



## Barack Obama: Eight Years in the White House

*On 60 Minutes, President Obama discusses his two terms as commander-in-chief, Donald Trump and what has been one of the strangest presidential transitions in history*

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Correspondent Steve Kroft

*The following script is from “60 Minutes Presents: Barack Obama: Eight Years in the White House,” which aired on Jan. 15, 2017. Steve Kroft is the correspondent.*

Good evening. I’m Steve Kroft. Welcome to “60 Minutes Presents.” Tonight, President Barack Obama looks back at eight years in the White House. His successes. His failures and what he learned from his two terms as the nation’s chief executive and commander-in-chief.

We first met him 10 years ago, when he was in his first term as a U.S. senator from Illinois and [launching an unlikely campaign](#) for president.

As we said at the time, there had never been another presidential candidate quite like him. His last name rhymed with “Osama.” And his middle name was Hussein.

He was half black, half white, and in terms of political experience, very green.

President Barack Obama: Steve Kroft.

Steve Kroft: Hey!

We sat down with President Obama Monday afternoon in the State Dining Room at the White House. It marked our 12th and final interview with him since he was elected president. We began by showing him a picture.



From left: 60 Minutes correspondent Steve Kroft, President Barack Obama and producer L. Franklin Devine, 2007.  
CBS News

Steve Kroft: I got something I want to show you.

President Barack Obama: What do we got here? Look at that. I got to say that I feel as if I couldn't take this kind of Chicago winter right now.

It was taken Super Bowl Sunday 2007 on a frigid day on the South Side of Chicago -- one of the last times he could walk a street without attracting a big crowd, unencumbered by Secret Service or an entourage. It was a week before he declared his formal candidacy for president.

Steve Kroft: That was 10 years ago.

President Barack Obama: I think that's right. That's my mother-in-law's house, that block, I think.

Steve Kroft: Nobody around, nobody. Nobody cared.

President Barack Obama: They didn't. How about that?

He was an audaciously hopeful junior senator from Illinois, splitting his time between his tiny apartment in Washington and the Chicago home where he had two young daughters.

*Steve Kroft: What else does he make besides tuna fish?*

*Malia Obama: Chili, and that's it.*

His wife was a working mom, a hospital executive and major breadwinner in the family. She wasn't crazy about her husband being in politics.

*Steve Kroft: Has it put strains on the marriage from time to time?*

*Michelle Obama: Oh, no.*

*Sen. Obama: Absolutely, it has.*

*Steve Kroft: But you'd let him go ahead and do this?*

*Michelle Obama: I think if I weren't married to him, I'd want him to be in there. So I don't want to stand in the way of that because we have to work out a few things. We've had those arguments and...*

*Sen. Obama: And I've lost them all.*



60 Minutes correspondent Steve Kroft and President Barack Obama  
CBS News

It all seems like a long time ago.

Steve Kroft: So what's the difference between this guy and the guy you are now? How much smarter are you than this guy standing on the street corner?

President Barack Obama: Well, let's see. Obviously I'm grayer, a few more wrinkles. You know I'll be honest with you, Steve. One of the things I'm proud about is that I think my basic character and outlook actually have not changed much. And people who are closest to me will tell you that the guy who came here is the same guy who's leaving. And the reason I take pride for that is one of the things you worry about when you're in the bubble, and there's all this pomp and circumstance and hail to the chief is, do you lose touch with what you thought was important and what brought you here? And I'm proud that I don't think I have lost touch.

Steve Kroft: If you had to write a brief description of this job beginning with wanted-- how would you describe the position? And what are the tasks? And what skills do you think you need?

President Barack Obama: Thick skin helps.

Steve Kroft: Thick skin, stamina.

**“People who are closest to me will tell you that the guy who came here is the same guy who's leaving.” President Obama**

President Barack Obama: Stamina. There is a greater physical element to this job than you would think, just being able to grind it out. And I think your ability to not just mentally and emotionally, but physically be able to say, “We got this. We're going to be OK.”

Steve Kroft: Did you learn the executive stuff on the job? Because when we first talked, I must have asked you 100 times. Your only executive experience was running the Harvard Law Review and running your own campaign. Did you have to learn a lot of this on the job?



President Barack Obama and 60 Minutes correspondent Steve Kroft  
CBS News

President Barack Obama: The campaign was a more significant training ground than I think people give it credit for. By the time I got here, I think I had a pretty good sense of what was required. But the circumstances in which I came in were different than most executives, right? The enterprise was in the midst of a major crisis. And so, those first six months were a fire drill.

Beside the two wars he inherited in Iraq and Afghanistan, and promised to end, a financial crisis at home had pushed the United States to the brink of another Great Depression. When we spoke with the [new president in March of 2009](#), the economy was losing 800,000 jobs a month, the government was throwing hundreds of billions of dollars at failing banks, and the auto industry was on the verge of collapse. Politically pummeled from all sides, Obama did his best to keep a sense of humor.

*President Obama: I just want to say that the only thing less popular than putting money into banks is putting money into the auto industry. So--*

*Steve Kroft: But 18 percent are in favor, 76 percent against.*

*President Obama: It's not a high number.*

*Steve Kroft: You're sitting here and you're-- you are laughing about some of these problems. Are people going to look at this and say, "I mean, he's sitting there just making jokes about money--" How do you deal with that?*

*President Obama: No, no, no.*

*Steve Kroft: I mean, wha-- explain the-- the-- the--*

*President Obama: Well--*

*Steve Kroft: The mood in your laughter.*

*President Obama: Yeah, I mean, there's gotta be--*

*Steve Kroft: Are you punch-drunk?*

*President Obama: No, no, there's gotta be a little gallows humor to get you through the day.*



President Barack Obama participates in a 60 Minutes interview with Steve Kroft in the State Dining Room of the White House, Jan. 9, 2017.  
Chuck Kennedy, The White House

A political candidacy built around hope and change and compromise would eventually become a presidency of crisis and confrontation.

Steve Kroft: Is there anything that surprised you about this job?

President Barack Obama: I was surprised and continue to be surprised by the severity of partisanship in this town. And I think that I'd been warned about it. You'll remember, in the campaign back in 2007, 2008, people would say, "Oh, he's being naïve. He thinks that there's no red states and blue states. And wait 'til he gets here." And I will confess that, I didn't fully

appreciate the ways in which individual senators or members of Congress now are pushed to the extremes by their voter bases. I did not expect, particularly in the midst of crisis, just how severe that partisanship would be.

Steve Kroft: You came into this office trying to unify the country. You said that many times during the campaign. You wanted to bring people together. You wanted to change Washington. You talked about transformative change. And you became the focal point for some of the division.

**“I’m the first to acknowledge that I did not crack the code in terms of reducing this partisan fever.” President Obama**

**President Barack Obama:** I became a lightning rod for some partisan battles. I could not be prouder of the track record we’ve put together. By almost every measure, the country is significantly better off than when I came in. If you can look back and say, “The economy’s better. Our security’s better. The environment’s better. Our kids’ education is better,” if you can say that you’ve made things better, then considering all the challenges out there, you should feel good. But I’m the first to acknowledge that I did not crack the code in terms of reducing this partisan fever.

Steve Kroft: You didn’t change Washington.

**President Barack Obama:** You know, I changed those things that were in direct-- my direct control. I mean, I-- look, I’m proud of the fact that, with two weeks to go, we’re probably the first administration in modern history that hasn’t had a major scandal in the White House. In that sense, we changed some things. I would’ve liked to have gotten that one last Supreme Court justice in there. I’d like the Supreme Court to take a look at--

Steve Kroft: You couldn’t even get a hearing.



President Barack Obama participates in a 60 Minutes interview with Steve Kroft in the Oval Office of the White House, Jan. 9, 2017.

Pete Souza, The White House

President Barack Obama: But we couldn't even get a hearing. Trying to get the other side of the aisle to work with us on issues, in some cases, that they professed, originally, an interest in, and saying to them, "Hold on a second. You guys used to think this was a good idea. Now, just because I'm supporting it, you can't change your mind." But they did. And what that did, I think, made me appreciate. And I've said this before. But it's worth repeating. Because this is on me. Part of the job description is also shaping public opinion. And we were very effective, and I was very effective, in shaping public opinion around my campaigns. But there were big stretches, while governing, where even though we were doing the right thing, we weren't able to mobilize public opinion firmly enough behind us to weaken the resolve of the Republicans to stop opposing us or to cooperate with us. And there were times during my presidency where I lost the PR battle.

And losing the PR battles, particularly about healthcare, translated into losing his Democratic majorities in Congress, beginning with a Republican landslide in the [midterm election of 2010](#).

*Steve Kroft: There is this feeling in-- particularly among people who are among your hardened supporters—*

*President Obama: Right.*

*Steve Kroft: --who feel a little disappointed that they think that you've lost your mojo. That you've lost your ability, that touch you had during the campaign to inspire—*



*President Obama: Yeah.*

*Steve Kroft: -- and lead that-- you know, everybody in Washington writes about the sort of aloofness that you have and I'm sure that drives you crazy. That you've let other people define you, that you haven't sold your successes well enough?*

*President Obama: I think it's a fair argument, you know, I think that over the course of two years we were so busy and so focused on getting a bunch of stuff done that we stopped paying attention to the fact that, you know leadership isn't just legislation, that it's a matter of persuading people and giving them confidence, and bringing them together and setting a tone.*

For the next six years, there would be legislative gridlock, and by 2016, the people who had looked to Obama for change were looking somewhere else.

Steve Kroft: [Donald Trump, if you take away the particulars, was elected to the office](#), basically, on the same program that you were, of change. He wants to change Washington.

President Barack Obama: Well, I mean that's a lot of particulars you're taking away. Fair enough.

Steve Kroft: But do you think--

President Barack Obama: He was a change candidate.

Steve Kroft: Do you think anybody can change Washington?

President Barack Obama: I think the American people can change Washington. But I think that it is not going to change, because somebody from on high directs that change. Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, are motivated by all kinds of issues. They're sincerely interested in the economy, in terrorism, in social issues. But the one overriding thing they're interested in is getting reelected. And if they think that it's harder for them to get reelected by cooperating with each other, then they won't cooperate.

Steve Kroft: A lot of people think the system is broken, that the system, the political system is broken. That seemed to be the message that you heard throughout this campaign.

President Barack Obama: Well --

Steve Kroft: And you seem to be saying, in some ways, maybe it is broken.



President Barack Obama and 60 Minutes correspondent Steve Kroft  
CBS News

President Barack Obama: In the first two years, when I had a strong majority in the House and the Senate, we were as productive as any administration has been since the '60s. I mean, we got a lot done. And so you can get a lot of stuff done through this system. But to sustain a governing majority, that requires an ability for Republicans and Democrats to find some common ground. And right now, the structure of the system is such where it makes it really hard for people to work together. And we mentioned, an example earlier, the Supreme Court nominations. I mean, the fact that Mitch McConnell, the leader of the Republicans, was able to just stop a nomination almost a year before the next election and really not pay a political price for it, that's a sign that the incentives for politicians in this town to be so sharply partisan have gotten so outta hand that we're weakening ourselves.

Steve Kroft: How serious do you think this is? I mean, how stable do you think that the political system, the democratic system, is?

President Barack Obama: Look, I think it's stable, because the framers, in their wisdom, designed the system so that power's pretty disbursed. You know, we have states. And we have cities. And we have counties. And we have the private sector. And-- and so the country still works even when Washington's dysfunctional. But the problem is that, over time, big pieces of business that have to get done without leadership from Washington, don't get done.

Steve Kroft: I want to go back just briefly on this. But I think, look, this last election, you had a political system. Well, first of all the people elected somebody who went around saying that the system was rigged.

President Barack Obama: Yeah.

Steve Kroft: You had two of the most unpopular presidential candidates selected by the two parties in history. Doesn't that say something's wrong, something serious is wrong?

President Barack Obama: It indicates that there is a lot of cynicism out there. It indicates that the corrosive nature of everything from talk radio to fake news to negative advertising has made people lack confidence in a lot of our existing institutions. I think it indicates, at least on the Democratic side, that we've got more work to do to strengthen our grassroots networks. In some ways, the Democratic Party hadn't constructed itself to get that message out to the places it needed to get to. The Tea Party I have huge disagreements with, obviously. But I give them credit for having activated themselves. And they made a difference in terms of moving the Republican Party, in terms of moving the country in a particular direction. It's a direction I disagreed with. But it showed that, in fact, you get involved, if your voice is heard it has an impact.

Steve Kroft: Do you feel the same way about Donald Trump?

President Barack Obama: Well I think that he clearly was able to tap into a lot of grievances. And he has a talent for making a connection with his supporters that overrode some of the traditional benchmarks of how you'd run a campaign or conduct yourself as a presidential candidate. What will be interesting to see is how that plays out during the course of his presidency. We are moving into an era where a lot of people get their information through tweets and sound bites and some headline that comes over their phone. And I think that there's a power in that. There's also a danger, what generates a headline or stirs up a controversy and gets attention isn't the same as the process required to actually solve the problem.

Steve Kroft: You said you don't know how he's going to do when he governs, but we're in this transition period and one of the first things that he has done in this transition period is to pick a fight with the intelligence agencies. Do you think that that's a smart move?



President Barack Obama  
CBS News

President Barack Obama: You're not going to be able to make good decisions without building some relationship of trust between yourself and that community.

Steve Kroft: Do you see that happening?

President Barack Obama: Not yet, but, you know, again, he hasn't gotten sworn into office yet.

When we come back, President Obama talks about one of the strangest transitions in White House history -- and he acknowledges some mistakes.

At the White House on Monday, crates and boxes lined the hallways and cluttered the East Room. Some carpets had been rolled up. Outside, there are bleachers on Pennsylvania Avenue and moving vans in the driveway -- visual evidence that there's a transition underway.

This ritual of democracy, this peaceful transfer of power can be awkward under the best of circumstances. And these are not the best of circumstances for either the outgoing or incoming president.

Steve Kroft: You have to admit that this is one of the strangest transitions in history.

President Barack Obama: It's unusual. I'll agree with that. Well, I--

Steve Kroft: I mean, he--

President Barack Obama: --and I suspect-- I suspect the president-elect would agree with that. Look--

Steve Kroft: No, I--

President Barack Obama: --he is an unconventional candidate.

Steve Kroft: Right.

President Barack Obama: I don't think there's anybody who's run a campaign like his successfully in modern history, not that I can think of. And, as a consequence because he didn't have the supports of many of the establishment in his own party, because he ran sort of an improvisational campaign--

Steve Kroft: Can you run an improvisational presidency?

President Barack Obama: I don't think so. And so now he's in the process of building up an organization. And well, we'll have to see how that works. And it'll be a test, I think, for him and the people that he's designated to be able to execute on his vision.

**“First of all, I think everybody has to acknowledge don't underestimate the guy, because he's going to be 45th president of the United States.” President Obama**

Steve Kroft: Look, I think that the country deeply appreciates the fact that you have not spoken clearly, I think, probably what's on your mind in relation to the president-elect. But as you said earlier it's unusual. He seems to have spent a good deal of his time sending out tweets that, you know, that the United States must strengthen and expand its nuclear ability. That Meryl Streep is an overrated Hillary flunky. You're watching this like everybody else. I mean what's going on?

President Barack Obama: You know, you're going to have to talk to him. But here's what I-- here's what I think. First of all, I think everybody has to acknowledge don't underestimate the guy, because he's going to be 45th president of the United States. The one thing I've said to him directly, and I would advise my Republican friends in Congress and supporters around the country, is just make sure that, as we go forward certain norms, certain institutional traditions don't get eroded, because there's a reason they're in place.



One thing both men have in common is a love of golf and a shared knowledge of the word “mulligan,” which means a do-over to replace a lousy shot.

Steve Kroft: I mean you play golf.

President Barack Obama: I do.

Steve Kroft: Do you ever wish you had a mulligan? I mean in the eight years that you’ve had, if-- if you had-- if you had three or four mulligans would you use ‘em?

President Barack Obama: Yeah. You know, there’s no doubt that probably at least once a week, maybe once a day, I said, “Ah, I should have done that better.” I bet at the end of this interview I’ll say, “Oh, that’s-- that would have been a really good answer for that or this.” I think we’ve done the big stuff right. I think that there are some big, obvious fumbles--

Steve Kroft: Like?

President Barack Obama: --or shanks if you are using the--

Steve Kroft: Right.

President Barack Obama: --golf analogy. Well, Healthcare.gov is a good example.

Steve Kroft: Right.

President Barack Obama: You know, if you know you got a controversial program, and you're setting up a really big, complicated website, website better work on the first day or first week or first month. The fact that it didn't obviously lost a little momentum. That was clearly a management failure.

Critics of the administration would cite what they see as larger failures in the area of foreign policy particularly in the Middle East, which [we grilled him about in an interview](#) 15 months ago.

*Steve Kroft: There is a perception in the Middle East that the United States is in retreat, that we've pulled our troops out of Iraq and ISIS has moved in and taken over much of that territory. The situation in Afghanistan is very precarious and the Taliban is on the march again.*

*President Obama: I think it's fair to say, Steve, that if--*

*Steve Kroft: It's -- Let me just finish the thought.*

*President Obama: OK.*

*Steve Kroft: They say you're projecting weakness, not strength--*

*President Obama: You're-- you're-- you're-- you're saying "they"--*

*Steve Kroft: I'm talking about--*

*President Obama: You're-- you're not-- you're not citing too many folks, but-- but--*

*Steve Kroft: No, I'll cite folks if you want me to.*

*President Obama: But here's--*

*Steve Kroft: I'd say the Saudis, I'd say the Israelis, I'd say a lot of our friends in the Middle East.*

*President Obama: I--*

*Steve Kroft: I'd say everybody--*

*President Obama: Steve--*

*Steve Kroft: Everybody in your-- everybody in the Republican Party. You want me to keep going?*

*President Obama: Yeah, if you are—if you're citing the Republican Party, I think it's fair to say that there is nothing I've done right over the last seven and half years.*

But even former members of his administration criticized the president for talking tough and not following through. In 2012, Obama told the Syrian government that the use of chemical weapons would cross a red line...

*Obama: That, that's a red line for us.*

That could provoke us military involvement. When they were used, the president responded not with force, but diplomacy, raising questions about his credibility.

Steve Kroft: I want to go back to, like, 2012.

President Barack Obama: Yeah.

Steve Kroft: I want to-- to two words. Red line.

President Barack Obama: Yeah.

Steve Kroft: You didn't have to say that.

President Barack Obama: Yeah.

Steve Kroft: And there have been reports that it wasn't in your speech.

President Barack Obama: No, it wasn't.

Steve Kroft: That you just sort of ad-libbed it. If you could pull -- and it created -- it created problems for you with the military people. Would you take those words back? You didn't have to say them.

President Barack Obama: Yeah, look, if you're putting all the weight on that particular phrase, then in terms of how it was interpreted in Washington, I think you make a legitimate point. I've got to tell you, though, I don't regret at all saying that if I saw Bashar al-Assad using chemical weapons on his people that that would change my assessments in terms of what we were or were not willing to do in Syria.

Steve Kroft: But you didn't say that.

President Barack Obama: Well--

Steve Kroft: You said you drew the red line.

President Barack Obama: I-- look, I--

Steve Kroft: I don't want to make too big a deal out of it, but--

President Barack Obama: I understand--



Steve Kroft: --I think that-- but I--

President Barack Obama: I-- but that--

Steve Kroft: --you think that that was--

President Barack Obama: --well--

Steve Kroft: Would you take it back? If you had--

President Barack Obama: Well--

Steve Kroft: --the opportunity to take it back?

President Barack Obama: The reason I'm hesitating is not to be defensive. It-- it's simply, Steve, that I would have I think made a bigger mistake if I had said, "Eh, chemical weapons. That doesn't really change my calculus." I think it was important for me as president of the United States to send a message that in fact there is something different about chemical weapons. And, regardless of how it ended up playing, I think-- in the Beltway, what is true is Assad got rid of his chemical weapons. And the reason he got rid of 'em is--

Steve Kroft: For a while.

President Barack Obama: --because-- well, look-- if 90 percent or 95 percent of those-- chemical stockpiles were eliminated, that's a lot of chemical weapons that are not right now in the hands of ISIL or Nusra or, for that matter, the regime.

Steve Kroft: Israel.

President Barack Obama: Yeah.

Steve Kroft: A few weeks ago you allowed the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution condemning Israel's settlements in the West Bank. It caused a major fallout between the United States and Israel. Was it your decision to abstain?

President Barack Obama: Yes, ultimately.

Steve Kroft: Why did you feel like you had to do that?

President Barack Obama: Well, first of all, Steve, I don't think it caused a major rupture in relations between the United States and Israel. If you're saying that [Prime Minister Netanyahu](#) got fired up, he's been fired up repeatedly during the course of my presidency, around the Iran deal and around our consistent objection to settlements. So that part of it wasn't new. And despite all the noise and hullabaloo-- military cooperation, intelligence cooperation, all of that has continued. We have defended them consistently in every imaginable way. But I also believe that both for our national interests and Israel's national interests that allowing an ongoing

conflict between Israelis and Palestinians that could get worse and worse over time is a problem. And that settlements contribute. They're not the sole reason for it, but they're a contributing factor to the inability to solve that problem. And--

Steve Kroft: And you wanted to make that point?

President Barack Obama: Not only did I want to make that point. We are reaching a tipping where the pace of settlements, during the course of my presidency has gotten so substantial that it's getting harder and harder to imagine an effective, contiguous Palestinian state. And I think it would have long-term consequences for peace and security in the region, and the United States, because of our investment in the region, and because we care so deeply about Israel, I think has a legitimate interest in saying to a friend, "This is a problem." And we've said it-- look, it's not as if we haven't been saying it from Day One. We've been saying it for eight years now. It's just that nothing seemed to get a lot of attention.

When we return: the president discusses eight years in the Oval Office and life with his family in the White House.

After our interview in the State Dining Room, President Obama invited us to the Oval Office where he had some things he wanted to show us, and some thoughts about his family's eight years in the Executive Mansion.

Steve Kroft: What are you going to miss most about this place?



60 Minutes correspondent Steve Kroft and President Barack Obama  
CBS News

President Barack Obama: This walk is one of them.

On the way, he told us that his family life had thrived living and working under the White House roof, but that his wife and daughters didn't feel the same way about life in what Harry Truman called "the finest prison in the world."

Steve Kroft: How do they feel?

President Barack Obama: Ah, they're ready to go. I mean, the girls, obviously, you know, they are now of an age in which the constraints of Secret Service and bubbles and all that stuff has gotten pretty old. Michelle never fully took to the scrutiny. I mean, she's thrived as a first lady, but it's not her preference. And so--

Steve Kroft: She was the hardest sell.

President Barack Obama: She was the hardest sell. And she never fully embraced being in the public spotlight, which is ironic, given how good she is. Having said that she would acknowledge, and I certainly feel that we-- we just have a lot of memories here. You know, our kids grew up here. Some of our best friends have been made here in this place. There have been moments that were highlights for us-- that-- you know, are going to be hard to duplicate. So--

Steve Kroft: She's glad you did it though?

President Barack Obama: She is now. Ahhh, I think I've said this story before. You know, she used to say to our friends, "Barack's exactly the kind of guy I want to be president. I just wish he didn't want to do it when I was married to him." So-- so now that we're--

Steve Kroft: But you're still all right? I mean, everything's OK?

President Barack Obama: So far, as far as I know. I better check later. Yeah.

Steve Kroft: You have said you're going to take a big vacation. You're going to write your book. You're going to work on your library. You're going to set up a foundation. I mean, that sounds very professorial compared to what you've been doing, like the ivory tower equivalent of puttering around the garden. Are you going to be happy doing this?

President Barack Obama: Well--

Steve Kroft: Are you--

President Barack Obama: --look, I'm going to try to get some sleep. And do a little puttering. Because I haven't had a lot of chance to reflect and absorb all this. I do not expect to be behind a desk a lot. I look forward to teaching the occasional class, 'cause I was a professor. And I had fun doing it.

Steve Kroft: You're not going to go to Wall Street, make a lot of money?

President Barack Obama: I'm not going to Wall Street. The amount of time that I'll be investing in issues is going to be high. But it'll be necessarily in a different capacity.

Steve Kroft: Roosevelt's remembered for Social Security. Eisenhower is remembered for a speech about the military industrial complex. Ten years from now, what are they going to say about you? What are they going to remember you for?

President Barack Obama: You know, I don't think you know now. I think you're not going to know until 10 years from now. I do think that, you know, saving the economy was a pretty big deal. We did a lot of stuff early that ended up having an impact. I believe that the work we've done in moving our energy future in a cleaner direction is going to stick even if some of the individual steps that we took are reversed by future administrations. I think that it's embedded itself in the economy. And we've been able to organize the international community around it in ways that aren't going to go back. I think we've set the bar with respect to the notion that it is possible to provide health care for people. Now I know that the incoming Congress and administration talks about repealing it. But we've set a bar that shows that this can be done. And that core principle is one that the majority of Americans, including supporters of Donald Trump believe in.

Steve Kroft: What are your memories of this office? What's going to stick in your mind? What are you going to remember from here?

President Barack Obama: Well I think the number of decisions that you make just with your advisers sitting here-- we've had some big powwows around, is the banking system about to collapse and what do we do about it? To questions of war and peace. So you remember the decisions that were made in this room. The objects in this room-- only a few of 'em I really attach to. I think that I'll always remember the bust of Dr. King. I thought having an American here who represented that civic spirit that got me into this office was useful. Over there I've got the original program for the March on Washington that was framed and given to me by a friend. You know, I'll remember the view out this window, because this is where we had our-- the playground that we put in when Malia and Sasha came in. Being able every once in awhile to look out the window and see your daughters during the summer, swinging on that swing set, that made the presidency a little bit sweeter.

When Sasha and Malia Obama arrived at the White House in 2009, they were age 7 and 10. Their parents -- for the most part -- were successful in keeping them out of the limelight, except in the rarest circumstances. In the fall, Malia begins at Harvard after a gap year. Sasha is a sophomore at her private school in Washington. This month, the swing set was dismantled and given away.

Steve Kroft: You feel older?

President Barack Obama: Yeah. You know, it's interesting. Physically, I feel probably as good as I've ever felt. And I've got as much energy as I ever did. But what you feel after eight years -- and I think you'd feel this no matter what, but anytime you have a big transition, it gets magnified -- is time passes. Your kids grow up. I think they more than anything are making me

feel as if, you know, you want to squeeze everything you got every single day out of this thing. Because it passes quick.

Steve Kroft: You're having trouble letting go?

President Barack Obama: No. I am looking forward to getting out of the bubble. I am glad that I'm leaving this place at a relatively young age, at 55. So I have the opportunity for a second maybe even a third act in a way that I think would be tougher if I were, you know, the age of some presidents when they left. There's some bittersweet feelings about leaving the people here. 'Cause even though all the team you assemble, you know, you're going to stay in touch with 'em, it's not the same, you know? The band kind of breaks up. And, I think I'm the best president I've ever been right now. And I think the team that is operating right now functions as well as any team that I've had. And so, you know, there is a part of you that thinks, "Man, we're pretty good at this stuff right now." And you hate to see that talent disperse.

Steve Kroft: You going to have reunions?

President Barack Obama: Well, not I don't think we're go have, like, T-shirts and, you know, all that stuff. That sounds kind of sad. And so my-- so many of my staff is young enough that they're going to do amazing things. And I'm going to be helping them try to do them. So overall though, I have a deep appreciation for the wisdom of this guy right there, George Washington. It's good to get fresh legs in here. I think that it refreshes our democracy. It-- I think sustaining the pace over more than eight years is pretty tough.

Steve Kroft: What are you going to do on the 21st when you wake up? I don't know where you're going to be when you wake up, but you're going to wake up someplace where you're not president.

President Barack Obama: Well, here's one thing is I'm not setting my alarm. That, I'm certain of. That I am absolutely positive of. I'm going to spend time with Michelle. And, you know, we got some catching up to do. We've both been busy.

Steve Kroft: You're going to be spending your own money, right?

President Barack Obama: Abs-- well, you know, the truth though is that we've been--

Steve Kroft: Have you been spending your own-- when was the last time you--

President Barack Obama: I--

Steve Kroft: --spent your own money?

President Barack Obama: Well, I will say this. You know, I mentioned how I've got a pretty thick skin in this job. You've got to have it. One thing that did kind of get under my craw sometimes was people talking as if when we went on vacation or--

Steve Kroft: Right, right, right, right.

President Barack Obama: --you know, that people'd be like, "Oh, spending taxpayer money." It's like, "No, no, I actually I'm paying for all of this. The only thing I don't pay for is Secret Service and an airplane."

Steve Kroft: And communications.

President Barack Obama: And communications, 'cause I don't have any choice. But, you know, we buy our own toilet paper even here in the White House.

Steve Kroft: Really?

President Barack Obama: You know, we-- it's not free. I'm-- I've got a grocery bill at the end of every month. You know, our toothpaste, our, you know, our orange juice, that all gets paid. But I-- it is true that I don't carry my wallet that often. So I'm going to have some catching up to do in terms of how day-to-day things operate.

Steve Kroft: It's not unusual for a president to issue an observation, "Beware of this. Be wary of that." What is the thing that concerns you most right now, leaving office, about the country?

President Barack Obama: Making sure that our democracy stays healthy. And making sure that we maintain that sense of solidarity. Um, the thing that has disturbed me most about the Russian hacking episode is-- and the thing that surprised me most has not been the fact of Russian hacking, because Chinese, Russians, Iranians-- a lot of--

Steve Kroft: The United States--

President Barack Obama: The United-- well, the cyber world is full of information gathering, you know, propaganda, et cetera. I have been concerned about the degree to which, in some circles, you've seen people suggest that Vladimir Putin has more credibility than the U.S. government. I think that's something new.

And I think it's a measure of how the partisan divide has gotten so severe that people forget we're on the same team.

President Barack Obama: We go into the hallway here...

The president led us through a side door from the Oval Office into a short hallway and into his small private dining room. Here, the mementos were personal, far less formal.

Steve Kroft: All this stuff is coming with you?

President Barack Obama: Absolutely. Well, not all of it. It-- I think--

Steve Kroft: Hard packing up?

President Barack Obama: I think, this famous--

Steve Kroft: This is going to stay there, right?

President Barack Obama: --painting of *The Peacemakers*, that goes with the territory.

Steve Kroft: How much stuff are you going to take with you?

President Barack Obama: Not that much. I mean, you know, we got-- I got books, I got clothes, I got mementos like-- these that, you know, I cherish. We got some furniture that we purchased that, you know, we'll try to use in the new place.

Steve Kroft: Do you like it, the new house?

President Barack Obama: It's a nice-- it's a nice home. I mean--

Steve Kroft: You've been there--?

President Barack Obama: Yeah. It'll-- it's temporary. And--

Steve Kroft: Two years?

President Barack Obama: Yeah. But it feels like a home. You know, it's not crazy big but there's enough room for, you know, a treadmill and some workout equipment in the basement.

***“My fellow Americans, it has been the honor of my life to serve you. I won't stop. In fact, I will be right there with you, as a citizen, for all my remaining days.” President Obama***

The next day President Obama was back in Chicago where it all began to deliver his farewell address.

[Obama in farewell address:](#) *My fellow Americans, it has been the honor of my life to serve you. I won't stop. In fact, I will be right there with you, as a citizen, for all my remaining days. Thank you. God bless you. And may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you.*

President Obama, in all the times we were with him, seemed to savor the challenge of an interview. For him, it was an intellectual workout, something on par with a pickup basketball game, complete with a little trash talk.

There were never any restrictions on questions. No taboo topics.

A year and half ago, there was a particularly contentious line of questioning about America's role in Syria. After it, we took a short break for a few sips of water. And when the cameras rolled again, the president was ready for more.

*President Obama: What else you got?*

Tonight, at last, we have no more questions. I'm Steve Kroft. Next Sunday, here on CBS, the AFC Championship game. And we'll be back in two weeks with a brand new edition of 60 Minutes.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-barack-obama-eight-years-in-the-white-house/>