

THE RAINBOW COALITIONAN END TO RACIAL DIVISION: A NEW BEGINNING FOR AMERICA

Address by Rev. Jesse Jackson
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Good afternoon. I want to express my appreciation for your invitation to meet with you today. You have given me the honor of becoming the first Presidential candidate ever to speak in Little Tokyo.

I stand here before you today, not just as a candidate who is looking for votes, but as one of many who want to use our campaign to change our country's domestic and foreign policies. I cannot make promises about what I can do for you as Asian Americans. I can only ask you to join me as equal partners in our crusade to change the whole direction of American politics.

You do not need special promises, from me or any other politician. You want the same things all people want: a decent job, a chance to make real contribution to the world around you, a chance to bring up your children with some hope for the future. These are the goals of the Rainbow Coalition for all people. These are the goals we can achieve when we build a movement strong enough to elect a Congress that will cut the defense budget, when we elect a President who will start investing our nation's resources in putting our people to work and meeting human needs. I can promise you only what we can achieve together, nothing more or less. But I can also promise you that this election year represents a great opportunity to redirect the course of history, an opportunity to convince the Democratic Party to become the party of peace and jobs and justice. That is the job of the Rainbow Coalition as we look forward to the Democratic Convention in July, as we look forward to all the work we have to do in the years to come.

I can promise you something else. You, as Asian Americans, have a special role to play in any effort to change our country's foreign, domestic and military policies. For you have seen so much of the worst side of our history as a nation... You must bear witness to our national shame: The 120,000 Japanese Americans interned in concentration camps during World War II despite every proof of their loyalty to their country; the shame of immigration policies based on racial bigotry; the long history of scapegoating that has forever kept the people of this country from dealing with their common problems. The holocaust of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

You have been witness to so much of the worst. Every year since that August day in 1945, the worst comes closer to destroying not only the lives of people in this country, but the people of the world. We cannot afford for any one of us who have been

witnesses to the truth to remain silent. We cannot afford simply to protest. We must do all that we can to achieve power—to change America's foreign and domestic and military policies before it is too late.

We fight not only for ourselves but for the future of humanity. Each individual battle for justice speaks to the truth of the need for a new direction. Each individual battle is strengthened by becoming part of the whole. That is the message of the Rainbow Coalition. The battle for reparations for the Japanese Americans who lost everything in the concentration camps during World War II becomes part of the witness against all racially biased government policies from the treatment of Native Americans driven from their homes down the Trail of Tears to the treatment of Haitian immigrants thrown into concentration camps in our own time for the crime of fleeing poverty and oppression. Bringing home the truth, the horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki for those who died and for those who survived is critical to all efforts to stop an arms race gone mad, an arms race that threatens tens of thousands of Hiroshimas.

You must bear witness. You must speak the truth and together, we can change the course of history.

Today we see Asians and Asian Americans blamed for the state of the United States economy. We see politicians, Republican and Democrat alike, stirring up hatred, suspicion and distrust of everything Japanese. Since the 1880s, you have borne witness to the terrible results of this kind of scapegoating, the racial violence that results. We must tell this story over and over again until every person in this country understands that promoting division among the people has never gotten anyone a job—except the worst of our country's politicians.

Since the Chinese Exclusion Act was first passed in 1882, you have seen 100 years of immigration policy based on racial bias. Families of every Asian nationality have been separated and victimized by discriminatory immigration laws. Until 1952 Japanese born in Japan were considered ineligible for citizenship no matter how long they lived in the United States. Not until 1965 were Asians allowed to immigrate to the United States on an equal basis with Europeans. In 1984, we have an immigration service that "sweeps" the Silicone Valley twice a week checking each worker of Latin or Asian origin, despite the protest of local authorities against the harassment of their citizens. And in 1984, we have a new racially biased immigration law that does not leave the principles of the Chinese Exclusion Act far behind. The Simpson-Mazzoli bill would require national I.D. cards as if this country were embracing the policies of South Africa. The Simpson-Mazzoli bill would allow for sanctions against employers that would make them even more reluctant to hire those who already suffer from discrimination in employment policies. The Simpson-Mazzoli bill would make it even harder to achieve the reunification of Asian families.

We must tell the world that we have had enough of immigration

law based on race and racial bias. We must tell the world the truth—the truth that racial divisions are used by those who would exploit the labor of the peoples of the earth for their own benefit. The story has been repeated over and over again, with Chinese people brought to this country in gangs to build the railways, with slaves from Africa brought to work in the cotton fields, with Japanese and Chicano agricultural workers imported and exploited for their labor in the fields. The labor of the Chinese and Japanese and the Chicanos and the Black people of this country has made a handsome profit—not for us, but for those who ran the railways and owned the cotton fields, the vineyards and American agribusiness. They have used us and they have used our labor. They have used our desperate poverty, the unspeakable conditions from which we fled or into which they drove us to systematically pay us less than other workers.

Cleverest of all, they have used the terrible conditions under which we live and work—conditions which they have established—to turn American working people against us whenever it suits their purpose. "They are stealing your jobs" is the message. "Don't organize unions for better working conditions, organize the Ku Klux Klan to protect your community." We hear the same message today. If you are unemployed, you are told to blame the Japanese. Not the heads of American industry who chose not to invest their profits in reindustrializing America's basic industries: Steel and auto and rubber and textile. Don't blame the American corporations who used their tax breaks and their profits to merge with one another, to close down plants and move to slave labor markets abroad, to pay their own executives exorbitant salaries, while they failed to take into account the needs and desires of the American consumers. Blame the Japanese. Don't hold corporate America responsible for anything but its own profits and salaries. Pass (domestic) content legislation to protect us from the Japanese. Protect American executives while they raise their salaries by 15% a year. That's all Lee Iaccoca (Chairman of the Board of Chrysler Corporation) asks. He said only yesterday that he was willing to make a great sacrifice—to accept a bonus of no more than \$433,000 if the government will renew its restrictions against Japanese imports and if auto workers will find ways of cutting their health care costs. A \$433,000 bonus might not sound like a great sacrifice to you or me, but you must realize that Lee Iaccoca's counterparts at Ford and General Motors have already given themselves twice that amount.

Unemployed auto workers have been told over and over again to blame the Japanese for their loss of jobs while Lee Iaccoca used a billion dollars in tax-payers' money and a billion dollars in concessions from the workers to "streamline" his company—to close down nine plants and lay off one third of his work force. In this year of record-breaking profits, Chrysler has already cut 52,000 workers from its work force, while its directors have have set aside \$51.6 million in bonuses for 1,400 executives.

Walter Mondale supports this status quo, this protection for corporate America at all costs. He boasts of the Chrysler bailout.

He supports content legislation. I do not. I believe in saving the jobs of American working people, but not on the terms of corporate decision-makers who have shown again and again that they have no real commitment to American workers, to American communities or American consumers. I believe that we must have new political leadership in this country—leadership that will demand corporate responsibility to all of the American people. If industries ask for bailouts, they must use those bailouts to put workers to work, not to increase the dividends for their stockholders. When industry asks for protection, they must prove that they are involving their entire work force in meeting the needs of American consumers, not in raising the salaries of their executives.

We need new political leadership that will stand resolute against all attempts to blame the mistakes of corporate America on the people of other lands. Not leadership that pats corporate America on the head with content legislation and looks the other way while the American people are told to "blame the Japanese."

On June 19, 1982, Vincent Chin, a young Chinese man was clubbed to death by two white auto workers who thought he was Japanese and "taking away jobs." When the two murderers came to trial, the judge expressed sympathy for them because they were not "real criminals" and sentenced them to only \$3,000 in fines and three years probation. Perhaps it would have been a fairer trial if all the politicians, all the corporate executives, the union leaders, and the journalists who have told the American people to "blame it on the Japanese" had stood trial with those two auto workers, but Vincent Chin's life is lost forever.

From the treatment of the 120,000 Japanese Americans interned in concentration camps during World War II, suffering the loss of all they held dear... homes, businesses, farms, communities... to the death of Vincent Chin, you have witnessed the terrible results of government policy based on racial prejudice. The ways in which racial divisions are exploited by the few to rob the many. We must, of course, do all in our power to seek reparations for the victims of such policies. I call on all members of our Rainbow Coalition to join with me in seeking full redress and reparations for the Japanese Americans and Aleut interned during World War II. The legislation to this effect must not continue to languish in Congress, pursued only by Japanese Americans themselves. The message of the Rainbow Coalition is that an injury to one is an injury to all. Fighting our separate battles, none of us is strong enough to see justice done. Together we can. But we must do far more than achieve reparations for the victims of past policies. We must set this nation on a new course, a course in which we work together to realize our common goals.

We can no longer afford to stand outside protesting the policies of the past. The time has come for your generation to shape the future. That is what my campaign for the Presidency of the United States is all about. This nation must have a new foreign policy, a new domestic policy. We must change our relationships with the nations of the earth. In our debate in Texas,

Walter Mondale stated that the solution to our immigration policy problems was to put more guards at our borders. There is perhaps no statement that better summarizes the differences between my candidacy and his. His is the old direction, trying to convince the American people that there is some way that they can and must protect themselves from the peoples of the earth. Your generation must lead our nation in a new direction. We will feel pressure at our borders as long as our 6% of the world's population continues to consume more than one third of the resources of the entire globe. We will continue to feel pressure both at home and abroad as long as we continue to waste the world's resources on a deadly and devastating arms race. In the last five years we have poured \$1.8 trillion of the world's resources into our military budget. A world in which two billion people live on incomes below \$500 a year, 600 million people have no jobs, and 11 million babies die before their first birthdays because of inadequate health care.

Gary Hart and Walter Mondale believe that we must keep increasing this defense budget which has increased 60% in real terms in the last year. I believe that we can only become more secure as a nation when we cut this defense budget, when we start eliminating wasteful, deadly weapon system, when we stop providing the dictators of the world with arms and start providing the people of the world with food and aid and trade.

As Asian Americans, you have also seen the worst of this country's foreign policies in Vietnam and Cambodia and Laos, in the Philippines and Korea. You have seen what our country's support of dictators have done to war-torn lands. You have seen how our country's dependence on developing it military bases before all else has led it to support some of the worst regimes on earth. It was Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale who first negotiated a treaty to give Marcos in the Philippines \$500 million in military aid. Now Reagan has doubled that to a dictator hated around the world, to a dictator whose people are even now succeeding in rejecting him in what was thought to be one of the most fraudulent elections on earth.

It is time for your generation to make a change. We must stop this arms race. We must stop supporting dictators like Marcos. We must stop supporting death squads in El Salvador. Your generation must bear witness, your generation must make the change before we see our country repeat it Central America what it did to Vietnam and Laos and Cambodia.

You generation must make the change and you must begin now. We must begin with a vote for a new direction, for jobs, peace and justice, for an end to the arms race, for an end to the use of gunboat diplomacy and nuclear confrontation here in California on Tuesday, June 5th. Your generation, your Rainbow Coalition, can do it. California can send the world a message it will never forget. The Democratic Party will never be the same again. We must take our message to San Francisco in July, and we must never stop. We can elect a new Congress and a new Senate. A Congress that will not vote to send military aid to El Salvador, a Congress

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that will past the Nuclear Freeze, a Congress that will vote not only for reparations for Japanese Americans, but a Congress that will vote for full employment policies that will never again allow the people of our land to be turned against each other.