



MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Former vice president Joe Biden talks politics, family and Trump at Miami Book Fair

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NOVEMBER 18, 2017 09:23 PM

UPDATED 1 MINUTE AGO

In the midst of a tumultuous political climate, Joe Biden stepped onto the Miami Book Fair stage at the Adrienne Arsht Center and offered a message of hope and encouragement to a crowd that cheered nearly every word.

He touched on stories and anecdotes from his memoir, “Promise Me, Dad: A Year of Hope, Hardship, and Purpose,” released this past week. But after he was asked by writer George Saunders to explain “what the hell is going on?” — he pivoted to discuss President Donald Trump, the middle class and what he sees as a source of divisiveness in the country.

“I think it’s one of the most dangerous times in modern history,” Biden told the sold-out crowd.

He mentioned former White House strategist Steve Bannon and others who have proposed ideas of white nationalism as promoting “half-baked nationalism” and “phony populism.” The former vice president said that the idea of being the “example of power” instead of showing “the power of example” in foreign policy was a negative approach.

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“I think that there have always been voices in our country — and particularly in the 19th and 20th century in Europe — that have always tried to take advantage of pain and change,” Biden said.

Biden also took some time to point out flaws in the Democratic Party, and said that more work has to be done to reach the middle class by both political parties.

“The reason why we’ve been so socially and politically stable is because of an aspirational class,” Biden said. “Some of the elites in my party deserve some of the blame.”

He questioned whether Trump was truly invested in a working class that helped secure victory for him last November.

“Do you think he really cares about the kids I grew up with in Scranton, Pennsylvania, as far as their economic well being?” Biden said.

And while he received raucous applause at multiple times, Biden did not say whether he was planning a presidential run in 2020. He instead went back to the message of hope.

“The world is ours. The rest of the world is looking to us,” Biden said as he stood and addressed the crowd.

Beyond the political talk, much of the discussion centered on the heart of Biden’s memoir — the loss of his son Beau, who died in 2015 of brain cancer.

Biden talked about how proud he was of his son and how he admired Beau’s commitment to service and to his friends.

“Beau was Joe 2.0. He was me without any of the flaws,” Biden said.

The former vice president also talked about his upbringing between Scranton and Wilmington, Delaware. He said he learned most of his life lessons from his parents and grandfather and tried to use those in his political career and his family life.

“You’re defined by your courage, and you’re redeemed by your loyalty,” Biden said, recounting a quote his mother often repeated.

Biden’s appearance at the Book Fair comes after several noteworthy talks from politicians in recent years. Last year’s appearance by former presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders was among the most popular at the fair and came just weeks after the election.

And earlier this week, former Democratic National Committee chairwoman Donna Brazile pulled no punches in discussing her party’s issues while promoting her book, “Hacks: The Inside Story of the Break-Ins and Breakdowns that Put Donald Trump in the White House.” She described some of U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz’s actions as a “cancer” on the party and said that Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton became too arrogant and made deals to take almost full control of the DNC.

Brazile also said that women who have accused President Bill Clinton of sexual misconduct should have been given more credence as national conversations continue about the powerful using their posts to sexually assault and harass women from Washington to various statehouses and Hollywood sets.

In the past two months, women have come forward and reported sexual harassment and assault by Hollywood figures such as Harvey Weinstein and Louis C.K. This past week, broadcaster Leeann Tweeden reported that Sen. Al Franken kissed her and groped her without her consent. Franken was set to speak at the Book Fair Sunday, but on Friday afternoon he canceled his appearance.

This story has been updated to clarify Brazile’s comments at the Book Fair.

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