

CD-1054 Transcription

Speaks on intercultural harmony in a pluralistic society,

1 March 1992.

M:

We've asked to put together a session, and this all started when I had the opportunity to talk to Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum when he came over to Fort Ord and later on a session here, in which we - - this had to do with the National Prayer Breakfast. And there were a number of ideas that came out of a session that we have with Pierre de Lespinois, myself, and other members of the staff and faculty. So we invited Rabbi Tanenbaum to come and express some of his views, because we recognized right off the bat that he was talking in terms of the ideas that directly bear on what we do in the management of this large [01:00] school, managing all of the foreign languages, the cultures, when we put all this together.

And so before we start off, I do want to give you some of the background on Rabbi Tanenbaum. He is an Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee. He has been a pioneering leader and a thinker in interreligious relations in social justice movements during the past 20 years. *Newsweek* magazine described him as the American Jewish community's

foremost apostle to the Gentiles, who has been able to solicit support from all factions of the Jewish community. A poll of American newspaper religious editors in 1978 voted Rabbi Tanenbaum one of the 10 most respected and influential religious leaders in America. And the citation of his fifteenth honorary degree characterized him as the Human Rights Rabbi of America.

[02:00] In a cover letter entitled, "The 10 Most Powerful Rabbis," *New York Magazine* described Rabbi Tanenbaum as the "foremost Jewish ecumenical leader in the world today."

President Carter invited Rabbi Tanenbaum as America's Jewish leader among 10 national religious spokesmen to discuss the state of the nation at the Camp David summit meetings in 1979. He's presently Chairman of the Technical Committee of the [media?] of the 1981 White House Conference on Aging. He's also been a major force in the promotion of social justice and human rights. At the invitation of the International Rescue Committee, he joined delegations of prominent Americans to carry out factfinding investigations of the plight of the Vietnamese boat people and Cambodian refugees. He's organized many release efforts for victims of war, refugees, and starving. Recently, he served as consultant to the NBC TV nine-hour special *Holocaust*, and earlier [03:00] was consultant to the special *Jesus of Nazareth*. President Carter appointed Marc Tanenbaum to serve on the Advisory Committee of the President's Commission on the

Holocaust. Rabbi Tanenbaum was also the only rabbi at the Vatican Council II, and he's founder and co-secretary of the Joint Vatican International Jewish [Consultive?] Committee.

In 1979, he was invited to consult with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and German parliamentary officials in Bonn on the abolition of the statute of limitations on Nazi war criminals. He's lectured at major universities, seminaries, religious and educational bodies in the United States, Europe, and Israel, and in numerous national conferences. Rabbi Tanenbaum is also the author and editor of several published books and of numerous articles.

So you can see with that wealth of background, and then in addition to the thoughts that we raised, is why specifically we asked Rabbi Tanenbaum to come back [04:00] and talk to us with the general title of the Intercultural Harmony in a Pluralistic Society. Now I think you'll find some of the thoughts and ideas that he brings forth very appropriate to us here at DLI. And without anything further, I will say we're delighted to have with us today Rabbi Tanenbaum. Marc. (applause)

Marc Tanenbaum:

[Good morning?]. I was young like that once too. I was able to bounce off stages, and... This was a very bad time in which to make that demonstration of that physical vigor and stamina, because I got up at six o'clock this morning to address a meeting in Orange County of all of the religious leaders in Orange County, and then from there [05:00] went to meet with a leading evangelical pastor at a thing called [Melody?] Land. Some interesting things are happening in America. And the largest evangelical church in the South of California; 14,000 people every Sunday. From there, raced up to CBS to tape a television discussion, and then almost missed my plane here by five minutes. [It's funny?], I missed lunch along the way. So it's rather unsettling sometimes to see that vigor and intactness in my present state of disorientation.

I'm really very grateful for the privilege of being able to be with you here this afternoon, even under those circumstances, and to share a few reflections with you. I should say that, lest any of you think that I'm nonplussed by the fact that this is a very large auditorium and that you're scattered around this way, I'm just going to take a minute out of my time, not your time, [06:00] to tell you a story that I was told by Dr. Billy Graham, who happens to be a very dear personal friend who I've been working on a number of problems, including world refugees. He

told me a story of a Baptist pastor who was one day called to deliver a sermon out in Wichita, Kansas. And as it turned out, the night in which he was to speak at this Baptist church, there was a raging storm took place, and Kansas was overwhelmed with something like 18, 20 inches of snow. It was a blizzard. But this Baptist pastor who felt his call, his mission to preach the gospel to his parishioners, mused through the snow, finally made his way into the church. And when he came into a church, there was this beautiful, large church. But he looked around, there was only one man sitting in the center of the church. Well, the preacher felt that [07:00] he's a minister of the gospel, and he was called to preach. So he got up to the pulpit, and he began preaching. And he preached 15 minutes, and he preach 20 minutes, and he preached 40 minutes, and 45 minutes. And he preached like he never preached before. And then when he finished preaching, he got down off the pulpit, he was absolutely staggered by the fact that this one man had come through this terrible storm and had stayed through the whole sermon to listen to him. And so he walked around to the side of the church, and he came over to the man, and he said, "Brother, I think it's wonderful that you came here tonight in this big storm, and you're the only person who came to stay and listen to it. Now frankly, I'm very interested in why you did all this." So the man looked up at the preacher, and he said, "Well,

preacher, I'm a farmer. I don't know very much about preachin', but I know somethin' about farmin,' and I know [08:00] how to take care of cows. And when I get up in the morning sometime, and I call the cows in, and if only one cow shows up, I'll feed the cow, but I sure won't throw the whole bale of hay at him."

(crowd laughter) That's my way of telling you that I want to make a few general observations, and I'm not going to throw the whole bale of hay at all of you scattered out in DLI.

The theme which (inaudible) and my good friend Rabbi Moskowitz asked me to speak to today, it was out of intercultural harmony in a pluralist society. And I want to begin this account not by some large, abstract, philosophical observations, which may be the spinoff of one subjective mind, [09:00] but rather by repeating a story that I told at the National Prayer Breakfast, whose impact on me has been transforming every since the first time it occurred to me. And then going from there, to reflect on the meaning of that event. I have been to Southeast Asia four times in the past three years with delegations of the International Rescue Committee, which is an international, non-sectarian body, devoted to trying to relieve the suffering of refugees, hungering people, in every part of the world. And on the second mission to Southeast Asia -- and these were semi-governmental missions that were called together by the president

of the United States, and were held accountable for bringing back fact-finding reports and recommendations not only to the president, but to the secretary of state at that time, Secretary of State [10:00] Cyrus Vance, to Brzezinski, who was then head of the National Security Council, and then with both heads of the members of Congress, the Majority and Minority Leaders of the Houses of Congress.

On the second mission that we undertook in 1978, in December of 1978, we came to Malaysia, and our group split up into several delegations. One of the members of that group is Mr. William Casey, then-Ambassador William Casey, who as many of you know is now Director of the CIA. Bill Casey and I became very good friends as we traveled through every one of the refugee camps in Southeast Asia. I told him not too long ago that when we were in Singapore and we had rooms together next to each other in the hotel. If I had known then that he was becoming Head of the CIA, I'd have locked my room every night. (crowd laughter)

But as we were traveling through Malaysia, I was led up the east coast of Malaysia [11:00] by a young representative of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. A man named Hansen. He was a Swede. And Hansen took me up to the northeast coast of Malaysia, Terengganu Province. Malaysia, as many of you may

know, is a country that is perhaps something like 60, 65% Muslim in its population, and the rest of the population is predominately ethnic Chinese. And as many of you may know as well, the ethnic tension, and discord, and suspicion, and rivalry between those communities is a constant problem which surfaces particularly during the course of election campaigns, when massacres take place and there's much disruption in the streets throughout Malaysia. It happened in the last election when we were there in February of 1978. On this particular day, in December of 1978, as we came up to [12:00] Terengganu Province, Hansen told me to be prepared for some possible difficulty. He said that this is the most conservative, indeed fundamentalist, community of Muslim believers, and that it's not inconceivable that there will be some strife between the ethnic Chinese and the Muslims living in the villages, the fishermen and others living in that province. On this particular day, as we came to Terengganu Province -- as I've told this story here once before -- a boatload of boat people came around an island, Pulau Bidong. Pulau Bidong was an island once so beautiful with eucalyptus trees and palm trees that it was used as the setting for shooting the filming of the film *South Pacific* of James Mitchner, who was also a member of our delegation. And on this day, when this boatload of predominately ethnic Chinese, as we were to see, but also a number of Vietnamese [13:00] boat

people, came around Pulau Bidong and came toward the shore. We could literally see the faces of people. I was particularly seized by the face of an elderly Chinese woman because she looked as if she were the same age as my mother, near 80 years old. And you could see on their faces as they were coming into shore, sailing probably as most of those boats, of Vietnamese boat people have been sailing four, five weeks in a row, usually pushed back by one country after another. And as the boat began to come in, looking at the faces of these boat people, I saw this woman's face light up with hope. Finally, they were going to land and find haven and an end to the turmoil, the tragedy they were suffering. No water, no food. Baby infants screaming.

As the boat came in and beached on the shore of Terengganu Province, suddenly, a whole group of people came tearing out of a village [14:00] which Hansen told me was a kampong, a village of some of the Muslim fishermen, or fishermen who happened to have been Muslim. And they began coming down onto this boatload of ethnic Chinese, predominately ethnic Chinese, with sticks and rocks. And they were screaming in Malaysian, a language that Hansen translated for me. They were screaming, "Heretics, infidels, pork-eaters." Traditional Muslims do not eat pork, as traditional Jews do not eat pork. Ethnic Chinese eat pork. And as they came down to the boat, screaming with fervent passion,

they pushed this boatload of hapless people back into the water as far as it would go. And as the boat came out into the South China Sea, it hit a reef and cracked open. And this boatload of some 235, 240 [15:00] people began to sink into the water. I turned to Hansen, I grabbed his hand, I said, "My God, let's do something." And we ran out into the water, and we began pulling people out of the boat who were then sinking into the water. I grabbed this elderly Chinese woman, who was for me the image of my mother. And I pulled her onto shore. We pulled children out, teenagers. And we probably saved 12, 15 people. As we came ashore afterward -- and the rest of them sank before our eyes into the water, just gasping for life, and sinking into the water, victims of this incredible racial, and religious, and ethnic hatred. And I turned to Hansen, and I said, "My God, what's going on here?" And Hansen, who was a cool, young Swede, turned to me and said, "Rabbi, it goes on all the time, week after week after week."

We landed a shore, I got to the telephone, and I called the American ambassador in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. [16:00] We had had dinner together with him in Kuala Lumpur, the delegation, Bill Casey and others. And I told him in my exasperation, [and my?] despair, what I had just experienced. And I said, "Is there no way to bring the Malaysian government

to send a militia here to put an end to this daily destruction of human life, which is the consequence of this kind of hatred that is going on?" And the American ambassador intervened with the Minister of Interior. And I understood that by the next day or so, there was a militia there to parole the shore to prevent this from happening.

This issue of racial, religious, and ethnic hatred, this absence of an understanding of both an ideology as well as a theology, as well as an experience of pluralism, [17:00] is one of the foundation sources, of most of the national conflicts which are taking place throughout much of the inhabited world today. I have been working now on the world refugee problems for more than a decade. There is hardly a continent on the earth in which literally hundreds of thousands of human beings are not being destroyed because in virtually every society, there are conceptions of racial, religious, and ethnic superiority, whose consequence are fatal for minority communities that live in those society. I will never forget becoming involved in 1967 and 1968 in the Nigerian-Biafran conflict, and experiencing one of the early episodes [18:00] of what has become for me, as I've called it in a book that I've written, religious values in an age of violence, an epidemic of dehumanization in the world today. I became involved through working with the State

Department, as well as with Catholic Relief Service and Church World Service in trying to bring relief to hundreds and thousands of Ibos living in Eastern Nigeria. Happen to be overwhelmingly Catholics. Pope John Paul II just visited them this past week as a sign of moral solidarity with a community which suffered so horrendously in the Nigerian-Biafran conflict. And I recall meeting with Christian Ibos. A chief of one of the major Ibo tribes once came to my office. He was slated to be the Supreme Court Justice of an independent Biafra, had it ever taken place. And he brought me a cassette. He said, "This is what is played every morning by the Yoruba and the Hausa tribesmen as [19:00] they set out to destroy the Ibos in the South." And there were ditties which talked about the Ibos as if they were subhuman people.

Now I'm not interested in putting together atrocity stories, but it seems to me that anyone who wants to look at the world in its reality certainly must take into the account that there's an incredible amount of generosity in the world, and no one knows that better than the American people. And I'm not here to play any kind of chauvinist games in terms of America's greatness. In fact, after my experience in many parts of the world, is in fact the bastion of freedom and human dignity and liberty, keeping in mind our difficulties. You need only to go in countries like

Cambodia where half of the population was destroyed by its leaders who were seeking to bring about the purification of Cambodia in the model of Adolf Hitler. Pol Pot regarded Adolf Hitler as the model for [20:00] political sovereignty for Cambodia. And his campaign of de-Westernization was based on Hitler's campaign of Aryanization. And anyone who was found having any association with Western culture, civilization, or society, was automatically shot in the streets. A country of eight million people was left with little more than four million people by the end of the Pol Pot regime's domination of that society.

But look at what is going on in the world today, with all the generosity and the care, refugees. We have brought 475,000 Southeast Asian refugees to the United States, 70% of them, incidentally, brought here by churches and synagogues, resettled and restored to human dignity. But while that generosity goes on here, problems of world hunger in Western Africa, food that has been given to Egypt and other parts of the Middle East, Israel and elsewhere. The epidemic [21:00] of dehumanization goes on throughout the world. Ireland, not a day passes by where Catholics do not kill Protestants, and Protestants do not kill Catholics. And if you look at the dynamic that goes on there, there is the same campaign of verbal violence.

Gordon Allport has written a book called *The Study of Prejudice* in which he dealt, psychodynamically, with the destruction of blacks, the lynching of blacks in America through the eighteenth, nineteenth century, into the early twentieth century. And he found the dynamic that one sees now everywhere in the world, Ireland. One looks around, in Lebanon today, where some 40, 50,000 Muslims and Christians have been destroyed. Cyprus, where Turkish Muslims and Greek Orthodox Christians have been literally creating a whole new refugee problem with a quarter of a million Greek Orthodox moved away from their homes, destroyed, and nobody knows about them. Uganda, where 500,000 black [22:00] Christians in a country that was 85% Christian -- half Roman Catholic, half Protestant -- dominated by Idi Amin, a Sudanese Nubian, Muslims who kept control of a police state, terrorizing a population by virtue of this kind of dehumanization that went on. And I saw it all over in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia. Equatorial Guinea, where the pope has just gone, where the Catholic Church was almost destroyed.

What is at work in much of these national, religious, and racial conflicts today is a process which Eric Fromm, the psychoanalyst -- who recently passed away -- wrote about in his last classic work, *The Anatomy of Destructiveness*. Fromm speaks of a process

that he calls "group narcissism," which he says is one of the most important [23:00] sources of human aggression. And he describes narcissism first as an experience by individuals in this way. Narcissism can then be described as a state of experience in which only the person himself, his body, his needs, his feelings, his thoughts, his property, everything and everybody pertaining to him, are experienced as fully real, while everybody and everything does not form part of the person, or is not an object of his needs, is not interesting, is not fully real, is perceived only by intellectual recognition while affectively, in terms of feelings and emotions, is without weight and color. A person, to the extent to which he or she is narcissistic has a double standard of perception. Only he or she, himself or herself, and what pertains to him or her has significance, [24:00] while the rest of the world is more or less weightless or colorless. And because of this double standard, the narcissistic shows severe defects in judgment, and lacks the capacity for objectivity. Often, the narcissistic person achieves a sense of security in his own, entirely subjective conviction of his perfect, his superiority over others, his extraordinary qualities, and not through being related to others or through any real work or achievement of his own. He needs to hold on to his narcissistic self image since his sense of worth, as well as a sense of identity, are based on

it. If his narcissism is threatened, he is threatened in a vitally important area. When others wound his narcissism by slighting him, criticizing him, showing him up when he has said something wrong, defeating him in a game, in numerous other occasions, [25:00] a narcissistic person usually reacts with intense anger or rage, whether not he shows it or is even aware of it. The intensity of this aggressive reaction can often be seen in the fact that such a person will never forgive someone who has wounded his narcissism, and often feels a desire for vengeance which would be less intense if his body or his property had been attacked.

Fromm then goes on to make the observation that that narcissism which leads to that kind of self-involvement to the exclusion of others, the inability of a person to relate to another person in a human way also has its counterpart in what he calls "group narcissism." And he describes it in these words: "The narcissistic image of one's own group is raised to the highest point, while the devaluation [26:00] of the opposing group sinks to the lowest. One's own group becomes a defender of human dignity, decency, morality, and right, and devilish qualities are ascribed to the other group. It is treacherous, ruthless, cruel, and basically inhuman, the out-group is. And the violation of one of the symbols of group narcissism, such as the

flag, or the person of the emperor, the president, or an ambassador, is reacted to with such intense fury and aggression by the people that they're even willing to support their leaders in a policy of war." And Fromm concludes, "Group narcissism is one of the most important sources of human aggression, and yet this, like all other forms of defensive aggression, is a reaction to an attack on vital interest. It differs from other forms of defensive aggression in that intense narcissism in itself is a semi-pathological phenomenon." [27:00] And he points out that in considering the causes and functions of bloody and cruel mass massacres as they occurred between Hindus and Muslims at the time of the partition of India, or recently between Bengali Muslims and their Pakistani rulers, group narcissism certainly plays a considerable role. (break in audio) -- has a monopoly on the notion that somehow that it stands at the center of the universe, and in theological terms, that it has a monopoly on God's truth, or all wisdom, in its own hand. The Jewish community continues to struggle against group narcissism against those ultra-fundamentalist Jews in Israel and our own country who believe that they contain all of God's revelation, not only for the Jewish people, but for their branch of the Jewish people. And those, like myself, a Conservative rabbi, somehow are somewhat heretical, infidels, outside of salvation in those terms. And part of the struggle [28:00] that we are

going through within Israel is to make sure that that kind of group narcissism, which is given theological sanction, is not allowed to have the power to impose its own sectarian view on the rest of the society, in our own community of that version, of that kind of narcissism, there is also an absence of an ideology of pluralism, of a doctrine of live and let live, and of coexistence. In the United States today, there is a very real concern about the rise of ultra-fundamentalist Christians, somewhat symbolized by the language of Moral Majority, and even those to the right of the Moral Majority. Jerry Falwell is quite civilized and humane compared to some of the people I've run into [and to?] some of the communities in the [Back Clay?] Hills of Georgia and elsewhere. People, first of all, who have never had an experience with another American outside of their own faith communities. I have had people in fundamentalist communities [29:00] ask me, how do you talk to a Catholic? How do you talk to talk to a Catholic cardinal? What do you call them? "Mister"? "Father"? How do you speak to them? They have absolutely no experiences in their entire lifetime of human communication, interaction, not with Malaysians, not with Pakistanis, but with people of differing racial, religious, and ethnic identities outside of their own limited community. And as a result of that, their perceptions of Catholics have led to a condition now where they're publishing comic books, caricaturing

the pope, caricaturing the Virgin Mary, calling for the burning of the Pope in effigy. The pope and the Catholics cease to exist for them as human beings. They have been emptied of all human meaning, and they exist as stereotypes with which one can do with whatever one wills.

And indeed, the issues that I refer to with regard to Islam is the source of something of the same kind of conflict. And when one takes this group narcissism, when one takes [30:00] a tradition in its ultra-fundamentalist form, which has neither ideology nor theology of coexistence and pluralism, one in fact has the condition of an Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, who virtually day after day after day, massacres innocent men, women, and children, not only because of political dissent, but because they are different kinds of human beings. Baha'is are being wiped out. Many Christians have been shot, and the Jewish community, which at one time lived with a sense of comfort and a sense of solidarity in Iran, lives in a state of terror as to when another Jewish leader will be destroyed in the street without trial.

And so the issue of pluralism is not an abstract, philosophical issue which needs to be studied only in academies and classrooms in terms of [why or?] how to find the philosophical sources of

pluralism, as one can indeed find them in much [31:00] of Western philosophical, intellectual tradition. It is an issue which touches the very capacity of the human family to survive today. More human beings have been destroyed as the result of religious, racial, ethnic strife since the end of World War II than have been killed in World War II itself. And one of the reasons for our concern, for wanting to discuss this issue in the United States of America is because America, in the judgment of many of our major historians, both secular historians and church historians, have gone through an experience which is worthy of examination by members of the entire human family. Not in any sense of imperialism, of grandiosity, but in terms of studying a human phenomenon which has the seeds of understanding how a community has moved, [32:00] in fact, from a monochromatic, monolithic community of one religious tradition to encountering the pluralism of this society, and learning not only to cope with it, but indeed, to celebrate it in terms of its freedom that it has given all of the members of that community.

In the first 100 years of the founding of American society, American conceived of itself essentially in the terms which existed in the Massachusetts Bay Colony after 1629. This country was conceived, in fact, as an Evangelical Christian community.

And Reverend Jerry Falwell today, who speaks of a return to the glory of America, seeks to try to regress to the period of time when he thought that that period of an Evangelical Christian America was a period of the greatest glory of this country. But if you read any of the major Church historians, such as Dr. Martin Marty of University of Chicago, or [Sidney Austrum?] of Yale, or Winthrop Hudson, or Theodore [Wertemberger?] study the puritan oligarch, and penetrate [33:00] and penetrate into the actual experience of what it meant to have a theocratic society, you begin to understand the price that America paid for that notion of unity, which does not allow in any way for diversity of point of view and coexistence. Thus Wertemberger describes how, in the early history of the American colonies, where there were established churches, when there was an alliance between church and state, no one was allowed to hold civic office unless that person was authorized by the preacher of the community. In order to be a member of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, a civil magistrate, or even a dogcatcher, the preacher had to testify that you were a Christian in good standing, that you took communion every Sunday, that you believed in the orthodox doctrine of baptism as preached by the Puritan fathers in that colony. And God forbid if you were found to be heretical in your beliefs. One suffered humiliation, and punishment, and death itself. [34:00] Indeed, Roger Williams, who was a member of that

colony, because he had a different interpretation of baptism, was forced to leave the colony after being flogged and punished, escaped through the night to Salem, Massachusetts, came back to Providence, Rhode Island, to found the colony of Providence, Rhode Island, whose fundamental affirmation was that of the separation of church and state, religious liberty, and freedom of conscience. Not only for Baptists, where he founded the first Baptist church, but for all believers. And he has a marvelous parable in which he talks about Jews and Catholics and Muslims, all of them having freedom of conscience, because that is all that God requires of human beings to give of their conscience freely to him, and that no human being has the right to coerce another into believing that which the rulers of the sovereign state seek to impose upon them. It was from Roger Williams and Providence that the Southern Baptists came [35:00] into being in Virginia, and fought for nearly 75 years a life and death struggle to disestablish the Anglican Church in Virginia. And they are responsible for bringing about the separation of church and state out of that struggle of Southern Baptists and Southern Methodists, and dissident Presbyterians, there came the First Virginia Declaration of Religious Liberty, which James Madison wrote, and then Thomas Jefferson wrote as the basis of the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution of the First

Amendment of separation of church and state, and freedom of conscience, which became the basis of religious pluralism.

The United States of America today numbers more than 235 religious sects, not to speak of racial and ethnic groups. One of my colleagues, who's an expert on the problems of ethnic groups in America, said by definition, with that multiplicity of groups in America, the United States, almost by definition, should be a massacre. The fact that the society hangs together [36:00] in fact is a miracle. And one of the reasons that the United States has created a society in which this multiplicity of religious, racial, and ethnic views, exists side by side not by sufferance, not as second-class citizens, but as first-class citizens -- *de jure*, as well as *de facto* -- that every American comes to the dialogue table as a first-class citizen with a right to be himself or herself in terms of commitment to his or her tradition is that there has been developed in this society a understanding of an idea which Martin Marty has described, namely of a tension between identity and exposure. That dialectic, Marty declares, allows for the possibility in this pluralist society that every group has the right, in a sense, to put its head together, [37:00] to be itself in its own terms, to be faithful to its own traditions, to be true to its own culture, its own language. And yet there is the obligation in

this pluralist society to recognize that if one is faithful only to one's tradition, one in fact engages in a form of idolatry; that is to say lifts up one's own community to be of ultimate importance at the expense of others. And that, in fact, can lead to the balkanization of this society, as other societies have been balkanized.

But the genius of the American pluralist system, Marty declares, is that we have worked out a dialectical tension between identity, being true to one's own tradition, and recognizing a responsibility to be exposed to the common welfare, if all of us together have a responsibility for the wellbeing of all of the members of a society. And one sees that operating at its best, one begins to realize the liberating power of this democratic pluralist [38:00] tradition, which has enabled each group to preserve itself in its own terms, which has enabled each group to preserve its own language, as Hispanic Americans are being encouraged to preserve their own language and their own culture, as my parents were able to preserve the Yiddish language when they came here from Eastern Europe, as we were able to meet with Poles who preserve a Polish liturgy today, and many other ethnic liturgies in their own churches in this country.

In sum, what we have learned during the past 100 years of the American experience, in this emergence of the doctrine of unity in the midst of diversity, is that it has been an incredible, liberating effect, which has enabled us to uphold the dignity of every human being in this society, with a sense of responsibility for the welfare, not only for our own group, but responsibility for the welfare of others in the society with whom we share a common welfare. And it's out of that experience of unity in the midst [39:00] of diversity that we have, in fact, begun to understand our responsibility of the unity not only of the American people, but the unity the human family, recognizing the diversity of religious, racial, ethnic groups all over the world. And I would suggest to you that this not only ideology of religious, racial, ethnic pluralism in America, which is manifest itself in the idea of the unity of the American people and respect for all of its diversity, in fact, may well represent one of the most important learning experiences that one from any foreign country can have in the United States. It is more important than our Gucci slippers, it is more important than Halston perfumes, it is more important than much of the material gadgets and gimmickry that we take away from this society, even computer technology. Because in a world today in which there is the capacity [40:00] to destroy the human family at least 12 times over with the nuclear

warheads that are available to our country as well as to the Soviet Union -- and I believe in a strong defense for this society -- hatred of one group for another is a luxury that the human family can no longer afford, if we ever could have afforded it. In a world in which, according to a Harvard report, there are now 439 nuclear reactors in some 46 countries throughout the world, many of them in the least-[depeded?], least-developed countries of the world, where showing nuclear power has become a sign of macho, making an impression on one's neighbors, where there's the capacity for nuclear theft, as Professor Taylor writes about in his book at Princeton University. Capacity for terrorists to destroy human life at will, religious, racial, ethnic hatred becomes one of the most serious threats to the survival of the human family. [41:00] And we have an obligation, those of us who are concerned about the human welfare, who are concerned about perpetuating the ideals of democracy and human dignity and human rights, not only for ourselves in our own group, but for every human community in the world to take seriously the experience of pluralism, and the fact that is the key to human survival in the kind of threatened world in which we live today. Thank you. (applause)

M: I would just add a note and say that we here at DLI, coming from a very diverse ethnic background, coming together in

this one center, and then clearly recognizing [42:00] our responsibilities as teachers to American youth, with their many different attitudes, or their different ideas on culture, religion, and ethnic differences, recognize very clearly the points that the Rabbi Tanenbaum was talking about today. And we're very appreciative of that. We have a few more minutes, and I would ask if anyone outside, if anyone would have any questions that they would like to pose to Rabbi Tanenbaum at this time. Answered all the questions right off the bat?

TANENBAUM: That's called a case of ecumenical overkill.
(laughter)

M: Anyone have any questions? Yeah.

TANENBAUM: Maybe we ought to try turning off the tape, [Colonel?], for about 18 minutes, and...

M: And there is no examination afterwards, (inaudible).

[43:00] Anyway, I would say we appreciate very much, Rabbi Tanenbaum, your very thought-provoking remarks.

M2: Wait, there's a question.

M: Yes?

M3: How do you reconcile the point of view -- (inaudible).

TANENBAUM: Concept of melting pot emerged in the early twentieth century in the United States. One of the authors of that term was Israel Zangwill, who came to America and

saw waves of immigration coming to this country after 1880, when there were massive waves of primarily Catholics from Central and Eastern Europe, followed and accompanied, in many cases, by several million Jews who came here and that also, [44:00] that wave of immigration in the wake of incredible amount of hunger, poverty, and pogroms that were taking place in Europe, with much destruction of life. Now as those groups came together, there was such a polyglot tradition, with every racial nationalist group, religious nationalist group speaking its own language that there emerged in the early history of this century a very great emphasis on the Americanization of foreign populations -- alien, foreign populations. So that every public school in America had courses on educating not only children how to speak English so that they could enter into the mainstream of American life and negotiate their futures, but have evening course for parents, so parents could be able to talk to their children, and help educate them to become Americans, and participate in the common welfare. The conception of melting pot [45:00] began to decline in the 1940s, after two generations of immigrants had been in this country had become fully Americanized, there began to emerge -- in fact, I recently read an essay by a social historian, a Japanese-American, Robert Lee. He now speaks

of what he calls a "*Homo americanus*," that there has been such homogenization of the various religious, racial, ethnic groups in America, in the model of common American identity, people who share common values, common ideals, who have in fact been shaped deeply by the cultural formation of American mass media, television, with common heroes and recognition that you can't be beautiful unless you use the same kind of deodorant, or soap, or perfume, that there's developed a *Homo americanus* who is an identifiable American personality. When that *Homo americanus* began to emerge with the common American culture, the notion of melting pot began to [46:00] disappear. And in fact, probably the one person who is responsible for destroying that concept, saying that it's no longer relevant, was the late professor Will Herberg, who wrote a book on the pluralism of American society. *Catholic, Protestant, Jew*, the book was called. And he described in great detail how that American melting pot has dissolved, completely. Now the tension is in the opposite direction. Given the reality of a *Homo americanus*, an identifiable American personality with new waves of immigrants coming into American life; first of all, Hispanics, who have come in here in some, perhaps, six, seven millions, who want to preserve their own culture and

language, now the swing of the pendulum is in the opposite direction: how do you preserve the common American identity, and yet make it possible for Hispanics to retain their own language, their own culture, their own faith, without giving that up and becoming totally absorbed and losing the richness of their own tradition? And now with new waves of Asian Americans coming to the United States, something of the same awareness takes place. [47:00] How do you help Asians preserve the richness of their own culture, and yet at the same time, learn the language so they can participate in the mainstream of the society?

I think the important thing to recognize in the conception of pluralism -- which is the central reality, which has supplanted melting pot idea, is that in this diversity which is taking place, even those homo-americanus, it is a homo-americanus that is composed of a variety of religious, racial, ethnic groups, each of whom preserves their own identity, but in the framework of an American identity. It is not an American identity which is absorbed into pluralism. And the issue today is the recognition that differences which exist among so many of the religious, racial, ethnic groups in this country have ceased to be viewed as a threat by the major opinion molders of the

society, and difference and diversity is viewed in this society as a source of enrichment. Indeed, I saw someone write an essay which is relevant to the DLI, [48:00] in which he made the point that look at the power of languages as a means of communication in the human family. Languages can become an unguided missile. One can use languages for babble, [like the?] Tower of Babel, for creating confusion. One can use it for hostility and dehumanizing, but one can use language as the vehicle of culture and ideals and values of an individual tradition. And like a symphony orchestra, each of the language uncovers another richness. And when harmonized together, creates a great symphony of the human family, communicating to each other the depth and the richness of each tradition. That's not bad, I ought to stop with that. (laughter)

M4: (inaudible) question.

M5: (inaudible) How do you [49:00] (inaudible) young American people to the (inaudible)?

TANENBAUM: That's a very large question. And -- you heard the question. What is the attitude of young Americans to intercultural harmony? It's a very large questions, which my own group, the American Jewish Committee, has now been studying for a variety of reasons, one of which has to do with problems of crime and vandalism, which has increased

in recent years. And it's become increasingly clear that in problems of vandalism that a form of antisocial behavior has developed, and this is, in a sense, marginal to the mainstream of a society. But we become aware that in many of the public school systems, especially in major urban centers, there has developed intergroup [50:00] cultural conflict, especially as massive populations from one particular group moves in as a migrant group into a school system that was almost homogeneous formerly before the group moved in. And we became aware of the fact that there is a deficiency now which needs to be dealt with, namely that after World War II, after the Nazi Holocaust, when there was such a sense of outrage in this society about the impact that hatred, prejudice, anti-Semitism had had, which led to the destruction of six million Jews, and eventually 35 million other human beings during World War II, that no one could take for granted that the American school system was helping to educate our young people to understand what such hatred and abuse of another human being could lead to. So in the late 1940s and early 1950s, there developed in the United States school systems, the public school systems, [51:00] programs for intercultural education. And my own group participated in that. It is namely we used to sit with school superintendents, and

principals, and student bodies, and faculties to discuss what it means to be an American, what it means to live in a democratic society, what pluralism is about, how groups should learn to work together for the common welfare in the school system. And those programs operated for much of the period of the 1950s. Then in the 1960s, when racism became a major issue in the Civil Rights struggle, much of the concentration was on the problem of racism in the school system. But the intercultural education generally, ethnic education, simply became nonexistent. And we began to see now over recent years, recent months in particular, as rivalries began to take place between black and white students, Italians, and Protestant students, and other students in the school system, that the time had come for paying attention again. And we have begun a series of programs with the National Education Association [52:00] to consciously begin to sensitize young people on what America is about, what democracy is about, what pluralism is about, and what intercultural living together requires. So it's an ongoing task for us. I'm not sure that one can generalize (inaudible). There are polls that are taken place of youth culture on a number of issues. Not very many of them have dealt with the problems of intercultural attitudes or prejudice. And perhaps, that's something that we've got to

do much more about in terms of our social science work in
the months ahead.

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