

CD-1058 Transcription

Marc H. Tanenbaum and Jesse Jackson at Queens College [1]. 1987.

Marc Tanenbaum:

(inaudible) who I knew when Jesse Jackson, but (inaudible) for (inaudible). Let me say at the outset that one of the most practical (inaudible) in black-Jewish relations occurred in (inaudible) as I walked into the [classroom?]. Together with maybe, (inaudible) Jesse Jackson, and I, to organize the black-Jewish collection of plays for audiences like this. (laughter) [01:00] I don't know if that's (inaudible), for a service tonight. (laughter)

I want to announce a tribute to the respect for scholarship, and scholarship is implicit in the ways it's perceived (inaudible). There's a lot of (inaudible) people, the Vatican Council II. When I (inaudible), why I was (inaudible) for the first conference in 1,900 years. Well, I've [been?] in the relationship with the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, and how did you [face?], (inaudible), have you changed? Very important that the Council, someone told me this story. The late, blessedful [02:00] John XXXIII, whose inspiration (inaudible) to Vatican Council II, which literally changed the course of the history of the Catholic Church over the past 1,900

years. Before he was elevated to the papacy, certainly (inaudible) in the Balkans, in Istanbul, and then after that, he was brought to France, where he there served as a delegate to the French government, for (inaudible) in France. And then the story happened, Monsignor (inaudible), he left, developed a very warm and intimate friendship with a chief rabbi, Rabbi Jacob [Capo?], and according to his account, [03:00] Monsignor (inaudible) to a banquet, (inaudible). And they came together in this large reception hall, as they were chatting, making small talk, changing (inaudible). Then, some of them had gone to a banquet, and wanted to walk through the reception hall into the big dining hall. Then, as this story has it, the chief rabbi came through the door, or entered into the banquet, and Monsignor (inaudible) was at his side, hoping (inaudible), and the chief rabbi turned from Monsignor (inaudible), and he said, "Your excellency, after you. You first." And Monsignor (inaudible), who was very fond of the rabbi, said, "No, your excellency, dear rabbi, you first." And this went on for like five minute back and forth, (inaudible) [04:00] going through the door. Finally, Pope John, then Monsignor (inaudible), in his entire Italian, earthly, and peasant way, grabbed hold of the arm of (inaudible), beginning to shout through the door, "This way. Oh, dear rabbi, the (inaudible)." (laughter)

Well, normally, I would appear after Jesse Jackson, and I would be happy to start out (inaudible) (laughter). What was left over. I hear it's (inaudible) of a few academic scholarship, the (inaudible), (laughter).

[05:00] The invitation extended to me by the honorable (inaudible) assistant majority leader of the New York State Assembly, and a professor of political science at Queens College, (inaudible), associations with the late [Leslie Plocker?], who served the American Jewish Committee with distinction. (inaudible) from professor Ernest Schwartz, (inaudible).

There are [thousands in support?] of the Queens Black-Jewish People-to-People Project, is both a symbol and a (inaudible) contribution to a compelling (inaudible), that hopefully all of us here, tonight, share. [06:00] The (inaudible) understanding, and the (inaudible) of knowledge, mutual respect, and what [ways?] we'd like in Jewish people in [communities?]. In the context of a profound, common concern, when the welfare of our (inaudible) American democratic republic.

Let me be clear at the outset about my (inaudible), as I see it to see things. I come here as an individual, only for myself,

(inaudible) through speech. While I believe, and I do express repeatedly (inaudible), the many, perhaps the most, I don't know, in the Jewish community. What I am about to (inaudible) the usual positions of the American Jewish Committee, and certainly not those of the [07:00] American Jewish community, which is characterized by diversity, and a formality of views, that is true of every great religious, racial, or ethnic group in our democratic society.

Why are we here this evening? Why is there such an impressive turnout of people in this community coming together tonight to this college? This is not a meeting either for the Reverend Jesse Jackson, or for myself. If the bigots and extremists in our society have their way, this evening would not have [come to pass?]. The fact that Jesse Jackson and I made our own separate decisions is sharing (inaudible) [08:00] in the face of threats, slander, and intimidations is a statement that our relationships will reject hatred, bigotry, and (inaudible) from whatever corner it is issued. (applause) We do not, and we will not obey the troublesome and disturbing (inaudible). But our [purpose?] tonight as I see it is to try to find a better way, a more civil and an instructive way, for blacks, and Jews who live and work together, and they have done, we must not forget, as they have done for much of their history during the past 25 years. I ask,

why are we here tonight? [09:00] And I'm not going to answer that question. Out of my reflections, I'd like to (inaudible) the past quarter-century or more.

In 1968, I got involved with Catholic and Protestant leaders in trying to relieve the suffering of the victims of the (inaudible). That exposure, day in and day out, with so much destruction of human lives, with tens of thousands of death of Muslims and Christians, and the incredible starvation of thousands of innocent children, literally transformed my life. While the Jewish (inaudible), the cause of Soviet Jews was under oppression still, the cause of victory, [10:00] the cause of peace in the Middle East between Jews and Arabs, the black Jews of Ethiopia, who still suffer terrible oppression and poverty among other (inaudible) are constantly at the core of my consciousness. Since that experience of 1968, literally, I have been driven today, much of my waking hours, through the (inaudible) and international human rights. Some 12 million refugees in the world today, some 6 million of them in Africa, the largest refugee problem in the world. Most of them living in desperate conditions. The (inaudible) that most of these refugees to which [11:00] I have been exposed or involved are the result of religious, racial, ethnic, and tribal hatred.

In the Sudan, several years ago, nearly a million black Christians and Arabs were massacred by (inaudible). In Uganda, President Idi Amin might, and is moving to try to slaughter some half a million black Christians in Africa, half of them are (inaudible). In India, there are unending slaughters of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. In Sri Lanka, Tamil, President [Hamid?], are slaughtering each other, all in the name (inaudible). The Iran and Iraq War has resulted in the deaths of an estimated quarter million human beings, namely children who are 12 to 14 years old. Oh, the (inaudible) they assured themselves certain descendants of (inaudible). [12:00] Lebanon, once the citadel of Arab Christendom, what was once to the Arab Christian world what Israel is to world Jewry, the model of (inaudible) is now the very [opposite?]. And (inaudible) over Ireland, where for more than a decade, Protestants and Catholics have been destroying each other.

Religious, racial, and ethnic hatreds have become the (inaudible) of a dehumanization of Earth. Nowhere is that dehumanization more palpable and tragic than any in South Africa. In October, 1985, I went on a mission with the American Jewish Committee to South Africa. We met a great many men and women from every segment [13:00] of that lively society, where Archbishop Tutu, (inaudible), business, and the Jewish

community. It is (inaudible). An abomination to which (inaudible) of nationalist (inaudible) and religious bigotry. (inaudible) has dominated Western civilization, including the [blood?] of South Africa, which is a Western country. Jews have suffered and have been destroyed by a 1,900 year old religious lie (inaudible), a certain notion that the Jewish people collectively killed Christ, and therefore was to endure any punishment in exile. And some who I know as Christians today, (inaudible) that the [14:00] Nazi Holocaust was God's ultimate punishment of the Jews for having elected to kill Christ. Apartheid is another such religious lie. In the Dutch Reformed Churches, it has been taught for generations as gospel truth that the black people have reached Earth by God with the curse of [man?], the (inaudible) of black people in the Biblical story. (inaudible) justifies (inaudible). I saw the men in power, with that religious lie, as I watch from afar in (inaudible) in 1985, watched dozens and dozens of young Afrikaans leaping out of their (inaudible), shooting black people at will. [15:00] These young Afrikaans, fresh off the farms, their heads filled with their church blessings, and raised in a culture of religious and racial hatred, and bigotry that has been indulged without limit. Where are they to learn that the life of a white child is as precious through the eyes of God as their own? The late (inaudible), Dr. Eric [Fromme?],

whose (inaudible) called such behavior brute narcissism. As in the dynamics of individual narcissism, a group attributes to themselves all virtue, and is consigned to all (inaudible), all vice, everything is (inaudible). Such a movement becomes potent in our [standard?], and [16:00] sees itself as naturally superior, and sees another as inferior, (inaudible) everything, deserving of destruction. Dr. Fromme calls this brute conflict psycho-[dynamic?] behavior, and is responsible for much of the brute oppression, terrorism, and violence that pock marks the world today. And the cost in human lives that the human family is paying for such religious and racial hatred all over the world is staggering. The non (inaudible) comprehension, in a nuclear missile age, such psych-pathology went out of control, were concealed to trigger off a nuclear holocaust.

Blacks and Jews. All (inaudible) needs to acknowledge that there are (inaudible) [17:00] has been different, is different over the past 200 years, (inaudible) have struggled mightily to establish an open, democratic, plural society. The true genius of America rests now on (inaudible) and Coca-Cola around the world. The true genius of America rests in the reality that each religious, racial, and ethnic group comes to the common American table by rights, as first class citizens, and (inaudible) suffers. Each -- (applause) Each group, religious, racial,



ethnic, has its own agenda, a focus, its own deeply-held priorities, and has a right to receive a fair and civil hearing at the shared (inaudible). [18:00] While advocating is (inaudible), at the same time, each of us has a simultaneous, collateral, overarching obligation to serve the common welfare. American democracy is founded on a social compact, which is a very fragile instrument. Watergate showed us how fragile. Irangate has taught us how fragile this compact can become. That compact needs to be continuously nurtured by the commitment to civility, and usual respect. That was not (inaudible) constructive criticism of each other's position, or holding different views. But indulging religious or racial bigotry, reckless and uninhibited racial epithets, or anti-Semitic deprivations, can heap this [19:00] precious, fragile social compact into the ground, into the dust. My friends, America is the only nation on Earth that has not been [spoiled?] by religious war. We have not had 30-Year Wars. We have not had Hundred-Year Wars over religious character, as one client all over the world reminds me. We have (inaudible) racism, and anti-Semitism, (inaudible). And let me tell you that the canard, the (inaudible) that Zionism is racism is just such an expression of defamation and (inaudible) violence. (applause)

(inaudible) natural demagogues, and of such moral (inaudible) and integrity is credibility [20:00] (inaudible). At their (inaudible) and at their most productive, black-Jewish relations in the 1960s and the 1970s were a paradigm of democratic, (inaudible) at its best. The essential (inaudible) extraordinary, even historic cooperation, was well formulated by our colleague, Albert [Borschman?], who in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* recalls how, in 1964, the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was challenging, together with Jesse Jackson, and Andy Young, and many other colleagues, that Dr. Martin Luther King was challenging racial discrimination in public accommodations. And (inaudible), there was a fierce resistance [21:00] from the sheriff of the police, as well as from the White Citizens Council, and the Ku Klux Klan. And Martin Luther King sent a telegram to the conference that was then meeting in Atlantic City on the central conflicts of American (inaudible), and he appealed for their help. Literally, within hours, that very day, since (inaudible), where they joined Dr. King, and his brothers and sisters. They entered a black church, and joined in prayer and mutual solidarity, and then they went off to find (inaudible) a lunch counter, (inaudible) of hatred, contempt, and (inaudible) racist policy. All of them, Martin King, and all around him, and the [22:00] 60 rabbis were all forced by collective cattle prods into a cell in the prison of St.

Augustine. A member from (inaudible), why did you rabbis engage in that civil disobedience? Why were they then prepared to go to jail? Almost spontaneous and at once. (inaudible). He said the answer is simple. Martin Luther King Jr. No other person could have (inaudible) such an instantaneous and uncritical response from us. For Dr. King, there was implicit trust, a profound bond, and the mutual respect, and a deep sense of solidarity with his mission, and that of his people. We respected him because he was [23:00] intellectually (inaudible), and a powerful orator, (inaudible) is not too bad either. (laughter) (applause).

And more than that, we loved him because he cherished the glory of racial and religious diversity. He despised black separatism as both wrong and counterproductive. He saw the civil rights revolution, not as a black rebellion, but as a covenant of white and black, Christian and Jew, standing together with decency. For Dr. King, (inaudible) was a seamless way. Anti-Semitism and (inaudible) prejudice with racial bigotry were anathema. (applause) His goal was not only justice for America's blacks, [24:00] but human rights for all peoples, and peace everywhere.

(inaudible), is, as I believe, (inaudible) essentially a problem Jews must face and resolve, so the Reverend Louis Farrakhan is a

central challenge to the integrity and the future of the black community. (applause) Black-Jewish relations are bigger than Louis Farrakhan or [Meir Cohen?]. (applause) And we still have much in common that transcend our demagogues and our friction. Dr. King never tired of pointing out, blacks and Jews have common enemies, not just in the 1960s. We've been (inaudible) this week [25:00] on what is happening on 60 major campuses in America, with a racism that is about to erupt again against black students on college campuses. What is happening in the farm belt of America, where the Aryan Brotherhood, the Christian Identity Movement, and the (inaudible), joining together a plan are now trying to create the canard that the (inaudible) of America, the breakdown of the family form, one of the great tragedies of this country, is due for one reason only, the Jewish conspiracy of America has set out to buy out the (inaudible) of America. It is the Jewish conspiracy that is responsible for the crisis in the farm belt, that they have not gone away. They're always the (inaudible).

We have a shared history of oppression that gives us a shared [26:00] visit, in a compassionate and open society. And, my friends, we need each other. I spoke today to our Washington representative, (inaudible), about problems relating to South Africa, and he talked to me about the incredible, close -- the

incredible cooperation of the accomplishment to our blacks as Jews, and he said, "No Jew (inaudible) in the United States, (inaudible) together as consistently to (inaudible) as the Jews and black congressmen in the United States Congress." (applause)

And they are (inaudible) protecting before the increasing opportunities (inaudible) [27:00] working together on the problems of unemployment, on family life, on education, on fair housing, brought crime, violence, resisting together the violations of the separation of church and state, which continues to now, but (inaudible) week after week. Together, working for the security of the State of Israel, speaking out for Soviet Jews, and others denied their human rights, opposing together Apartheid in South Africa, and racism at home, despite (inaudible) of the conflicts that cloud our mutual relations, even on such endless issues as affirmative action, where there can be legitimate and constructive criticism. There are still a lot that brings Jews and blacks together.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. [28:00] forged a black-Jewish bond in love, devotion, (inaudible) that we Jews can take (inaudible). That superb religious leader, as political activist, can nurture and strengthen that bond, which was and must remain a blessing for America and for the world. I can only hope and pray that

this shared evening, with Jesse Jackson, whom I've known for many years, will mark a turn away from the aberrations and the deviations of black-Jewish relations in the past, and will return us to a higher of justice, mutual respect, mutual support and solidarity. For the sake of black and Jewish [29:00] peoples of our nation, and above all, for the well-being of this great American democratic society that we love. Thank you. (applause)

**M1:**

Thank you very much, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum. As I was listening to you, Rabbi, you touched (inaudible) historical (inaudible). You made reference to that coalition of Jews, blacks, and others that was the experience early on in the Civil Rights Movement, in the 1950s, and the 1960s. [30:00] I was a student in Queens College at the time, and as you spoke, three names popped into my head, names that we should not forget, some of us that worked with them in college should remember: Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman. (applause) Three young people, in their commitment to principle and idealism. Two of them Jewish, one of them black, who went south to fight the Civil Rights Movement, non-violently, and were murdered in the South because of their commitment. Maybe that's what we could focus on, that kind of renewal of spirit that we could tell people to make that kind of sacrifice.

Ladies and gentlemen, a great privilege for me to introduce a gentleman who was appointed by Martin Luther King early on in his career as director [31:00] of Operation Breadbasket, which was the economic arm of the Southern Christian Leadership Council. Later in 1971, organized Operation PUSH, People United to Serve Humanity. I remember reading about it then, what struck me, the theme of this self-help organization on the character, the theme of people, for people, across people's differences, fighting their way out of their (inaudible), by themselves, not dependent on (inaudible), their own self work, their (inaudible). Later, organized the Push for Excellence educational program. He has been a leader in our community for several decades. In 1983, he began his candidacy for president of the United States. He was a leading candidate in the 1986 elections. As a politician, I know that he received three-and-a-half million votes in the primaries, [32:00] 22% of the vote in the Democratic primaries. He won four states, and Washington, D.C. He is a renowned (inaudible), thinker, philosopher, community leader, not without controversy, but certain ones (inaudible) in America today. Ladies and gentlemen, the Reverend Jesse Jackson.

**Jesse Jackson:**

(inaudible) [33:00] on this historic occasion tonight. I might have two here because I won't be here, some place to be, (inaudible), relations of this nation, would have (inaudible) upon America and the world. I speak for myself. The views perhaps represent the most (inaudible) coalition and friends beyond that. I want to thank Queens College for the sponsorship of this important evening, for their gracious hospitality, especially (inaudible) for building the idea of black-Jewish dialogues, maturing support, [34:00] and most of all, for your own personal leadership (inaudible), you're a very necessary person. This community has you in the (inaudible), as a political leader. Traditionally, (inaudible) as far as Moses, that figure whose life is also a symbol of other racial cooperation. It was Moses, the Jewish child, raised by an Egyptian princess, who led his people out of Egypt in freedom, who finally says, being (inaudible) a pharaoh, Moses went (inaudible), enabling their child because, he said, I felt a stranger [35:00] in a foreign land. As a political leader, Moses spoke up to pharaoh, told the truth to pharaoh (inaudible). They led the Jewish people to cross the Red Sea, all (inaudible) the promised land. As a religious leader, Moses spoke up to the same people, and he came out of Mt. Sinai, with the Ten Commandments, and he found them worshipping the golden calf. And this (inaudible) religious leaders to speak the truth, (inaudible)



necessary, and speak out for all moderation, to always be prepared in God's name, to speak truth as you know it.

American history began with religious figures serving as political leaders. Led by the ministers of (inaudible), [36:00] the voyage that crossed the Atlantic in search of religious freedom, and yet, ironically, what they valued for themselves, they denied to others, for being (inaudible), strict sectarian lives. There were other examples too. The difference between preach and practice, tolerance, and respect. The Baptist minister, (inaudible) Williams, (inaudible) the principals of religious toleration. The (inaudible) of Pennsylvania, fully in persecution at home, all of them (inaudible). And not coincidentally, (inaudible) Native Americans, an American curse into law, and American (inaudible).

Religious figures stepped to the front line of the leadership in the fight to abolish slavery. [37:00] John Brown, Frederick Douglas, both deeply religious, used their talents (inaudible) and their moral authority to speak out against the evils of slavery, insist that this religion live up to its own best principles of (inaudible) and equality. Meanwhile, the (inaudible), slaves (inaudible) secretly at night, a symbol of (inaudible) and redemption. In the black communities of slaves,

and free men alike, the religion here was most often also politically the natural result in small, decent communities, their own internal social structure, political, and economic resources are political authority. The similarity between these black communities in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, [38:00] and the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe during the same time. (inaudible) rabbi was elected to serve as teacher, (inaudible) and negotiated to the outside world. Who better to tell the people their hopes and goals in the community? Who better than (inaudible) speak out for civil authorities (inaudible).

Rabbi Tanenbaum and I, from (inaudible) to speak about different perspectives. We begin by acknowledging our common experiences. As Jews and African Americans, our people have gone through life to be slaves. Of all the people in the world, we explicitly remember that experience by ourselves, and our children, that we were slaves. In the life of Egypt and the United State of America. As we remember slavery, we celebrate [39:00] the (inaudible), and take joy in our (inaudible), knowing it is brought to us by God's grace, and protected by constant vigilance. Jews and blacks have traveled different trails. We share a common history, the experience of oppression. Both our people have suffered or (inaudible), with blacks in slavery,

legislated or enforced by governments (inaudible)  
institutionalized, legalized discrimination, are being enforced  
by agencies of our own government. The Jews, the memory is of  
the Holocaust, (inaudible), human beings, from babies to  
grandparents, and a search of safety and refuge from which  
[40:00] too many in the world are the next turn away. The  
(inaudible) are fresh, and (inaudible) carried out in the name  
of the law, carried out by people who can wear the uniform of  
the law. Because of experience, (inaudible) for evil, we must be  
told that (inaudible) will make our message clear.

When President Reagan announced his plans to travel to Bitburg,  
and forgot the Second World War, I was shocked.

(laughter)(applause) I was shocked that, despite of appeals,  
[41:00] government officials, and the public, (inaudible) to  
that history. (inaudible) to this trip, I spoke to people who  
were authorities on the Holocaust here (inaudible). I spoke to  
(inaudible), and congratulations to an honor well deserved, as  
well as US (inaudible) of Boston. The former (inaudible) in  
Massachusetts, an engineer, and an African American. Dr.  
[Farbes?] was acting director, and told me his own, personal  
experience as a soldier in the United States [42:00] Army in  
1945. As a member of the (inaudible), he (inaudible). As those  
troops approached this death camp, which was so eerie and

silent, they were quiet. They thought it was a camp held by the Germans. It was a death camp. There are some piles of bodies in the presence of an incomprehensible tragedy, and constant evil. But they all assumed that German soldiers were out in the death camp's walls, waiting to attack them. Inside those (inaudible) remaining Jewish prisoners were huddled in fear. They heard approaching with footsteps, and assumed the worst, that German soldiers were returning to finish them off. In (inaudible), [43:00] they realized these soldiers were black, and could not be Nazis. The prisoners -- (applause). The prisoners had never seen a black, rushed out when they saw that. In stark disbelief, and in (inaudible) they were informed, both by shock, both were momentarily paralyzed by the cutting edge of history. Mutual fear and insecurity that had (inaudible) in the mutual security and rescue. Blacks (inaudible) and moved all concentration camps first. These were stories that must be told, and (inaudible), and taught. It was the spirit of those moments, a trial, that once we're captured and (inaudible), and never let go. [44:00] (inaudible) not just for blacks and Jews, but at some point, had rejected everybody. But an entire community of the suffering and the survivors, they spent (inaudible) Native Americans, (inaudible) American, and the people of the Caribbean.

This true story of Dr. Farbes is what (inaudible) the lessons of our time. In the (inaudible), separated by their walls, they fear the worst. But when they opened their eyes, they saw for themselves, they realized the truth that we must live on each other's planet, (inaudible), allies, (inaudible), that kept us apart. [45:00] You must tear down the walls, open our eyes, smile for our kids, open our hearts to one another, to give (inaudible), and more. And so today, when we look at the situation here at home, we see examples of (inaudible) the young, who have had such high hopes. We could provide any example in the (inaudible) and fear, which reinstated a hatred that manifests itself (inaudible) violence. Caught in the prison of racism, we see natural allies kept apart. It's because our (inaudible) were stronger in that, what we have in common. I come here tonight to talk about our common future, reaching for the common good. It's because I believe so strongly in the people of good will, the reason together -- [46:00]

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