

REV. JESSE JACKSON'S ADDRESS AT THE
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC COUNCIL OF ASIAN PACIFIC
AMERICANS
OCTOBER 18, 1987

("Rainbow" representatives will stand behind the candidate.)

I want to express my gratitude to Bert Nakano for his kind and generous introduction.

I also want to thank the co-chairs Barbara Mee-Ya-Moe-Toe and May Lee Tom and the National Democratic Council of Asian and Pacific Americans for inviting me here today.

Thank and acknowledge:

Elected Officials

Meg Thornton, the Southern California Chair of Asians & Pacific Islanders for Jesse Jackson

Mike Murase, my Campaign Director in the state of California, who will be working with Chris Hammond, who will serve as the Campaign Manager

Eddie Wong, who heads our National Asian Desk and is serving as the Field Coordinator in Washington, D.C.

And all of the friends and supporters in the Rainbow Coalition.

It is a testament to the growing political power of Asian and Pacific Americans that we are gathered here today. In 1988, Asian and Pacific Americans will shake the political establishment with the vigor of new ideas and ideals.

In 1988, it will have been 20 years since assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was the symbol of the modern civil rights movement. In his day, the issue of civil rights was relatively simple. It was black and white in both moral and social terms. Southern American apartheid was the law of the day. But through the work of Dr. King, SCLC, the NAACP, SNCC, CORE and many who will forever remain nameless and faceless, the cotton curtain of apartheid was pulled down.

Today, however, we must redefine the civil rights struggle for the 80s and beyond. The struggle of the 60s was never a struggle merely for civil rights. It was always a struggle for social justice. Thus, the definition of the social justice movement in America in the 60s around civil rights must be broadened and expanded in the 80s and beyond to include a commitment to human rights: i.e. social justice (civil rights or equal protection under the law for all); economic justice (or worker rights); and the political justice (or political freedom - of press, of assembly, of protest, of religion, and of access to information), everywhere.

Dr. King said that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Now we must add to that, unorganized workers anywhere are a threat to organized workers everywhere; and political oppression anywhere is a threat to political freedom everywhere. Any we must measure human rights everywhere by one yardstick.

Why must we broaden our concern from just civil rights to human rights, put the focus on workers' rights, and demand political freedom? The media has put a lot of focus on the imbalance of trade with Asia -- Japan, Taiwan and Korea. But are they really the problem -- or scapegoats who are victims themselves? Consider Taiwan. The U.S. trade deficit with Taiwan was \$13 billion in 1985 and \$16 billion in 1986. Are the Taiwanese to blame for this country's economic problems? The number one exporter from Taiwan is not Taiwan. It's G.E. Other U.S. corporations are not far behind.

THE STANDARD RAP ON GM CLOSING DOWN PLANTS ... 30,000 JOBS TO KOREA.

Why do American and other multinationals go to Taiwan and Korea? In addition to a number of incentives from the Taiwanese government, workers rights are systematically violated. Assembly workers receive barely subsistence wages for 8 to 12 hours a day. They live in dormitories with no air-conditioning, despite 100 degree heat. Strikes are all but illegal under martial law conditions.

Scapegoating and the rise of anti-Asian sentiment and violence today is reminiscent of the 1940's, when Japanese Americans were blamed for Pearl Harbor and locked up in America's concentration camps. We cannot afford a "re-run" of the 1940's. Don't blame Japanese, Korean or Asian people for taking away U.S. jobs.

Any attempt to deal effectively with trade and world economy problems must deal squarely with transnational corporations and with the issue of international worker rights.

The trade issue has spawned another problem, one which should concern all Americans - anti-Asian violence. All the racist stereotypes of Asians as sneaky, cunning, evil have come back with a vengeance. Vincent Chin, beaten to death by unemployed white workers with baseball bats, Cambodians burned out of their homes in Boston, Senator Inouye being called a "Jap" during the Iran-contra hearing -- these vicious acts of racial violence must end! From Vincent Chin to Howard Beach, all acts of racial violence must be condemned!

But even these acts of racial violence are formed in the backdrop of a larger problem - economic violence. White and Black; Black and Asian - all are pitted against each other as we fight each other for jobs which are disappearing, for programs which have fallen out of the safety net, for education which is monetarily beyond our grasp.

Economic violence is the critical issue of our day. When merger maniacs make windfall profits and top management is given excessive bonuses, while workers take a wage cut, a benefit cut, and a job loss -- that's economic violence. We must replace economic violence with economic justice!

We need bold leadership. We need a new direction.

I stand before you today with a challenge. In 1988, 20 years after the death of Dr. King and 200 years after the creation of the U.S. Constitution, we have a chance not only to elect a new President but to fulfill the unfinished agenda for justice and equality. We have a chance to turn America away from rightwing Reaganism which has fought affirmative action at every turn, set back union rights, and cut education and health care to the bone.

My campaign seeks to change the status quo, not out of any anarchistic impulse, but because it is the right and moral thing to do. It is wrong that out of 7,000 top U.S. government managers, there are only 57 Asian Americans. It is wrong that Asian families face unwarranted obstacles as they seek family reunification. It is wrong that conservatives seek to impose English-only laws when only 1/5 of the world's population speaks English.

Half of the people in the world are Asians. Half of them are Chinese. One eighth of the world are Africans. Two thirds of this hemisphere speak Spanish and Portuguese in the main. When Rajiv Gandhi wakes in the morning he rules over more people than Reagan and Gorbachev combined. So when Reagan and Gorbachev met in Geneva, it was a minority meeting. Most people in the world are non-white, female, young, non-Christian, and don't speak English. So if we are going to live in the real world, we cannot be so narrow-minded....

I want you to use my candidacy as a platform for Asian and Pacific concerns. My campaign is open to your ideas and has already been enriched by your thoughts, feelings and beliefs. We have stood together many times before - in San Francisco Chinatown with Mrs. Lily Chin, still grieving at the miscarriage of justice and the loss of her only son; in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo with survivors of the World War II concentration camps, now closer than ever before to winning redress and reparations. I spoke out against the Marcos dictatorship and stood together with the Pilipino community leaders working for democracy and human rights. I travelled together with an Asian American delegation to Japan and South Korea, and I have learned from you and will learn much more in the months and years ahead as we work together.

In 1988 you will have a choice. There are distinctions among the candidates. Those distinctions are direction, priorities, record, risk and resolve. One candidate is distinguished by fighting for the right to vote, voter registration, corporate negotiations, leading demonstrations, motivating our youth in school, spending time in jail for justice, going to Geneva and meeting Gorbachev face-to-face about the nuclear arms race and human rights. We must choose the human race over the nuclear race. By the year 2000, we must rid the planet of nuclear weapons, so there will be no more Hiroshimas and No More Nagasakis. Today, I support a Nuclear Free Pacific, and urge an immediate halt to nuclear testing in the Pacific Islands.

More than any other candidate, I will discuss the issues that most directly affect the majority of American people and the ones that they are most interested in...and I will discuss them with clarity, with bold leadership for a new direction.

This race is not a 100 yard dash. It is a marathon. We must not only focus on winning the nomination and taking the White House in 1988. We must also educate our people to importance of being counted in the 1990 census. We must concentrate on the redistricting process in 1991 because we will gain more representation through boundary changes than through voter registration alone. In my campaign, I will appoint Asian and Pacific Americans to key leadership positions; if elected, I am committed to appointing Asian and Pacific Americans to cabinet posts, to the Civil Rights Commission, federal judgeships and other leading positions in government.

But we must go even further in our quest for empowerment and representation. It is time for more Asian and Pacific Congresspeople, more Asian and Pacific Senators, state legislators, and Asian and Pacific Americans running for and winning elected office at all levels of government! This is what winning the marathon is all about..

As I announced my candidacy, I stood at 25% in the polls, the frontrunner among the field of Democratic candidates. The experts say it's just name recognition. It's not just name recognition. It's service recognition. (somebody would know their names...)

We can WIN. The Rainbow Coalition has the numbers to win. Mr. Mondale won the nomination in 1984 with 6.7 million votes. There are 20 million eligible Black voters alone - 13 million registered and 7 million unregistered. There are more unregistered Black voters than Mondale won the nomination by in 1984. And our coalition is growing. We are reaching out and the people are responding. The people - Asian and Pacific Islanders, Latinos, workers, farmers, peace and environmental activists - are ahead of the leaders. And they want bold leadership and a new direction. If we don't lose hope, and if we don't lose faith, we can win.