

7 Lessons We Could Learn From Obama's Farewell Address

A leader's words to the nation do not start and end with "I".

The farewell address of Barack Obama bore the hallmarks of a true leader—because it was not only about him but his country people; it was never "my" achievement but "our" achievement. Also, as always, he started his address by saying "Michelle and I..." reinforcing her role as a partner rather than just as a supportive presence in this journey. Mr. Obama showed the world that it is not a prerequisite to leave everything in order to fulfill the demands of a position of power, authority and responsibility. He never for once portrayed Michelle, Malia and Sasha as second priorities, instead highlighting their role as integral to his entire life, including his tenure as President of the United States.

While most politicians would have thanked a spouse for their "sacrifices" and glorified having had to miss parenting milestones because they were too busy changing the world, he highlighted the importance of being a husband and father first. Mr. Obama also didn't shy away from describing his vice-president and his wife as a second "family", drawing yet another standing ovation for himself.

Directions: There are seven quotes from the speech listed here. Under each one, jot down your thoughts to some of the following prompts:

- *What does it mean?*
- *Is he talking about something specific? If so, what?*
- *What did you think of it?*
- *Did it mean something to you?*
- *Do you have a question about it?*

1. "I am asking you to believe. Not in my ability to bring about change — but in yours."

2. "Change only happens when ordinary people get involved, get engaged, and come together to demand it."

3. "You have been a great Vice President... in the bargain, I gained a brother."

4. "Not that our nation has been flawless from the start, but that we have shown the capacity to change."

5. "We must uphold laws against discrimination... But laws alone won't be enough. Hearts must change."

6. "That faith I placed all those years ago, not far from here, in the power of ordinary Americans to bring about change—that faith has been rewarded in ways I couldn't possibly have imagined."

7. "Democracy does require a basic sense of solidarity—the idea that for all our outward differences, we are all in this together; that we rise or fall as one.... Democracy does not require uniformity, but it needs for people to understand differences and work together to overcome adversity.

...Democracy can buckle when we give in to fear. So just as we, as citizens, must remain vigilant against external aggression, we must guard against a weakening of the values that make us who we are."