

### ***Civic Minds***

**Date:** Friday, January 13, 2017

**Print Replica Date:** Wednesday, January 11, 2017

**Article Title:** 'Democracy is threatened when we take it for granted'; Obama uses last address to urge Americans to get involved

**Section:** Main, A1

### **Learning Objectives**

- ✓ Students will examine President Obama's farewell address and how they feel about American democracy today.

### **CCSS Standards**

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.b**

Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

#### **Social Studies EALR 1: Civics**

The student understands and applies knowledge of government, law, politics, and the nation's fundamental documents to make decisions about local, national, and international issues and to demonstrate thoughtful, participatory citizenship.

#### **Social Studies EALR 3: Geography**

Understands the cultural universals of place, time, family life, economics, communication, arts, recreation, food, clothing, shelter, transportation, government, and education.

- Analyzes and evaluates the social and political factors affecting cultural interactions.

#### **Social Studies EALR 4: History**

- Analyzes the motives and interests behind an interpretation of a recent event.

#### **Social Studies EALR 5: Social Studies**

- Analyzes consequences of positions on an issue or event.
- Analyzes the short-term and long-term implications of decisions affecting the global community.

### **Vocabulary**

Look up the definition of ***tout***. Please write the definition and create a new sentence, using your own words.

"He ***touted*** the end of the Great Recession and other economic gains, foreign-policy achievements such as restoring diplomatic ties to Cuba and a breakthrough with Iran to stall its nuclear program, as well as marriage equality in the U.S. and the expansion of access to health care for 20 million Americans who had been uninsured."

### **Comprehension Questions**

1. President Obama bid farewell to the nation Tuesday night in an emotional speech that sought to do what?
2. He made only passing reference to the Republican Trump, who will soon replace him. But when he noted the imminence of that change, what did the crowd do and what was Obama's message?
3. Obama's decision to deliver his final major national address from his adopted hometown instead of the White House was one of several flourishes on a tradition of goodbyes that have produced some of the most memorable speeches in presidential history. What were the other two examples they gave?

4. Tuesday's address was orchestrated as a \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The speech also reflected the unique situation Obama will confront as he leaves office. At just 55, he is preparing for an active post presidency. What is he planning on doing?
6. Obama's remarks touched only marginally on his record. What achievements did he tout?
7. But he said those achievements were not his alone. Who else did he say created the change?
8. Instead his focus was his \_\_\_\_\_ going forward after a bitter campaign to replace him and lingering concern about how Trump will handle foreign relations, national security, the economy and other big-ticket issues.
9. What did Obama call for?
10. And the nation's first black president reflected on what? What did he call for?
11. The remarks were expected to be Obama's final address in office, though he may still conduct one more news conference before he leaves office on what date?

### **Class Discussion Questions and Essay Prompts**

- What does Democracy mean to you?
- Do you take living in our democratic society for granted? Why or why not?
- Did you watch President Obama's farewell address? What did you think about it? If not, please take time to watch it here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/farewell>

***Obama's valedictory speech in his hometown of Chicago was a public meditation on the trials and triumphs that made up his eight years in the White House. Arguing that his faith in America had been confirmed, Obama said he ends his tenure inspired by America's "boundless capacity" for reinvention and declared: "The future should be ours."***

- Why did the writer say Obama's speech was a public meditation on his trials and triumphs?
- What do you think Obama meant when he stated that he's inspired by America's boundless capacity for reinvention and declared that the future should be ours?

***Reflecting on the corrosive recent political campaign, Obama said America's great "potential will be realized only if our democracy works. Only if our politics reflects the decency of our people. Only if all of us, regardless of our party affiliation or particular interest, help restore the sense of common purpose that we so badly need right now."***

***Obama returned to the point later, saying, "Our democracy is threatened whenever we take it for granted."***

- Do you agree that the recent political presidential campaign was corrosive? Why or why not?
- Do you agree with Obama's statement, "Our democracy is threatened whenever we take it for granted?" Why or why not?

***"You were the change. You answered people's hopes, and because of you, by almost every measure, America is a better, stronger place than it was when we started," he said.***

- Do you think American is better and stronger than it was 8 years ago? Why or why not?

***Instead his focus was his optimism about civic engagement going forward after a bitter campaign to replace him and lingering concern about how Trump will handle foreign relations, national security, the economy and other big-ticket issues. He called for a new social compact to creating opportunity for all, or else "the disaffection and division that has stalled our progress will only sharpen in years to come."***

- What is civic engagement?

- What types of civic engagement do you see in your own community?
- Have you ever worked towards bettering your school or community? Share your story.

***And the nation's first black president reflected on racial tensions "as old as our nation itself," calling for greater understanding and acceptance of the increasingly diverse nation.***

***"Laws alone won't be enough. Hearts must change," he said.***

- In your opinion, has racial tension been higher the last few years? Why or why not?
- Do you agree that hearts must be changed, rather than just laws? Why or why not?

**Civic Minds in The Seattle Times is posted to the Web on Friday. Please share the NIE program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica version of the newspaper please call 206/652-6290 or toll-free at 1-888/775-2655.**

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