedicated to my parents for inspiring and encouraging me to realize my dreams. Dad, you have set an example and challenged me to be a strong researcher, persuasive writer, and eloquent public speaker. Mom, you have shown and encouraged me to be a critical thinker, innovative problem solver, and optimistic risk taker. From Victoria to Toronto, I know your love blows always.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	7
Literature Review.....	10
Research Questions.....	25
Data Collection.....	27
Methodology.....	28
Findings and Discussion.....	30
Conclusion.....	48
Research Limitations and Future Scholarship.....	50
Reference List.....	51
Appendix.....	53

## Introduction

This Major Research Paper analyzes four of President Obama's addresses or speeches leading up to and during the initial year in his presidential term: his *Second Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, *Second Presidential Election Victory Speech*, *Second Presidential Inaugural Address*, and *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*. These addresses and speeches include political, economic, and constitutive stories that are crucial to an understanding of why Americans voted for Obama during the 2012 election. During the campaign months, Obama wholeheartedly connected with Americans at the core of each of their stories: the American Dream. Obama exemplified qualities such as determination, generosity, and courage in the stories that are needed to achieve the American Dream. All the while, he made Americans feel like they made progress toward it during his second presidential term. In addition, these stories were instrumental in clarifying his agenda and outlining his forthcoming legacy as president. Shortly after his re-election, Obama worked to rally Americans from multiple parties toward a common ground: a prosperous, strong, and equitable United States. He wanted to see this vision come to fruition through multiple policies such as the *Violence Against Women Act*. Obama employed stories to build trust with Americans and in his leadership capabilities.

Obama accepted the Democratic party's nomination and asked Americans to re-elect him for another term in his *Second Presidential Nomination*

*Acceptance Speech*. Following the National Democratic Convention, Obama introduced his collective vision and policies in both his *Second Presidential Election Victory Speech* and *Second Presidential Inaugural Address*.

Approximately a month into his second presidential term, he concretely outlined what he wanted to accomplish and how in his *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*. Obama gave one speech and address before his second presidential election campaign and one speech and address after his second presidential election victory. Within these speeches and addresses, political, economic, and constitutive stories were evident. Political stories remind Americans of the promises their government has made to combat foreign threats, ensure their security, and protect their democratic institutions and processes. Economic stories delve into Americans' challenges, highlight Obama's economic policies and their effects, and offer a vision of and promises for collective wealth. Constitutive stories refer to American history, culture, and traits.

This Major Research Paper analyzes existing literature. Scholars have primarily focused on the rhetorical strategies, themes, and techniques in Obama's speeches. Identifying this crucial gap, my research questions are as follows: What political, economic, and constitutive stories did Obama include in the four speeches? How did Obama frame these stories? I collect the four speeches and addresses mentioned earlier in this Introduction from an online database called American Rhetoric. My analysis indicates that Obama carefully selects political,



economic, and constitutive stories and framing techniques to convey common American experiences, provide a renewed vision for the United States of America, and empower Americans as capable agents to create a better future, ultimately moving *forward*, the slogan of his second presidential campaign. Ultimately, Obama's stories and framing techniques helped to convince Americans to make him their presidential leader. By extension, Americans choose a United States of America that stands strong on its founding principles, protects its democratic institutions and processes, and continues to provide security, a high quality of life, and opportunity to its people.

## Literature Review

### Part I: Rhetorical Strategies

Examining Obama's rhetoric from 2004-2012, Sheckels (2013) reveals how Obama's distinct, consistent voice, a rhetorical technique, has assisted his shift from being perceived as a prophetic leader to a public policy leader. Sheckels analyzes Obama's *2004 Democratic National Convention (DNC)* followed by his *2008 DNC, First Election Night, 2009 Inaugural, 2012 DNC, and 2012 Election Night Addresses* (p. 1717). When giving his *2004 DNC Address*, Obama presented himself as the humble and accomplished Senator from Illinois who strived to become the first Afro-American president (p. 1719/1720). Obama consistently refers to Illinois resident such as a young woman in East St. Louis who he has served as an Illinois Senatorial to highlight his roots to the state (p. 1719). By his *2012 Election Night Address*, Obama transformed his public image, particularly by presenting himself as an experienced public policy leader who represented the Democratic party and served middle class Americans (p. 1728). He refers to Americans across the country who have benefitted from his policies, especially a young child in North Carolina with dreams to become a doctor or the next president (p. 1726).

Applying Bakhtin's idea that stories are told in different voices, Sheckles identifies the following voices: Obama's own story, average Americans' stories, the opposition, scripture, and American patriotism (p. 1718/1719). Sheckles

analyzes these voices by considering quotes, stylization, or popular culture reference techniques (p. 1718). These techniques are all embodied in Obama's reference to admired political and cultural figure John Kennedy: "America is not about what can be done for us" (p. 1726). Obama's phrase has been stylized from Kennedy's original quote, which is "My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Sheckels argues that Obama incorporated these six voices in the speeches identified above to create a personal narrative with which Americans identified themselves. For the *2012 Election Night Speech*, Sheckels highlights how Obama did not mention national documents, scripture, or his own personal story, but Obama rather focused on the individual and collective voices of Americans (p. 1726). In regards to collective voices, Obama describes how his job as a community organizer brought him in contact with "people [living] in the shadow of a shuttered steel mill" (p. 1725). At the individual level, he told the story of a young homeless woman who recently won a science fair (p. 1725). In addition, Obama included family voices Americans are familiar with that included quotes from his grandparents and Michelle, and he expressed opposition voices from Governor Romney and his friends (p. 1725).

Hammer (2010) compares and contrasts Obama's primary campaign rhetoric with presidential aspirant Jesse Jackson's rhetoric by focusing on two themes: Americans uniting under the American Creed and Americans practicing

one American civil religion. First, she defines the American Creed as “commonly held political principles,” and she draws upon Lipset and Huntington to highlight that the American Creed has been embodied in the United States’ exceptionalist attitude that it is different than and superior to other states (p. 270/272). Second, she presents Bellah’s definition of American civil religion as “a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity” (p. 272). In her rhetorical analysis, Hammer compares and contrasts Obama’s *2004 DNC Speech*, *2007 Presidential Announcement*, *A More Perfect Union Speech*, *Memorial Day Speech*, and *2008 DNC Speech* with Jackson’s *National Democratic Convention Addresses* in 1984 and 1988 (p. 270). At the 2004 Convention, Obama introduced his “image for the American nation” by discussing how his Kenyan father grew up in a “tin roof shack” and, despite his upbringing, received a scholarship to study in the United States (p. 273). Obama united Americans through this invisible American Creed by re-affirming their belief in a self-made individual, a central tenant of American liberalism (p. 273). In addition, Obama highlighted that Americans practise a shared civil religion by mentioning that his father followed “so many who had come before;” this story makes most Americans acknowledge that they have experienced or are the product of voluntary immigration (p. 273/274). Overall, Obama effectively persuaded Americans to vote for him by uniting them under the American Creed

and showing them that they have a stake in a larger American civil religion (p. 271).

## **Part II: Rhetorical Themes**

Scholars have also identified rhetorical themes that characterize Obama's speeches and addresses leading up to his first presidential term. Atwater (2007) discusses how Obama employed the concept of hope to reach a large American audience. He analyzes Obama's *2004 Keynote Democratic National Convention Speech* and his book, *The Audacity of Hope* (2006). In his *2004 Keynote Democratic National Convention Speech*, Obama defined hope for the American people by distinguishing it from other concepts such as blind optimism and willful ignorance, and he employed anecdotes to highlight how it remains a distinct American belief (p. 125). For example, he uses a personal anecdote when referring to the American Dream: "I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe debt to all of those who came before me, and that in no other country on earth, is my story even possible" (p. 124). In the *Audacity of Hope* (2006), Obama also presented the theme of hope as a "rhetoric of new politics" that united Americans (p. 126). Overall, Obama used the rhetoric of hope effectively to appeal to Americans who wanted definitive change.

Marshall (2012) highlights how Obama's campaign rhetoric about the themes of national unity and racial equality were inspired by President Lincoln, especially in his *Gettysburg Address* and his *House Divided* and *Cooper Union*

*Speeches*. Marshall analyzes *Obama's Announcement for President* and *A More Perfect Union Speeches* (2012). Obama gave this presidential announcement in front of the Old State Capitol Building in Springfield Illinois, precisely where Lincoln made his *House Divided Speech*. There, Obama mentioned that "North, South, East, and West come together," which is similar to Lincoln's mention that "we gathered from the four winds" (p. 158). Furthermore, Obama made explicit reference to Lincoln as the instrumental figure who called upon the "divided house to stand together" (p. 158). Obama referred to Lincoln to make "appeals to national unity, racial harmony" and to "mak[e] good the promise of America" (p. 155). Together, Atwater and Marshall's research reveals the following rhetorical themes present in Obama's speeches and addresses: hope, national unity, and racial equality.

### **Part III: Rhetorical Techniques**

Schroedel et al., Sweet and McCue-Enser, and Jenkins and Cos analyze the rhetorical techniques Obama employed during his first presidential campaign. Schroedel et al. (2013) analyze how Obama and all other major candidates in the primary and general election employed charismatic rhetoric. The scholars utilize a content analysis program called DICTION 5.0 to map prevalent rhetorical techniques and examine how partisan and electoral factors influenced primary and general election rhetorical choices (p. 101). In addition, the scholars employ nine rhetorical constructs, based upon Shamir, Arthur, and House's motivational

theory of charismatic leadership, and utilize a data set consisting of speeches, interviews, and debates (p. 106/112). The scholars group the presidential candidates' words and phrases into communal, agentic, and neutral charismatic constructs (p.107/108). Communal words have a collective focus around building consensus and trust; agentic aspects emphasize movement toward a similar vision; and neutral aspects bridge the past and present (p. 107/108). During the campaign, Obama made a similar number of references to a collective focus, less references to followers' worth, and greater references that highlight similarity to followers than the other candidates (p. 114). In regards to agentic charismatic constructs, Obama scored slightly higher than the average by referring to progress toward his vision and adversity over other opponents and forces (p. 108/115). Lastly, Obama stressed continuity over time more along with intangible future goals and values less than other candidates (p. 116/117). Altogether, candidates' results indicate that Democrats and Republicans employed different rhetoric during the primary and general elections (p. 121/122).

Focusing on the first presidential election campaign, Sweet and McCue-Enser (2010) advance the idea that Obama's rhetoric presented American society as a work in progress toward a perfect union. The scholars analyze two sermons, two commemorations, a commencement address, a Fourth of July oration, an apology, and an acceptance speech to better understand Obama's rhetorical construction of "We the People" (p. 608). His rhetoric "anchor[ed] 'the people' in

a simultaneous interplay of fluidity and self-constancy” while also referencing American values related to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (p. 606). In the speech, they identify three themes that Obama incorporates to lead Americans toward a more perfect union: skepticism toward a homogenized American story, disagreement with American individualism, and support for dissent as a positive American right and responsibility (p. 609). Overall, Obama’s rhetoric attempted to enhance how Americans view themselves and to make them realize how they have a collective agency of self-governance (p. 603).

In regards to the first presidential campaign, Jenkins and Cos (2010) argue that Obama executed a successful campaign because he used rhetorical pragmatism. Rhetorical pragmatism is discourse that “negotiates uncertainty, generates knowledge based on human interest, expresses individualism (pluralism), and builds communities” (p. 184). They analyze Obama’s *Keynote Address at the Democratic National Convention*, *Announcement for President*, *A More Perfect Union Speech*, *The American Promise Speech*, and *Election Night Speech*. In these, the scholars identify an “authorial persona” that was presidential, a “second persona” that made Americans agents of change, and a “third persona” that appealed to excluded Americans (p. 185). In an example of the first persona, Obama criticized the Bush administration for its response to help Americans after the global financial crisis: “What’s stopped us is the failure of leadership, the smallness of our politics...[.]” (p. 190). In addition, Obama



referred to the second persona by stating that “at each moment when that promise was in jeopardy, ordinary men and women—students and soldiers, farmers and teachers, nurses and janitors—found the courage to keep it alive” (p. 191). For the third persona, Obama addressed all Americans, particularly those who had been neglected by the Bush administration such as single mothers, blue collar workers, and Native Americans (p. 193). According to these scholars, Obama was successful because he employed Danisch’s four tenants of American pragmatism: negotiating uncertainty, generating knowledge, expressing individualism, and building communities (p. 188). In sum, Obama was successful because he employed a pragmatic moral voice.

Existing literature on Obama’s speeches and addresses mainly focuses on rhetorical strategies, themes, and techniques. With respective studies that examine texts over five years, Sheckels and Hammer identify Obama’s rhetorical strategies, especially his ability to draw upon the American Creed, American civil religion, and the voices of the opposition, scripture, and Americans. Atwater and Marshall examine a few of Obama’s rhetorical themes: hope, national unity, and racial inequality. Schroedel et al., Sweet and McCue-Enser, and Jenkins and Cos research Obama’s rhetorical techniques such as charismatic rhetoric. While some scholars acknowledge stories within his texts, most of them gave more detailed consideration to his types of rhetoric, overarching themes, and specific words. The literature review reveals that none of the scholars have applied both narrative

and framing theories. These theories can provide new insights into what stories Obama includes in his speeches and addresses and how he constructs them with a combination of framing techniques.

#### **Part IV: Narrative Theory**

Abbott's *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (2008) provides a concise definition of narrative and story. According to Abbott, "narrative is the representation of an event or a series of events" that consists of a story and narrative discourse (p. 13/19). While a story is "an event or sequence of events," narrative discourse is "those events as represented" (p. 19). For example, on January 19, 2009, Obama was sworn in as president. This was a historic event. Following his inauguration, journalists wrote about the event. Their various interpretations contribute to the narrative discourse. Further breaking down the concept of story, Abbott argues that it has two main components: an event and entities involved in the events (p. 19). Abbott acknowledges that another component to story is its setting (p. 20). However, he removes this element from his definition because he believes that it's often difficult to "disentangle setting from what's going on and who's doing it" (p. 20).

Abbott discusses two groups of scholars who would require more elements in a narrative. The first group includes Barthes and Rimmon-Kenan who require at least two events (p. 13). The second group includes scholars such as Bal, Bordwell, and Richardson who require that the events are causally related (p. 13).

Other scholars would criticize Abbott for his broad use of the term representation.

In refute, Abbott provides a definition from Gerald Prince's *Dictionary of*

*Narratology* (1987):

The recounting...of one or more real or fictitious EVENTS communicated by one, two, or several (more or less overt) NARRATORS to one, two, or several NARATEES...[A] dramatic performance representing (many fascinating) events does not constitute a narrative...,since these events, rather than being recounted, occur directly on stage. On the other hand, even such possibly uninteresting texts as "The man opened the door," "The goldfish died," and "The glass fell on the floor" are narratives, according to this definition (p. 14/15).

Prince's definition supports Abbott's claim that narrative must have real or fictional events that are described by a narrator. The event or events make up a story. These stories span academic disciplines, particularly political science where Smith introduces three peoplehood story themes important for politicians.

Smith (2003) argues that persuasive stories contribute to the "ongoing constitution, maintenance, and transformation of political identities," all critical for sustaining every nation (p. 43). Stories have two primary goals: building collective trust and guaranteeing individual preservation (p. 50). These goals are revealed in three story themes: economic, political, and constitutive (p. 50).

Economic themes refer to safeguarding members' economic welfare and

increasing collective wealth (p. 50). As an example, he describes how the American revolutionaries referenced King George as “cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world” and “imposing Taxes on us without our Consent” in the Declaration of Independence (p. 51). Political power themes tell members of “physical protection and security,” communal defence against foreign threats, and a form of representative government (p. 51/52). American revolutionaries sought a representative government that had “the consent of the governed,” particularly “Representation in the Legislature,” independent judges for the “Administration of Justice,” and no “standing Armies without consent of our legislatures” (p. 52). Lastly, constitutive themes relate to “members’ religion, race, ethnicity, ancestry, language, culture, history, class, customs, and practices, or other such traits [which] are integral to their very identities and affirm their moral value while also delineating their duties” (p. 53). In constitutive stories, the following themes are most prevalent: religion, ethnicity/race, and patriarchy (p. 54/55). In another example, the American Declaration authors referred to their “consanguinity” with “British brethren” while deploring “merciless Indian savages” they were fighting against (p. 53). These commonalities highlight European members’ traits and create trust (p. 53). While these stories provide insight into why people seek membership in a community, they are unable to explain why people choose to follow a particular leader. Framing theory at a leadership level can be insightful

when applied to understanding how Obama constructs the stories present in his speeches and addresses.

### **Part V: Framing Theory**

According to McQuail (2010), framing has two definitions. First, framing relates to the way journalists shape and contextualize information into “some familiar frame of reference and according to some latent structure of meaning” (p. 557). Framing theory stems from this definition. Second, framing refers to how the public interprets the information (p. 557). Audiences adopt these frames of reference, and, as a result, these frames shape how the audience views the world (p. 557). Priming and agenda-setting theories utilize the second definition. These framing definitions and theoretical distinctions are vital to understanding how framing theory has evolved.

McQuail argues that many scholars cite Goffman as the “originator of the idea that a frame is needed to organize otherwise fragmentary items of experience or information” (p. 380). Within the news context, frames have been interchangeably used with “frame of reference,” “context,” “theme,” and “news angle” (p. 380). More recently, Entman has defined framing as the “selection and salience” of elements within the news story (p. 380). McQuail presents the following framing techniques: “using certain words or phrases, making certain contextual references, choosing certain pictures or film, giving examples as typical, [and] referring to certain sources...[.]” (p. 380). McQuail provides

examples of scholars applying framing theory in their content analyses. McQuail cites Horsti along with Downing and Husband for their research on how journalists present race relation issues as more problematic for society than immigration (p. 380). In addition, he discusses how Van Gorp revealed Belgian news coverage bias of asylum seekers as either victims or intruders (p. 380). Furthermore, McQuail describes McNair's study on how journalists reported on the Cold War as a dichotomy between the righteous United States and villainous Soviet Union (p. 380).

Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) are instrumental for using framing theory that has usually been applied to news content to better understand how organizational leaders employ language to present themselves. Furthermore, they take framing theory's subject focus from the mass society level to the individual level. I argue that their framing techniques can be applied to the political sphere and, specifically, they can reveal how Obama constructs stories, which none of the scholars in the literature review have done. The application of framing theory to political communication is crucial because political leaders heavily rely upon business practices and, by extension, language to govern. After the global financial crisis, American federal, regional, district, state, county, and city leaders experienced pressure to operate with smaller budgets and lay off employees while fulfilling their commitments to their citizens. Ultimately, these leaders employed

language to identify key issues, present solutions, and deliver responses that helped the United States recover. Obama led them.

While Fairhurst and Sarr distinguish their application of framing theory, they rely upon a traditional definition of framing as “the selection and highlighting of one or more aspects of our subject while excluding others” (p. 21). In *The Art of Framing*, Fairhurst and Sarr identify five framing devices business leaders use: metaphors, slogan, contrast, spin, and stories (p. 100). Metaphors compare two or more subjects’ likeness, and contrast differentiates a subject from its opposite (p. 100). Slogans use repeatable and carefully phrased words to describe a subject, and spin relies on words that make a subject appear positive or negative (p. 100).

This quote from Obama provides an example of metaphor and contrast framing techniques: “I’ve met workers in Detroit and Toledo who feared they’d never build another American car; and today they can’t build them fast enough because we reinvented a dying auto industry that’s back on the top of the world” (Obama, 2012, p. 3). The “dying auto industry” is a metaphor because the industry is not a person and, therefore, it is incapable of dying. The metaphor works to intensify and convey the auto industry’s devastating state after the global financial crisis. Furthermore, the “dying auto industry” has been contrasted with a new auto industry that’s “back on top of the world” (Obama, 2012, p. 3). Here, contrast reveals the differences between Obama’s and Bush’s economic policies

and their effects, and it highlights the tangible changes that have occurred over four years.

Another quote from Obama provides an example of slogan and spin techniques: “My grandparents were given the chance to go to college, buy their own -- their own home, and fulfill the basic bargain at the heart of America’s story: the promise that hard work will pay off, that responsibility will be rewarded, that everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules” (Obama, 2012, p. 6). The slogan “basic bargain” refers to the achievement of the American Dream. These words recognize Obama’s promise to Americans should they elect him and confirm his vision for a renewed United States. In addition, Obama’s grandparents’ story has been spun to emulate the American Dream.

Carefully crafted stories can be unique because they are composed of a combination of framing techniques (Fairhurst and Sarr, 1996, p. 117). According to Fairhurst and Sarr, “a single story could manage meaning around several subjects. Usually, however, there is a central theme or subject whose meaning is to be established through an example” (p. 117). Overall, Fairhurst and Sarr suggest that metaphor, contrast, slogan, and spin techniques convince people to respect and follow a leader.



## **Research Questions**

Existing literature on Obama's speeches and addresses mainly focus on rhetorical strategies, themes, and techniques. While some scholars acknowledge stories within his texts, most of them gave more detailed consideration to his types of rhetoric, overarching themes, and specific words. The literature review reveals that none of the scholars have applied both narrative and framing theories to analyze Obama's speeches and addresses. Addressing this crucial gap in the literature, I answer two questions in relation to the end of Obama's second presidential campaign and the beginning of his final presidential term.

First, what political, economic, and constitutive stories did Obama include in the four speeches and addresses? In order to identify these stories, I use Abbott's definition of stories as having two main components: an event and entities involved in the events (Abbott, 2008, p. 19). To further identify the specific types of stories, I rely upon Smith's three story themes. Smith defines economic stories as referring to safeguarding members' economic welfare and increasing collective wealth (Smith, 2015, p. 50). Political power stories touch upon members' "physical protection and security," communal defence against foreign threats, and a form of representative government (Smith, 2015, p. 51/52). Constitutive stories relate to "members' religion, race, ethnicity, ancestry, language, culture, history, class, customs, and practices, or other such traits

[which] are integral to their very identities and affirm their moral value while also delineating their duties” (Smith, 2015, p. 53).

Second, how did Obama frame these stories? To review past literature, Entman has defined framing as the “selection and salience” of elements within the news story (McQuail, 2010, p. 380). Fairhurst and Sarr utilize a traditional definition of framing: “the selection and highlighting of one or more aspects of our subject while excluding others” (Fairhurst and Sarr, 1996, p. 21). Applying framing theory to better understand how business leaders persuade others, Fairhurst and Sarr identify five framing devices leaders use: metaphors, slogan, contrast, spin, and stories (Fairhurst and Sarr, 1996, p. 100).

## **Data Collection**

I analyzed Obama's *Second Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, *Second Presidential Election Victory Speech*, *Second Presidential Inaugural Address*, and *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*. These speeches span from September 2012 to February 2013. I collected the speeches and addresses from an online database called American Rhetoric. From audio recordings, the site owners transcribed the textual versions, which I downloaded and printed. These texts helped me answer my research questions because they encompassed a crucial timeframe leading up to and shortly after Obama's re-election. In addition, they all included political, economic, and constitutive stories. Furthermore, they had some notable consistency in framing techniques.

## **Methodology**

For my methodology, I employed a content analysis with a deductive approach. To answer the first research question, I created a Microsoft Excel document with the following columns: Speech, Page, Story, Theme, and Description. Political stories were coded in blue, economic stories were coded in green, and constitutive stories were coded in purple. For the Description column, I noted the following characteristics about the person or people whose story was told: name, occupation, and geographical location. After creating this document, I identified stories in these speeches and sorted them into one of Smith's story themes.

For the second analysis, I took the political, economic, and constitutive stories that were grouped by their respective themes and identified the framing practices within them. I utilized Fairhurst and Sarr's framing techniques: metaphor, contrast, and slogan. The second part of the Microsoft Excel document had the following columns: Story, Framing Techniques, and Metaphor and Contrast Reasoning. The Metaphor and Contrast Reasoning column provided a brief explanation of all of the metaphor examples and some of the less obvious contrast examples. Metaphor examples were bolded, contrast examples were underlined, and slogan examples were italicized.

While Smith's story themes were more appropriate for providing a descriptive analysis of Obama's storytelling, Fairhurst and Sarr's framing

techniques were more appropriate for providing a detailed understanding of how Obama constructed the stories through a detailed, interpretative analysis.

Although the stories fit into several of the categories, the process of categorizing them first by their story theme and then identifying framing techniques within the stories provided insights into Obama's speeches and addresses.

## Findings and Discussion

### Part I: Political Storytelling Themes and Framing Techniques

Political stories remind Americans of the promises their government has made to combat foreign threats, ensure their security, and protect their democratic institutions and processes. With regards to combating foreign threats, Obama references past and present conflicts. In the *Second Presidential Inaugural Address*, he mentions that the Patriots fought the Loyalists during the American Revolutionary War to create “a republic, a government of, and by, and for the people” (Obama, 2013, p. 1). Referring to the Second World War, Obama acknowledges the sacrifices his grandfather, Stanley Dunham, made as a “soldier in Patton’s army” to protect the United States of America (Obama, 2012, p. 2). As Obama takes Americans on a journey from the past toward the present, he mentions American soldiers’ service in Afghanistan: “I promised to refocus on the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11, and we have. We've blunted the Taliban's momentum in Afghanistan[,] and[,] in 2014, our longest war will be over” (Obama, 2012, p. 5). Obama refers to two threats that the United States of America faces: nuclear warfare and cyber attacks. In the *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, Obama assures Americans that “we've strengthened old alliances and forged new coalitions to stop the spread of nuclear weapons” (Obama, 2012, p. 5).

In protecting American democratic institutions and processes, Obama refers to the republic, union, and most recent election. First, Obama describes how the Patriots fought the Loyalists during the American Revolutionary War to create a republic, “[e]ntrusting each generation to keep safe our founding creed” (Obama, 2013, p. 1). Here, Obama reminds Americans of their collective responsibility to protect the republic. Second, in the *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*, he opens by quoting former President Kennedy. Fifty-one years prior to Obama’s address, Kennedy stated the following: “It is my task... to report the State of the Union -- to improve it is the task of us all” (Obama, 2013, p. 1). The State of the Union becomes a common reference point to rally Americans together. Third, Obama acknowledges the contributions that individual Americans made by voting in the election: “whether you held an Obama sign or a Romney sign, you made your voice heard, and you made a difference” (Obama, 2012, p. 1). Here, Obama highlights that Americans have a responsibility to participate in the democratic process regardless of their political affiliations.

With regards to ensuring security, Obama references national issues that focus on crime, terrorism, and natural disasters. In the *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*, he notes that Congress recently passed the *Violence Against Women Act*, which Vice-President Biden wrote nearly 20 years ago (Obama, 2013, p. 9). Obama encourages Americans to protect each other by supporting stricter gun laws that may have saved 15-year-old Hadiya Pendleton who

performed for the country at Obama's inauguration and died a week later in a park near his house (Obama, 2013, p. 13). He provides another example of a police officer named Brian who protected Americans worshipping in a Sikh temple from a gunman (Obama, 2013, p. 14). Later in the *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*, Obama describes how a nurse named Menchu protected newborns when "Hurricane Sandy plunged her hospital into darkness" (Obama, 2013, p. 14). As natural disasters that result from climate change become more common, he acknowledges the significance of Americans' progress in reducing "emissions of the dangerous carbon pollution that threatens our planet" (Obama, 2013, p. 5).

In the political stories, Obama employs metaphors that refer to the current fight Americans experience after the global financial crisis, the fight American soldiers have fought and won overseas, and the recent victory for Democratic voters in the 2012 election. In the *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, he uses the metaphor of fight to describe Americans' experience after the global financial crisis and the fight his grandparents experienced in the Second World War (Obama, 2012, p. 2). He conveys this message: "Ours is a fight to restore the values that built the largest middle class and the strongest economy the world has ever known -- the values my grandfather defended as a soldier in Patton's Army, the values that drove my grandmother to work on a bomber assembly line while he was gone" (Obama, 2012, p. 2). In addition, Obama touches upon the Iraq War and how American soldiers have



defeated the enemy by killing Osama bin Laden (Obama, 2012, p. 5). When discussing the campaign, he compares it to a match, in which one person emerges victorious. Later on in the *Second Presidential Election Victory Speech*, he states, “I just spoke with Governor Romney, and I congratulated him and Paul Ryan on a hard-fought campaign” (Obama, 2012, p. 1). Because it was a match, those who voted for and supported Obama can take pride in knowing they had a stake in his success.

For political stories, Obama employs contrast as direct negations or subtle differentiations to acknowledge Americans who voted in the last election, the differences between his opponents and himself during the election campaign, and his vision for his final presidential term. In the *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, he uses contrast to acknowledge that he became the first Afro-American president because of Americans who voted in the last election: “[T]he election four years ago wasn't about me. It was about you” (Obama, 2012, p. 7). At another point, he differentiates American voters who “held an Obama sign or a Romney sign” in the most recent election (Obama, 2012, p. 1). In addition, Obama alludes to himself as the winner and his opponent as the loser. When making this point, he mentions: “I just spoke with Governor Romney, and I congratulated him and Paul Ryan on a hard-fought campaign” (Obama, 2012, p. 1). Looking toward the future, Obama utilizes contrast to set a collaborative vision for his final presidential term. He quotes Kennedy who stated

that both Democrats and Republicans must act "...not [as] rivals for power but [as] partners for progress" (Obama, 2013, p. 1).

With regards to political stories, Obama employs slogans to convey complex ideas and to highlight commonalities amongst middle class Americans, particularly as they relate to the 2008 election, the 2012 election, and his public policy effects. In the *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, Obama acknowledges Americans' impact with the following slogan: "You were the change" (Obama, 2012, p. 7). Being more precise, he reveals that Americans were responsible for American families that have been able to be reunited with their loved ones that have fought overseas (Obama, 2012, p. 8). He uses the slogan "[w]elcome home" to convey what American families said, and he repeats the slogan twice to extend his personal "welcome home" (Obama, 2012, p. 8). In the same speech, Obama refers to policy changes that were made during his first presidential term. He employs a slogan, "stop the spread of nuclear weapons," to describe the result of his efforts at both enhancing old and creating new coalitions (Obama, 2012, p. 5). After he won the 2012 election, Obama relies upon another slogan to convey Democratic voters' collective impact. He proclaims, "Whether you voted for the very first time or waited in line for a very long time[,]...you made your voice hear[d] and you made a difference" (Obama, 2012, p. 1).

Obama employs political stories and framing techniques in his speeches and addresses to convey common American experiences, provide a renewed vision for the United States of America, and empower Americans as capable agents to create a better future, ultimately to convince them to move *forward*, the slogan of his second presidential campaign. In regards to common American political experiences, Obama mentions his grandfather who fought in Patton's Army during the Second World War, a crucial event in American history (Obama, 2012, p. 2). In addition, he refers to a recent meeting of leaders from most parties and levels of government in New York and New Jersey to help rebuild those communities after a devastating storm, Hurricane Sandy that swept the Eastern seaboard (Obama, 2012, p. 2). Obama's renewed political vision rests upon two promises that he made to Americans: end the War in Iraq and capture the terrorists responsible for 9/11 (Obama, 2012, p. 5). He acknowledges that the longest war that Americans have been involved will end soon, and the Taliban's capabilities have been blunted (Obama, 2012, p. 5). The One World Trade Centre embodies Obama's vision of a renewed, stronger United States of America (Obama, 2012, p. 5). Lastly, Obama empowers Americans as capable agents by referring to them as "the change" after his first presidential election (Obama, 2012, p. 7). In particular, he commends Americans for assisting the little girl in Phoenix who needed heart surgery, the young immigrant who stayed in the country after she pledged her allegiance, and military families who welcomed

their loved ones back from war (Obama, 2012, p. 8). Ultimately, Obama's political stories persuaded Americans to follow his leadership and contributed to his second presidential election.

## **Part II: Economic Storytelling Themes and Framing Techniques**

Economic stories delve into Americans' challenges, highlight Obama's economic policies and their effects, and offer a vision and promises for collective wealth. When expressing Americans' challenges, Obama touches upon living costs, paying for higher education, and securing employment. In the *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, he describes how middle class Americans lived prior to the global financial crisis: “[F]amilies struggled with costs that kept rising but paychecks that didn’t [, and] folks rack[ed] up more and more debt just to make the mortgage[,] pay tuition, put gas in the car[,] or food on the table” (Obama, 2012, p. 2). Once the global financial crisis occurred, Americans' problems were compounded by losing their jobs, homes, and life savings (Obama, 2012, p. 2). In helping the most vulnerable, Obama mentions how “[m]illions of students are paying less for college today because we finally took on a system that wasted billions of taxpayer dollars on banks and lenders” (Obama, 2012, p. 4). Since the global financial crisis, he describes how he has protected jobs within America's strongest industries and created new jobs (Obama, 2012, p. 3/4). He states, “I worked with business

leaders who are bringing jobs back to America not because our workers make less pay, but because we make better products” (Obama, 2012, p. 3).

Obama mentions his own economic policies in the speeches and addresses, including the *American Jobs Act*, Race to the Top Competition, and international trade agreements. First, in the *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*, Obama highlights the *American Jobs Act* (Obama, 2013, p. 4). He states that independent economists predicted it would result in over 1 million new jobs (Obama, 2013, p. 4). Here, Obama distances his economic policies from those of his predecessor, which remains a consistent theme. Second, he describes the Race to the Top Competition that his administration created at the start of his first presidential term (Obama, 2013, p. 7). With only 1 percent of the total education budget, he describes how the competition “convinced almost every state to develop smarter curricula and higher standards” (Obama, 2013, p. 7). Third, in the *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, Obama mentions international trade agreements he signed (Obama, 2012, p. 3). He proclaims that these agreements are assisting American companies sell “more goods to millions of new customers, goods that are stamped with three proud words: 'Made in America'” (Obama, 2012, p. 3). Here, Obama shows his pride in American based companies, people, and products, which he reiterates for rhetorical consistency and effectiveness.

Throughout the speeches and addresses, Obama offers a vision of and promises for collective wealth. In the *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, he mentions how American businesses have put community before profits (Obama, 2012, p. 8). He states, “The family business in Warroad, Minnesota...didn't lay off a single one of their 4,000 employees when the recession hit” (Obama, 2012, p. 8). Furthermore, Americans have protected their fellow employees instead of their own wages and jobs (Obama, 2012, p. 8). In addition, Obama highlights how middle class Americans shared similar financial challenges. (Obama, 2013, p. 8). He encompasses Americans’ experiences in the following quote: “The American people have worked too hard, for too long, rebuilding from one crisis to see their elected officials cause another” (Obama, 2013, p. 4). Lastly, Obama describes how Americans have persevered to attain a better quality of life than previous generations (Obama, 2012, p. 4). For inspiration, he shares the experience of a father in Mentor, Ohio whose eight-year old daughter’s leukemia treatments “nearly cost their family everything...had it not been for health care reform passing” (Obama, 2012, p. 4).

For economic stories, Obama relies upon metaphors to draw attention to the most recent global financial crisis and Americans’ aspirations. In the *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, he utilizes a “house of cards” metaphor to refer to both “millions of innocent Americans” and “a tragedy” that was the global financial crisis (Obama, 2012, p. 2). He proclaims,

“And when the house of cards collapsed in the Great Recession, millions of innocent Americans lost their jobs, their homes, their life savings -- a tragedy from which we're still fighting to recover” (Obama, 2012, p. 2). In a later address, for the global financial crisis’ effects, he poignantly uses a “rubble of crisis” metaphor to highlight Americans’ determination. He conveys this message: “we have cleared away the rubble of crisis, and we can say with renewed confidence that the State of our Union is stronger” (Obama, 2013, p. 1). Ultimately, “the house of cards” and “rubble of crisis” emphasize the global financial crisis, the most crucial event of Obama’s first presidential term (Obama, 2012/2013, p. 1/2). In the *Second Presidential Election Victory Speech*, Obama equates the “spirit” he has seen at work in the United States of America with the community focused “family business” (Obama, 2012, p. 4). He connects them both in the following quote: “I’ve seen *it* in the family business whose owners would rather cut their own pay than lay off their [neighbors] and in the workers who would rather cut back their hours than see a friend lose a job” (Obama, 2012, p. 4).

In the economic stories, Obama relies upon contrast as direct negations or subtle differentiations to highlight the quality of his policies, the reach of his policies, and the enriched lives of middle class Americans who benefit from his policies. In the *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*, he contrasts the initial monetary investment and return from one of his economic policies. He proclaims, “Every dollar we invested to map the human genome returned \$140 to

our economy -- every dollar” (Obama, 2013, p. 4). In making changes, Obama tells Americans that he holds small businesses on Main Street, corporations and banks on Wall street, and government officials in Washington DC to the same standards (Obama, 2012, p. 2). While small businesses exert small influence, banks exert large influence, and government officials have ultimate decision-making power, they are all being held to the same standards. Along with the diversity of places affected by his policies, President Obama articulates the vast number of middle class Americans who have benefitted from his economic policies. In the *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, he highlights the American jobs restored after the global financial crisis and the pride Americans should have for their auto industry that’s come “back on top of the world,” a contrast to its state shortly after the global financial crisis (Obama, 2012, p. 3).

Obama incorporates economic stories and framing techniques into his speeches and addresses to convey common American experiences, provide a renewed vision for the United States of America, and empower Americans as capable agents to create a better future, ultimately to convince them to move *forward*, the slogan of his second presidential campaign. The global financial crisis is the most crucial event leading up to Obama’s first presidential election and, by the second election campaign, becomes a commonality amongst Americans and provides a foundation for a renewed, more prosperous United



States of America. Americans' challenges include keeping up with the rising costs and borrowing more money to meet basic needs (Obama, 2012, p. 2). In addition, Obama's renewed economic vision is evident in the policies he put forth and their effects, which have the ultimate combined purpose of creating a more prosperous United States. He mentions how both the Democratic and Republican parties worked together during his first presidential term to reduce the national deficit by \$2.5 trillion (Obama, 2013, p. 2). Lastly, Obama empowers Americans as capable agents by highlighting their acts of perseverance, sacrifice, and generosity (Obama, 2012, p. 8/9). In one instance, he describes how a family business made a tremendously positive impact in their community by retaining all employees after the global financial crisis (Obama, 2012, p. 8). Overall, Obama's economic stories persuaded Americans to follow his leadership and contributed to his second presidential election.

### **Part III: Constitutive Storytelling Themes and Framing Techniques**

Constitutive stories refer to American history, culture, and traits. With regards to American culture, Obama references Americans' political, social, and economic principles. In the *Second Presidential Inaugural Address*, he highlights that "the principles of liberty and equality" have been integral to American culture since the country's independence won during the Revolutionary War (Obama, 2013, p. 1). Reiterating this point, he tells the story of a trip to Burma where he met "a man who said, 'There is justice and law in the United States. I want our

country to be like that” (Obama, 2013, p. 12). The American Dream, a reminder to Americans of the opportunities their country provides, serves as another cultural principle. Obama refers to his grandparents’ ability to attend college and purchase their own home because they “fulfilled the basic bargain at the heart of America’s story: the promise that hard work will pay off, that responsibility will be rewarded, [and] that everyone gets a fair shot...[.]” (Obama, 2012, p. 2). In the *Second Presidential Inaugural Address*, Obama highlights how modernity and free market principles have been integral to the United States’ development, especially over the last century (Obama, 2013, p. 2). In particular, he refers to two components of the modern economy: “railroads and highways to speed travel and commerce, [and] schools and colleges to train our workers” (Obama, 2013, p. 2).

There are several historical moments that Obama refers to when rallying Americans behind him and together, namely, the Revolutionary War, civil rights movement, and his presidential election. First, Obama mentions the United States of America’s creation during the Revolutionary War as a moment in time that defines all Americans. The war resulted in the creation of the republic and American constitution. Second, in the *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*, Obama references Kennedy, an admired figure, because of his vision to perfect the State of the Union (Obama, 2013, p. 1). A crucial turning point in Kennedy’s presidential term was addressing civil rights issues such as de-segregation. Activist and lawyer, Martin Luther King Jr., was at the forefront of

the civil rights movement. Obama pays tribute to Luther King Jr.'s legacy by referring to Selma (Obama, 2013, p. 3). More recently, Obama shares his presidential journey, another key moment in American history. In 2004, he addressed the Democratic Convention for the first time as a Senate candidate with a hopeful vision for the United States of America (Obama, 2012, p. 1).

With regards to American traits, Obama highlights the importance of selflessness, self-reliance, and determination. These are crucial traits for achieving the American Dream. In the *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*, Obama recognizes a demonstration of selflessness when a nurse named Menchu saved the lives of twenty newborns after Hurricane Sandy (Obama, 2013, p. 14). Instead of abandoning them, she devised a rescue plan that kept everyone safe (Obama, 2013, p. 4). In addition, Obama commends Americans for their self-reliance. He states that “we have never relinquished our skepticism of central authority, nor have we succumbed to the fiction that all societies[] ills can be cured through government alone” (Obama, 2013, p. 2). Furthermore, Obama applauds Americans for their determination and resilience. In reference to both the State of the Union and the American Dream, he mentions that Americans have helped perfect their country through a spirit and belief that they can overcome “war and depression” and rise from the “depths of despair to the great heights of hope” (Obama, 2012, p. 1). Ultimately, Obama believes that “[t]his generation of

Americans has been tested by crises that steeled our resolve and proved our resilience” (Obama, 2013, p. 3).

In the constitutive stories, Obama employs metaphors to highlight aspects of American culture. In the *Second Presidential Inaugural Address*, Obama equates “the star” to the belief that “all of us are created equal” and states that it guides Americans today (Obama, 2013, p. 3). Adding another dimension of complexity, he equates that star to the star that guided “our forebears through Seneca Falls, [Selma], and Stonewall” (Obama, 2013, p. 3). In the *Second Presidential Election Victory Speech*, he refers to Americans’ lives as a journey: “[T]he American people, reminded us that while our road has been hard, while our journey has been long...we know in our hearts that for the United States of America, the best is yet to come” (Obama, 2012, p. 1). Here, he alludes to the belief that Americans can overcome the global financial crisis’ effects, particularly high unemployment. When bringing Americans together and giving them hope, Obama refers to Aung San Suu Kyi, a Burmese social democrat, as an inspirational metaphor: “I saw the power of hope last year in Rangoon, in Burma, when Aung San Suu Kyi welcomed an American President into the home where she had been imprisoned for years” (Obama, 2013, p. 12).

For constitutive stories, Obama employs contrast as direct negations or subtle differentiations to connect with Americans through their shared history, culture, and values. In the *Second Presidential Inaugural Address*, he contrasts

the Patriots that founded the American Republic with the Loyalists who supported the “tyranny of a king” in England (Obama, 2013, p. 1). In another speech, he distinguishes Americans’ past with the present: “[T]he American peopl[e] reminded us that while our road has been hard...we know in our hearts that for the United States of America, the best is yet to come” (Obama, 2012, p. 1). Furthermore, Obama defines hope by differentiating it from “blind optimism” and “wishful thinking” (Obama, 2012, p. 1). He acknowledges that hope remains prominent in American culture by stating, “...that dogged faith in the future...has pushed this nation forward, even when the odds are great, even when the road is long” (Obama, 2012, p. 1). In the *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*, he utilizes contrast to emphasize American values such as selflessness and bravery. When a gunman in Wisconsin began shooting innocent Americans in a Sikh temple, a police officer named Brian arrived and “did not consider his own safety” (Obama, 2013, p. 14). Instead, the police officer focused on protecting the worshippers inside (Obama, 2013, p. 14).

With regards to constitutive stories, Obama employs slogans to convey complex ideas and find common ground with middle class Americans, especially as it relates to their shared culture, history, and values. In the *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*, Obama utilizes slogans to accurately convey American values that have made the American Dream attainable for past generations. He refers to the American Dream as the “basic bargain at the heart of

America's story" that's supported by "the promise that hard work will pay off," "responsibility will be rewarded," and "everyone gets a fair shot" (Obama, 2012, p. 2). Reflecting on American history, he uses recognizable terms such as "road" and "journey" to connect with most Americans who experienced hardships and challenges after the global financial crisis and the slogan "the best is yet to come" to convey optimism in their future. Specifically, he offers hope and opportunity: "...[T]he American peopl[e] reminded us that while our road has been hard, while our journey has been long, we have picked ourselves up, we have fought our way back, and we know in our hearts that for the United States of America, the best is yet to come" (Obama, 2013, p. 1). Turning to the present, Obama employs another slogan "Made in America" to acknowledge that Americans should feel proud about the progress made toward recovery (Obama, 2012, p. 3). He proclaims, "I've signed trade agreements that are helping our companies sell more goods to millions of new customers, goods that are stamped with three proud words: 'Made in America'" (Obama, 2012, p. 3).

Obama employs constitutive stories and framing techniques in his speeches and addresses to convey common American experiences, provide a renewed vision for the United States of America, and empower Americans as capable agents to create a better future, ultimately to convince them to move *forward*, the slogan of his second presidential campaign. In regards to common American constitutive experiences, Obama refers to two constants throughout

history: the road and the star, the latter a recognisable icon of the American flag. Americans all travel down the same road, which tests their determination and resolve time and again (Obama, 2012, p. 1). On this road, Americans are guided by a star that “we are all created equal” and, therefore, all Americans have a responsibility to each other (Obama, 2013, p. 3). Obama’s renewed constitutive vision for a stronger, more prosperous, and equitable United States is embodied in his call to Americans to improve the State of the Union (Obama, 2013, p. 1). During his first presidential term, he describes how one of his policies, the *Violence Against Women Act*, was passed because of Joe Biden’s continuous effort that spanned almost two decades (Obama, 2013, p. 26). Lastly, Obama empowers Americans as capable agents by highlighting their acts of selflessness, determination, and courage. In one instance, a 102-year-old woman named Desiline stood in line for hours to exert her right to vote in the last election (Obama, 2013, p. 14). Overall, Obama’s constitutive stories persuaded Americans to follow his leadership and contributed to his second presidential election.

## **Conclusion**

Obama carefully selects political, economic, and constitutive stories to convey common American experiences, provide a renewed vision for the United States of America, and empower Americans as capable agents to create a better future. He constructs these stories using a combination of metaphor, contrast, and slogan techniques.

Political stories remind Americans of the promises their government has to combat foreign threats, ensure their security, and protect their democratic institutions and processes. Economic stories delve into Americans' challenges, highlight Obama's economic policies and their effects, and offer a vision of and promises for collective wealth. Constitutive stories refer to American history, culture, and traits. Focusing on the framing techniques, Obama employs metaphors such as the "house of cards" to describe and to illustrate the global financial crisis, the most severe Americans have experienced since the Great Depression. He relies upon contrast to make stark and subtle differentiations, especially between himself and his opponents. Lastly, Obama utilizes slogans such as "Made in America" to highlight American achievements and optimistic future prospects.

This Major Research Paper has contributed to existing scholarship by applying both Smith's narrative theory and Fairhurst and Sarr's framing theory to Obama's speeches and addresses. As Obama completes his final term in the



White House, scholars will evaluate his legacy for the United States of America. These speeches and addresses provide valuable insights into his past achievements, promises, and vision for the American people. President Obama's vision, subtly interwoven into the text, speaks to a United States of America that stands strong on its founding principles, protects its democratic institutions and processes, and continues to provide security, a high quality of life, and opportunity to its people. Even without President Obama, the State of the Union will continue its path *forward*: the slogan of his last presidential campaign.

### **Research Limitations and Future Scholarship**

Although my research has produced insights into what story themes and framing techniques Obama employs, future scholarship would benefit from analyzing more speeches and addresses, venturing beyond Smith's peoplehood story themes, and incorporating a computer generated quantitative analysis. First, I chose four of Obama's speeches and addresses leading up to or shortly after his second presidential term. Scholars may analyze more speeches over a larger time period that proceeds his second election victory. This would provide greater insights into Obama's vision and promises and, ultimately, his presidential legacy. Second, my first research question directed my results to focus on Smith's (2015) three peoplehood story themes: political, economic, and constitutive. The peoplehood story themes revealed sub-themes, including American culture, history, and values. Future research has the opportunity both to expand and deepen the stories and themes I identified. In particular, the American Dream could be an additional theme because of its re-occurrence in several constitutive stories. Third, I manually coded the speeches and addresses both for story themes and framing techniques. Scholars may want to use software programs to conduct quantitative studies that examine the repetition and use of words throughout the speeches. This could provide a more holistic analysis, especially when applied to a larger data set of speeches and addresses.

## Reference List

- Abbott, Porter H. (2008). *The Cambridge introduction to narrative* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge: University Press, Cambridge.
- Atwater, D. F. (2007). Senator Barack Obama: The rhetoric of hope and the American dream. *Journal of Black Studies*, 38(2), 121-129.
- Fairhurst, G. T., & Sarr, R. A. (1996). *The art of framing: Managing the language of leadership* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Hammer, S. (2010). The role of narrative in political campaigning: An analysis of speeches by Barack Obama. *National Identities*, 12(3), 269.
- Jenkins, K. B., & Cos, G. (2010). A time for change and a candidate's voice: Pragmatism and the rhetoric of inclusion in Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 54(3), 184-202.
- Marshall, C. (2012). From Gettysburg to Grant Park: Echoes of Lincoln in the campaign rhetoric of Barack Obama. *Comparative American Studies*, 10(2), 154-162.
- McQuail, Denis. 2010. *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Schroedel, J., Bligh, M., Merolla, J., & Gonzalez, R. (2013). Charismatic rhetoric in the 2008 presidential campaign: Commonalities and differences. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 43(1), 101-128.
- Sheckels, T. F. (2013). The polyphonic orchestration of Barack Obama, 2004 to 2012: The evolving strategic campaign message. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(12), 1716-1730.
- Smith, Rogers M. (2015). *Political peoplehood: The roles of values, interests, and identities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, Rogers M. (2003). *Stories of peoplehood: The politics and morals of political membership*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Story. (n.d.). In *Oxford Dictionaries*. Retrieved from

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/story>

Sweet, D., & McCue-Enser, M. (2010). Constituting "the people" as rhetorical interruption: Barack Obama and the unfinished hopes of an imperfect people. *Communication Studies*, 61(5), 602-622.

Obama, Barack. (2013). *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address*. Retrieved from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/barackobamaspeeches.htm>

Obama, Barack. (2012). *Second Democratic Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech*. Retrieved from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/barackobamaspeeches.htm>

Obama, Barack. (2013). *Second Presidential Inaugural Address*. Retrieved from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/barackobamaspeeches.htm>

Obama, Barack. (2012). *Second Presidential Election Victory Speech*. Retrieved from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/barackobamaspeeches.htm>

Oxford English Dictionary (2016). *Story*. Retrieved from <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/190981?rskey=XMY8kN&result=2#eid>.

## Appendix

### **Part I: *Second Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech***

Thank you, so much. Thank you. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

Michelle, I love you so much. A few nights ago, everybody was reminded just what a lucky man I am. The other night, I think the entire country saw just how lucky I am. Malia and Sasha, we are so proud of you. And yes, you do have to go to school in the morning. And Joe Biden, thank you for being the very best Vice President I could have ever hoped for, and being a strong and loyal friend.

Madam Chairwoman, delegates, I accept your nomination for President of the United States.

[Now, the first time I addressed this convention in 2004, I was a younger man; a Senate candidate from Illinois who spoke about hope -- not blind optimism, not wishful thinking, but **hope** in the face of difficulty; hope in the face of uncertainty, that **dogged faith in the future which has pushed this nation forward**, even when *the odds are great*, even when *the road is long*.]

Eight years later, that hope has been tested -- by the cost of war, by one of the worst economic crises in history, and by political gridlock that's left us wondering whether it's still even possible to tackle the challenges of our time.

I know campaigns can seem small, even silly sometimes. Trivial things become big distractions. Serious issues become sound bites. The truth gets buried under an avalanche of money and advertising. If you're sick of hearing me approve this message, believe me, so am I.

But when all is said and done -- when you pick up that ballot to vote -- you will face the clearest choice of any time in a generation. Over the next few years, big decisions will be made in Washington -- on jobs, the economy, taxes and deficits, energy, education, war and peace -- decisions that will have a huge impact on our lives and our children's lives for decades to come.

And on every issue, the choice you face won't just be between two candidates or two parties. It will be a choice between two different paths for America; a choice between two fundamentally different visions for the future. [Ours is a **fight** to restore the **values** that built **the largest middle class** and **the strongest economy** the world has ever known -- the values **my grandfather defended as a soldier in**

Patton's Army, the values that drove my grandmother to work on a bomber assembly line while he was gone.]

They knew they were part of something larger -- a nation that triumphed over fascism and depression, a nation where the most innovative businesses turned out the world's best products, and everyone shared in that pride and success -- from the corner office to the factory floor. [My grandparents were given the chance to go to college, buy their own -- their own home, and fulfill the basic bargain at the heart of America's story: *the promise that hard work will pay off, that responsibility will be rewarded, that everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules* -- **from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington, D.C.**]

And I ran for President because I saw that basic bargain slipping away. [I began my career helping people in the shadow of a shuttered steel mill, at a time when too many good jobs were starting to move overseas.] [And by 2008, we had seen nearly a decade in which families struggled with costs that kept rising but paychecks that didn't, folks racking up more and more debt just to make the mortgage or pay tuition, put gas in the car or food on the table.] [And when the house of cards collapsed in the Great Recession, millions of innocent Americans lost their jobs, their homes, their life savings -- a tragedy from which we're still fighting to recover.]

Now, our friends down in Tampa at the Republican convention were more than happy to talk about everything they think is wrong with America, but they didn't have much to say about how they'd make it right. They want your vote, but they don't want you to know their plan. And that's because all they have to offer is the same prescriptions they've had for the last 30 years: "Have a surplus? Try a tax cut." "Deficit too high? Try another." "Feel a cold coming on? Take two tax cuts, roll back some regulations, and call us in the morning!"

Now, I've cut taxes for those who need it -- middle-class families, small businesses -- but I don't believe that another round of tax breaks for millionaires will bring good jobs to our shores, or pay down our deficit. I don't believe that firing teachers or kicking students off financial aid will grow the economy, or help us compete with the scientists and engineers coming out of China. After all we've been through, I don't believe that rolling back regulations on Wall Street will help the small businesswoman expand, or the laid-off construction worker keep his home. We have been there. We've tried that. And we're not going back. We are moving forward, America.

Now, I won't pretend the path I'm offering is quick or easy. I never have. You didn't elect me to tell you what you wanted to hear. You elected me to tell you the truth. And the truth is, it will take more than a few years for us to solve challenges that have built up over decades. It'll require common effort, shared responsibility, and the kind of bold, persistent experimentation that Franklin Roosevelt pursued during the only crisis worse than this one. And by the way, those of us who carry on his party's legacy should remember that not every problem can be remedied with another government program or dictate from Washington.

But know this, America: Our problems can be solved. Our challenges can be met. The path we offer may be harder but it leads to a better place, and I'm asking you to choose that future. I'm asking you to rally around a set of goals for your country, goals in manufacturing, energy, education, national security, and the deficit -- real, achievable plans that will lead to new jobs, more opportunity, and rebuild this economy on a stronger foundation. That's what we can do in the next four years, and that is why I am running for a second term as President of the United States.

We can choose a future where we export more products and outsource fewer jobs. After a decade that was defined by what we bought and borrowed, we're getting back to basics and doing what America's always done best. We are making things again. [I've met [workers in Detroit and Toledo who feared they'd never build another American car](#); and [today they can't build them fast enough because we reinvented a dying auto industry that's back on the top of the world.](#)] [I worked with [business leaders who are bringing jobs back to America](#) not because our workers make less pay, but because [we make better products -- because we work harder and smarter than anyone else.](#)] [I've signed [trade agreements that are helping our companies sell more goods](#) to millions of new customers, goods that are stamped with three proud words: "*Made in America.*"] And after a decade of decline, this country created over half a million manufacturing jobs in the last two-and-half years.

And now you have a choice: We can give more tax breaks to corporations that shift jobs overseas or we can start rewarding companies that open new plants and train new workers and create new jobs here in the United States of America. We can help big factories and small businesses double their exports. And if we choose this path, we can create a million new manufacturing jobs in the next four years.

You can make that happen. You can choose that future.

You can choose the path where we control more of our own energy. After 30 years of inaction, we raised fuel standards so that by the middle of the next decade, cars and trucks will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. We have doubled our use of renewable energy, and thousands of Americans have jobs today building wind turbines and long-lasting batteries. In the last year alone, we cut oil imports by one million barrels a day, more than any Administration in recent history. And today the United States of America is less dependent on foreign oil than at any time in the last two decades.

So now you have a choice, between a strategy that reverses this progress or one that builds on it. We've opened millions of new acres for oil and gas exploration in the last three years, and we'll open more. But unlike my opponent, I will not let oil companies write this country's energy plan or endanger our coastlines or collect another four billion dollars in corporate welfare from our taxpayers. We're offering a better path.

We're offering a better path where we -- a -- a future where we keep investing in wind and solar and clean coal, where farmers and scientists harness new biofuels to power our cars and trucks, where construction workers build homes and factories that waste less energy, where -- where we develop a hundred-year supply of natural gas that's right beneath our feet. If you choose this path, we can cut our oil imports in half by 2020 and support more than 600,000 new jobs in natural gas alone. And yes, my plan will continue to reduce the carbon pollution that is heating our planet, because climate change is not a hoax. More droughts and floods and wildfires are not a joke. They are a threat to our children's future. And in this election, you can do something about it.

You can choose a future where more Americans have the chance to gain the skills they need to compete, no matter how old they are or how much money they have.

Education was the gateway to opportunity for me. It was the gateway for Michelle. It was -- It was the gateway for most of you. And now more than ever it is the gateway to a middle-class life. For the first time in a generation, nearly every state has answered our call to raise their standards for teaching and learning. Some of the worst schools in the country have made real gains in math and reading. [Millions of students are paying less for college today because we finally took on a system that wasted billions of taxpayer dollars on banks and lenders.]

And now you have a choice. We can gut education, or we can decide that in the United States of America, no child should have her dreams deferred because of a crowded classroom or a crumbling school. No family should have to set aside a



college acceptance letter because they don't have the money. No company should have to look for workers overseas because they couldn't find any with the right skills here at home. That's not our future. That is not our future.

A government has a role in this -- but teachers must inspire; principals must lead; parents must instill a thirst for learning; and students, you've got to do the work. And together, I promise you we can out-educate and outcompete any nation on earth.

So help me. Help me recruit a hundred thousand math and science teachers within 10 years and improve early childhood education. Help give two million workers the chance to learn skills at their community college that will lead directly to a job. Help us work with colleges and universities to cut in half the growth of tuition costs over the next 10 years. We can meet that goal together. You can choose that future for America. That's our future.

You know, in a world of new threats and new challenges, you can choose leadership that has been tested and proven. [Four years ago I promised to end the war in Iraq. We did. I promised to refocus on the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11, and we have. We've blunted the Taliban's momentum in Afghanistan and in 2014, our longest war will be over. A new tower rises above the New York skyline; al-Qaida is on the path to defeat; and Osama bin Laden is dead (political).]

And tonight we pay tribute to the Americans who still serve in harm's way. We are forever in debt to a generation whose sacrifice has made this country safer and more respected. We will never forget you and so long as I'm Commander-in-Chief we will sustain the strongest military the world has ever known. When you take off the uniform, we will serve you as well as you've served us, because no one who fights for this country should have to fight for a job or a roof over their heads or the care that they need when they come home.

[Around the world, we've strengthened old alliances (political) and forged new coalitions to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.] [ We've reasserted our power across the Pacific and stood up to China on behalf of our workers.] [From Burma to Libya to South Sudan, we have advanced the rights and dignity of all human beings -- men and women, Christians and Muslims and Jews.]

But for all the progress that we've made, challenges remain. Terrorist plots must be disrupted. Europe's crisis must be contained. Our commitment to Israel's security must not waver, and neither must our pursuit of peace. The Iranian

government must face a world that stays united against its nuclear ambitions. The historic change sweeping across the Arab world must be defined not by the iron fist of a dictator or the hate of extremists, but by the hopes and aspirations of ordinary people who are reaching for the same rights that we celebrate here today.

So now we have a choice. My opponent and his running mate are new to foreign policy. But from all that we've seen and heard, they want to take us back to an era of blustering and blundering that cost America so dearly. After all, you don't call Russia our number one enemy -- not al-Qaida, Russia -- unless you're still stuck in a Cold War mind warp. You might not be ready for diplomacy with Beijing if you can't visit the Olympics without insulting our closest ally.

My opponent -- My opponent said that it was tragic to end the war in Iraq. And he won't tell us how he'll end the war in Afghanistan. Well, I have, and I will.

And while my opponent would spend more money on military hardware that our Joint Chiefs don't even want, I will use the money we're no longer spending on war to pay down our debt and put more people back to work -- rebuilding roads and bridges, and schools and runways, because after two wars that have cost us thousands of lives and over a trillion dollars, it's time to do some nation building right here at home.

You can choose a future where we reduce our deficit without sticking it to the middle class. Independent experts say that my plan would cut our deficit by four trillion dollars. And last summer I worked with Republicans in Congress to cut a billion dollars in spending, because those of us who believe government can be a force for good should work harder than anyone to reform it so that it's leaner and more efficient and more responsive to the American people.

I want to reform the tax code so it's simple, fair, and asks the wealthiest households to pay higher taxes on incomes over 250,000 dollars -- the same rate we had when Bill Clinton was President, the same rate we had when our economy created nearly 23 million new jobs, the biggest surplus in history and a whole lot of millionaires to boot.

Now, I'm still eager to reach an agreement based on the principles of my bipartisan debt commission. No party has a monopoly on wisdom. No democracy works without compromise. I want to get this done, and we can get it done. But when Governor Romney and his friends in Congress tell us we can somehow lower our deficits by spending trillions more on new tax breaks for the wealthy, well -- what'd Bill Clinton call it? You do the arithmetic. You do the math.

I refuse to go along with that, and as long as I'm President I never will. I refuse to ask middle-class families to give up their deductions for owning a home or raising their kids just to pay for another millionaire's tax cut. I refuse to ask students to pay more for college or kick children out of Head Start programs to eliminate health insurance for millions of Americans who are poor and elderly or disabled -- all so those with the most can pay less. I'm not going along with that.

And I will never -- I will never turn Medicare into a voucher. No American should ever have to spend their golden years at the mercy of insurance companies. They should retire with the care and the dignity that they have earned. Yes, we will reform and strengthen Medicare for the long haul, but we'll do it by reducing the cost of health care, not by asking seniors to pay thousands of dollars more. And we will keep the promise of Social Security by taking the responsible steps to strengthen it, not by turning it over to Wall Street.

This is the choice we now face. This is what the election comes down to. Over and over, we've been told by our opponents that bigger tax cuts and fewer regulations are the only way, that since government can't do everything, it should do almost nothing. If you can't afford health insurance, hope that you don't get sick. If a company releases toxic pollution into the air your children breathe, well, that's the price of progress. If you can't afford to start a business or go to college, take my opponent's advice and borrow money from your parents.

You know what? That's not who we are. That's not what this country's about. As Americans, we believe we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, rights that no man or government can take away. We insist on personal responsibility and we celebrate individual initiative. We're not entitled to success. We have to earn it. We honor the strivers, the dreamers, the risk-takers, the entrepreneurs who have always been the driving force behind our free enterprise system, the greatest engine of growth and prosperity that the world's ever known.

But we also believe in something called "citizenship" -- citizenship, a word at the very heart of our founding, a word at the very essence of our democracy, the idea that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another and to future generations.

We believe that when a CEO pays his autoworkers enough to buy the cars that they build, the whole company does better.

We believe that when a family can no longer be tricked into signing a mortgage they can't afford, that family's protected, but so is the value of other people's homes -- and so is the entire economy.

We believe the little girl who's offered an escape from poverty by a great teacher or a grant for college could become the next Steve Jobs or the scientist who cures cancer or the President of the United States -- and it is in our power to give her that chance.

We know that churches and charities can often make more of a difference than a poverty program alone. We don't want handouts for people who refuse to help themselves, and we certainly don't want bailouts for banks that break the rules.

We don't think the government can solve all of our problems, but we don't think the government is the source of all of our problems -- any more than our welfare recipients or corporations or unions or immigrants or gays or any other group we're told to blame for our troubles -- because -- because America, we understand that this democracy is ours.

We, the people, recognize that we have responsibilities as well as rights; that our destinies are bound together; that a freedom which asks only, what's in it for me, a freedom without a commitment to others, a freedom without love or charity or duty or patriotism, is unworthy of our founding ideals and those who died in their defense. As citizens, we understand that America is not about what can be done for us. It's about what can be done by us together, through the hard and frustrating but necessary work of self-government. That's what we believe.

[So you see, [the election four years ago wasn't about me. It was about you. My fellow citizens: \*You were the change.\*](#)]

[**You're the reason** [there's a little girl with a heart disorder in Phoenix who'll get the surgery she needs](#) because [an insurance company can't limit her coverage.](#) [You did that.](#)]

[**You're the reason** [a young man in Colorado who never thought he'd be able to afford his dream of earning a medical degree is about to get that chance.](#) [You made that possible.](#)]

[**You're the reason** [a young immigrant who grew up here and went to school here and pledged allegiance to our flag will no longer be deported from the only country she's ever called home; why selfless soldiers won't be kicked out of the](#)

military because of who they are or who they love; why thousands of families have finally been able to say to the loved ones who served us so bravely:

"*Welcome home.*" Welcome home. *You did that. You did that. You did that.*]

If you turn away now -- If you turn away now, if you buy into the cynicism that the change we fought for isn't possible, well, change will not happen. If you give up on the idea that your voice can make a difference, then other voices will fill the void -- the lobbyists and special interests, the people with the 10 million dollar checks who are trying to buy this election and those who are trying to make it harder for you to vote, Washington politicians who want to decide who you can marry or control health care choices that women should be making for themselves. Only you can make sure that doesn't happen. Only you have the power to move us forward.

You know, I recognize that times have changed since I first spoke to this convention. Times have changed and so have I. I'm no longer just a candidate: I'm the President. And...that means I know what it means to send young Americans into battle, for I've held in my arms the mothers and fathers of those who didn't return. I've shared the pain of families who've lost their homes, and the frustration of workers who've lost their jobs. If the critics are right that I've made all my decisions based on polls, then I must not be very good at reading them.

And while I'm very proud of what we've achieved together, I'm far more mindful of my own failings -- knowing exactly what Lincoln meant when he said, "I have been driven to my knees many times by the overwhelming conviction that I had no place else to go."

But as I stand here tonight, I have never been more hopeful about America; not because I think I have all the answers; not because I'm naive about the magnitude of our challenges -- I'm hopeful because of you.

[The **young woman** I met at a science fair who won national recognition for her biology research while living with her family at a homeless shelter -- she gives me hope.]

[The **auto worker** who won the lottery after his plant almost closed, but kept coming to work every day, and bought flags for his whole town and one of the cars that he built to surprise his wife -- he gives me hope.]

[The **family business** in Warroad, Minnesota, that didn't lay off a single one of their 4,000 employees when *the recession hit*, even when their competitors shut

down dozens of plants, even when it meant the owner gave up some perks and some pay, because they understood that their biggest asset was the community and the workers who had helped build that business -- they give me hope.]

[I think about the **young sailor** I met at Walter Reed Hospital still recovering from a grenade attack that would cause him to have his leg amputated above the knee. And six months ago we would watch him walk into a White House dinner honoring those who served in Iran [Iraq], tall and 20 pounds heavier, dashing in his uniform, with a big grin on his face, sturdy on his new leg. And I remember how a few months after that I would watch him on a bicycle, racing with his fellow wounded warriors on a sparkling spring day, inspiring other heroes who had just begun the hard path he had traveled. He gives me hope. He gives me hope.]

I -- I don't know what party these men and women belong to. I don't know if they'll vote for me. But I know that their spirit defines us. They remind me, in the words of Scripture, that ours is a future filled with hope. And if you share that faith with me, if you share that hope with me, I ask you tonight for your vote.

If you reject the notion that this nation's promise is reserved for the few, your voice must be heard in this election.

If you reject the notion that our government is forever beholden to the highest bidder, you need to stand up in this election.

If you believe that new plants and factories can dot our landscape, that new energy can power our future, that new schools can provide ladders of opportunity to this nation of dreamers, if you believe in a country where everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does their fair share and everyone plays by the same rules, then I need you to vote this November.

America, I never said this journey would be easy and I won't promise that now. Yes, our path is harder but it leads to a better place. Yes, our road is longer but we travel it together.

We don't turn back. We leave no one behind. We pull each other up. We draw strength from our victories and we learn from our mistakes, but we keep our eyes fixed on that distant horizon knowing that providence is with us and that we are surely blessed to be citizens of the greatest nation on earth.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless these United States.

## **Part II: Second Presidential Election Victory Speech**

Thank you. Thank you so much.

[Tonight, more than 200 years after a [former colony won the right to determine its own destiny](#), the task of [perfecting our union](#) moves forward. It moves forward because of you. It moves forward because you reaffirmed [the spirit](#) that has triumphed over war and depression; [the spirit](#) that has lifted this country from the depths of despair to the great heights of hope -- [the belief](#) that while each of us will pursue our own individual dreams, we are an American family, and we rise or fall together, as one nation, and as one people.]

[Tonight, in this election, you, [the American people](#), reminded us that while [our road has been hard](#), while [our journey has been long](#), we have picked ourselves up, we have fought our way back, and we know in our hearts that for the [United States of America](#), the best is yet to come.]

I want to thank every American who participated in this election. [Whether you voted for the very first time or waited in line for a very long time -- by the way, we have to fix that. Whether you pounded the pavement or picked up the phone -- whether you held an [Obama sign](#) or a [Romney sign](#), [you made your voice heard](#), and [you made a difference](#).]

[I just spoke with Governor Romney, and [I congratulated him and Paul Ryan on a hard-fought campaign](#).] We may have battled fiercely, but it's only because we love this country deeply, and we care so strongly about its future.

From George to Lenore to their son Mitt, the Romney family has chosen to give back to America through public service, and that is a legacy that we honor and applaud tonight.

In the weeks ahead, I also look forward to sitting down with Governor Romney to talk about where we can work together to move this country forward.

I want to thank my friend and partner of the last four years, America's happy warrior -- the best Vice President anybody could ever hope for -- Joe Biden.

And I wouldn't be the man I am today without the woman who agreed to marry me 20 years ago. Let me say this publicly -- Michelle, I have never loved you more. I have never been prouder to watch the rest of America fall in love with you, too, as our nation's First Lady. Sasha and Malia, before our very eyes, you're

growing up to become two strong, smart, beautiful young women, just like your mom. And I'm so proud of you guys. But I will say that for now, one dog is probably enough.

To the best campaign team and volunteers in the history of politics -- the best. The best ever. Some of you were new this time around, and some of you have been at my side since the very beginning. But all of you are family. No matter what you do or where you go from here, you will carry the memory of the history we made together, and you will have the lifelong appreciation of a grateful President. Thank you for believing all the way, through every hill, through every valley. You lifted me up the whole way. And I will always be grateful for everything that you've done and all the incredible work that you put in.

I know that political campaigns can sometimes seem small, even silly. And that provides plenty of fodder for the cynics who tell us that politics is nothing more than a contest of egos, or the domain of special interests. [But if you ever get the chance to talk to [folks who turned out at our rallies, and crowded along a rope line in a high school gym, or saw folks working late at a campaign office](#) in some tiny county far away from home, you'll discover something else.]

[You'll hear the [determination in the voice of a young field organizer](#) who's worked his way through college, and wants to make sure every child has that same opportunity.] [You'll hear the [pride in the voice of a volunteer](#) who's going door to door because her brother was finally hired when the local auto plant added another shift.] [You'll hear the deep [patriotism](#) in the voice of a **military spouse** who's working the phones late at night to make sure that [no one who fights for this country ever has to fight for a job, or a roof over their head when they come home.](#)]

That's why we do this. That's what politics can be. That's why elections matter. It's not small; it's big. It's important.

Democracy in a nation of 300 million can be noisy and messy and complicated. We have our own opinions. Each of us has deeply held beliefs. And when we go through tough times, when we make big decisions as a country, it necessarily stirs passions, stirs up controversy. That won't change after tonight -- and it shouldn't. These arguments we have are a mark of our liberty, and we can never forget that as we speak, people in distant nations are risking their lives right now just for a chance to argue about the issues that matter, the chance to cast their ballots like we did today.



But despite all our differences, most of us share certain hopes for America's future. We want our kids to grow up in a country where they have access to the best schools and the best teachers -- a country that lives up to its legacy as the global leader in technology and discovery and innovation, with all the good jobs and new businesses that follow.

We want our children to live in an America that isn't burdened by debt; that isn't weakened by inequality; that isn't threatened by the destructive power of a warming planet.

We want to pass on a country that's safe and respected and admired around the world; a nation that is defended by the strongest military on Earth and the best troops this world has ever known -- but also a country that moves with confidence beyond this time of war to shape a peace that is built on the promise of freedom and dignity for every human being.

We believe in a generous America; in a compassionate America; in a tolerant America, open to the dreams of an immigrant's daughter who studies in our schools and pledges to our flag. To the young boy on the South Side of Chicago who sees a life beyond the nearest street corner. To the furniture worker's child in North Carolina who wants to become a doctor or a scientist, an engineer or entrepreneur, a diplomat or even a President. That's the future we hope for. That's the vision we share. That's where we need to go. Forward. That's where we need to go.

Now, we will disagree, sometimes fiercely, about how to get there. As it has for more than two centuries, progress will come in fits and starts. It's not always a straight line. It's not always a smooth path. By itself, the recognition that we have common hopes and dreams won't end all the gridlock, or solve all our problems, or substitute for the painstaking work of building consensus, and making the difficult compromises needed to move this country forward. But that common bond is where we must begin.

Our economy is recovering. A decade of war is ending. A long campaign is now over. [And whether I earned your vote or not, [I have listened to you. I have learned from you. And you've made me a better President.](#)] With your stories and your struggles, I return to the White House more determined and more inspired than ever about the work there is to do, and the future that lies ahead.

[Tonight, you [voted for action, not politics as usual. You elected us to focus on your jobs, not ours.](#)] And in the coming weeks and months, I am looking forward

to reaching out and working with leaders of both parties to meet the challenges we can only solve together: reducing our deficit; reforming our tax code; fixing our immigration system; freeing ourselves from foreign oil. We've got more work to do.

But that doesn't mean your work is done. The role of citizen in our democracy does not end with your vote. America has never been about what can be done for us. It's about what can be done by us, together, through the hard and frustrating but necessary work of self- government. That's the principle we were founded on.

This country has more wealth than any nation, but that's not what makes us rich. We have the most powerful military in history, but that's not what makes us strong. Our university, culture are the envy of the world, but that's not what keeps the world coming to our shores.

What makes America exceptional are the bonds that hold together the most diverse nation on Earth -- the belief that our destiny is shared; that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another, and to future generations; that the freedom which so many Americans have fought for and died for comes with responsibilities as well as rights, and among those are love and charity and duty and patriotism. That's what makes America great.

[I am hopeful tonight because I have seen this **spirit at work** in America.] [ I've seen **it** in the family business whose owners would rather cut their own pay than lay off their neighbors, and in the workers who would rather cut back their hours than see a friend lose a job.]

[I've seen **it** in the soldiers who re-enlist after losing a limb, and in those SEALs who charged up the stairs into darkness and danger because they knew there was a buddy behind them, watching their back.]

[I've seen **it** on the shores of New Jersey and New York, where leaders from every party and level of government have swept aside their differences to help a community rebuild from the wreckage of a terrible storm.]

[And I saw **it** just the other day in Mentor, Ohio, where a father told the story of his eight-year- old daughter, whose long battle with leukemia nearly cost their family everything, had it not been for health care reform passing just a few months before the insurance company was about to stop paying for her care. I had an opportunity to not just talk to the father, but meet this incredible daughter of his. And when he spoke to the crowd, listening to that father's story, every parent

in that room had tears in their eyes, because we knew that little girl could be our own. And I know that every American wants her future to be just as bright.]

That's who we are. That's the country I'm so proud to lead as your President. And tonight, despite all the hardship we've been through, despite all the frustrations of Washington, I've never been more hopeful about our future. I have never been more hopeful about America. And I ask you to sustain that hope.

I'm not talking about blind optimism -- the kind of hope that just ignores the enormity of the tasks ahead or the roadblocks that stand in our path. I'm not talking about the wishful idealism that allows us to just sit on the sidelines or shirk from a fight. I have always believed that hope is that stubborn thing inside us that insists, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us, so long as we have the courage to keep reaching, to keep working, to keep fighting.

America, I believe we can build on the progress we've made, and continue to fight for new jobs, and new opportunity, and new security for the middle class. I believe we can keep the promise of our founding -- the idea that if you're willing to work hard, it doesn't matter who you are, or where you come from, or what you look like, or where you love -- it doesn't matter whether you're black or white, or Hispanic or Asian, or Native American, or young or old, or rich or poor, abled, disabled, gay or straight -- you can make it here in America if you're willing to try.

I believe we can seize this future together -- because we are not as divided as our politics suggest; we're not as cynical as the pundits believe; we are greater than the sum of our individual ambitions; and we remain more than a collection of red states and blue states. We are, and forever will be, the United States of America. And together, with your help, and God's grace, we will continue our journey forward, and remind the world just why it is that we live in the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you, America. God bless you. God bless these United States.

### **Part III: *Second Presidential Inaugural Address***

Thank you, so much.

Vice President Biden, Mr. Chief Justice, members of the United States Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens, each time we gather to inaugurate a president, we bear witness to the enduring strength of our Constitution. We affirm the promise of our democracy. We recall that what binds this nation together is not the colors of our skin or the tenets of our faith or the origins of our names.

What makes us exceptional, what makes us America is our allegiance to an idea articulated in a declaration made more than two centuries ago:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Today we continue a never ending journey to bridge the meaning of those words with the realities of our time. For history tells us that while these truths may be self-evident, they've never been self-executing. That while freedom is a gift from God, it must be secured by his people here on earth.

[The patriots of 1776 did not fight to replace the *tyranny of a king* with the *privileges of a few*, or *the rule of a mob*. They gave to us a republic, a government of, and by, and for the people. Entrusting each generation to keep safe our founding creed. And for more than 200 years we have.] [Through blood drawn by lash, and blood drawn by sword, we noted that **no union** founded on the principles of liberty and equality **could survive half slave, and half free**. We made ourselves anew, and vowed to move forward together.]

[Together we determined that a modern economy requires railroads and highways to speed travel and commerce, schools and colleges to train our workers.]

[Together we discovered that a free market only thrives when there are rules to ensure competition and fair play. Together we resolve that a great nation must care for the vulnerable and protect its people from life's worst hazards and misfortune.

[Through it all, we have never relinquished our skepticism of central authority, nor have we succumbed to the fiction that all societies['] ills can be cured through government alone.] Our celebration of initiative and enterprise, our insistence on hard work and personal responsibility, these are constants in our character.

But we have always understood that when times change, so must we; that fidelity to our founding principles requires new responses to new challenges; that preserving our individual freedoms ultimately requires collective action. For the American people can no more meet the demands of today's world by acting alone than American soldiers could have met the forces of fascism or communism with muskets and militias. No single person can train all the math and science teachers we'll need to equip our children for the future, or build the roads and networks and research labs that will bring new jobs and businesses to our shores. Now, more than ever, we must do these things together, as one nation and one people.

[This generation of Americans has been tested by crises that steeled our resolve and proved our resilience.] A decade of war is now ending. An economic recovery has begun. America's possibilities are limitless, for we possess all the qualities that this world without boundaries demands: youth and drive; diversity and openness; an endless capacity for risk and a gift for reinvention. My fellow Americans, we are made for this moment, and we will seize it -- so long as we seize it together.

For we, the people, understand that our country cannot succeed when a shrinking few do very well and a growing many barely make it. We believe that America's prosperity must rest upon the broad shoulders of a rising middle class. We know that America thrives when every person can find independence and pride in their work; when the wages of honest labor liberate families from the brink of hardship. We are true to our creed when a little girl born into the bleakest poverty knows that she has the same chance to succeed as anybody else, because she is an American; she is free, and she is equal, not just in the eyes of God but also in our own.

We understand that outworn programs are inadequate to the needs of our time. So we must harness new ideas and technology to remake our government, revamp our tax code, reform our schools, and empower our citizens with the skills they need to work harder, learn more, reach higher. But while the means will change, our purpose endures. A nation that rewards the effort and determination of every single American. That is what this moment requires. That is what will give real meaning to our creed.

We, the people, still believe that every citizen deserves a basic measure of security and dignity. We must make the hard choices to reduce the cost of health care and the size of our deficit. But we reject the belief that America must choose between caring for the generation that built this country and investing in the

generation that will build its future. For we remember the lessons of our past, when twilight years were spent in poverty and parents of a child with a disability had nowhere to turn.

We do not believe that in this country freedom is reserved for the lucky, or happiness for the few. We recognize that no matter how responsibly we live our lives, any one of us at any time may face a job loss, or a sudden illness, or a home swept away in a terrible storm. The commitments we make to each other through Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security, these things do not sap our initiative, they strengthen us. They do not make us a nation of takers; they free us to take the risks that make this country great.

We, the people, still believe that our obligations as Americans are not just to ourselves, but to all posterity. We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations. Some may still deny the overwhelming judgment of science, but none can avoid the devastating impact of raging fires and crippling drought and more powerful storms.

The path towards sustainable energy sources will be long and sometimes difficult. But America cannot resist this transition, we must lead it. We cannot cede to other nations the technology that will power new jobs and new industries, we must claim its promise. That's how we will maintain our economic vitality and our national treasure -- our forests and waterways, our crop lands, and snow-capped peaks. That is how we will preserve our planet, commanded to our care by God. That's what will lend meaning to the creed our Fathers once declared.

We, the people, still believe that enduring security and lasting peace do not require perpetual war. Our brave men and women in uniform, tempered by the flames of battle, are unmatched in skill and courage. Our citizens, seared by the memory of those we have lost, know too well the price that is paid for liberty. The knowledge of their sacrifice will keep us forever vigilant against those who would do us harm. But we are also heirs to those who won the peace and not just the war; who turned sworn enemies into the surest of friends -- and we must carry those lessons into this time as well.

We will defend our people and uphold our values through strength of arms and rule of law. We will show the courage to try and resolve our differences with other nations peacefully -- not because we are naïve about the dangers we face, but because engagement can more durably lift suspicion and fear.

America will remain the anchor of strong alliances in every corner of the globe. And we will renew those institutions that extend our capacity to manage crisis abroad, for no one has a greater stake in a peaceful world than its most powerful nation. We will support democracy from Asia to Africa, from the Americas to the Middle East, because our interests and our conscience compel us to act on behalf of those who long for freedom. And we must be a source of hope to the poor, the sick, the marginalized, the victims of prejudice -- not out of mere charity, but because peace in our time requires the constant advance of those principles that our common creed describes: tolerance and opportunity, human dignity, and justice.

[We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths -- that *all of us are created equal* -- is **the star that guides us still**; just as **it** guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall; just as **it** guided all those men and women, sung and unsung, who left footprints along this great Mall, to hear a preacher say that *we cannot walk alone*; to hear a "King" proclaim that our individual freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of every soul on Earth.]

It is now our generation's task to carry on what those pioneers began. For our journey is not complete until our wives, our mothers and daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts.

Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law -- for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well.

Our journey is not complete until no citizen is forced to wait for hours to exercise the right to vote.

Our journey is not complete until we find a better way to welcome the striving, hopeful immigrants who still see America as a land of opportunity -- until bright young students and engineers are enlisted in our workforce rather than expelled from our country.

Our journey is not complete until all our children, from the streets of Detroit to the hills of Appalachia, to the quiet lanes of Newtown, know that they are cared for and cherished and always safe from harm.

That is our generation's task: to make these words, these rights, these values of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness real for every American. Being true to our founding documents does not require us to agree on every contour of life. It

does not mean we all define liberty in exactly the same way or follow the same precise path to happiness. Progress does not compel us to settle centuries-long debates about the role of government for all time, but it does require us to act in our time.

For now decisions are upon us and we cannot afford delay. We cannot mistake absolutism for principle, or substitute spectacle for politics, or treat name-calling as reasoned debate. We must act, knowing that our work will be imperfect. We must act, knowing that today's victories will be only partial and that it will be up to those who stand here in four years and 40 years and 400 years hence to advance the timeless spirit once conferred to us in a spare Philadelphia hall.

My fellow Americans, the oath I have sworn before you today, like the one recited by others who serve in this Capitol, was an oath to God and country, not party or faction. And we must faithfully execute that pledge during the duration of our service. But the words I spoke today are not so different from the oath that is taken each time a soldier signs up for duty or an immigrant realizes her dream. My oath is not so different from the pledge we all make to the flag that waves above and that fills our hearts with pride.

They are the words of citizens and they represent our greatest hope. You and I, as citizens, have the power to set this country's course. You and I, as citizens, have the obligation to shape the debates of our time -- not only with the votes we cast, but with the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideals.

Let us, each of us, now embrace with solemn duty and awesome joy what is our lasting birthright. With common effort and common purpose, with passion and dedication, let us answer the call of history and carry into an uncertain future that precious light of freedom.

Thank you. God bless you.

And may He forever bless these United States of America.



#### **Part IV: *Fourth Presidential State of the Union Address***

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, members of Congress, fellow citizens:  
[Fifty-one years ago, John F. Kennedy declared to this chamber that “the Constitution makes us not rivals for power but partners for progress.” “It is my task,” he said, “to report the State of the Union -- to improve it is the task of us all.”]

Tonight, thanks to the grit and determination of the American people, there is much progress to report. After a decade of grinding war, our brave men and women in uniform are coming home. [After years of grueling recession, our businesses have created over six million new jobs.] We buy more American cars than we have in five years, and less foreign oil than we have in 20. Our housing market is healing, our stock market is rebounding, and consumers, patients, and homeowners enjoy stronger protections than ever before.

[So, together, we have cleared away the rubble of crisis, and we can say with renewed confidence that the State of our Union is stronger.]

But we gather here knowing that there are millions of Americans whose hard work and dedication have not yet been rewarded. Our economy is adding jobs -- but too many people still can't find full-time employment. Corporate profits have skyrocketed to all-time highs -- but for more than a decade, wages and incomes have barely budged.

It is our generation's task, then, to reignite the true engine of America's economic growth -- a rising, thriving middle class.

It is our unfinished task to restore the basic bargain that built this country -- the idea that if you work hard and meet your responsibilities, you can get ahead, no matter where you come from, no matter what you look like, or who you love.

It is our unfinished task to make sure that this government works on behalf of the many, and not just the few; that it encourages free enterprise, rewards individual initiative, and opens the doors of opportunity to every child across this great nation.

The American people don't expect government to solve every problem. They don't expect those of us in this chamber to agree on every issue. But they do expect us to put the nation's interests before party. They do expect us to forge

reasonable compromise where we can. For they know that America moves forward only when we do so together, and that the responsibility of improving this union remains the task of us all.

Our work must begin by making some basic decisions about our budget -- decisions that will have a huge impact on the strength of our recovery.

[Over the last few years, both parties have worked together to reduce the deficit by more than \$2.5 trillion -- mostly through spending cuts, but also by raising tax rates on the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans.] As a result, we are more than halfway towards the goal of \$4 trillion in deficit reduction that economists say we need to stabilize our finances.

Now we need to finish the job. And the question is, how?

[In 2011, Congress passed a law saying that if both parties couldn't agree on a plan to reach our deficit goal, about a trillion dollars' worth of budget cuts would automatically go into effect this year.] These sudden, harsh, arbitrary cuts would jeopardize our military readiness.

They'd devastate priorities like education, and energy, and medical research. They would certainly slow our recovery, and cost us hundreds of thousands of jobs. That's why Democrats, Republicans, business leaders, and economists have already said that these cuts, known here in Washington as the sequester, are a really bad idea.

Now, some in Congress have proposed preventing only the defense cuts by making even bigger cuts to things like education and job training, Medicare and Social Security benefits. That idea is even worse.

Yes, the biggest driver of our long-term debt is the rising cost of health care for an aging population. And those of us who care deeply about programs like Medicare must embrace the need for modest reforms -- otherwise, our retirement programs will crowd out the investments we need for our children, and jeopardize the promise of a secure retirement for future generations.

But we can't ask senior citizens and working families to shoulder the entire burden of deficit reduction while asking nothing more from the wealthiest and the most powerful. We won't grow the middle class simply by shifting the cost of health care or college onto families that are already struggling, or by forcing communities to lay off more teachers and more cops and more firefighters. Most

Americans -- Democrats, Republicans, and independents -- understand that we can't just cut our way to prosperity. They know that broad-based economic growth requires a balanced approach to deficit reduction, with spending cuts and revenue, and with everybody doing their fair share. And that's the approach I offer tonight.

On Medicare, I'm prepared to enact reforms that will achieve the same amount of health care savings by the beginning of the next decade as the reforms proposed by the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles commission.

Already, the Affordable Care Act is helping to slow the growth of health care costs. And the reforms I'm proposing go even further. We'll reduce taxpayer subsidies to prescription drug companies and ask more from the wealthiest seniors. We'll bring down costs by changing the way our government pays for Medicare, because our medical bills shouldn't be based on the number of tests ordered or days spent in the hospital; they should be based on the quality of care that our seniors receive. And I am open to additional reforms from both parties, so long as they don't violate the guarantee of a secure retirement. Our government shouldn't make promises we cannot keep -- but we must keep the promises we've already made.

To hit the rest of our deficit reduction target, we should do what leaders in both parties have already suggested, and save hundreds of billions of dollars by getting rid of tax loopholes and deductions for the well-off and the well-connected. After all, why would we choose to make deeper cuts to education and Medicare just to protect special interest tax breaks? How is that fair? Why is it that deficit reduction is a big emergency justifying making cuts in Social Security benefits but not closing some loopholes? How does that promote growth?

Now is our best chance for bipartisan, comprehensive tax reform that encourages job creation and helps bring down the deficit. We can get this done. The American people deserve a tax code that helps small businesses spend less time filling out complicated forms, and more time expanding and hiring -- a tax code that ensures billionaires with high-powered accountants can't work the system and pay a lower rate than their hardworking secretaries; a tax code that lowers incentives to move jobs overseas, and lowers tax rates for businesses and manufacturers that are creating jobs right here in the United States of America. That's what tax reform can deliver. That's what we can do together.

I realize that tax reform and entitlement reform will not be easy. The politics will be hard for both sides. None of us will get 100 percent of what we want. But the

alternative will cost us jobs, hurt our economy, visit hardship on millions of hardworking Americans. So let's set party interests aside and work to pass a budget that replaces reckless cuts with smart savings and wise investments in our future.

And let's do it without the brinksmanship that stresses consumers and scares off investors. The greatest nation on Earth cannot keep conducting its business by drifting from one manufactured crisis to the next. We can't do it.

Let's agree right here, right now to keep the people's government open, and pay our bills on time, and always uphold the full faith and credit of the United States of America. [The American people have *worked too hard, for too long, rebuilding from one crisis to see their elected officials cause another.*]

Now, most of us agree that a plan to reduce the deficit must be part of our agenda. But let's be clear, deficit reduction alone is not an economic plan. A growing economy that creates good, middle-class jobs -- that must be the North Star that guides our efforts. Every day, we should ask ourselves three questions as a nation: How do we attract more jobs to our shores? How do we equip our people with the skills they need to get those jobs? And how do we make sure that hard work leads to a decent living?

[A year and a half ago, I put forward an American Jobs Act that independent economists said would create more than 1 million new jobs. And I thank the last Congress for passing some of that agenda.] I urge this Congress to pass the rest. But tonight, I'll lay out additional proposals that are fully paid for and fully consistent with the budget framework both parties agreed to just 18 months ago. Let me repeat -- nothing I'm proposing tonight should increase our deficit by a single dime. It is not a bigger government we need, but a smarter government that sets priorities and invests in broad-based growth. That's what we should be looking for.

Our first priority is making America a magnet for new jobs and manufacturing. [After shedding jobs for more than 10 years, our manufacturers have added about 500,000 jobs over the past three.] Caterpillar is bringing jobs back from Japan. Ford is bringing jobs back from Mexico. And this year, Apple will start making Macs in America again.

There are things we can do, right now, to accelerate this trend. [Last year, [we created our first manufacturing innovation institute in Youngstown, Ohio.](#)] A once-shuttered warehouse is now a state-of-the art lab where new workers are mastering the 3D printing that has the potential to revolutionize the way we make almost everything. There's no reason this can't happen in other towns.

So tonight, I'm announcing the launch of three more of these manufacturing hubs, where businesses will partner with the Department of Defense and Energy to turn regions left behind by globalization into global centers of high-tech jobs. And I ask this Congress to help create a network of 15 of these hubs and guarantee that the next revolution in manufacturing is made right here in America. We can get that done.

Now, if we want to make the best products, we also have to invest in the best ideas. [[Every dollar we invested to map the human genome returned \\$140 to our economy](#) -- every dollar.]

Today, our scientists are mapping the human brain to unlock the answers to Alzheimer's. They're developing drugs to regenerate damaged organs; devising new material to make batteries 10 times more powerful. Now is not the time to gut these job-creating investments in science and innovation. Now is the time to reach a level of research and development not seen since the height of the Space Race. We need to make those investments.

Today, no area holds more promise than our investments in American energy. After years of talking about it, we're finally poised to control our own energy future. We produce more oil at home than we have in 15 years. [We have doubled the distance our cars will go on a gallon of gas, and the amount of renewable energy we generate from sources like wind and solar -- [with tens of thousands of good American jobs to show for it.](#)] We produce more natural gas than ever before -- and nearly everyone's energy bill is lower because of it. [And over the last four years, [our emissions of the dangerous carbon pollution that threatens our planet have actually fallen.](#)]

But for the sake of our children and our future, we must do more to combat climate change. Now, it's true that no single event makes a trend. But the fact is the 12 hottest years on record have all come in the last 15. Heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods -- all are now more frequent and more intense. We can choose to believe that Superstorm Sandy, and the most severe drought in decades, and the worst wildfires some states have ever seen were all just a freak coincidence. Or

we can choose to believe in the overwhelming judgment of science -- and act before it's too late.

Now, the good news is we can make meaningful progress on this issue while driving strong economic growth. I urge this Congress to get together, pursue a bipartisan, market-based solution to climate change, like the one John McCain and Joe Lieberman worked on together a few years ago. But if Congress won't act soon to protect future generations, I will. I will direct my Cabinet to come up with executive actions we can take, now and in the future, to reduce pollution, prepare our communities for the consequences of climate change, and speed the transition to more sustainable sources of energy.

[Four years ago, other countries dominated the clean energy market and the jobs that came with it. And we've begun to change that. Last year, wind energy added nearly half of all new power capacity in America.] So let's generate even more. Solar energy gets cheaper by the year -- let's drive down costs even further. As long as countries like China keep going all in on clean energy, so must we.

Now, in the meantime, the natural gas boom has led to cleaner power and greater energy independence. We need to encourage that. And that's why my administration will keep cutting red tape and speeding up new oil and gas permits. That's got to be part of an all-of-the-above plan. But I also want to work with this Congress to encourage the research and technology that helps natural gas burn even cleaner and protects our air and our water.

In fact, much of our new-found energy is drawn from lands and waters that we, the public, own together. So tonight, I propose we use some of our oil and gas revenues to fund an Energy Security Trust that will drive new research and technology to shift our cars and trucks off oil for good. If a nonpartisan coalition of CEOs and retired generals and admirals can get behind this idea, then so can we. Let's take their advice and free our families and businesses from the painful spikes in gas prices we've put up with for far too long.

I'm also issuing a new goal for America: Let's cut in half the energy wasted by our homes and businesses over the next 20 years. We'll work with the states to do it. Those states with the best ideas to create jobs and lower energy bills by constructing more efficient buildings will receive federal support to help make that happen.

America's energy sector is just one part of an aging infrastructure badly in need of repair. Ask any CEO where they'd rather locate and hire -- a country with

deteriorating roads and bridges, or one with high-speed rail and Internet; high-tech schools, self-healing power grids. [[The CEO of Siemens America](#) -- a company that brought hundreds of new jobs to North Carolina -- [said that if we upgrade our infrastructure, they'll bring even more jobs.](#)] And that's the attitude of a lot of companies all around the world. And I know you want these job-creating projects in your district. I've seen all those ribbon-cuttings.

So tonight, I propose a "Fix-It-First" program to put people to work as soon as possible on our most urgent repairs, like the nearly 70,000 structurally deficient bridges across the country. And to make sure taxpayers don't shoulder the whole burden, I'm also proposing a Partnership to Rebuild America that attracts private capital to upgrade what our businesses need most: modern ports to move our goods, modern pipelines to withstand a storm, modern schools worthy of our children. Let's prove that there's no better place to do business than here in the United States of America, and let's start right away. We can get this done.

And part of our rebuilding effort must also involve our housing sector. The good news is our housing market is finally healing from the collapse of 2007. Home prices are rising at the fastest pace in six years. Home purchases are up nearly 50 percent, and construction is expanding again.

But even with mortgage rates near a 50-year low, too many families with solid credit who want to buy a home are being rejected. Too many families who never missed a payment and want to refinance are being told no. That's holding our entire economy back. We need to fix it.

Right now, there's a bill in this Congress that would give every responsible homeowner in America the chance to save \$3,000 a year by refinancing at today's rates. Democrats and Republicans have supported it before, so what are we waiting for? Take a vote, and send me that bill.

Why would we be against that? Why would that be a partisan issue, helping folks refinance? Right now, overlapping regulations keep responsible young families from buying their first home. What's holding us back? Let's streamline the process, and help our economy grow.

These initiatives in manufacturing, energy, infrastructure, housing -- all these things will help entrepreneurs and small business owners expand and create new jobs. But none of it will matter unless we also equip our citizens with the skills and training to fill those jobs.

And that has to start at the earliest possible age. Study after study shows that the sooner a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road. But today, fewer than 3 in 10 four year-olds are enrolled in a high-quality preschool program. Most middle-class parents can't afford a few hundred bucks a week for a private preschool. And for poor kids who need help the most, this lack of access to preschool education can shadow them for the rest of their lives. So tonight, I propose working with states to make high-quality preschool available to every single child in America. That's something we should be able to do.

Every dollar we invest in high-quality early childhood education can save more than seven dollars later on -- by boosting graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancy, even reducing violent crime. In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children, like Georgia or Oklahoma, studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind. Let's give our kids that chance.

Let's also make sure that a high school diploma puts our kids on a path to a good job. Right now, countries like Germany focus on graduating their high school students with the equivalent of a technical degree from one of our community colleges. So those German kids, they're ready for a job when they graduate high school. They've been trained for the jobs that are there. Now at schools like P-Tech in Brooklyn, a collaboration between New York Public Schools and City University of New York and IBM, students will graduate with a high school diploma and an associate's degree in computers or engineering.

We need to give every American student opportunities like this.

[And four years ago, we started *Race to the Top* -- a competition that convinced almost every state to develop smarter curricula and higher standards, all for about 1 percent of what we spend on education each year.] Tonight, I'm announcing a new challenge to redesign America's high schools so they better equip graduates for the demands of a high-tech economy. And we'll reward schools that develop new partnerships with colleges and employers, and create classes that focus on science, technology, engineering and math -- the skills today's employers are looking for to fill the jobs that are there right now and will be there in the future.

Now, even with better high schools, most young people will need some higher education. It's a simple fact the more education you've got, the more likely you are to have a good job and work your way into the middle class. But today,



skyrocketing costs price too many young people out of a higher education, or saddle them with unsustainable debt.

Through tax credits, grants and better loans, we've made college more affordable for millions of students and families over the last few years. But taxpayers can't keep on subsidizing higher and higher and higher costs for higher education. Colleges must do their part to keep costs down, and it's our job to make sure that they do.

So tonight, I ask Congress to change the Higher Education Act so that affordability and value are included in determining which colleges receive certain types of federal aid. And tomorrow, my administration will release a new "College Scorecard" that parents and students can use to compare schools based on a simple criteria -- where you can get the most bang for your educational buck.

Now, to grow our middle class, our citizens have to have access to the education and training that today's jobs require. But we also have to make sure that America remains a place where everyone who's willing to work -- everybody who's willing to work hard has the chance to get ahead.

Our economy is stronger when we harness the talents and ingenuity of striving, hopeful immigrants. And right now, leaders from the business, labor, law enforcement, faith communities -- they all agree that the time has come to pass comprehensive immigration reform. Now is the time to do it. Now is the time to get it done. Now is the time to get it done.

Real reform means strong border security, and we can build on the progress my administration has already made -- putting more boots on the Southern border than at any time in our history and reducing illegal crossings to their lowest levels in 40 years.

Real reform means establishing a responsible pathway to earned citizenship -- a path that includes passing a background check, paying taxes and a meaningful penalty, learning English, and going to the back of the line behind the folks trying to come here legally.

And real reform means fixing the legal immigration system to cut waiting periods and attract the highly-skilled entrepreneurs and engineers that will help create jobs and grow our economy.

In other words, we know what needs to be done. And as we speak, bipartisan groups in both chambers are working diligently to draft a bill, and I applaud their efforts. So let's get this done. Send me a comprehensive immigration reform bill in the next few months, and I will sign it right away. And America will be better for it. Let's get it done. Let's get it done.

But we can't stop there. We know our economy is stronger when our wives, our mothers, our daughters can live their lives free from discrimination in the workplace, and free from the fear of domestic violence. [Today, [the Senate passed the Violence Against Women Act that Joe Biden originally wrote almost 20 years ago.](#)] And I now urge the House to do the same. Good job, Joe. And I ask this Congress to declare that women should earn a living equal to their efforts, and finally pass the Paycheck Fairness Act this year.

We know our economy is stronger when we reward an honest day's work with honest wages. But today, a full-time worker making the minimum wage earns \$14,500 a year. Even with the tax relief we put in place, a family with two kids that earns the minimum wage still lives below the poverty line. That's wrong. That's why, since the last time this Congress raised the minimum wage, 19 states have chosen to bump theirs even higher.

Tonight, let's declare that in the wealthiest nation on Earth, no one who works full-time should have to live in poverty, and raise the federal minimum wage to \$9.00 an hour. We should be able to get that done.

This single step would raise the incomes of millions of working families. It could mean the difference between groceries or the food bank; rent or eviction; scraping by or finally getting ahead. For businesses across the country, it would mean customers with more money in their pockets. And a whole lot of folks out there would probably need less help from government.

In fact, working folks shouldn't have to wait year after year for the minimum wage to go up while CEO pay has never been higher. So here's an idea that Governor Romney and I actually agreed on last year -- let's tie the minimum wage to the cost of living, so that it finally becomes a wage you can live on.

Tonight, let's also recognize that there are communities in this country where no matter how hard you work, it is virtually impossible to get ahead. Factory towns decimated from years of plants packing up. Inescapable pockets of poverty, urban and rural, where young adults are still fighting for their first job. America is not a place where the chance of birth or circumstance should decide our destiny. And

that's why we need to build new ladders of opportunity into the middle class for all who are willing to climb them.

Let's offer incentives to companies that hire Americans who've got what it takes to fill that job opening, but have been out of work so long that no one will give them a chance anymore. Let's put people back to work rebuilding vacant homes in run-down neighborhoods. And this year, my administration will begin to partner with 20 of the hardest-hit towns in America to get these communities back on their feet. We'll work with local leaders to target resources at public safety, and education, and housing.

We'll give new tax credits to businesses that hire and invest. And we'll work to strengthen families by removing the financial deterrents to marriage for low-income couples, and do more to encourage fatherhood -- because what makes you a man isn't the ability to conceive a child; it's having the courage to raise one. And we want to encourage that. We want to help that.

Stronger families. Stronger communities. A stronger America. It is this kind of prosperity -- broad, shared, built on a thriving middle class -- that has always been the source of our progress at home. It's also the foundation of our power and influence throughout the world.

Tonight, we stand united in saluting the troops and civilians who sacrifice every day to protect us. Because of them, we can say with confidence that America will complete its mission in Afghanistan and achieve our objective of defeating the core of al Qaeda.

[Already, [we have brought home 33,000 of our brave servicemen and women.](#)]

This spring, our forces will move into a support role, while Afghan security forces take the lead. Tonight, I can announce that over the next year, another 34,000 American troops will come home from Afghanistan. This drawdown will continue and by the end of next year, our war in Afghanistan will be over.

Beyond 2014, America's commitment to a unified and sovereign Afghanistan will endure, but the nature of our commitment will change. We're negotiating an agreement with the Afghan government that focuses on two missions -- training and equipping Afghan forces so that the country does not again slip into chaos, and counterterrorism efforts that allow us to pursue the remnants of al Qaeda and their affiliates.

Today, the organization that attacked us on 9/11 is a shadow of its former self. It's true, different al Qaeda affiliates and extremist groups have emerged -- from the Arabian Peninsula to Africa. The threat these groups pose is evolving. But to meet this threat, we don't need to send tens of thousands of our sons and daughters abroad or occupy other nations. Instead, we'll need to help countries like Yemen, and Libya, and Somalia provide for their own security, and help allies who take the fight to terrorists, as we have in Mali. And where necessary, through a range of capabilities, we will continue to take direct action against those terrorists who pose the gravest threat to Americans.

Now, as we do, we must enlist our values in the fight. That's why my administration has worked tirelessly to forge a durable legal and policy framework to guide our counterterrorism efforts. Throughout, we have kept Congress fully informed of our efforts. I recognize that in our democracy, no one should just take my word for it that we're doing things the right way.

So in the months ahead, I will continue to engage Congress to ensure not only that our targeting, detention and prosecution of terrorists remains consistent with our laws and system of checks and balances, but that our efforts are even more transparent to the American people and to the world.

Of course, our challenges don't end with al Qaeda. America will continue to lead the effort to prevent the spread of the world's most dangerous weapons. The regime in North Korea must know they will only achieve security and prosperity by meeting their international obligations.

Provocations of the sort we saw last night will only further isolate them, as we stand by our allies, strengthen our own missile defense and lead the world in taking firm action in response to these threats.

Likewise, the leaders of Iran must recognize that now is the time for a diplomatic solution, because a coalition stands united in demanding that they meet their obligations, and we will do what is necessary to prevent them from getting a nuclear weapon.

At the same time, we'll engage Russia to seek further reductions in our nuclear arsenals, and continue leading the global effort to secure nuclear materials that could fall into the wrong hands -- because our ability to influence others depends on our willingness to lead and meet our obligations.

America must also face the rapidly growing threat from cyber-attacks. Now, we know hackers steal people's identities and infiltrate private emails. We know foreign countries and companies swipe our corporate secrets. Now our enemies are also seeking the ability to sabotage our power grid, our financial institutions, our air traffic control systems. We cannot look back years from now and wonder why we did nothing in the face of real threats to our security and our economy. [And that's why, earlier today, I signed a new executive order that will strengthen our cyber defenses by increasing information sharing, and developing standards to protect our national security, our jobs, and our privacy.]

But now Congress must act as well, by passing legislation to give our government a greater capacity to secure our networks and deter attacks. This is something we should be able to get done on a bipartisan basis.

Now, even as we protect our people, we should remember that today's world presents not just dangers, not just threats, it presents opportunities. To boost American exports, support American jobs and level the playing field in the growing markets of Asia, we intend to complete negotiations on a Trans-Pacific Partnership. And tonight, I'm announcing that we will launch talks on a comprehensive Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the European Union -- because trade that is fair and free across the Atlantic supports millions of good-paying American jobs.

We also know that progress in the most impoverished parts of our world enriches us all -- not only because it creates new markets, more stable order in certain regions of the world, but also because it's the right thing to do. In many places, people live on little more than a dollar a day. So the United States will join with our allies to eradicate such extreme poverty in the next two decades by connecting more people to the global economy; by empowering women; by giving our young and brightest minds new opportunities to serve, and helping communities to feed, and power, and educate themselves; by saving the world's children from preventable deaths; and by realizing the promise of an AIDS-free generation, which is within our reach.

You see, America must remain a beacon to all who seek freedom during this period of historic change. [I saw the power of hope last year in Rangoon, in Burma, when Aung San Suu Kyi welcomed an American President into the home where she had been imprisoned for years; when thousands of Burmese lined the streets, waving American flags, including a man who said, "There is justice and law in the United States. I want our country to be like that."]

In defense of freedom, we'll remain the anchor of strong alliances from the Americas to Africa; from Europe to Asia. In the Middle East, we will stand with citizens as they demand their universal rights, and support stable transitions to democracy.

We know the process will be messy, and we cannot presume to dictate the course of change in countries like Egypt, but we can -- and will -- insist on respect for the fundamental rights of all people. We'll keep the pressure on a Syrian regime that has murdered its own people, and support opposition leaders that respect the rights of every Syrian. And we will stand steadfast with Israel in pursuit of security and a lasting peace.

These are the messages I'll deliver when I travel to the Middle East next month. And all this work depends on the courage and sacrifice of those who serve in dangerous places at great personal risk -- our diplomats, our intelligence officers, and the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. As long as I'm Commander-in-Chief, we will do whatever we must to protect those who serve their country abroad, and we will maintain the best military the world has ever known.

We'll invest in new capabilities, even as we reduce waste and wartime spending. We will ensure equal treatment for all servicemembers, and equal benefits for their families -- gay and straight. We will draw upon the courage and skills of our sisters and daughters and moms, because women have proven under fire that they are ready for combat.

We will keep faith with our veterans, investing in world-class care, including mental health care, for our wounded warriors -- supporting our military families; giving our veterans the benefits and education and job opportunities that they have earned. And I want to thank my wife, Michelle, and Dr. Jill Biden for their continued dedication to serving our military families as well as they have served us. Thank you, honey. Thank you, Jill.

Defending our freedom, though, is not just the job of our military alone. We must all do our part to make sure our God-given rights are protected here at home. That includes one of the most fundamental right of a democracy: the right to vote. When any American, no matter where they live or what their party, are denied that right because they can't afford to wait for five or six or seven hours just to cast their ballot, we are betraying our ideals.

So tonight, I'm announcing a nonpartisan commission to improve the voting experience in America.

And it definitely needs improvement. I'm asking two long-time experts in the field -- who, by the way, recently served as the top attorneys for my campaign and for Governor Romney's campaign -- to lead it. We can fix this, and we will. The American people demand it, and so does our democracy.

Of course, what I've said tonight matters little if we don't come together to protect our most precious resource: our children. It has been two months since Newtown. I know this is not the first time this country has debated how to reduce gun violence. But this time is different.

Overwhelming majorities of Americans -- Americans who believe in the Second Amendment - - have come together around common-sense reform, like background checks that will make it harder for criminals to get their hands on a gun. Senators of both parties are working together on tough new laws to prevent anyone from buying guns for resale to criminals.

Police chiefs are asking our help to get weapons of war and massive ammunition magazines off our streets, because these police chiefs, they're tired of seeing their guys and gals being outgunned.

Each of these proposals deserves a vote in Congress. Now, if you want to vote no, that's your choice. But these proposals deserve a vote. Because in the two months since Newtown, more than a thousand birthdays, graduations, anniversaries have been stolen from our lives by a bullet from a gun -- more than a thousand.

[One of those we lost was a young girl named **Hadiya Pendleton**. She was 15 years old. She loved Fig Newtons and lip gloss. She was a majorette. She was so good to her friends they all thought they were her best friend. Just three weeks ago, she was here, in Washington, with her classmates, performing for her country at my inauguration. And a week later, [she was shot and killed in a Chicago park after school, just a mile away from my house.](#)]

Hadiya's parents, Nate and Cleo, are in this chamber tonight, along with more than two dozen Americans whose lives have been torn apart by gun violence. They deserve a vote. They deserve a vote. Gabby Giffords deserves a vote. The families of Newtown deserve a vote.

The families of Aurora deserve a vote. The families of Oak Creek and Tucson and Blacksburg, and the countless other communities ripped open by gun violence — they deserve a simple vote. They deserve a simple vote.

Our actions will not prevent every senseless act of violence in this country. In fact, no laws, no initiatives, no administrative acts will perfectly solve all the challenges I've outlined tonight. But we were never sent here to be perfect. We were sent here to make what difference we can, to secure this nation, expand opportunity, uphold our ideals through the hard, often frustrating, but absolutely necessary work of self-government.

We were sent here to look out for our fellow Americans the same way they look out for one another, every single day, usually without fanfare, all across this country. We should follow their example.

We should follow the example of a New York City nurse named Menchu Sanchez. [When Hurricane Sandy plunged her hospital into darkness, she wasn't thinking about how her own home was faring. Her mind was on the 20 precious newborns in her care and the rescue plan she devised that kept them all safe.]

We should follow the example of a North Miami woman named Desiline Victor. [When **Desiline** arrived at her polling place, she was told the wait to vote might be six hours. And as time ticked by, her concern was not with her tired body or aching feet, but whether folks like her would get to have their say. And hour after hour, a throng of people stayed in line to support her -- because Desiline is 102 years old. And they erupted in cheers when she finally put on a sticker that read, "I voted."]

We should follow the example of a police officer named Brian Murphy. [When a gunman opened fire on a Sikh temple in Wisconsin and **Brian** was the first to arrive, he did not consider his own safety. He fought back until help arrived and ordered his fellow officers to protect the safety of the Americans worshipping inside, even as he lay bleeding from 12 bullet wounds. And when asked how he did that, Brian said, "*That's just the way we're made.*"]

That's just the way we're made. We may do different jobs and wear different uniforms, and hold different views than the person beside us. But as Americans, we all share the same proud title -- we are citizens. It's a word that doesn't just describe our nationality or legal status. It describes the way we're made. It describes what we believe. It captures the enduring idea that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another and to future



generations, that our rights are wrapped up in the rights of others; and that well into our third century as a nation, it remains the task of us all, as citizens of these United States, to be the authors of the next great chapter of our American story.

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