

Sent: Mon, 05 Oct 2015 19:20:02 -0400
From: "Dorey-Stein, Beck" <rebecca_c_dorey-stein@who.eop.gov>
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Interview of the President by Bill Simmons, GQ

Stop looking at your blackberry! Have a fun night!

P6/b(6)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, October 05, 2015 06:27 PM
To: Dorey-Stein, Beck
Subject: RE: Interview of the President by Bill Simmons, GQ

Thank you!

Sent on a Samsung Galaxy S4

----- Original message -----

From: "Dorey-Stein, Beck"
Date: 10/05/2015 6:00 PM (GMT-05:00)
To:
Subject: Interview of the President by Bill Simmons, GQ

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Internal Transcript

October 5, 2015

INTERVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT
BY BILL SIMMONS, GQ

Map Room

2:28 P.M. EDT

Q I wanted to talk about eras, because this is now an era for you. This is -- you got elected in 2008; we're now October 2015. Seven years. When you think about this whole era, if you could go back in a time machine, 2008, go back, tell yourself one thing, what would it be?

THE PRESIDENT: You're going to be busy. You are going to be busy.

Look, I knew coming in that we were going through an unprecedented economic upheaval that was global in scale and was going to take a number of years to unwind. What I don't think anybody fully anticipated was that it would then be combined with an upheaval in the Middle East that we hadn't seen in our lifetimes. And you combine those two things, it meant that there was going to be a huge amount of disruption.

And I think that on the economic front, the steps we took at the beginning were the right ones. I would probably tell myself to communicate more effectively early on than I did. It's interesting, we ran a great campaign and -- it wasn't as great as it seems in retrospect; there's always rose-colored glasses, there were a bunch of ups and downs, but there's no doubt that we captured the country's imagination and had some key themes that we just drilled home. And somehow, in those first two years, I think a certain arrogance crept in in the sense of thinking as long as we got the policy right, we didn't have to sell it, and we didn't have to do the retail politics, and hit the road and market the trouble we were in and why we were doing the things that we were doing.

And one thing that I have learned through some tough election cycles is that you can't separate out good policy from the need to bring the American people along and make sure that they know why you're doing what you're doing, and when you should expect results and set expectations properly and contrast it with what the other folks are doing. And that's particularly true now in this new communications era.

I think we were ahead of the curve in 2008 in social media and the Internet and digital communications. And again, when we came into office, instead of taking some of those lessons, we suddenly adapted ourselves to the White House press room and structures that had been built back in the 1940s and '50s. And it took us a while to realize, we've got to revamp, because we don't have three networks and two newspapers of record; we've got 500 platforms, and we've got to be able to communicate to everybody continuously.

And so I think that as a consequence of those missteps early -- we got the policies right and that's why the economy now has grown for five and a half straight years, six years, and why unemployment rate has gone from 10 percent to 5.1 percent, but there was a lot of political pain along the way that might not have been necessary.

Q Was there a point in that first three years where you started to feel overwhelmed by the job? Where you're just like, my God, I just had no idea this was going to be this hard, you've got to be kidding me?

THE PRESIDENT: That part of it, I've got to admit, I had a pretty good handle on. One thing I learned during the campaign was that I've got a good temperament, I don't get too high and I don't get too low, and I'm able to stay focused even when there's a lot of stuff going on around me.

Q So you're like Gregg Popovich. Although he does get mad at times at reporters.

THE PRESIDENT: He does. (Laughter.) So do I. (Laughter.) Or maybe Rodgers in the

pocket, in the sense of you can't be distracted by what's around you, you've got to be looking downfield. Any good quarterback. And I think that's a quality that I have, of not getting flustered in what's around me.

So there was never a point, even early on -- even in the first six months -- where we weren't sure whether we were going to dip into another Great Depression. We weren't sure whether the steps we were taking on rescuing the auto industry or stabilizing the financial system were going to work. There weren't moments where I thought, gee, it feels like we're in over our head.

But I do think that what I didn't fully appreciate -- and nobody can appreciate until they're in the position -- is how decentralized power is in this system. I mean, you understand it in your civics textbook, and separation of powers, and there's Congress and there's the courts, and there's state and local governments. But when you're in the seat and you're seeing the housing market collapse, and you're seeing unemployment skyrocketing, and you have a sense of what the right thing to do is, and then you realize, okay, not only do I have to persuade my own party, not only do I have to prevent the other party from blocking what the right thing to do is, but now I can anticipate this lawsuit, this lobbying taking place in this federal agency that technically is independent so I can't tell them what to do, I've got the Federal Reserve Bank and I'm hoping that they do the right thing -- and, by the way, since the economy now is global, I've got to make sure that the Europeans, the Asians, the Chinese, everybody is on board.

And so a lot of the work is not just identifying the right policy, but now constantly building these ever-shifting coalitions to be able to actually implement and execute and get it done.

Q I always talk about -- with the presidency, the President is always surprised how much the people around him matter, which shouldn't be something you're surprised by, but then when you're in it -- you're building an inner circle, you're hiring people left and right, you're also trying to win the election, and now you're stuck with those people. When did you feel like you had the right inner circle around you? Like what year of the presidency was it?

THE PRESIDENT: So the right team is going to vary with circumstances. My first Chief of Staff was Rahm Emanuel. He's now the Mayor of Chicago. And Rahm was famously hot-tempered, volatile, anxious --

Q Sounds like his brother.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Well, the whole Emanuel family, right --

Q Ari. I know Ari really well.

THE PRESIDENT: -- is constantly high-strung.

Q High-strung.

THE PRESIDENT: But we had a window in those first two years to get a bunch of stuff done legislatively --

Q Before things --

THE PRESIDENT: -- before things potentially flipped. And Rahm is as smart as anybody I know. He is as tenacious as anybody I know. He knows politics. He is practical. He understands the legislative process. He had helped to elect a lot of the Democratic majority in the House. And so at a time when we wanted to get as much legislatively through as we could -- including the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare -- he was exactly the right person to be there.

The Chief of Staff I have now, Denis McDonough, is in many ways the complete opposite of Rahm temperamentally, even though they both work just as hard. Denis is measured. He is somebody who is very conscious of how the whole team feels. He is very much below the radar screen, doesn't like to be in the spotlight too much.

Q So how many people are in there? Like, ultimately -- like, you're out to dinner with your wife and the phone rings. How many of the people in your life are like, uh oh, I've got to take this?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if I'm out with my wife, Malia and Sasha and maybe my mother-in-law are on that list.

Q Okay.

THE PRESIDENT: My National Security Advisor, Susan Rice, and Denis McDonough, my Chief of Staff -- those are the only people whose call I would take during a dinner with --

Q During a date.

THE PRESIDENT: -- during date night with Michelle. But the entire White House is full of people who have enormous responsibilities.

You can't do this by yourself. And so -- even the Chief of Staff can't do it by himself. Our National Security Advisor, who essentially manages the interactions between the Defense Department, the State Department, the Treasury -- all the various agencies that have work to do internationally, they have to manage that. And so those two are sort of the quarterback and the middle linebacker.

But everybody on that team has to carry their weight. And what you discover -- what I discovered at least is that the principle of team-building in the White House is really no different than the principle of team-building anywhere -- on a sports team, or a well-run business --

Q I was going to say, it sounds like a sports team, yes.

THE PRESIDENT: -- and that is, do they put team ahead of themselves? Do you make sure all the pieces fit together? Because just having the best athletes, if they're knocking heads and nobody is doing rebounding and everybody wants the ball, isn't always going to work.

Q I'm sure chemistry, too. You don't want there to be bad apples or people talking crap about --

THE PRESIDENT: Chemistry, exactly, right. Are they people who trust each other and you can trust? Are there folks who are able to operate well under stress? Are they people who are willing to take responsibility rather than try to deflect blame when something goes wrong?

Because the one thing you know in the White House is, is that there's going to be something going wrong at some point. About a week into the job, Bob Gates, who was my first Defense Secretary and did a great job and was a carry-over from the Bush administration -- he had served under I think seven Presidents. He had been CIA Director, he had done a whole bunch of stuff. And I asked him, so, Bob, what advice do you have just seeing how Presidents operate. He says, Mr. President, you've got 2 million people working for you. So the one thing I can guarantee is that at any given moment of any given day, somebody, somewhere is screwing up really badly. He didn't use the word screwing up.

So you know that there are going to -- this is a massive enterprise and it is a human enterprise, and so there are going to be times where what you try doesn't work. And by definition, the stuff that comes to the White House, the stuff on my desk doesn't lend itself to easy answers; otherwise I would never see it. So a lot of times you're working on probabilities. You're thinking in terms of this has a 60 percent shot at working, or this is a problem where if you don't pay attention, there's an 80 percent chance that it blows up in your face.

And so to have people who are comfortable problem solving, accepting the fact that they're not going to get it perfect every single time, and are willing to own solving problems as opposed to explaining to you why there is a problem or why somebody else screwed up, that ends up being a big priority.

Q It almost sounds like you're talking about football whether to decide whether to go for it on 3rd and 1, or should we punt on the 40-yard line, the same kind of variables.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Obviously the stakes are a little bit higher.

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: And it's just -- even the things that in retrospect look like they were the absolute right thing to do when you're in the heat of the moment aren't clear.

Q So you're always trying to hear the other side, right? What's the worst thing that could happen if we do this?

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely. And so another thing that I learned very early on -- and this came fairly naturally to me -- is to make sure that there's a space for some really smart people to argue it out in front of you, and to have thought through all the options and all the upsides and downsides of whatever decision you're going to make, and creating that space but then making sure that once I make a decision, it's carried out and people aren't re-litigating it somewhere else, and everybody is on the same page, and everybody is executing.

And I think overall we've been pretty good at that. I think we're better now than we were when we first came in. Some of it was just personality. We had a lot of personalities coming in and people who would clash more than the team that I have today. But generally speaking, I'm pretty proud of the track record. If you look at the kind of drama that you've seen behind the scenes in other presidencies, generally we've been able to keep that to a minimum. I'm not a big drama person, and I think that people who work for me know that.

Q I think presidencies -- this is going sound weird -- it's a little like with a sports team. Like even the Bulls, right? They have this window of five, six, seven years, but you need luck. You need Derrick Rose not to get hurt in round one against Philly. And you need Luol Deng not to go down in the playoffs. And you had a lot of those first few years with stuff, and it seems like recently the luck has turned a little bit. I mean, it's not -- it hasn't been great, but at least you've had better things happen than just these random rug-getting-pulled-out-from-under-you moments that seemed to happen over and over again.

THE PRESIDENT: No, I mean, I think you're absolutely right, that sometimes you make your own luck. But if you are President or working in the White House, the one thing inevitably that happens is you are more humble leaving than you were coming in. Because what you realize is, is that there are these big forces at work, big trends, that you can manage but that you don't fully control.

We've been using sports metaphors, but a useful metaphor also is captain of a ship. You don't control the weather. And so if you're captain of a ship and the seas are calm and the sun is shining and there's a nice light breeze, you can look like a really good captain even if you're not. And if you are having to be captain during a big storm and you are able to navigate through it and get people into port safely, they may not appreciate it when they're soaking wet and throwing up and were terrified that at any moment they were going to go under. And I do think that this stretch of time that we've had has been particularly tumultuous, and there have been other times where you had a more calm stretch.

Having said that, I also think that it's made the decisions we make particularly consequential. And I've had opportunities to make a difference of a sort that you might not have had if things were a little more tranquil.

Q Is it fair to say that in 2015, you've been like the second-semester high school senior who got into Yale and now is like, yeah, I'm not going to -- I'm just going to let it fly, yeah, I'm going to go out today, I don't care if I have a test tomorrow. That's how I feel like you've acted. And I think all of us were kind of waiting for that guy to show up after you got reelected. What took two years to get there?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that there's no doubt that the longer I'm in this job, the more confident I am about the decisions I'm making and more knowledgeable about the responses I can expect.

Q So it's banked experience.

THE PRESIDENT: And as a consequence, you end up being looser in the same way that any athlete who's been around for a while -- what you lose in speed and quickness and vertical, maybe you make up for in just better knowledge. And so part of what I think is reflected is that sense that there's not much I have not seen at this point and I know what to expect and I can anticipate more than I did before.

Q With that said, you're definitely feeling it a little more.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, part of it is also just that we -- I have a case to make now that was harder to make earlier in my presidency. So we had confidence, for example, that the economic decisions that we made to stabilize the financial system and pass Wall Street reform and raise taxes on the wealthiest and pass health care -- that all these various decisions we were making would have a payoff. But because we had been in such a deep hole and it took so long for the recovery to be felt by people on a day-to-day basis, we had to be careful about crowing success when people weren't feeling it.

And it wasn't really until around 2014 where the attitude of the American people was, the economy is improving, I'm feeling better, I'm seeing my --

Q So you feed off that a little bit?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, what happens then is you can make your case without caveats as much -- which I think was something that hampered my ability to communicate confidence and optimism to people because you didn't want people to feel as if you were getting ahead of yourself, mission accomplished, and they weren't feeling it. And I think there was a little more license to talk about look at what's happened to the unemployment rate, oh, and by the way, Obamacare actually is working and 16, 17 million people have health insurance who didn't have it, oh, and by the way, all the predictions that this was going to massively increase health care costs -- it turns out that health care inflation has been the lowest it's been in 50 years. Oh, and everybody said that this was going to bankrupt the system -- our deficits have gone down by two-thirds.

And so you can marshal facts in a way that are hard to argue against and hard to dispute. So I think it's a combination of me feeling looser because I've just been in this job a long time and have gone through some tough stretches, and so -- I said this in another interview somewhere -- not only do you not look like you have any fear but you actually don't have any fear. And I don't at this point.

And also, objectively, the bets we made early on have paid off. And some of it does have to do with luck. I mean, you look at -- if you think about 2013, right after I'd been reelected, our goal at that point was to lead with a big push on immigration reform. And then before the second inauguration has even happened, Sandy Hook happened -- which remains, by the way, the worst few days of my presidency because it was only a day or two after the shootings that I went up and visited with those families and -- you know, Bill, you've still got small kids. These are six-year-olds, right, and you have 20 of them who have been massacred.

And so right away, our focus had to shift to, is there a way for us to capture this moment to see if we can get over this incredible hump to try to put in place some common-sense gun-safety rules. And we knew it was a stretch just because of the politics of Congress and the NRA. But we had to try. So out of the box, immediately you're doing something that is unlikely to succeed, but you feel compelled to do. And throughout 2013 and '14, you had a series of events like that. Then the Snowden disclosures happened, and suddenly I'm having to call leaders around the world and contain the damage of this massive security breach, but also send a message to the intelligence community that we've got to tighten up how you guys operate.

And then you've got last year, for example -- Ebola, Ferguson, ISIL, and unaccompanied children coming across the border all sort of stacked up in a row; none of them individually unsolvable, but given the 24/7 news cycle, they just sort of pile up on each other. And even though in the midst of this, the economy is improving, and we are making real progress on education and health care and energy and so forth, political momentum turned sharply against you.

And so the bottom line is, sometimes the seas are going to be stormy; sometimes they're calm. I think we've had more than our share of stormy seas, but I think we've navigated the ship well. And now, at a time when the waters are still choppy -- it's not as if it's smooth sailing -- but I can look out on the horizon and I can see where we need to be going, and I've got a crew that has gone through some big storms and knows that we can handle them. And all of that I think gives you a sense of confidence and a sense of progress.

Q I think any time you have President -- when you're an American, you always feel like there's the President. Then there's this other person who is not the President who is -- and you're trying to figure out what that person is like. And I think with you and Clinton, those were the two guys that everybody kind of felt like, yeah, they'd be fun to hang out with, be fun to play golf with, be fun to go to a game with. And you have that person there what we know is sitting there, but then you have to be President Obama, and then there's Obama, the person.

And like when Ferguson happened last year, that seemed like -- I think I was waiting for Obama, the person, to come in. But you had to be President Obama. And it was -- when you see like how you handled Charleston this year and the Selma speech, all that stuff, that was Obama, the person. So what happened with Ferguson? Do you regret -- do you wish you had handled that differently?

THE PRESIDENT: The challenge of Ferguson, and all of these issues related to police shootings, the criminal justice system, race and the criminal justice system, is that in order to actually get something done you have to build consensus. And expressing simple outrage without follow-up in the institutional position of President is oftentimes counterproductive.

And so, for example, in the case of Ferguson, I'm the Attorney General's boss, the nation's chief law enforcement officer, so if I chime in with a strong opinion about what's happened, how did that shooting occur, who is guilty, who is innocent, is this fair, is this not fair -- not only do I stand to potentially damage subsequent law enforcement cases that are brought, but immediately you get a blowback and backlash that may make people less open to listening.

What was different in Charleston was the clarity of what happened that allowed I think everybody to be open to it. And so that's a moment I could seize in a way that in Ferguson would have been less simple to do.

Q Did it take time during the presidency to realize what kind of moments those were? Get a sense of I can do this here?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, sometimes it's feeling. And, look, sometimes it's just the circumstances won't give you a clean statement. The fact of bias in the criminal justice system, the fact that race has always been the fault line of our society and has always distorted our politics -- that is not subject to argument. But the specifics of any one case or any one event, those are constantly contested and argued about.

And part of what you're looking for is a way not to just vent, but to actually move the needle. And I practiced law for a while, and one of the common sayings in the law is that a lot of times hard cases can make bad law. If you have an issue that you want to put forward, you're looking for the right plaintiff and the right court to appear before --

Q Right, like Deflategate.

THE PRESIDENT: Because -- (laughter).

Q I had to.

THE PRESIDENT: Right. I was wondering how long it would take for that to come up -- but before you can make your most powerful case, right?

And so Rosa Park wasn't the first person who had been told she couldn't sit in the front of the bus. But she was prepared, and there was a case that could then be brought. And I do think that as you go on as President, you get a better feel for this, but you're not always going to be perfect on it. I think that when the Trayvon Martin case happened, I had an honest response as a father that I think resonated with a lot of people. Then immediately, we started something called My Brother's Keeper that focused on how do we reach out to young men of color in disadvantaged circumstances to put them on a different track.

When Ferguson happened, there was a gap between how quickly we could pull together a police task force, recommendations. And so in that lag, it feels as if I haven't spoken to the moment as effectively. And I suspect that if I were to do it over again, there might be something I could say that would have crystalized it more effectively. But as I said before, Ferguson, the case itself was tough because people didn't know what was going on exactly. In some ways, the Gardner case in New York was clear because you had on videotape exactly what had happened. And then some of the subsequent cases have been more obvious.

But I guess the point, Bill, is, is that one thing you learn as President is you're not always going to perform flawlessly, and you have to be able to put that out of your mind and then look at the next problem coming down the pike.

And just going back to sports metaphors -- I don't watch TV news. So if I'm working out in the gym, I'm watching "Sports Center," or a game. And if "Sports Center" has already looped like four times and there isn't a good game on, then sometimes I'll go to "NBA Classics," right? And I'll watch some of these old classic games.

Q The lack of HD really hurts it.

THE PRESIDENT: It does.

Q You can hardly tell anybody. Like, who is that? Is that Robert Parrish? (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: It's true. And the graphics at the bottom are terrible, right?

Q Yes, yes, it's awful.

THE PRESIDENT: But not surprisingly, a lot of my "NBA Classics" of choice are the '90s Bulls, right?

Q You got to relive the past.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, of course. And the thing that you're reminded of, watching those old Bulls games, is, number one, how truly excellent Jordan was and how charismatic physically he was on the court, right? That you can't take your eyes off him. And he's just beautiful to watch.

But what you also are reminded of is he had some stinker games in the playoffs. I mean, there were games where he got his 30, but there were a lot of shots and there's a missed free throw in a critical moment, and there's a ball bounced off somebody's head on a pass. And the point that you draw from it, though, is that it's not that Jordan didn't screw up, it's just that he would get that out of his mind in a second and then the next moment comes, and he's right there. And he could have a terrible game for the first three quarters and then suddenly go crazy the fourth. Or he might miss a free throw, and then the next play is he's stealing the ball and hitting the game-winning shot.

And so part of what I try to do -- not at the level that Jordan did on the basketball court -- but part of what you aspire to as President, or in any of these positions of leadership, is to try to figure out how to be in the moment; make the best decision you can; know that you're going to get a bunch of them right, but you're also going to not get it exactly the way you want it a bunch of the times; and then be able to fix it, or improve it, or modify how you approach the problem the next time and learn from your mistakes.

Q You talked about that lag. So Clinton was the Internet President. The Internet happened as he became President. By the end of the presidency, it was a big part of the economy. People were moving that way, and it changed how we communicate. So you take over -- you win the election in 2008, but you take over in January 2009. Twitter is just becoming a thing.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, we didn't use Twitter in 2008, really. We were sort in the Myspace.

Q Right, Myspace was still wrapping up. Facebook was --

THE PRESIDENT: Facebook was just starting to happen.

Q -- posting pictures of your kids.

THE PRESIDENT: Right. (Laughter.)

Q But now it's like -- I would say over the course of your presidency, that's the biggest thing that's changed.

THE PRESIDENT: Social media took over.

Q How you communicate, how things speed up, how it speeds up the news cycle, how groups can mobilize and try to get you to have to make a statement on something. What's the biggest challenge with all that stuff?

THE PRESIDENT: Speed.

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. You just have to -- you are on 24/7. You have to respond immediately.

My favorite story about this is that when the Bay of Pigs happened, and this is early in JFK's presidency.

Q No social media.

THE PRESIDENT: And it's a complete disaster up and down the chain. It took like two weeks for the news outlets in Washington to even know about it. And by that time, Kennedy had thoroughly scrubbed what had happened. They were fully prepared. He has a press conference, he makes a statement -- admirably taking responsibility for it, even though it had been something that had been cooking since before he was President. He takes like three or four questions in the press conference, and then that's sort of it. (Laughter.)

Q And he's out.

THE PRESIDENT: And it's on to the next thing. And then you contrast that with something like the IRS snafu in Cincinnati, where these folks are trying to figure out how do we apply this statute that says nonprofits can't act politically -- and they clumsily, stupidly, use certain code words like "tea party" to sort through and narrow stuff, and this is like this massive conspiracy.

And people are all trying to play catch-up. And you got folks like Jon Stewart, because they want to look evenhanded, suddenly slamming -- why are -- this is just as bad as something the

Republicans have done. And then eventually, three or four or six months later, an investigation is done and it turns out there was no conspiracy. This was just these folks trying to figure something out. But by that time, you're on to something else.

Q So it's the first thing that is setting the trends --

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely, yes. And so the job of our office to keep up and to respond quickly to anything that's happening, but not be consumed by it, is completely different.

So part of what we've been doing is building a digital team inside the White House.

Q When did that start?

THE PRESIDENT: Too late. That's an example of something that I would have started earlier. That was a lesson that coming out of the first term, I should have understood, but even then we were slow to get the take-up on it.

But now, we've got folks who -- some of the best technology engineers and digital executives in the world have come on --

Q Well, the old way of doing things was something happened, you'd be like, well, we've got to wait until that guy gets back. Or that guy, he's in Europe; this guy he's in -- we'll talk in six hours. You don't have the six hours anymore. You've got like 90 minutes.

THE PRESIDENT: And that's why we built this team. But part of it is also just being able to reach the American people. It's so interesting watching my daughters.

Q I was going to ask about this.

THE PRESIDENT: So both of them are complete --

Q So you've lost that battle.

THE PRESIDENT: -- ninjas on the phone. And they're -- they can do things that I don't even understand what they're doing, and they're doing them in two seconds. So they're completely absorbed with it. But I even see a difference between Malia, who's 17, and Sasha, who's 13. There's almost a mini generational gap in terms of Sasha being so connected seamlessly to this smartphone in a way that Malia, who was already a little bit older when it really started to take, is not.

Q So the ability to multitask with 19 different friends at the same time.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, and just the degree to which their social life is so connected to that.

So the point I was making is, is that it's not just having to change how we do business inside of

the White House to react to stories. But it's also how do we tell a story about issues to constituencies that are completely splintered who don't watch television in the same way, who don't watch the news in the same way.

And so if we want to tell a story about health care and how the Affordable Care Act can help you get affordable health insurance, now we've got to think about are there websites that are most likely to attract somebody who might need it. And we've got to engage in micro-targeting to try to figure out how to communicate with particular constituencies, and we have to think about telling the story more visually, because they might just see a Vine or a snippet of something, but are not going to have patience with some long, boring speech that I'm delivering.

And so a lot of changes are taking place there. And in some ways, we're just laying the foundation for what I assume will be the standard practice of future presidents.

Q I want to talk about gun control really quick, just because --

THE PRESIDENT: It's timely. But it's always timely.

Q Well, it's timely. You've tried to legislate it as much as you possibly could and hit a wall basically in every direction. But the one thing Hillary Clinton brought up was executive action, and whether that's a possibility.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, keep in mind, after Sandy Hook, we put forward 23 executive actions. So we haven't been asleep at the switch in terms of the executive actions that we've tried.

There may be a few more that we have that have to be scrubbed by the lawyers, because essentially, with every executive action, we can count on it being challenged by somebody in Congress or, in this case, the NRA. And so we want to make any executive action we take as defensible as possible legally and within our authorities.

So I think that there may be still a couple of steps remaining administratively. But I have to tell you that in terms of having a significant impact on the problem in the absence of a movement politically in which people say enough is enough, we're going to continue to see, unfortunately, these kinds of -- these tragedies take place.