

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

REVEREND AL SHARPTON  
*OBAMA: IN PURSUIT OF A MORE PERFECT UNION*  
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

**Reverend Al Sharpton**  
**President, National Action Network**  
**October 18, 2018**  
**Interviewed by Peter Kunhardt**  
**Total Running Time: 39 minutes and 28 seconds**

START TC: 01:00:00:00

CREW:

Reverend Al Sharpton interview, take one, marker.

ON-SCREEN TEXT:

Al Sharpton

President, National Action Network

## **Meeting Obama**

01:00:13:17

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

I think I first met him when he was running for Senator. I had known of him when he ran for Congress and was defeated by Congressman Bobby Rush. But my first memory of him was, he was running for the US Senate and both of us were in the Bud Billiken Day Parade, which is a major African American day in the city of Chicago.

## ***Dreams from My Father***

01:00:47:05

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

When I read his book, I came to understand that he had a particular Black experience that was not unfamiliar to me. A lot of people in the civil rights community came from the south. I came from the north. Being that I was born and raised in New York, I knew a lot of people that had come from the Caribbean, come from Africa, and that had had these kinds of experiences with a father with an American mother, some even interracial, so it was easier for me to relate than some of those that I grew up under in the Civil Rights Movement that only knew Black and white in the south. It wasn't that way in the north where it was just Black and white. There was Black, but there were different kinds of nationalities and ideologies, Black. And there was whites and there was different ethnic groups. Down in the south, you was Black or white. It wasn't that simple for us in the north, and it wasn't that simple for Barack Obama.

### **2004 Democratic National Convention**

01:01:56:18

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

The Black caucus of delegates to the 2004 Democratic Convention had their sessions where they would have various people come in and speak to the several hundred observers and actual Black delegates. And they invited me to speak 'cause I was one of the candidates for President that year, for the Democratic nomination for president, and they invited Mr. Obama. At that time, I think he was a state legislator who was going to keynote the

convention at the invitation of the nominee, John Kerry. And I remember I was coming in and had those that were with me, and Dr. Charles Ogletree of Harvard, who was supporting me for President, he was on my presidential campaign committee and Dr. Ogletree had mentored Michelle Obama and Barack Obama in Harvard. He was walking out with Senator—State Senator then, Obama. And he stopped and he pulled me off as Ogletree would do and he pulled Obama off. He says, “Well, you need to know each other.” And—and Obama kinda cut Ogletree off. He says, “I just want to explain to you, Reverend, that I’m doing the keynote tomorrow night and I’m probably gonna be more expansive and unifying than a lot of people are used to.” And I stopped him then and said, “Don’t worry Senator, you do what you have to do tomorrow night because you have to win for the US Senate. I’m gonna take care of the brothers and sisters tonight.” And he kind of looked at me the way he kind of looks his head and he laughed, kind of smiled and I think that began a relationship where he and I understood that we play different roles but have the same end goals of—of the country. And in that little moment, I think we began what would become a growing understanding of, you gotta respect people for what they do if they do it for good reasons.

01:04:11:07

I had spoken the night before, and he came the next night. So, I was sitting up in one of the box seats, and I had some of the activists with me and they were like, “Well, why wasn’t he talking about voting rights?” and “why isn’t he talking about some of our issues?” And I said, “He’s mentioned all of that.” I understood that he had to deal with a broad range of issues, and that he was running for the US Senate to represent everybody in Illinois, not just a

particular group in Illinois, who was the Black community. I actually got into arguments defending him and then I didn't know him. I just had met him to talk the day before, even though I'd seen him a few times because I would say, "Wait a minute, we cannot fight to get our best to the mainstream and then tell them, don't talk to the mainstream about mainstream issues." It's almost like you want to put him there and handicap them at the same time. And a lot of them felt that the speech wasn't hard enough on our issues. I thought it was a monumental speech for an African American to show that we cannot be unfaithful to our roots, but we are not limited in terms of the expanded view, and he did it beautifully, in my opinion.

**Blackness**

01:06:01:11

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

He was very loudly condemned by some, and in private even more loudly. He wasn't Black enough. He didn't have the slave experience. And people were asking me, "Who're you going to support?" And I said that, "Well, everybody that's my color is not my kind." But the more I talked to him, the more I felt that Barack Obama was authentic. He wouldn't say to me what he knew I wanted to hear. But he said to me what I needed to hear and that was, "I'm gonna take care of everybody, but I'm also gonna take care of the concerns y'all have. But if you're looking for somebody that's going to just tell you brother, this is what—I'm doing it, I'm really faking, I'm not your guy. But I really do believe we can make the country go forward and that our community can get what they want." And I think that is the fight. I would get

all kinds of calls. “You gotta go with Hillary” when he had finally entered the primary. “He didn’t come to somebody’s Black agenda meeting”—and “Hillary is your home state Senator.” Heard all of that and I was not there at first with Obama, but as things started moving—he came to National Action Network’s convention. Hillary had come, everybody had come, Joe Biden, that April 2007. And as things started evolving, the more I talked to him, the more I said that “I think that we need to work with this guy.” And he had always said to me, “I’m not asking you to support me, just don’t hurt me. If you don’t hurt me—I understand the local politics.” And I made up my mind though, I wanted to support him. Not in a way that he looked like he was Al Sharpton, but in a way that we would say that we’re with him because he represents the best alternative, and I didn’t want him to carry the baggage of those that disagreed with me that would join his coalition. And as far as those that felt he wasn’t Black enough; I was ready to deal with them. I was on the radio every day three hours a day. I certainly moved around the country with National Action Network, and I became a real believer and the more I talked to him, the more I believed that he was genuine.

### **Obama’s candidacy**

01:08:42:22

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

When he made the announcement that day, and at the same time in Virginia there was a Black agenda conference that I was there. Certain elements got very angry. And they started attacking him and I was not yet there supporting him, but I defended him and we got into vociferous arguments to

where they turned on me, which didn't bother me at all 'cause I had my own base. And these were academicians, let's face it. They were not leading civil rights groups. And I'm like, "Wait a minute, y'all are talking for the community. Y'all ain't really in the community now, you're talking to me now." We went back and forth, and- and some of us lost friendships. But one of the things I thought about; we elected in 1989 a Black mayor in New York named David Dinkins, and Dinkins was of a different style than us. He would try to—he talked about the gorgeous mosaic, and we were pounding him. You go to too many events. You're running around too much kissing whites behind, and he won, and we were fighting a racial case here, he won by 52,000 votes. And we beat up on him in four years, and he lost by 50,000 some votes. And I made up my mind I was never gonna make that mistake again. When Obama ran for President, the reason I fought a lot of my friends is, I saw the mistake of handcuffing or handicapping people that really can help and do right for us if we would just grow and to understand that that's where we need them. And I found myself arguing with people that have been in the trenches with me and some I knew were not in the trenches that were challenging him 'cause they wanted to get their facetime or because they wanted tickets to the inauguration or whatever it is because they weren't any more in the community than they were arguing, and I felt that it was my responsibility to be true to the cause. What really was gonna help the cause? Putting a guy like this in the White House if we could help do that and not get in the way or playing to the—what my pastor used to call "the cheap seats" of just rah, rah, rah, and we end up with nothing.

**Supporting Obama**

01:11:12:03

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

I met with Valerie Jarrett, and we talked about how I was going to be discreet but effective in terms of talking to the base, my radio base, my—touring churches, and the fact that I had a certain kind of- of gravitas in movement image that would say, “No, he’s Black enough.” I did not want the issue to become any of us, and we cemented in that relationship and every time an issue would rise, I would call Valerie or Valerie would call me and I’d say, “I got it.” And I would handle it either on radio or calling somebody or dealing with somebody. We started getting crises. Jeremiah Wright issue, Reverend Jackson, who was a mentor of mine. And I—I was—already had cemented this relationship before they became an issue, which made me someone that became—that could counter some of the negativism that would come in the Black community. So, when a very painful thing for President Obama was dealing with his pastor, very painful. And it was very painful to the community because people were angry because they were trying to act like he threw his pastor in front of the bus, and I dealt with that by saying as one who respected Jeremiah Wright all my life, that there is a difference between those that are in the prophetic tradition and those that are seeking elected office, and he’s not throwing anybody in front of the bus, he is on a different track that’s gonna bring us somewhere, and I could explain that and try to salvage some of that. When Reverend Jackson was caught saying something on the mic, I had to navigate through the fact that I was the one who grew up as Reverend Jackson’s youth director. And why would Reverend Jackson say

that? See, he's not Black enough. And I explain, "Well, you know, sometimes people say things for reasons that we don't understand, but let's move on." And I think that we had cemented that relationship ended up being helpful to him and redeeming for me.

**Reverend Jesse Jackson**

01:13:49:17

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

The Jackson thing was- was personal because I was a mentee of Jesse Jackson, and I really was caught in between that. But I had to also go by what I learned from Reverend Jackson, to look at the bigger picture. And the bigger picture was that we could not not do what was right by supporting Senator Obama. And whatever reasons he would saying—what he was saying, the bigger picture was, where were we going with our people. Reverend Jackson played a role with the Clinton administration and had access like I ended up having access to the Obama administration, where there were things that I disagreed with vehemently with Bill Clinton. The crime bill, omnibus crime bill. Welfare reform bill. I marched on Bill Clinton about the crime bill and the welfare reform bill, and I would always say to Reverend Jackson, he's wrong about this, he's wrong. And some of its Reverend Jackson would agree with me, but he said, "But Al, you gotta look at the bigger picture." I got the chance to say to Reverend Jackson, "But Reverend, we gotta look at the bigger picture."

**Bill Clinton**



01:15:08:21

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton, though I disagree with him on several of the legislative initiatives, namely the welfare reform bill and the omnibus crime bill, but we—when she came to New York after that as first lady, ran for the senate, we had developed a decent relationship. But when Bill Clinton came out after the South Carolina primary and tried to dismiss the significance that Barack Obama, who had upset everyone winning Iowa, lost in New Hampshire. So now South Carolina's the next primary and he won. And Bill Clinton kind of, "Well, even Jesse Jackson won that." What are you saying? And for me being a recognizable New Yorker nationwide to call him to task, they couldn't say he was playing politics because I'm saying, "Wait a minute, if that's not outright racist, it's as borderline as you can get. What do you mean, *even* Jesse Jackson won that?" Then when it came out about the whole question of him saying to Ted Kennedy, "This guy used to—could be getting our coffee." Well, he might have meant that he was a political novice, but the racial tone of that. I said to myself, if we caught a right-winger or a Republican saying that we would not say that—that maybe he was talking politics. So I began to look at it differently and was pounding on it because I was offended, I was insulted. It was interesting because a couple of years later when Caroline Kennedy and I went—and was having lunch, she said that the first time she had heard Barack Obama speak was at National Action Network Convention. So it was full circle that I was defending her uncle standing up for Obama because of the conversation with Bill Clinton.

**Obama's approach to leadership**

01:17:12:02

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

I think that-- George McGregor Burns wrote a book called *Leadership*, that when I went to Brooklyn College I studied. He said, "There are two types of leaders. There's transactional and there's transformative." Barack Obama became one of the few that I met that was more transformative. He was about how we change the time and the system and the sense of governing for the long haul rather than how we transact a situation right now. Have a rally, have a march. And he had the ability, an uncanny ability—I've observed out through the years, of looking at the long picture. When we dealt with a police brutality matter, he would be, "Well, Al, let's talk about how we're gonna deal with policing, period. What we—what are the steps?" And he put together a commission to deal with that. When we deal—dealt with other issues, similar issues, Trayvon. How we deal with that, how we deal with the voter ID laws in terms of electoral process and I think that Dr. West and others from an academic standpoint would deal in transactional—trading a deal. How we get this immediacy done. Henry Louis Gates stopped by a cop in his house. How we make that cop pay rather than that cop pay in the broader context of how we deal with racial profiling and police. A lot of it I think got ugly and personal unnecessarily. Like I remember when we had the anniversary of—the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery march and the Voting Rights Act. So that Wednesday, President Obama, on the actual day, was going to speak with Bill Clinton and Oprah Winfrey and all. I called a commemoration and a march that Saturday to say we still have challenges,

voter ID laws and purging voters in Washington. So even though everybody knew about Wednesday and there was gonna be a huge crowd, we got even as many people or more that Saturday to march, and Dr. West said, “Al Sharpton is now the head negro in charge of the Obama plantation.” And everybody said, “Well, wait a minute, he’s marching about voter ID. What makes him—if he was head negro, he’d just wait till Wednesday with Obama, he’s on the program. And what plantation? So when you start getting that ugly, everybody starts to say, “Wait a minute, this is not about politics, this is a little personal now. ‘Cause you mad at anybody that disagrees with you on Obama? I mean, so not only don’t you agree with him, the fact that we’ve all been out here where you have not been, in the streets, now we’re no good because we’re near Obama. Come on Cornel, let’s not get—let’s not do that.

**Eric Holder Jr.**

01:20:15:08

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

I think the President understood Eric Holder’s Civil Rights Attorney background. I think he understood that his platform as the Attorney General was a different role than him being president. I think that in many ways, they had an official government what he had with some of us in civil rights. They understood each other’s role, and he understood that when he met with Mark Moriale, the Urban League and others and me, that I was gonna go out and say and do certain things that he just wasn’t gonna do and shouldn’t in—at—in his role as President, which was way up here dealing with things we couldn’t see that broadly. And I think he understood that Holder, as Attorney

General and as the Chief Law Enforcement Officer, could be a lot more aggressive in language and execution than him. So I think they had that kind of relationship.

**Trayvon Martin**

01:21:23:06

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

Trayvon Martin was a Florida known case. The attorney, Ben Krump, called me and said, “Reverend Al,” he told me what happened, “and we’d like you to help make this national.” He flew the parents in, and I met with the parents and I was just totally stricken by the story and I said, “Alright, we’re gonna call a rally.” I got a couple of radio guys, Michael Bayes and all, and we called a rally. And to really nationalize it and I started pumping it on my MSNBC show. I started doing what we could with National Action Network. There were already people doing social media. There was all kinds of stuff. I got ready to fly down for the first big rally in Sanford, Florida. I had never heard of Sanford, Florida. Never heard of Trayvon Martin. We went down there. We’d been promoting it two weeks and we ended up with over 10,000 people at the first rally. When I got on the plane that morning, I checked my messages and found out my mother had died the night before. So I got on the plane, went anyway because I felt my mother would have wanted me to go. We met the family—it had flashed across the news that my mother died. They didn’t think I was going. I said, “We’ve got a meeting with the Justice Department, people in Florida. As we were going into the meeting, my cell phone rang. And I answered, I said, “Hello.” He said, “Would you hold for the

President of the United States.” And President Obama had called me to give his condolences for the passing of my mother. And I said, “Well, I appreciate that.” He said, “Al, I lost my mother, I know there’s no words.” And we talked a few minutes. “Where are you?” he said, “I hear all that noise in the background.” I said, “I’m in Sanford, Florida,” and the story of Trayvon Martin. And I told him. He said, “I heard something about that.” He says, “Well, I’m sure you’ll be briefing Valerie and attorney general Holder.” He says, “Yeah, you might hear something else, too.” And a couple of days later, he never said what to me, but a couple of days later he said, “Trayvon could’ve been my son.” And it showed he understood that he could put things in a context because he was the president, and it was a two-edged sword. People wanted him to do more, but if he did more, it would not have had the same impact. Really, he expected us to play our roles and let him play his role. He’s the president. And I used to get in arguments with people saying, “Yes, he didn’t come to your fish fry, and he missed that. He’s the president! He’s got to deal with NATO, he’s got to deal with the Middle East. And are we really telling our children we want them to be president, but we really don’t want you to be president. Let him perform as president and show we can do it.”

01:24:39:13

We called Bill Clinton the first Black President, and he put legislation through that I disagree with that he came to say later hurt us; omnibus crime bill, welfare reform bill. Show me where Barack Obama did anything to hurt us. Not one bill, not one legislation, not one embarrassment, not one major scandal and you’re calling him names. He made our kids know how big and

broad and big minded we could be, and you're gonna call him out his name.  
You're doggone right I'm gonna defend him.

### **Institutional racism**

01:25:23:01

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

There was racial intolerance that was embedded in the system to where people just couldn't adjust that this smart Black man and black family was really the leader of the free world. To see the State of the Union, which was the sacred speech of the year, and a member of Congress blurted out and heckled the president, "you lie" in the middle of the speech. I mean, we had presidents that had got up and said all kinds of things that we didn't like, and you had civil rights leaders in the congress from Adam Clayton Powell all the way to John Lewis, that never happened. But they almost felt they were entitled to do that to him because he was Black. The kind of derogatory ways they would denigrate him. I remember, I picked up a tabloid in New York and they had him like a gorilla and we marched on the tabloid. It was where they had no regard for the presidency at all, and the racial tone that the tea party had started and the whole movement around birtherism. We are challenging the birth certificate of the President of the United States? And it actually picked up momentum. I got a call in the middle of the birtherism thing from an attorney who said, "Why are you calling Donald Trump's statements racial and calling him a racist?" I said, "I didn't call him a racist." I later did, but at that point, I said- I said, "What he's saying is racist." "Well, you know Donald." "Yeah, I do, and I fought Donald on Central Park five." "Why don't you all

meet?" And we met. And "Al, you know I'm not a racist." I said, "What you're saying is racist, because what you're really saying, Mr. Trump, is he's not one of us, and we know what that means." And for this to have caught on the traction that it did was the institutional racism, and I remember one day they had broke ground for the Smithsonian Museum, and they had a reception at the White House after. And Dr. W Franklin Richardson, who chairs National Action Network board, and I went, and President Obama came out and Mrs. Obama spoke and he come over and was speaking to some of us at—in the east room, he had there in the reception. He said, "I was just talking to Rachel Robinson, Jackie Robinson's widow." He says, "You know, one of the things they had to teach themselves is to remain disciplined, don't react, keep playing because he was the first, he had to break through." He said, "In many ways, that's what I've had to do. I've had to take a lot of stuff and not react 'cause like Jackie Robinson, I'm the first one. I can't mess it up." And that's a whole lot of weight to carry. But he carried it with dignity and grace. I don't know if I could've ever done what he did, but I was certainly gonna make sure he had all the help he could get from us on the outside. We may not have carried the weight, but we could try to help on the sides to take some of it up for him.

**Progressive support for Obama**

01:28:53:09

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

Oh, there were others in the progressive community that dealt with the fact that he was not an early supporter of same sex marriage, and they- they had

that. There were those that felt that the Affordable Care Act should have been more to the left in terms of everyone having health care. And there were those that had to deal with that. There were those in the labor movement who had to deal with that. One of the big controversies was education. 'Cause he wanted to experiment to a limited degree with his education secretary, Arnie Duncan, on—on charter schools. One of the first meetings I had when he became president was we met on education. And it was funny, Valerie Jarrett said, "The President said that he was gonna give you a meeting, and it is now going into May, we've been in 90 days." He said—she said, "What is it that you want to meet on, your civil rights issue?" And I said, "Education." She says, "Alright. Get back to me on who's going to attend, we'll work out the date." Gave me the date. She calls me back and says, "Who are you bringing to the meeting?" I said, "Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Newt Gingrich." She said, "Newt Gingrich?" I said, "Yeah." "You can get Newt Gingrich to come with Al Sharpton to the White House?" I said, "Yeah." I had met with Newt and Newt, and I agreed that we need to deal with public education. He was all the way pro charter, I was saying only in special occasions, and we met. Date comes, Newt Gingrich, Michael Bloomberg, Al Sharpton walks into the Oval Office. And I could see President Obama kind of look—that look—where he later said at a speech that he didn't believe Newt was coming till we walked in.

01:30:47:11

And when we left, one of his aides said to me, "How did you make that happen?" And I said, "Well, Newt wanted to deal with the issue and wanted to be relevant." I knew this was his first civil rights—formal civil rights meeting



in the White House. He'd be attacked by the right that you actually bringing Al Sharpton to the Oval Office? But they couldn't say it if it was balanced with Newt, and they couldn't say it with Michael Bloomberg. You can't help somebody if you're not going to be realistic and not give him the balance he needs. And of course, he surprised us, he says, "I need you guys to go on a five city tour." I was like, "Ok, you're really sticking it to me now, Mr. President. I look out by bringing in Newt Gingrich, now I got to live with this guy through five cities." And Arnie Duncan and the Secretary of Education and Newt and I went on a five-city tour. That was when I said to Valerie Jarrett, "I really thought he liked me. But now I don't know, I've got to do five cities with Newt." But we ended up having a good tour, Newt and I became frenemies. Political frenemies.

**Rudy Giuliani**

01:32:02:01

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

When Rudy Giuliani tried to attack the President's relationship with me, and say that I'd been to the White House more than anybody else, it was that this was the big bad boogie man of Black America, you know, racial Al Sharpton. It didn't work. First of all, I was -- Bill O'Reilly used to go to dinner with me and Shawn Hannity, so people were like, well wait a minute now, why wouldn't the President meet with him? He has a national constituency; he ran for president. So I think Rudy was playing from a 1990's New York bookie, it didn't work. What was interesting though is the way the President answered it was by not answering it; he just came and spoke at National Action

Network's convention. That answered it. And I remember I was doing my show every day then on MSNBC and I remember the day, the second time President Obama spoke at National Action Network's convention, which was around the time Rudy had made these attacks, and they had closed off all around the Sheraton, which they do when the President—any president comes. I went down the block, I'm walking to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue with a couple of people that were with me, and they were not letting traffic through 'cause the President was still at the Sheraton. I remember a cop was standing on the corner and I was standing behind him, waiting to cross, and an old white female says, "Why is all the traffic stopped?" He says, "President Obama is down the block. I think he's leaving, and they stopped the traffic till he passes through." "Oh, I didn't know he's in town. What is he here for?" And the cop looked at her and says, "Can you believe it, he's here for Al Sharpton." And she looked up at him, says, "Gotta give it to him, Al's come a long way." And that was my answer to Rudy, that lady. 'Cause she wasn't hostile. She looked at it where Rudy didn't. So, it was that whole attempt to try to racialize things that I think Rudy and Cornel missed. America's nowhere near where it needs to be, but with Obama we kind of made a couple of steps forward that outdated some of that stuff.

**Personal influence from Obama**

01:34:20:17

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

Obama changed me in a public way because he gave me the opportunity to perform at a level to effect some change. To fight for things that would help

with healthcare. He would bring me into meetings with other progressive leaders that we would fight for things that were not just racial. But he changed me personally because he challenged me to grow and really see, did you do what you did and march the marches and rally because of the theatre or 'cause you really want to get something done? And because he gave me access to being in a room to get change, he made me come to terms with whether you're gonna be a performer or whether you really believe what you say. He never lectured me on it. It's sort of like he passed the ball. Now let's see if you can shoot.

**Donald Trump**

01:35:31:15

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

I think that when you study history, every time we made a step forward, there was always a backlash. So, we go from Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation to Reconstruction, Ku Klux Klan, White Citizens Council, President Johnson, Andrew Johnson, rise up, backlash. Supreme court decisions, backlash. Turn of the century, lynching's, NAACP is formed. Backlash, lynchings. All the way up through the Civil Rights Movement. It was naïve for us to think there wouldn't be a backlash to the first Black president. We just never would imagine it would've been Donald Trump. But Donald Trump caught into a backlash fervor of the fears, unfounded fears, of many people and striking on simplistic things like they're not one of us, we need to go back to old America, make America great. And no one thought that that could work, but if we'd studied history, we would have been more careful,

and I think that those of us who are dealing with the era of Trump are fighting now to maintain what was gained from Dr. King all the way to Barack Obama and studying would've happened with other backlashes. Sometimes you just gotta hold down the foundation of the building, even if you know you may lose some of the roof and wait for the storm to pass and rebuild on the foundation that was established.

### **Obama's legacy**

01:37:22:12

REVEREND AL SHARPTON:

Obama left in the presidency the idea that we could give healthcare to people, even with pre-existing conditions, that we could have a scandal free administration, that we could provide people with jobs. Here's a man that took an economy that was losing 800,00 jobs a year and turned it around to where it was 200,000 net jobs a month. We was losing 800,000 a month, not a year, a month, and he turned it around. But he also did something else. He taught America that the idea of racial discrimination and that we could not perform at the highest level is just not true. You can no longer tell any young American that a Black man can't be president, and a Black woman. He ripped the ceiling off of our ambitions. I was in my 50's when he was elected, and he had invited me to be in Chicago that night in Grant Square. I decided to call a rally and a watch night service like we do on New Year's Eve down at Martin Luther King's church in Atlanta. And that night, Bernice King, Dexter King and my friend Martin Luther King III and I went to the grave of Dr. King. 5,000 people that we walked over into the church after visiting his tomb. Because

that's what they fought for, and when it flashed across that screen, Obama won Ohio and we knew he was gonna be President, I was in my 50's and it was the first time in my life that I could honestly tell a kid, "You can be president." Trump can't cancel that. You can take away our healthcare, you can even try and take away some of what he did in other areas, but you can't put the ceiling back on our ambitions. We know now that we can perform at the highest level of government in the world, and you'll never put that genie back in the box.

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