

AMERICAN, BRITISH AND SOUTH AFRICAN ICONS

Barack Obama Farewell Speech

Task 1: INTRODUCTION

Talk to your partner and discuss the following questions:

1. Which American presidents have you heard of?
2. What do you know about the last two presidents of the United States?
3. What makes Barack Obama different from all the other presidents?

Task 1: LISTENING AND READING

Listen to the highlights of Barack Obama Farewell Speech at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0jL_YFyIU&t=35s

In pairs, try to decide on the purpose of each extract from the speech.

- A. To thank his family
- B. To encourage people to be critical of the official information that we are exposed to
- C. To summarize what he and his government have achieved
- D. To show respect to earlier politicians and people behind the changes in the U.S.A
- E. To point to the current problems
- F. To encourage citizens to act, not just complain

1. If I had told you eight years ago that America would reverse a great recession, reboot our auto industry, and unleash the longest stretch of job creation in our history - if I had told you that we would open up a new chapter with the Cuban people, shut down Iran's nuclear weapons program without firing a shot, take out the mastermind of 9-11 - if I had told you that we would win marriage equality and secure the right to health insurance for another 20 million of our fellow citizens -- if I had told you all that, you might have said our sights were set a little too high. But that's what we did. That's what you did. You were the change. The answer to people's hopes and, because of you, by almost every measure, America is a better, stronger place than it was when we started.
2. After my election there was talk of a post-racial America. And such a vision, however well intended, was never realistic. Race remains a potent and often divisive force in our society.

3. If you're tired of arguing with strangers on the Internet, try talking with one of them in real life. If you're disappointed by your elected officials, grab a clip board, get some signatures, and run for office yourself. Show up, dive in, stay at it. Sometimes you'll win, sometimes you'll lose.
4. Michelle LaVaughn Robinson of the South Side... You made the white House a place that belongs to everybody. And a new generation sets its sights higher because it has you as a role model. Malia and Sasha... you wore the burden of years in the spotlight so easily. Of all that I have done in my life, I am most proud to be your dad.
5. For too many of us it's become safer to retreat into our own bubbles, whether in our neighborhoods, or on college campuses, or places of worship, or especially our social media feeds, surrounded by people who look like us and share the same political outlook and never challenge our assumptions. And increasingly we become so secure in our bubbles that we start accepting only information, whether it's true or not, that fits our opinions, instead of basing our opinions on the evidence that is out there.
6. I am asking you to hold fast to that faith written into our founding documents; that idea whispered by slaves and abolitionists; that spirit sung by immigrants and homesteaders and those who marched for justice; that creed reaffirmed by those who planted flags from foreign battlefields to the surface of the moon; a creed at the core of every American whose story is not yet written: Yes, we can.

Task 2: LISTENING AND READING

In pairs, comment on each paragraph and summarize in your own words what Barack Obama was saying.

Task 3: GRAMMAR - PREPOSITIONS

Complete the text with prepositions. Then check against the original text.

WORDLIST: But Of at by down for from in into like of on out to up with without

1. If I had told you eight years ago that America would reverse a great recession, reboot our auto industry, and unleash the longest stretch ___ job creation ___ our history - if I had told you that we would open ___ a new chapter ___ the Cuban people, shut ___ Iran's nuclear weapons program ___ firing a shot, take ___ the mastermind ___ 9-11 - if I had told you that we would win marriage equality and secure the right ___ health insurance ___ another 20 million ___ our fellow citizens ---- if I had told you all that, you might have said our sights were set a little too high. ___ that's what we did. That's what you did. You were the change. The answer ___ people's hopes and, because ___ you, ___ almost every measure, America is a better, stronger place than it was when we started.

2. After my election there was talk ___ a post-racial America. And such a vision, however well intended, was never realistic. Race remains a potent and often divisive force ___ our society.

3. If you're tired ___ arguing ___ strangers ___ the Internet, try talking ___ one ___ them ___ real life. If you're disappointed ___ your elected officials, grab a clip board, get some signatures, and run ___ office yourself. Show __, dive __, stay __ it. Sometimes you'll win, sometimes you'll lose.

4. Michelle LaVaughn Robinson ___ the South Side... You made the White House a place that belongs ___ everybody. And a new generation sets its sights higher because it has you as a role model. Malia and Sasha... you wore the burden ___ years ___ the spotlight so easily. ___ all that I have done ___ my life, I am most proud ___ be your dad.

5. For too many ___ us it's become safer ___ retreat ___ our own bubbles, whether ___ our neighborhoods, or ___ college campuses, or places ___ worship, or especially our social media feeds, surrounded ___ people who look ___ us and share the same political outlook and never challenge our assumptions. And increasingly we become so secure ___ our bubbles that we start accepting only information, whether it's true or not, that fits our opinions, instead ___ basing our opinions ___ the evidence that is ___ there.

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Teachers' Notes

This activity has been designed for intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced students to be used before the event as an introduction and a way of getting students interested in the subject.

Sources:

4-minute highlights video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0jL_YFyIU&t=35s

Washington post script of the speech: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/01/10/president-obamas-farewell-speech-transcript-annotated/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.c9e24a74002c

You may follow up the exercises with an additional pronunciation activity to help students notice sentence stress and pausing in the speech.

Students listen to the speech and underline emphasized words and add / in place of pauses. Then they try to read paragraphs from the speech themselves.

You can assign the 6 paragraphs to different students, who may then take turns to read the paragraphs aloud.