

The Greatness We Deserve: The Election of 2020 and the Fight for America's Future

There are Americans who are dead now only because Donald Trump is President. There will be more Americans dead by the election, because Trump is President. There are people across the world who have suffered and died, because Trump is president. The need to oppose and oust him has been clear since his inauguration (if not before), but Trump's failure to take America's vast resources and wield them to manage a terrible crisis (not just for our country, but our world) has made this need not only clear but also urgent and imperative. If Trump wins in November, the guilt for all that follows will rest not only upon his head, but also upon our collective failure to take the reins of power from a man unequal and unsuited to the responsibilities of the Presidency.

But defeating Trump requires winning the general election in November. It requires a mobilized, enthusiastic Democratic coalition, unified behind a leader whose capabilities are equal to the present moment and inspired by a vision of what the next chapter in the American story will be. Joe Biden has yet to show that leadership; if he is serious about defeating Trump and righting America's course, he must either step aside for someone else, or he must rise to this occasion with every ounce of intelligence, courage, and humility he possesses.

The 2020 election was always going to be a pivotal, hard-fought election. The sheer density and diversity of the Democratic Party's primary field spoke to the multifarious reactions sparked by Trump's maladministration and the recurring failure of both the party in power to check his excesses and the opposition party to muster an effective opposition. There were as many contenders for the Democratic nomination as there are theories of what America needs to become following Trump's norm-upending Presidency. By the end, we were reduced to the "two-man race" many had forecasted from the beginning: Joseph "Joe" Biden and Bernie Sanders.

From the beginning of the Democratic Primary, but especially after the race was winnowed down to just Sanders and Biden, there were echoes of Sanders' 2016 contest against Clinton (the moderate establishment collection with a long, sometimes-embarrassing resume vs. the historic outsider who wears his socialist badge proudly in a country where that label is often the kiss of death), but the substance of the 2020 primary is quite different. In 2016, Clinton was pitching herself as the logical successor to entrench and expand upon the successes of Barack Obama's administration: Sanders (and Trump) were tapping into a current of resentment against a status quo that had failed so many Americans (though they tapped into this resentment in very different ways). America in 2020 is at once more stridently partisan, more generally exhausted with the status quo, and more nostalgic for a time before this chaos, among many other differences. Biden speaks to the nostalgia for a more civil, comfortable America: Sanders still speaks to the anti-establishment resentment, but heightened partisanship in general (and the bad faith actions of even so-called moderates in the GOP) means that his support is much more cohesive and energized, actively disparaging the notion of moderating their policy goals to be more palatable to an establishment that has largely refused even the token appearance of compromise and bipartisanship.

Biden's presumptive victory in the Democratic primary is instructive, but so is his ongoing struggle to claim a decisive mandate. Biden served as vice president for eight years under one of the most popular political figures in America, united the full weight of the Democratic establishment behind him, and had decades of name recognition besides from his lifelong career as a politician and public servant, so his general popularity (and his acceptance as a compromise candidate by his rivals and their supporters) is not surprising. But the same qualities that make Biden a palatable compromise candidate also inform the general lack of enthusiasm for his candidacy. Biden's sweeping Super Tuesday victories and his quick efforts to secure the endorsements of his rivals demonstrate that he has the potential to be a unifying force, but his losses in the early primaries pose troubling signs for a general election. What happens when Biden confronts a President with a devoted, enthusiastic base and the full weight of the GOP behind him?

We cannot make the mistake of thinking that the 2020 election is simply a matter of successfully refighting the electoral battles of 2016. Trump's electoral college victory was an unexpected upset won

against a candidate with unique disadvantages (sexism not least among them). But even accounting for those disadvantages, Clinton still won the popular vote by 3 million voters: only electoral college math gave Trump the presidency (disclaimer: I've been railing against the Electoral College since the 8th grade, and started a petition on petition.org to disband it following Obama's 2012 victory). Trump was elected without a mandate, after making enemies of not only most Democrats but also a considerable number of powerful Republicans. His main asset was a fervent and devoted base and widespread antipathy for the status quo and the political establishment, as well as specific conservative dissatisfaction with the Obama administration. Taken together with Clinton's relative unpopularity, these advantages allowed him win key districts and states and, in doing so, claim the Presidency.

Trump in 2020, however, is a very different beast, having coopted huge swathes of the Republican establishment while retaining (and perhaps strengthening) his devoted base. This coalition has as its core mission the defense, entrenchment, and expansion of their power and self-interest, whether that takes the form of the historic corruption of the Trump administration and its key members or the form of the GOP's ongoing endeavor to reshape government at every level to the permanent benefit of the Republican party. There is no meaningful Republican opposition to Donald Trump: the GOP has practiced a studied indifference and apathy towards the crimes and transgressions of the Trump administration (with previous Republican presidential contenders McCain and Romney being notably excepted from this pattern of abject moral surrender). They demonize attempts to hold them accountable to facts and truth as a conspiracy by the media to discredit them and project their own self-interested corruption onto anyone who dares object to their behavior.

This coalition was dangerous long before the COVID-19 pandemic metastasized into the current crisis, from its refusal to embrace commonsense immigration reform in favor of Trump's xenophobic fantasies to its bizarre desire to slash corporate taxes in a time of tremendous economic growth to its dereliction in not investigating, condemning, and restraining Trump from the dangerous displays of incompetence (in the case of our response to the devastation of Puerto Rico by Hurricane Maria), corruption (in the case of trying to weaponize foreign aid to Ukraine in order to blackmail a political rival), and inhumanity (in wielding immigration enforcement to separate children from their families and cause harm to people fleeing danger for the promise of the American dream).

(Sidenote: in case this is mistaken for saying that more Republicans should have voted for impeachment, I have heard many conservatives grouse that impeachment was the wrong remedy for the problem at hand, a deliberate escalation from Democrats without proper foundation or investigation to warrant such an extreme measure. Leaving aside any whataboutism: if impeachment is the wrong remedy, why do Republicans in the House and Senate not offer another? Bipartisan subpoenas for records that can ascertain the exact nature of any wrongdoing, condemnation of the acts they find outrageous (if any), a refusal to fund Trump's pet projects or follow his agenda. I mention this only to ameliorate any easy rebuttals)

But COVID-19 has made it impossible to ignore the danger this coalition poses to our liberty, our prosperity, and our very lives. Trump made this crisis worse before it even began, and continues to exacerbate it at every turn: from disbanding the NSC pandemic group founded by President Obama (thereby preventing a team of experts from being able to move to anticipate and react to the pandemic before it began in earnest) to his continued reluctance to mobilize the full resources of the government for internal or external interventions (in spite of early warnings from the intelligence community that the situation in Wuhan was worse than China was saying) to his constant downplaying of the pandemic to his flirting with an early end to social distancing to preserve the strength of the economy (regardless of expert advice or potential death tolls) to [bragging about the size of his media audience](#) to [blaming hospitals for negligence and theft](#) (while [his administration seizes supplies intended for the states](#)). Still the GOP by and large remains silent about his repeated errors (when they do not push for their own harmful agenda).

But how could it be otherwise, when Trump takes any opposition as a evidence of dangerous disloyalty that must be crushed? almost find it difficult to blame them, what with Trump hinting that

whether or not states will receive federal aid will depend on how well they treat him. This behavior isn't even new: he made similar comments when San Juan mayor Carmen Cruz and others criticized his response to Hurricane Maria. Trump sees the power of the Presidency as something that exists for his personal benefit, to be wielded at his discretion to reward his allies and punish his enemies. And far from restraining him, the GOP continues to enable him.

My litany of Trump's failings is not merely intended as a longwinded complaint (although it certainly is that). Each of those failures is a link in a chain of disaster. The renewed Puerto Rican antipathy towards Trump in 2019 was because of his appropriating FEMA funds for his border wall. The impeachment proceedings were founded upon Trump's misuse of his office for personal gain, and the failure of his party to meaningfully condemn or restrain him encourages him to do it in matters not just foreign, but domestic. It is essential that Trump and his coalition be defeated. The strength, wealth, and health of our nation depends upon it.

The appeal of the GOP in general (and Trump in particular) rests on defense of the status quo. The very term "conservative" implies as much (to conserve something is, after all, to keep it from destructive change), and even as an anti-establishment candidate, Trump spoke to this impulse: there is a reason his 2016 slogan was "Make America Great Again." The phrase has a powerful appeal, tapping into both mainstream Republican vision (that the "traditional America," however you define it, is under threat and must not only be protected but also restored to its proper place at the heart of American life) and the anti-establishment impulse (the "Again" says that America was once great, and that your frustration with the status quo is well-placed: we must return to a better time, before all this dangerous change that caused your present dissatisfaction). There is a reason his 2020 slogan is "Keep America Great": it unifies his coalition, selling preservation of the status quo and painting his success as still-fragile, under attack by a Deep State that would plunge America back into the same nebulous, terrible change that so threatened his supporters. And the GOP's strength is Biden's weakness.

Biden's broad appeal is founded in part upon his long record and name recognition and in part on the fear of Trump's continued reign. The calculus is that Biden is the candidate most likely to build the broadest victory coalition, to win over moderates frightened of the chaos and inhumanity of Trump's administration without alienating them with agendas that are considered too "socialist" or "radical" by mainstream America. Biden's vision for America is a "return to normalcy," painting Trump as a uniquely disruptive force who has escalated partisan tensions and abused his office. In this story, President Biden would restore us to an era of functional, moderate, and sober government undergirded by genuine bipartisan cooperation. In many ways, Biden is trying to run on, "Make America Great Again," simply providing a different definition of when America was great and how we can reclaim that greatness.

Putting aside that Biden's message is unlikely to resonate with those who have been unhappy under both Obama and Trump (not to mention Bush and Clinton), Biden's defense of the status quo is unwise for two reasons. First and foremost, political battles in defense of the status quo will rarely break in favor of the "left-wing" party over the "right-wing" (2018 had a rare example in Democratic victories in defense of the Affordable Care Act, but that was a unique case for reasons I will outline below). Second, it ignores the realities of the general election. Even with his increasing unpopularity, Trump is such a dangerous candidate because he is an incumbent president supported by both a committed base and the GOP establishment, his supporters united by fear of any change in the status quo (even one as moderate as Joe Biden) and the accompanying threat to their values (in the case of the rank-and-file) and power (in the case of the politicians) that any Democratic victory poses. Biden has only one element of this coalition: the broader appeal to the Democratic establishment. He cannot get the other—the devoted, mobilized base—without tapping into visions of America that go well beyond a return to normalcy. He needs to harness the progressive enthusiasm that drove (and still drives) support for Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

Bernie and Warren's bases, and the enthusiasm they were born from, both come from the same place: a deep and widespread hunger, especially among millennials, for widespread progressive change to a

status quo that has repeatedly harmed us. Sanders in particular has built up and expanded his devoted base into a serious political force that gave him a nearly incontestable lead in a crowded field. He was unable to translate that political capital into mass appeal or to offer himself as a compelling second choice to the supporters of other candidates after they dropped out, but his supporters remain a force to be reckoned with, for good or ill.

Why is Trump doing so well? Why does Sanders, with the supposedly toxic socialist label attached to his person and policies, still command such support? Because they have what Biden currently lacks. They have a vision of what America should be. And such visions are not idealistic fantasies to be downplayed or discarded in the name of electability. Such visions are among the few unifying themes in American history.

From our founding, American politics have been fundamentally aspirational: we were a colony, subject to a King, demanding our national independence on the basis of the first principles of humanity and governance. "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." The moments of our national history that we are proudest all carry at their core a powerful vision of what the world should be, realized by taking action that permanently shifts our definition of what is possible: the Civil War and Emancipation, the New Deal, the Second World War, the Civil Rights Movement, the Apollo Missions. The figures we admit to the American canon all carried, and fought to realize, a vision of a new world.

Bernie Sanders has this vision. Whether you like him or not, you know exactly what Sanders stands for and what he believes the future of America should be. There is a reason his core supporters were far more devoted, numerous, and mobilized than those behind any other Democratic candidate. There is a reason Sanders so often invokes the idea of a "revolution," echoing the remarkable circumstances under which our country was founded, and the permanent, world-changing consequences it had. Sanders is a visionary politician, and his vision drove (and continues to drive) a genuine movement. But that vision, and the movement, cannot change the world alone.

Politics is the art of the possible, and if America's greatest moments are defined by aspirational visions, they are also tainted by the political and moral compromises that made them possible. As we founded a country by declaring that all men are created equal, we turned a blind eye to the humans trapped and tortured in bondage for the benefit of their rich masters, and codified this cruelty in the government we built. If a war was fought to end slavery, reducing the new freedmen to a lower caste in a legally-enforced racial hierarchy was an acceptable price for peace in the aftermath. The New Deal expanded the social safety net to guarantee the American dream more widely, but it could do so only by explicitly and implicitly maintaining the Jim Crow status quo and excluding people of color in general (and black people in particular) from these new benefits. America became a superpower by mobilizing incredible resources to defeat a xenophobic Japanese empire and a genocidal Nazi army, but along the way it bankrolled tyrants and interned its own citizens in xenophobic fear. The Apollo Missions may have put footprints on the moon, but they could only do so as the extension of a military rivalry that threatened nuclear armageddon. And while the Civil Rights Movement permanently changed America for the better by expanding the franchise and ending the appalling abuses of Jim Crow, it could only do so at the cost of many of its members' and leaders' lives...and even then, it could not compel the government to make reparations for centuries of harm.

Politics is the art of the possible. You must make your own decisions about what compromises you must accept, and what you must regret, and what you must refuse. But the great moments of American history are always tainted by the compromises needed to get there. And Trump, for all his many failings, excels at wedding his "vision" to the gritty compromises necessary to realize it.

Trump's coalition echoes the tradition of vision and compromise by expertly manipulating the fear and discontent of his base and the GOP at large. There is a reason "Make America Great Again" was so successful a slogan. Trump offered a simple idea: America has gone astray, because of the corruption of "the swamp" and "the Deep State." Both these ideas are intentionally vague, because in that vagueness rests Trump's strength. To his base, this points to the general corruption of Washington

DC: to politicians listening to lobbyists over their constituents, to the many failures of both parties to protect the country from trouble and harm and to extend the benefits of a strong stock market to the average person. To establishment Republicans, it was hyperbole founded on truth: after all, they already viewed the Democratic party in general (and the Obama administration in particular) as dangerous, incompetent, and corrupt. He offered simple, direct solutions to complex problems (even if those solutions, like his Border Wall, were impractical, ineffective, inhumane, or all of the above). This vision—of the simple, straightforward way America could be made great again—was the foundation of his coalition. To everything else, Trump and his supporters only had to say, “No.”

That simple “No” is the greatest strength of the modern GOP, the weaponization of the natural human impulse to preserve the status quo and to prefer the devil we know to the devil we don't. So much of the GOP coalition is built on saying “no”—no to abortion, no to gun control, no to socialism, no to universal healthcare. The great power of saying “no” is that it captures some of the strength of America's aspirational nature. “No to the murder of babies in the womb. No to a nation where Americans lose their Constitutional rights at the hands of an overreaching government. No to a government that can control what doctors I can see, and what treatments I can get. America is a place of freedom, of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And the change you want to make would destroy us.” “No” is one of the most powerful weapons in maintaining a morally pure vision of what America should be. Even if that vision—that “no”—has so often been the weapon by which life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are hurt and destroyed.

It was that simple “no” that made powerful slavers and their political allies so steadfast in refusing any form of emancipation, even by way of not extending their slavery to the new states of the Union. It was that simple “no” that refused to recognize the freed slaves as citizens and human beings of unalienable rights, and instead treated them as second-class citizens (at best) for a grim and brutal century, and still refuses to recognize the systemic racism baked into the foundations of American law. It was that “no” that said that the LGBT community did not deserve equal rights or the protection of the American government, from the AIDS epidemic to the Defense of Marriage Act and a thousand other indignities in between.

I cannot say how history will look at the modern GOP and the way they wield their “no.” I know why they resort to it, time and time again. It is so much more difficult to say “yes.” Saying “no” retains the moral purity of a vision: if any change would threaten what America should be, rejecting that change requires no further introspection. Saying “yes” is harder. Saying “yes” requires a vision of what the world can be, and doing the gritty, difficult, and heartbreaking work necessary to make that vision come true. And the GOP's inability to say “yes” cost them the House in 2018.

The 2018 mid-term election was a rare case where defense of the status quo was a valid (and successful!) tactic for Democratic candidates. Saying “no” to Republican attempts to dismantle the Affordable Care Act and the broader insurance coverage it granted to so many Americans (myself included) offered a unifying throughline that progressive and moderate candidates alike could seize upon. Republican calls to “Repeal and Replace” could not endure these attacks, in part because the “Replace” part was so vague. Repealing it would mean upending a status quo that had measurably saved American lives. Only a meaningful vision of what “Replace” meant could have allowed for the GOP to unify their message, but “Replace” requires saying “yes.” Saying “yes” is always a risk: the Affordable Care Act itself proves as much, for good and ill.

The Affordable Care Act may one day join the list of pivotal moments in American history. It was only possible in the first place because of unique circumstances: the first majority-Democratic Congress in 14 years, united beneath a president of genuine charisma, vision, and political experience, with enough collective will to try and massive reform America's byzantine and exploitative healthcare system. Realizing this vision of a better healthcare system required gritty, difficult compromises, bargaining with politicians, care networks, insurance companies, doctors, hospitals, and the thousand other organizations and officials, great and small, that this reform would effect. And this was merely the prelude to the enormous upheaval and bitter partisan fighting that significantly informed the Republican Congressional victories of 2010. In order for the Affordable Care Act to become a status

quo that could be protected, it first had to be a vision that politicians fought to realize, whatever costs or compromises it required.

Biden is an expert politician, integral to many of the successes of the Obama administration, with a long history of bargaining, negotiating, and compromising from positions of strength and positions of weakness. I do not fear that Biden will get bogged down in a quest for moral purity that prevents him from realizing his vision. But in part, I do not fear this because Biden has no real vision. All he seems able to do is say, "No." "No" to Trump, yes, but also "no" to critiques of his record and accusations about his behavior, both as a politician, and as a person.

Democrats must be a big tent party, and as a straight white man who has worked in politics for decades, there was no chance of Biden being perfectly palatable to every part of the potential coalition. But his prickliness when confronted (from his part in the fight against busing to his involvement in the nomination and approval of Clarence Thomas to his support for the tough-on-crime measures that caused such a horrific expansion in mass incarceration to a dozen other issues) is concerning. If Biden truly intends to be a unity candidate, he has to demonstrate comprehension of his mistakes, contrition for them, and a willingness to change. He owes that for his political mistakes, to the people hurt by his decisions. And he owes that for his personal mistakes, too: for the women he has hurt with his disregard for their personal comfort and space.

This is a moral issue, but it is also a political one. I have written before about how Brett Kavanaugh's successful appointment to the Supreme Court is demonstrative of how terribly unashamed the GOP has become in pursuit of their own self-interest. The Democratic Party has been galvanized by the #MeToo movement, and gained both acclaim and support through its willingness to oust politicians who use their power to harass, exploit, manipulate, and assault women. Biden cannot be the standard-bearer if he is tainted by this abuse. And he certainly cannot be the candidate if he is, as Tara Reade alleges, guilty of sexual assault.

Biden sought this nomination, and neither his campaign nor the American public can afford to let another man's privileged ego dictate our future. If Biden is innocent of Tara Reade's accusation, he must welcome an independent, objective, and thorough investigation to prove that innocence. Even if we assume his innocence in sexual assault (which we have no obligation to do, as we are not in a criminal court), he must still meaningfully recognize and respond to the other accusations and critiques made against him (rather than the piddling half-measures he has taken so far). Rather than merely giving lip service to the idea of "changing standards," Biden has to be willing to show contrition, humility, and compassion.

In some ways, I recognize the dilemma Biden faces: political wisdom has often held that merely giving air to a story runs the risk of enlarging it in the public imagination. But we live in a different era now, with wider access to media and a wider hunger for stories, where there are ways to truly kill a story so it cannot reach the public or linger in our memory. And a full and thorough reckoning with his past mistakes is not just the right thing to do: it is also good politics. Such a reckoning would clearly set him apart from a GOP that refuses to hold its potentates accountable for their abuse, and to the serial abuser they have made the face of their party. Biden is selling himself as the unity candidate, and he cannot unify his coalition if he cannot rise to this moment, set aside his ego, and make genuine efforts to change his behavior and atone for his past mistakes.

Biden has a tremendous task in front of him. He must reckon with the accusations against him and the discomfort he has caused; he must make amends for his past politics that, whatever the standards of the time in which he practiced them, make so many reluctant to vote for him now; he must reach out to and offer a reason for the progressive movement to back his candidacy. I do not envy him this task, but if he is unwilling or unable to rise to meet it, he must make way for someone who can. Biden chose to run for the presidency during what may well be the most important election in living memory. If he cannot do the difficult work necessary to unify a Democratic coalition, I fear for his chances in the general election, I fear for his ability to defeat Donald Trump, and I fear what fresh disasters four more years of Trump's presidency will certainly bring.

COVID-19 has made the stakes of this election impossible to ignore. For all my personal distaste for Trump, I understand the difficulty of this moment. There is likely no President who could have faced this crisis without being susceptible to just and well-earned criticism, however ably they commanded the resources of the United States, whatever steps they took to confront such an unexpected and virulent disease. Trump's corruption, grandstanding, and prejudice have forever cost him my support, but they did not mean he had to fail to meet this moment. He was (and remains) President of the most wealthy and powerful nation ever to exist on Earth: he could have wielded that power, if not for the good of the world, than at least for the good of the country he claims to lead.

But Donald Trump has failed to meet this crisis, and the certainty of that failure was foretold in nearly every action his administration has taken since his inauguration. His distaste for officials that do not operate first and foremost out of personal loyalty to him led him to dismantle a group that might have anticipated this pandemic and to oust some of his most capable subordinates; his distrust for intelligence agencies led him to dismiss their reports of what COVID-19 could become; his relentless need for good PR and the illusion of economic strength led (and continue to lead!) him to downplay the crisis and to choose wealth over health; his inability to express contrition or admit fault now leads him and his enablers to claim he was prophetic in anticipating the crisis, and that he has achieved unprecedented success in containing it. None of this is new: time and time again, Trump shows that he will choose what is best for him over what is best for the nation, and there can be no greater disqualification for the President of the United States.

The Presidential Election of 2020 is going to be recorded as one of the most important elections in the history of the United States. When November comes, we will still be reeling from the suffering, disruption, and death of the COVID-19 epidemic, in the form of jobs and assets diminished and lost, personal struggles with illness, and fallen friends and family, as well as a hundred other difficulties small and large that we cannot even begin to anticipate. I do not know exactly what the future holds, but I know that Trump's failings will exacerbate and amplify the problems we face, where they do not create new challenges entirely. The victor of the 2020 election will determine what America will become in the aftermath of the crisis. I have seen Trump's idea of what America should become. I want no part of it.

Politics is the art of the possible, and the possibility that Trump will continue to be President simply cannot be permitted. We live in a Republic, and who we support (and how we support them) matters. The stakes of this election are too high for apathy or inaction. It falls to all of us to donate, phone bank, canvas, campaign, to reach out to family members, to mobilize a resounding majority of Americans to say that a President whose government makes the lives of Americans measurably worse cannot be allowed to retain power.

But if we have an obligation to cast our votes effectively, and use our resources to try and support the candidate closest to our hearts, then our would-be representatives have an obligation to listen to their constituents and offer the best vision of what America can be. That obligation requires listening even to those ideas that seem mad or impossible, as the idea of this Republic once seemed mad and impossible to its detractors. And that obligation requires doing the difficult, brutal work of compromise and outreach, of moderating and modifying your ideas, of making concessions to placate the hostile or the apathetic, of making genuine amends for past mistakes.

Joe Biden is the Democratic nominee. He is not the nominee I would have chosen, and if Tara Reade's accusation is true, he must withdraw at once. But his checkered record is not one long tale of disaster. He is an able politician with a broad and incontestable understanding of the function, importance, and powers of every aspect of government. He has a history of listening to his constituents and changing his thoughts on policies on their advice, as well as listening to the political will of his supporters and evolving his positions over time. If politics is the art of the possible, Biden may be one of its most capable artists. Biden has it within him to rise to this occasion: to recognize and reckon, not only with his own mistakes, but with the mistakes and failures of America, both past and present.

These failures and mistakes cannot be disguised or argued with, but the right candidate could use those mistakes and failures to fuel a truly meteoric campaign: to articulate a clear vision of what America should be, and tell us how that vision can be realized: to recognize that we can neither Make America Great Again (for our past is checkered with tragedies and our tomorrows have always been brighter than our yesterdays) nor Keep America Great (for if the current crisis has shown us nothing else, it is that whatever pretense of greatness we can claim it is not adequate to the scale of the problems we face), but that American greatness is ever ahead of us.

Because from the founding of our country, American greatness has always been defined by the fact that it is never attained: American greatness is in the *vision* of what America should be, a vision that we can never fully realize but that we will always struggle for, fight for, die for if need be. A vision of a place where we recognize, from the poorest citizen to the strongest President, the self-evident truth that all peoples are created equal, endowed with unalienable rights. A vision of a government that is, at its heart, driven by the need to protect this equality, and uphold those unalienable rights.

Politics is the art of the possible, but the definition of what is possible changes from era to era, and from day to day. We define what the future of America will be, by our choices, by our words, but above all by our actions. And we deserve a leader, and a government, who shares our vision of America's possibilities.