

My speech on democracy

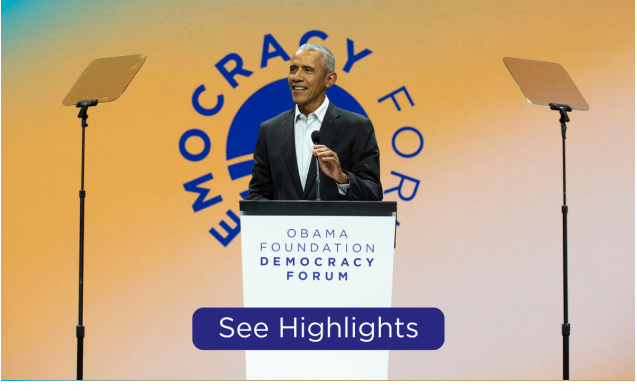


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Hi there,

Yesterday I joined the Obama Foundation's inaugural Democracy Forum to talk about how we can preserve and strengthen democracy around the world.



At the Forum, I was happy to announce that the Foundation is expanding its work to train young people across this country with the new [Leaders United States program](#) that will allow more people to be a part of our growing network of leaders from around the world. And while these young people are working on the front lines of a range of issues, one thing that has become obvious is that progress on so many of them is linked to a broader commitment to democratic values.

Right now, democratic ideas are under assault around the world. This has nothing to do with traditional partisan lines or policy preferences. What's being challenged are the foundational principles of democracy itself. That's why we decided to hold this Forum – to bring together some of the remarkable young leaders in our network with some of the top thinkers and practitioners in the field so we can protect – and improve – democracy.



It's fair to say that we won't solve this in 48 hours. The reasons for democratic backsliding are complicated and varied, but we identified a few issues where we can start digging deeper. We explored ways to create a more inclusive and sustainable model of capitalism, so that people feel they've got real economic opportunity; reimagine both our traditional and social media platforms to curb toxic disinformation and encourage a healthier exchange of ideas; and strengthen the forces of pluralism in an increasingly diverse world by looking at the story we're telling about our culture, values and identity – because for any genuine democracy to function, all people need a seat at the table.

Rather than shy away from these cultural questions, we have to take them head on and find a way to affirm the best of traditional values and create a space for our differences, while also insisting that our politics and governmental institutions uphold the overarching principles of equality for all people.

We have to rebuild healthy mediating institutions – worker organizations, civic associations, religious associations, trade groups – both in the real world and virtual world. We need to expand the civic education we provide our children – make it hands-on and relevant, so they can practice the skills of citizenship. And we must find ways to harness the power of information technologies – through better industry practices, government regulation, and innovative new business models – to promote more trust and cooperation and less anger and fear.

Making progress on these issues is a project that will take decades, not years. But it will be driven by the ideas and insights of a new generation of leaders who are better attuned to the changes that are taking place around the world.

[I hope you'll take a few minutes to hear from those young leaders directly at the Forum.](#)

We're proud to support them through our work at the Obama Foundation and look forward to them carrying democracy's torch into the future.

– Barack

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