



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Now, the Real Work Begins

The 2012 Democratic National Convention was an exuberant celebration of President Obama, his accomplishments, and the many ways his presidency has made us better off than we were four years ago. Between a stirring and incandescent speech by First Lady Michelle Obama, and an impassioned charge by former President Bill Clinton, the delegates were roused and the pressure was high for President Obama to deliver an inspiring charge to those who have already spend hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars to participate in the convention.

Truly, he delivered with a tone that was alternately exuberant, defiant, humorous, and apologetic. Most importantly, he spoke of our country as being at a fork in the road, with choices to be made. Forward with Obama, backward with Romney. He challenged the delegates to move forward and embrace his accomplishments. Spirits were certainly high as thousands of delegates left the Time Warner Cable Arena chanting, “Fired up, ready to go.”

Why are political conventions held, anyway? Some are convinced they could’ve easily collapsed their three or four day schedule to just one or two days, because they are so scripted. Yet, one or two days might not be enough to engender the excitement that was present on Thursday night – the chanting, the hugging, the notion that, despite significant challenges, hard work will bring Democrats a victory in Novem-



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ber. The convention is a tool to bring delegates, who are local leaders, into focused campaign activity. The convention is a tool to get the delegates out to organize and mobilize people.

After the euphoria, though, real-

holding the line, and that absent cooperation on the American Jobs Act, our president is doing the best that he or anyone else can do.

Is holding the line good enough? The African American unemployment rate is 14.1 percent. With the underutilization index, Black unemployment rates were nearly 26 percent, which means that one in four African Americans do not have work. Some say this is an underestimate. There are 5 million people who are part of the long term unemployed, people who were out of work for half a year or more.

applauded, and maybe Leroy even agreed that we are at a fork in the road. But when Leroy is asked if he is better off than he was four years ago, he is only thinking about his unemployment. He is thinking that he can’t pay his rent. He is thinking that he is worse off, and a great speech won’t make him feel better.

The Democratic challenge is to meet Leroy where he lives, to explain to him that his job prospects might be even more restricted under a Romney-Ryan administration than an Obama one. The challenge is to move Leroy past his angst and indifference to the same enthusiasm that delegates felt on Thursday night. The speeches are over and the work now begins. Speeches won’t bring electoral victory. A solid ground operation and lots of elbow grease will.

After the speech, as people filed out of the Time Warner Cable Arena, I spent some time with the Pacifica team from Los Angeles, Margaret Prescod, Davey D, and others. Congresswoman Maxine Waters, Ralph Nader, and I talked about the speech and next steps. Nader is most critical, indicating that President Obama spoke neither of poverty nor increasing the minimum wage. While he is right, one wonders if, at a fork in the road, these are appropriate criticisms. Nader is a critic of the two-party political system, but that’s all we have now, so we have to work it.

As much as I was fired up by President Obama’s speech, and the ones that preceded it, I also listened to it through the lens of Leroy, the brother who has been unemployed, or even out of the labor force, for half a year or more

ity sets in. In other words, on Friday morning, the reality of unemployment rates sets in. While the unemployment rate dropped just a bit, from 8.3 to 8.1 percent, the level of job creation does not meet expectations. In other words, with only 96,000 jobs created, the Republicans have hay to make about the employment situation. On the other hand, Democrats can clearly say that that President Obama’s policies are

These folks represent 40 percent of the unemployed. The data can be spun either way. Not enough? Holding the line? Failure? On the road to progress?

As much as I was fired up by President Obama’s speech, and the ones that preceded it, I also listened to it through the lens of Leroy, the brother who has been unemployed, or even out of the labor force, for half a year or more. Leroy listened, and Leroy

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11 Memorable Quotes from the DNC

#11 – Former Florida Republican Gov. Charlie Christ:

“Half a century ago, Ronald Reagan, the man whose relentless optimism inspired me to enter politics, famously said that he didn’t leave the Democratic Party; the party left him. I can certainly relate. I didn’t leave the Republican Party; it left me. Then again, as my friend Jeb Bush recently noted, Reagan himself would have been too moderate and too reasonable for today’s GOP.”

#10- Massachusetts Senatorial Candidate Elizabeth Warren:

“After all, Mitt Romney’s the guy who said corporations are people. No, Governor Romney, corporations are not people. People have hearts, they have kids, they get jobs, they get sick, they cry, they dance. They live, they love, and they die. And that matters. That matters. That matters because we don’t run this country for corporations, we run it for people.”

#9 – First Lady Michelle Obama:

“Barack knows the American Dream because he’s lived it...and he wants everyone in this country to have that same opportunity, no

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George E. Curry



matter who we are, or where we’re from, or what we look like, or who we love. And he believes that when you’ve worked hard, and done well, and walked through that doorway of opportunity...you do not slam it shut behind you...you reach back, and you give other folks the same chances

“If Mitt was Santa Claus, he’d fire the reindeer and outsource the elves.”

— Ted Strickland, former Ohio governor

that helped you succeed.”

#8- HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius:

“What’s missing from the Romney-Ryan plan for Medicare is Medicare. Instead of the Medicare guarantee, Republicans would give seniors a voucher that limits what is covered....”

#7 – Rep. Luis Gutierrez

(Ill.):

“President Obama is protecting immigrants. Mitt Romney wants to send them back. This election will determine whether high school valedictorians, football team captains, and student council presidents will be treated with respect – or treated like suspects.”

#6- Musician James Taylor:

“It’s an empty chair, it makes you nervous, don’t worry — I’m going to sit on it. I’m not going to talk to it.”

#5 – Former President Bill Clinton:

“In Tampa, the Republican argument against the president’s reelection was actually pretty simple – pretty snappy. It went something like this: ‘We left him a total mess. He hasn’t cleaned it up fast enough. So fire him and put us back in.’”

#4- Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley:

“Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan now say they want to take Ameri-

ca back. And so we ask: Back to what? Back to the failed policies that drove us into a deep recession? Back to the days of record job losses? Back to the days when insurance companies called being a woman a ‘pre-existing condition’? No, thank you. I don’t want to go back.”

#3- The late Senator Ted Kennedy (clip from 1994 debate with Mitt Romney):

“I have supported Roe v. Wade. I am pro-choice. My opponent is multiple-choice.”

#2 – Former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm:

“Mitt Romney loves our lakes and our trees. He loves our cars so much, they even have their own elevator. But the people who design and build and sell those cars? Well, in Romney’s world, the cars get the elevator, and the workers get the shaft!”

#1- Ted Strickland, former Ohio governor:

“If Mitt was Santa Claus, he’d fire the reindeer and outsource the elves.”

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine, is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA).