



Michelle Obama

*Democratic National Convention Address*



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**AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED:** Text version below transcribed directly from audio

As you might imagine, for Barack, running for President is nothing compared to that first game of basketball with my brother Craig.

I can't tell you how much it means to have Craig and my mom here tonight. Like Craig, I can feel my dad looking down on us, just as I've felt his presence in every grace-filled moment of my life.

And at six-foot-six, I've often felt like Craig was looking down on me, too -- literally. But the truth is, both when we were kids and today, Craig wasn't looking down on me; he was watching over me. And he has been there for me every step of the way since that clear day, February, 19 months ago, when, with little more than our faith in each other and a hunger for change, we joined my husband, Barack Obama, on the improbable journey that has led us to this moment.

But each of us comes here also by way of our own improbable journey. I come here tonight as a sister, blessed with a brother who is my mentor, my protector, and my lifelong friend. And I come here as a wife who loves my husband and believes he will be an extraordinary President.

And I come here as a mom whose girls are the heart of my heart and the center of my world. They're the first things I think about when I wake up in the morning and the last thing I think about before I go to bed at night. Their future -- and all our children's future -- is my stake in this election.



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And I come here as a daughter, raised on the South Side of Chicago by a father who was a blue-collar city worker and a mother who stayed at home with my brother and me. My mother's love has always been a sustaining force for our family, and one of my greatest joys is seeing her integrity, her compassion, her intelligence reflected in my daughters.

My dad was our rock.

And although he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in his early 30s, he was our provider. He was our champion, our hero. But as he got sicker, it got harder for him to walk, took him longer to get dressed in the morning, you know. But if he was in pain, he never let on. He never stopped smiling and laughing, even while struggling to button his shirt, even while using two canes to get himself across the room to give my mom a kiss. He just woke up a little earlier and he worked a little harder.

He and my mom poured everything they had into me and Craig. It was the greatest gift a child could receive, never doubting for a single minute that you're loved and cherished and have a place in this world. And thanks to their faith and their hard work, we both were able to go to college. So I know firsthand, from their lives and mine, that the American Dream endures.

And you know, what struck me when I first met Barack was that even though he had this funny name, and even though he had grown up all the way across the continent in Hawaii, his family was so much like mine. He was raised by grandparents who were working-class folks just like my parents, and by a single mother who struggled to pay the bills just like we did. And like my family, they scrimped and saved so that he could have opportunities that they never had for themselves.

And Barack and I were raised with so many of the same values, like you work hard for what you want in life; that your word is your bond; that you do what you say you're going to do; that you treat people with dignity and respect, even if you don't know them and even if you don't agree with them.

And Barack and I set out to build lives guided by these values and to pass them on to the next generation, because we want our children and all children in this nation to know that the only limit to the height of your achievements is the reach of your dreams and your willingness to work hard for them.

And as our friendship grew and I learned more about Barack, he introduced me to the work that he'd done when he first moved to Chicago after college. You see, instead of heading to Wall Street, Barack went to work in neighborhoods that had been devastated by the closing of steel plants. Jobs dried up. And Barack was invited back to speak to people from those neighborhoods about how to rebuild their community.



And the people gathered there together that day were ordinary folks doing the best they could to build a good life. See, they were parents trying to get by from paycheck to paycheck; grandparents trying to get it together on a fixed income; men frustrated that they couldn't support their families after jobs had disappeared. You see, those folks weren't asking for a handout or a shortcut. See, they were ready to work. They wanted to contribute. They believed, like you and I believe, that America should be a place where you can make it if you try.

And Barack stood up that day, and he spoke words that have stayed with me ever since. He talked about the world as it is and the world as it should be. And he said that all too often we accept the distance between the two, and we settle for the world as it is, even when it doesn't reflect our values and aspirations.

But he reminded us that we also know what the world should look like. He said we know what fairness and justice and opportunity look like, and he urged us to believe in ourselves, to find the strength within ourselves to strive for the world as it should be. And isn't that the great American story?

It's the story of men and women gathered in churches and union halls, in high school gyms, and people who stood up and marched and risked everything they had, refusing to settle, determined to mold our future into the shape of our ideals. And it's because of their will and determination that this week we celebrate two anniversaries: the 88th anniversary of women winning the right to vote -- and the 45th anniversary of that hot summer day when Dr. King lifted our sights and our hearts with his dream for our nation.

And I stand here today at the crosscurrents of that history, knowing that my piece of the American dream is a blessing hard-won by those who came before me, all of them driven by the same conviction that drove my dad to get up an hour early each day to painstakingly dress himself for work, the same conviction that drives the men and women I've met all across this country:

People who work the day shift, then kiss their kids good night and head out for the night shift without disappointment, without regret. See, that good-night kiss is a reminder of everything they're working for.

The military families who say grace each night with an empty seat at the table.

The servicemen and women who love this country so much, they leave those they love most to defend it.

The young people across America serving our communities, teaching children, cleaning up neighborhoods, caring for the least among us, each and every day.

People like Hillary Clinton -- who put those 18 million cracks in that glass ceiling so that our daughters and our sons can dream a little bigger and aim a little higher.



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People like Joe Biden -- who has never forgotten where he came from and never stopped fighting for folks who work long hours and face long odds and need someone on their side again.

All of us driven by the simple belief that the world as it is just won't do; that we have an obligation to fight for the world as it should be.

And that is the thread that connects our hearts. That is the thread that runs through my journey and Barack's journey and so many other improbable journeys that have brought us here tonight, where the current of history meets this new tide of hope. And you see, that is why I love this country.

And in my own life, in my own small way, I have tried to give back to this country that has given me so much. See, that's why I left a job at a big law firm for a career in public service, working to empower young people to volunteer in their communities, because I believe that each of us -- no matter what our age or background or our walk in life -- each of us has something to contribute to the life of this nation.

And it's a belief Barack shares, a belief at the heart of his life's work. See, it's what he did all those years ago in Chicago, setting up job training to get people back to work and after-school programs to keep kids safe; working block by block to help people lift up their families. It's what he did in the Illinois Senate, moving people from welfare to jobs, passing tax cuts for hardworking families, and making sure women get equal pay for equal work. It's what he's done in the United States Senate, fighting to ensure that the men and women who serve this country are welcomed home not just with medals and parades, but with good jobs and benefits and health care, including mental health care.

See, that's why Barack's running: to end the war in Iraq responsibly; to build an economy that lifts every family; to make sure health care is available for every American; and to make sure that every single child in this nation has a world-class education all the way from preschool to college. That's what Barack Obama will do as President of the United States of America.

He'll achieve these goals the same way he always has: by bringing us together and reminding us how much we share and how alike we really are. You see, Barack doesn't care where you're from or what your background is or what party, if any, you belong to. See, that's just not how he sees the world. He knows that thread that connects us: our belief in America's promise, our commitment to our children's future -- he knows that that thread is strong enough to hold us together as one nation even when we disagree.

It was strong enough to bring hope to those neighborhoods in Chicago. It was strong enough to bring hope to the mother he met who was worried about her child in Iraq; hope to the man who's unemployed and can't afford gas to find a job; hope to the student working nights to pay for her sister's health care, sleeping just a few hours a day.



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And it was strong enough to bring hope to people who came out on a cold Iowa night -- and became the first voices in this chorus for change that has been echoed by millions of Americans from every corner of this nation -- millions of Americans who know that Barack understands their dreams; millions of Americans who know that Barack will fight for people like them and that Barack will bring finally the change that we need.

And in the end, after all that's happened these past 19 months, see, the Barack Obama I know today is the same man I fell in love with 19 years ago. He's the same man who drove me and our new baby daughter home from the hospital 10 years ago this summer, inching along at a snail's pace, peering at us anxiously through the rear-view mirror, feeling the whole weight of her future in his hands, determined to give her everything he'd struggled so hard for himself, determined to give her something he never had: the affirming embrace of a father's love.

And as I tuck that little girl and her little sister into bed at night, you see, I think about how one day, they'll have families of their own and how one day, they -- and your sons and daughters -- will tell their own children about what we did together in this election. They'll tell them how this time, we listened to our hopes instead of our fears; how this time, we decided to stop doubting and to start dreaming; how this time, in this great country -- where a girl from the South Side of Chicago can go to college and law school, and the son of a single mother from Hawaii can go all the way to the White House -- that we committed ourselves to building the world as it should be.

So tonight, in honor of my father's memory and my daughters' future, out of gratitude for those whose triumphs we mark this week and those whose everyday sacrifices have brought us to this moment, let us devote ourselves to finishing their work; let us work together to fulfill their hopes; and let's stand together to elect Barack Obama President of the United States of America.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless America.