

Remarks at the White House

29 August 2011

Let us return for a moment to election night 2008. As I sat in our farm house in Pennsylvania, watching Barack Obama's victory speech, I turned my head aside so my wife would not see the tears in my eyes. I suspect that millions cried. It was a great day for America.

We had great hopes for Barack Obama - perhaps our dreams were unrealistic - he is only human. But it is appropriate, it is right, in a period honoring Martin Luther King, to recall the hopes and dreams of that evening.

We had a dream – that the new President would understand the intergenerational injustice of human-made climate change – that he would recognize our duty to be caretakers of creation, of the land, of the life on our planet – and that he would give these matters the priority that our young people deserve.

We had a dream – that the President would understand the commonality of solutions for energy security, national security and climate stability – and that he would exercise hands-on leadership, taking the matter to the public, avoiding backroom crippling deals with special interests.

We had a dream – that the President would stand as firm as Abraham Lincoln when he faced the great moral issue of slavery – and, like Franklin Roosevelt or Winston Churchill, he would speak with the public, enlisting their support and reassuring them.

Perhaps our dreams were unrealistic. It is not easy to find an Abraham Lincoln or a Winston Churchill. But we will not give up. There can be no law or regulation that stops us from acting on our dreams. Have no doubt – if that tar sands pipeline is approved, we will be back, and our numbers will grow. For the sake of our children and grandchildren, we must find someone who is worthy of our dreams.