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## Remarks by Vice President Harris During a Moderated Conversation on Reproductive Health | Des Moines, IA

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OFFICE OF  
THE VICE PRESIDENT

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 28, 2023

### Remarks by Vice President Harris During a Moderated Conversation on Reproductive Health

*Drake University  
Des Moines, Iowa*

12:12 P.M. CDT

MS. PALMIERI: Hello, Des Moines. I'm so excited to be in Des Moines. It's Des Moines in July. (Laughter.) Not unlike D.C. in July, but Des Moines in July is way more fun. (Laughter.)

So, yeah, I'm Jennifer Palmieri, currently with Showtime's documentary series, "The Circus." But I know a lot of you from my time as President Obama's communications director -- (applause) -- yay! -- and Hillary Clinton's communications director in '16. (Applause.) That's nice. Got some -- got some special friends here from that time, I know.

And, wow, there is a lot happening -- a lot happening in your state, a lot happening in the

world. I was ab- -- able to hear some of the pre-program and the fights that you all have on your hands here. Senate Minority Leader Pam Jochum, Jennifer Konfrst, the House Minority Leader, and taking on the fight to try to defeat the six-week abortion ban. (Applause.)

But it's like -- it -- it seems that so much of American life is changing the han- -- whether it's the hands of the Supreme Court or in our state legislatures, and it's kind of even hard to process, let alone understand -- or people want to figure out how to fight back.

And so, I think we're really privileged today. We can -- everybody has super busy lives, middle of the summer. But we can take 40 minutes, step back, a little timeout, and have the privilege of hearing from someone who's not just the Vice President of the United States but who's, you know, throughout her career, fighting for rights, advancement of rights, and has a perspective of not just what's happening in -- on abortion rights but -- you know, I watched her speech last night when she went to Florida last week, talk about some of the changes happening there, particularly regarding school curriculum -- and sees this sort of, kind of, erosion of rights as a larger -- larger fight.

And we can take some time to kind of put that in context. You all are dealing with what you're dealing with. What that means -- might mean for Iowa and the country overall.

So, it is -- this is the cool -- one of the coolest things to be able to do to announce the Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris. (Applause.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Hi, Des Moines. It's good to be back. (Applause.)

MS. PALMIERI: I mean, it's fun to be in Des Moines, right?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I was just here in March. And -- but the last time I was at Drake was, I think, 2019. And it's -- it's -- I love this stage, and it's good to see everyone. Thank you for being here. (Applause.) Thank you.

MS. PALMIERI: I was hoping for a fried pork sandwich, but maybe another trip. (Laughter.) "The Circus" will be back soon, so we'll be -- don't worry. As you know, we like to eat and drink on that show. So, there'll be plenty of that.

So, you were -- as -- you know, it is -- Madam Vice President, it is a real privilege to be able to have this conversation with you. I mean, this state is wrestling with the six-week abortion ban that was just enacted here a couple of weeks ago.

But this larger erosion of rights is, you know, happening across the country. I know you were here in March and I know that, at that time, the Iowa poll -- Ann Selzer's famous Iowa poll showed that 61 percent of Iowans support abortion -- support abortion for most or all of -- at all -- most or all times. And still --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: And -- and 70 percent of Iowan women support it. (Applause.) Yeah.

MS. PALMIERI: So --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS. PALMIERI: It's not what the people want. And still, Governor Reynolds called a special session, passed this ban. I know that it's -- I know that it's, you know, being -- it's right now being held up in the courts.

But what is it -- you -- you know, why did you -- you said in March you wanted to come back. Why did you want to be here today? What did you want to tell Iowa today?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I want to thank everyone for being here.

Iowa is part of a very important aspect of who we are as a country. And the state of Iowa, how Iowans are doing, is a measure of how we are doing as a country. And so, being here and being back here -- and I've been here many, many times -- is an extension of a sense of respect and -- and appreciation for the people of this state. And that, as Vice President of the United States, I am and will continue to be concerned about all people in our country.

When I think about -- (applause) -- thank you.

And so, Jen, first of all, thank you for the time. When -- when we look at where we are as a country right now -- so let's contrast the fact that 70 percent of the women in Iowa support the importance of respecting the bodily autonomy of women and the ability and the authority they should have to make decisions about their own body. So, let's start there.

Let's then contrast that with a piece of legislation that has been passed -- it is stayed right now -- but would put a six-week ban on that, which is basically a ban -- because, I think, as I travel the country, it becomes clear to me that so many people in these state legislatures don't even know how women's bodies work. (Laughs.) (Applause.)

MS. PALMIERI: I mean, that has really broken through.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: In that most women will not even know they are pregnant in six weeks.

MS. PALMIERI: Yeah.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: So, it is -- it is in effect an outright ban. And looking at it, then, in the context of not only the significance of what happened last year with the Dobbs decision, which to contextualize that is that the highest court in our land, the United States Supreme Court, the Court of Thurgood and RBG, took a constitutional right that had been recognized from the people of America, from the women of America. (Applause.)

And so, considering the significance of that just on its face, in the context of also what I think most of us would agree, which is that we are a nation that has measured its progress and growth in many ways, including through an understanding that we are stronger through an expansion of rights, not restriction of rights, right? (Applause.)

So, putting it in that context, and then let us put it in the context that this decision came down over a year ago, I've been traveling our country, and the fallout to real people every day is profound.

And so, let us be truth-tellers about what's going on. I was going to say "explicit," but it sounds like explicit means provocative unnecessarily. Let us just tell the truth about what is going on. (Applause.)

Women in our country are having miscarriages in toilets. Laws are being passed that make no exception for rape or incest.

Now, many of you know I started my career as a prosecutor. And as a prosecutor, my specialty was crimes against women and children.

So, let us put these no-exception rules in context: So, after an individual has survived an act of violence, a violation to their body, so-called leaders would suggest she doesn't have the authority or right to make a decision about what happens to her body next. That's immoral. (Applause.) Or they would suggest -- or they will suggest, "Oh, well, we will give an exception if you report it."

Now, again, as someone who has personally dealt with these cases, the majority don't report. And often, they have a good reason for why they don't, in terms of what they know to be in their best interest or the best interest of their family. So how dare these supposed

leaders -- (applause) -- these supposed leaders have decided they're in a better position to tell her what's in her best interest than she is to know.

Imagine where we are right now, in terms of just fundamental values and a fundamental level of respect and appreciation for the fact that women know what's in their best interest. They don't need to be told by their government. (Applause.)

MS. PALMIERI: Thirt- -- thirteen months of living in post-Roe America -- I mean, you and I are around the same age. We didn't know any other era.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yeah.

MS. PALMIERI: And I know you've done since -- in the last 13 months, that you've done at least 50 visits, events --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MS. PALMIERI: -- in, you know, states -- like this state that have enacted bans, states that have done constitutional protections. You do talk a lot about women's stories, and you're very detailed in -- in telling the stories.

I mean, I wonder -- because you said you used to prosecute these cases. And it was -- it made me think when I heard it, I was like, "Oh, this is -- this is how she prosecutes cases." It's: Let me be very deliberate in telling you what it's exactly like for the woman. She needs to get on a plane. It is full of strangers.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yeah, that's right.

MS. PALMIERI: You know, like -- and go to a doctor she doesn't know across the country to get this procedure of a child that has died within her but she's, like, being forced to -- you know, to bring -- to bring to term.

But why is it -- why do you find it is so important to tell those stories.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Because this is not an intellectual debate.

MS. PALMIERI: But people make it such, right? It's like legal -- they make it legal.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: But it's -- people are playing political games with other people's lives -- (applause) -- in ra- -- very real ways.

And before I go on, to your first point -- so our daughter is in her twenties. She is going to have fewer constitutional rights than my mother-in-law. Imagine.

So, a point of the story. So, you've -- you've shared a bit of it. Part of what is happening -- so women, like the women in Iowa, if the stay is lifted for any reason, will have, by my count -- there's roughly maybe two states they can travel to to seek reproductive care, to seek abortion care.

Okay. So, what that means is -- first of all, understand that the majority of women who seek abortion care are mothers.

So, that means she's going to have to figure out childcare.

And if she is the single parent, she's going to have to be able to pay for that childcare.

She's going to lose time for work.

Maybe she has paid family leave, maybe she doesn't. Maybe she has paid sick leave, maybe she doesn't. She will have to be able to pay for a plane, train, bus, gas.

Most Americans are a \$400 unexpected expense away from bankruptcy. She may have to stay overnight. That's hotel.

If she is traveling -- like one example is a young woman who -- she and her husband wanted to be pregnant, and she was going through a miscarriage. And she had to travel from Texas to Seattle, because that's the only place she could receive care to help her survive this miscarriage.

So, this means that this woman has to afford a ticket. Now, just let's think about it, break it down. Go to an airport. Stand in line at TSA. Get on a plane with a bunch of strangers, knowing what's happening to her body right now. Endure that plane ride. Go through another crowded airport. You see what I'm saying? Why would we make people suffer this way?

You know, I -- when I talk about extremist so-called leaders, here's what I mean when I use that phrase. I believe it is a sign of strength, not weakness, to -- for a leader, in particular, to have empathy. It's a sign of strength. (Applause.)

It's a sign of a strong leader to have some level of concern, curiosity, and care for the suffering of other people and to not judge them but try to understand what they may actually be going through.

And what is happening with this issue around our country is the fallout of it includes the

stories I've just shared, many of them. And those are the ones we know, by the way. Because so many people are silently suffering for this other reason: Part of the environment of this discussion is to dispense judgment, as though these women have done something wrong, as though they were irresponsible -- they got themselves into some mess.

And the result of that, in many cases, is to make, then, these individuals who are being faced with very significant decisions that they are weighing based on the priorities of their life -- to make them feel alone and embarrassed.

Why would we do that? As a civil nation, as a civilized nation, why would we do that to our neighbors?

And so, when we think about this issue, there are so many layers to it that are about a violation of basic freedoms and rights that are about an attack on autonomy and basic concepts, such as the right of each person to have self-determination. And then, there is the piece of this that is about just making people feel alone and without support.

And that's how I think about this issue. And I would urge all of us to also consider and agree: On this subject, one does not have to abandon their faith or deeply held beliefs to agree the government should not be telling her what to do. (Applause.)

MS. PALMIERI: I mean, look at this at -- at this reaction. We know, as you said, 70 percent of women in this state, clearly a majority in the country -- why is it happening? Why are --

I mean, you just laid out why it's terrible. Why -- why do you think -- I did not anticipate in, like, our lifetime this big of a backlash. I guess that was naïve on my part.

But why do you think they're doing this? It's not just women's rights, of course. You know, and you just -- you had that speech in Florida last week about the -- that even Congressman Byron Donalds, a very strong supporter of President Trump, spoke out against the curriculum that DeSanti -- you know, that was approved in Florida.

Why do you think this is happening? I mean, it's -- this reckoning is, like --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I think you and I know this has been --

MS. PALMIERI: -- minority -- minority rule. This is not what the -- America wants.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: But this is an agenda that has been a long time in the making and is being carried out.

MS. PALMIERI: Yeah. A long time planned.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: But to your point, to pull out and kind of further contextualize it, I do believe that we are witnessing a national agenda that is about a full-on attack against hard-won, hard-fought freedoms and rights.

Consider this issue and then think about what is happening around a full-on attack on the right and the freedom to vote, where laws are being passed banning drop boxes, reducing the amount of early voting time. A law that was passed that would make it illegal to give people food and water if they are standing in line for hours. What happened to “Love thy neighbor”?

You look at what's happening in states like Florida, with “Don't say gay,” where you have -- you know, I think about it this way. I was very proud when I was District Attorney of San Francisco to perform some of the first same-sex marriages in our country in 2004 -- in 2004. (Applause.) So next year will be, obviously, 20 years.

I think about what's happening. But I think about what's happening in Florida through this context. And again, I think it is so important that when people are trying to engage in this kind of political rhetoric that we always ask, “What does this mean to a real person?”

So, on the “Don't say gay” piece, I'm thinking, okay, almost 20 years ago, that's -- same-sex marriages were performed. You've got young teachers, then, in Florida in their twenties who are afraid to put up a photograph of themselves with their life partner, with their spouse for fear that if they do, they might be fired from a job they love, which is one of the most noble professions: to teach other people's children. (Applause.)

You know, I asked my team -- I'm -- so, I love Venn diagrams. (Laughter.) I really do. The three circles, you know, and then they overlap. And so, Venn diagrams can help you sort through --

MS. PALMIERI: Are you a math person? I feel like --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I'm just kind of an undercover geek. (Laughter.)

And so, I asked my team, “Tell me -- let's do a Venn diagram. Tell me from which states are we seeing attacks on reproductive freedoms, voting, LGBTQ.”



And you would not be surprised to see that there was a significant overlap. And I think it's very important to see this in that context but to also see, then, the opportunity presented in this moment of crisis, which is the opportunity to re-dedicate ourselves to coalition building, to bringing people together -- (applause) -- right? -- bringing people together.

And by the way, the theme on all this is about, again, a very essential point: the freedom to just be oneself. Let people be. At the heart of it, isn't that the point also? They're not harming anyone else. Let people be. Let them exercise their rights -- that are the attributes of a democracy, by the way.

Because, Jen, I do think about it in an -- in a way that is about full-on attacks on foundational principles about who we are as a country and, therefore, our democracy.

So, as Vice President of the United States, I have now met over 100 world leaders -- presidents, prime ministers, chancellors, and kings.

One of the things about who we are as Americans representing the United States of America is we can walk in those rooms, chin up, shoulders back, with the earned and self-appointed authority to then talk about the importance of democracy, rule of law, human rights.

But the thing about being a role model is people watch what you do to see if it matches what you say. (Applause.)

So let us think also about what this means in terms of our standing in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent, global world. Let us think about what this means for some young woman who, in some nation with a dictator or an autocrat, is fighting for women's rights. And that autocrat or dictator is saying, "Well, you want to hold out the United States as your example? Look what they're doing. You be quiet."

Think about what this means not only as we have discussed, for the people of America, but potentially people around the world.

MS. PALMIERI: The -- what has been hard for me to wrap -- like, among the things it's been hard to sort of process of, like, so much radical change: A lot of is happening because 40, 50, sometimes 60 years ago, conservatives started movements like Federalist Society -- things -- things that were going to put conservative judges in -- in the courts, in power. Had, you know, a very -- you know, 50-year campaign to try to overturn Roe.

Some of these -- and they sort of aligned at a time -- I mean, the changes that are happening, the rights that are being eroded, the invasion is not conservative. The invasion of people's lives is -- right? -- it is -- it is --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Government intrusion.

Q It is -- it is --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Isn't that ironic?

MS. PALMIERI: I mean, it's just plainly government -- it is plainly government intrusion. But the conservatives sort of built this structure by which they had the courts that are allowing this to happen.

You talked about that you think that this is -- there's an opportunity now, which I agree there's an opportunity among the coalition to show that woman who's living in another country, dictator, these -- America can have these -- these things happen and this erosion of rights, but America can also find all sorts of tools to fight back.

Do you -- what do you think that coalition is like? And do you think it's going to take -- you know, I think about this. Like, well, will it take 50 years on our side to win rights back? Is it -- can a perfect storm, a perfect coalition form that people rise up quickly and try to restore these things? Like, what kind of -- what's the coalition and what kind of horizon do you think that we're on?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I'm going to cut to the chase of where I'm going to go with a much longer point.

MS. PALMIERI: Yeah.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Register to vote. (Applause.) Register to vote, and then vote.

MS. PALMIERI: (Inaudible) answer.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Because here's the thing. The Court took away the freedom and the right of people to make decisions about their own body. Congress can put it back by codifying Roe v. Wade, which means putting back into law the protections of Roe v. Wade. And Joe Biden will sign it. And Joe Biden will sign it. (Applause.)

So, we need a Congress that will pass that legislation. And then it will be the law of the

land and undo the kinds of things that are being proposed here and in many other states.

Register to vote and then vote so we can pass the John Lewis Voting Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act. (Applause.) And Joe Biden will sign it. (Applause.)

So, there are some fundamental -- the Equality Act. We are -- just there are so many aspects of this that literally are about the right of the people to have a say in the future of their country and the tool by which -- one of the tools by which that occurs, and that is through voting and helping folks see the nexus, the connection between voting and all these issues.

And I can't help but first to say: Thank you, everyone here, for all you have done. Because you're -- you being so active and so invested in our country -- your love of our country makes a difference. It is the purest act, I think, of patriotism -- (applause) -- to fight for the ideals of our country.

We love our country. We believe in those foundational principles. And now is the time to -- to be vigilant in protecting them. And so, registering to vote and voting will make a big difference.

And just think about what happened in 2020. Because people voted, we have now -- we now have capped the cost of insulin for seniors at \$35 a month. (Applause.) Long overdue.

We capped the cost for seniors of prescription medication on an annual basis to \$2,000 a year. Long overdue. Long overdue. Let Medicare negotiate drug prices against the pharmaceutical companies. (Applause.) We did that. Long overdue.

Let's pass reasonable gun legislation. That safety -- that says -- (applause). But we still need to pass an assault weapons ban.

Register to vote and vote. (Applause.)

So, all is not lost. This is a moment where, again, I will say I do believe there's a full-on attack against hard-won freedoms.

But we have power. And if I may use a cliché, the power is in the people. The power is in the people.

I'm going to -- see, I couldn't be here without offering a website. Vote.gov. (Laughter.)

Vote.gov.

Please, I would ask everyone -- you've taken so much effort to be here and away from all of your other priorities and obligations. Please do check and make sure you registered to vote at Vote.gov. And then please just ask three people randomly who you might see on the street, when you go to the grocery store, or wherever.

Let's make sure that people start registering now. Let's not wait until the eve of the election. Let's take these next few months until the end of the year and make it our personal mission to remind everyone we know: Please register to vote. Because it will and it does make a difference.

MS. PALMIERI: These poor people live in Iowa, so all they hear are people asking them to go to a website to give them money so they can make a debate stage. So I'm sure they're happy to -- (laughter) --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Right.

MS. PALMIERI: -- to hear about about a ".gov" website that all it is about -- nothing about politics -- all this is about is just making your -- making your voice heard.

So, you talked about the -- you know, pursuing federal protections to restore abortion rights. I know there's not a -- it's frustrating there's not a ton that the administration can do outside of that. But there is a lot that you all have tried to do in the -- after Roe, particularly since this state is facing -- depending on what the court decides -- this ban.

You know, tell us about some of the administrative actions that you all have taken post-Roe -- or Post-Dobbs.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, we -- we're doing a lot of work through the various federal agencies to protect privacy, especially where we have had some concern about, for example, mobile apps where a lot of young people will go on to check their menstrual cycles, and making sure that no one is giving that private information to someone to track whether they have missed a period.

MS. PALMIERI: I mean --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: This -- this is just the way the body works. It's okay to have these conversations in public. (Laughter and applause.)

MS. PALMIERI: Yeah. But in America, you have to worry about it.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: So, that -- we're doing a lot of that work around privacy, protecting access to contraception, because we are very concerned that this could lead to that issue. (Applause.)

Doing work that is about ensuring that all states are following the law, which -- around the requirement to give emergency care to anyone who needs it.

So, this is some of the work. But there's some related work that we're doing that also represents and highlights the hypocrisy around these folks who are pushing these bans.

Do you know that in the top 10 -- the states that have the top 10 rates of maternal mortality also have bans? Okay?

I have -- the issue of maternal mortality has been a priority of mine for a number of reasons. And --

MS. PALMIERI: I know that you were on your way to a maternal health event in Illinois with Congresswoman Underwood when the --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The Dobbs decision came down.

MS. PALMIERI: Yeah.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Absolutely right. And so, here's the thing --

MS. PALMIERI: Because the maternal healthcare sy- -- it's an abomina- -- people don't know it's an abomination in America. Tell us about that.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We are the wealthiest nation of all wealthy nations. We -- the United States of America has the highest rate of maternal mortality.

Okay, so I said "hypocrisy." Well, yeah. Because all these people who are pushing these bans and they -- they suggest that it is because they care about mothers and children -- and have been silent on the issue of maternal mortality. (Applause.)

And here's a data point that many here know: Black women are three times more likely to die in connection with childbirth. Native women, twice as likely. Rural women, one and a half times more likely.

Well, we know that one third of the people in this beautiful state live in rural America. Do you know that in two thirds of the counties in Iowa, there's not one OBGYN? (Applause.) Think about that. Think about that.

So, folks are passing these bans, meanwhile not paying attention to the fact that in two thirds of the counties, there's not one OBGYN. The hypocrisy that is present in this issue.

I have been pushing that states would agree that they would extend Medicaid for postpartum care from what the standard was when I started this, which is 2 months -- she just gave birth to a human being -- (laughter) -- to 12 months. (Applause.)

So, when we started this, only -- there were only three states that were doing it. Now I believe there are 35. Iowa still hasn't signed on, which is just a simple point. Expand Medicaid coverage for postpartum care from 2 months to 12 months. Put your money where your mouth is, literally. (Applause.)

MS. PALMIERI: I do wonder -- I mean, some of these stories that I've heard about -- particularly from South Carolina state legislature when they were passing -- passing, I think it -- I don't remember if it was a 6-week ban or 12 or 10 or something.

But, you know, legislators saying, "Well, I didn't understand that -- what that meant. I didn't understand that a woman might not know that she's -- that she..." And I believe -- you know, this is just the speed with which -- with which they are moving.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Meanwhile, Jen -- meanwhile, these are the ones walking around with their flag pin and all their staff running after them. (Laughter.) And then, they still don't know basic facts about biology, but they profess to be so knowledgeable. (Applause.) Come on.

MS. PALMIERI: The staff running after them is a nice -- (laughter) --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, you want to think about this.

MS. PALMIERI: You paint a good picture. You're good at painting -- you know, like, I work in, like, telling stories. I was like, "That's good. Yeah, I can see it now." The staff running after them with the flag pin. So good. (Laughter.)

What about -- so -- but, you know, what -- so, I don't know -- I don't know enough about Iowa's ballot initiative situation. But Kansas, pretty conservative state. Iowa, pretty conservative state. They have -- they're going to have a ballot initiative -- 58 -- I saw a poll

-- 58 percent.

And I do wonder -- you know, people just taking these matters into their own -- you know, citizens take matters into their own hands might be a good way to start to restore some of these rights.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, you bring up such a great point. So, remember --

MS. PALMIERI: I know you travel in a lot of states, so I don't know if there's any of the other stories you want to share what from (inaudible) these experiences.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I'll just go from where the punditry was to where the voters were in the midterms.

MS. PALMIERI: (Inaudible) pundit. (Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No offense. (Laughter.)

Remember, everyone said in the midterms there was going to be this so-called red wave. And on this point, to your point, wherever choice was on the ballot, from Kansas to California, the voters voted in favor of the freedom of the individual to make decisions about their own body. (Applause.) Right?

MS. PALMIERI: When I was in -- during the midterms -- yes, I was traveling with "The Circus." And people were like, "What's happening..." -- I spent a lot of time in Pennsylvania -- "...what's happening with Fetterman?" It's like, "I don't know. Everyone here seems to really have this guy back -- guy's back, know someone who's had a stroke, and everyone is talking about jobs." (Laughs.)

Like absolutely everyone was talking about jobs. They're saying, like, "What do you think is going to happen?" "Well, I think the Democrats are going to win because of abortion," you know.

Like every -- but, to your point, people got it. They got the link of what was, like, at stake here -- the rights. You know, that it wasn't just that these things are combined.

And young people, in particular, have a lot at stake.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MS. PALMIERI: It's not -- it's on everyone. You know, like, I know that they're like, "Don't put that all on us just because we're going to be around longest to fix everything."

But what have you seen with young people being energized around this or your -- you know, what do you want to say about that -- that demographic about, you know, what they can do, what they -- what you've heard from them?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I'll take my goddaughter, for example. She was applying to college. And she told me that her friends were all -- whatever their gender -- now making a decision about where they would apply based on what state that is and what the laws are.

MS. PALMIERI: Not good for -- I was dat- -- look, I'm a Big 10 fan; I'm not an Iowa -- an Iowa State fan. (Inaudible) look out because --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yeah. And young people are also -- young adults making decisions about where they will take a job based on this issue.

So, you know, there is often -- when we are talking about a violation of basic civil rights, there's often an economic cost to it as well. It may not be the first thing we think about and it certainly may not be the most injurious of the impacts, but one should understand that we're now talking about essentially creating restrictions on the freedom of movement for people or at least encumbering the freedom of movement.

And -- and so, there is a wide range of impact. But that's part of what I'm hearing from young people -- you know, people in their twenties -- in particular, people in high school -- young people in high school thinking about where they will live, where they will go, their dreams about their future.

And -- and I'm also hearing from them, they're upset. (Laughter.) That's the kind way of saying it. They're really -- I will tell you in traveling, however: Our future as a country is so bright.

I am meeting young leaders around our country. They -- they're done. They're like -- they're done. You know, "What are you doing about climate crisis? Is everybody going to get in front of this? Because we are really clear..." The young people are have shared with me -- young leaders shared with me for the first time --

I said, "How are you guys talking with each other?" -- these young climate activists. And they said, "Well, you know, we're talking about a number of things, including climate anxiety." They're literally experiencing anxiety for fear about doomsday and whether or not



they should have children, whether or not they should even think about buying a house because of the longevity of that commitment and will everything be the same over that period of time?

Young people are talking about gun violence. I mean, think about it. I grew up, you know, at a time in California where we would, first day of school, learn the name of the teacher; there's the bathroom down the hall; and if there's an earthquake, hide under your desk. Our children now on their first day of school are learning there's the teacher, there's the bathroom, and this is how you quietly hide from an active shooter.

I have talked with young students who have said to me on this topic, "Yeah, you know, I don't really like going to fifth period." "Why, sweetheart?" "Because there is no closet in that classroom" in which they can hide.

So, on so many of these issues, our young leaders are just fed up with the status quo and they are organizing. And it makes me so excited about our future.

So, including on the issue of choice, but a lot of these other issues, I think the best that we can do, all of us, at whatever stage of youth we are in -- (laughter) -- is to encourage our young leaders to lead. I really do. I really do. (Applause.)

MS. PALMIERI: And they're doing it.

We're just about out of time. Just for our last question -- you know, you talk about how, you know, America is about promise.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yeah.

MS. PALMIERI: And it's about, you know -- the fight for rights is never -- is never fully -- never fully won. Do you see -- do you look at this sort of time -- it's obviously very difficult. Do you have any sense of optimism about what may follow this?

I mean, you said that you're optimistic about young people and where they're -- where they're going. But what we may -- you know, it's important that leaders can paint a vision of, like, where we might go, how might we come out of this.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: So I'll make two points. One, you're right, I often -- and I will do it again right now -- paraphrase a quote from Coretta Scott King, who famously said the fight for civil rights -- which is the fight for freedom and justice and equality -- the fight for civil rights must be fought and won with each generation.

And I think her point there was, one, that it is the nature of it all that whatever gains we make will not be permanent unless the second point is true, which is that we are vigilant. So, we must remain vigilant.

And understanding that it's the nature of it all, don't be disappointed or despair or throw up our hands. Let's just roll up our sleeves. It's the nature of it all that we must be vigilant.

And the second point I'll make is this. I do worry a great deal about what this means in terms of the strength of our democracy. And so, here's how I think about that. The nature of democracy is it's -- there are two sides to it, in terms of the nature of it. There's a duality.

On the one hand, when democracy is intact, it is incredibly strong in terms of the strength it bestows on the individuals, in terms of their rights and their freedoms -- incredibly strong, in terms of what it does for its people.

On the other hand, it's very fragile. Our democracy will only be as intact as our willingness to fight for it.

And so, fight we must and fight we will. (Applause.) Yes, we will. Because we love our country. We love our country. We believe in our country. Our country is worth fighting for. (Applause.)

MS. PALMIERI: Thank you. Thanks, everyone for coming.

END                      12:55 P.M. EDT

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