

CD-1059 Transcription

Marc H. Tanenbaum and Jesse Jackson at Queens College [2]. 1987.

Jesse Jackson:

(inaudible) public good. It's because our needs were (inaudible) in the ability of people of good will to (inaudible) together. (inaudible) not all the issues which we may differ, on the large issues on which we agree. It's because I believe so strongly in the need for us to work together, I will speak to you tonight about the myth that divides us. Yes, we have real problems, and real concerns. No resident of Queens, of New York, no public citizen in this nation tonight can deny that we have problems, and controversy between groups. And those (inaudible) that thought these problems are exaggerated. Some of these conflicts have been exacerbated. Some of the so-called issues are (inaudible) exposed, and hard to miss. Let me mention three of these.

[01:00] First is the myth that one of the biggest problems facing black and Jew (inaudible) by extremism in each group. Some refer to this as blaming the victim. In reality, this is a political diversion, an attempt to distract our attention to the real problems the both of us (inaudible) our facts from the outside. And make no mistake, there are extremists out there

aiming at both of us. The neo-Nazis want to build an Aryan Nation, are both hatred toward blacks and Jews. The (inaudible) from President Reagan's White House were [oddly?] against the Southern Christian, Dr. King's birthday, all of whom opposed the prosecution of Nazi war criminals. Even if we had less in common, we would be reminded of our common interests by the enemies we share.

The second myth is that black-Jewish relations are so fragile. [02:00] In such (inaudible), there are somehow (inaudible) between both ethnic groups. Why is it that so much public attention is being focused on relations between blacks and Jews? Why, always, our relationship is being tested? Monitored? Critiqued? Investigated? The day after the killing in Howard Beach, did the media call for an investigation of Italian-black relations? (applause) (inaudible) why this is (inaudible), we see newspaper articles about black-Irish black-Croatian, black-(inaudible), black-German relations. Even the hardest friendship were being tainted by constant lack of (inaudible) testing, [03:00] public monitoring, and an investigation. We remain on the watch and investigation. The fact that our relationships have lasted as long as they have, and the (inaudible) is a testament to (inaudible).

And finally, let's think about the third, potentially, the most dangerous one, that because our relationship is old, (inaudible) between blacks and Jews have split the old rules about coalition. In fact, Jews and blacks continue to work together. It's also just a (inaudible) abroad. In the Congress, black members and Jewish members work closely together, fighting for economic opportunity for (inaudible) and ending Apartheid in South Africa. (inaudible), Jews, and blacks, tend to vote very much alike. In 1984, [04:00] despite the (inaudible) and predictions of those who would divide us, both Jews and blacks voted for Walter Mondale (inaudible) many other peoples. Blacks (inaudible) in the city of Chicago, where a great mayor, Harold Washington, is seeking reelection. (inaudible) than any other ethnic group. In public opinion polls, and in the polling place, blacks and Jews demonstrate similar commitment to the values, social justice, civil rights, and human dignity.

Those who (inaudible). There's not a myth that says blacks and Jews (inaudible). It's all (inaudible) to one another, we express our differences aloud and see the friends with mutual respect. Friendship does not require full (inaudible).

(applause) [05:00] If we speak in terms of civility, we frame the debate within the terms of Congress, in which (inaudible) one another respect one another, allies can be honest, and speak

out about (inaudible) our alliance would be destroyed. It is not a myth to say that there are issues where blacks and Jews may differ. As long as we remember that many more with which we agree. The bonds between us have been forged on the (inaudible) common experience, and knowing. (inaudible). At the same time, at this place in history, does not mean we have not traveled different paths to reach this place. Sometime, our different experiences lead us to a different conclusion. That does not (inaudible) because of our past. Blacks and Jews have very different reactions to the world of the word (inaudible).

[06:00] For blacks, a (inaudible) opportunity. For Jews, (inaudible) concealing on success. Because of the different, (inaudible) does not feel cannot (inaudible), open the way for minorities and women to put this (inaudible) every day for American life. Even (inaudible) America wants a different experience with blacks, than the Jews. The Jews leaving Europe to come to America, while leaving oppression, and (inaudible) because the experience of the immigrant, welcomed at Ellis Island, and greeted by the Statue of Liberty. The black experience was reversed. There was an experience called the slave experience, leaving Africa to come to America, and leaving independence, and being forced into slavery. Thus, the word *immigration* [07:00] has a very different meaning to us. Both of agree that political refugees deserve the right (inaudible), and

both of us were fighting for these rights. But the (inaudible) Jacob Timerman, and the (inaudible) of Argentina, and the (inaudible) in the Soviet Union, or Nelson Mandela in South Africa, [believe?] that the government of the United States should speak out on behalf of all those unjustly jailed, not (inaudible). (applause)

That is why I went to Geneva with a [peace?] delegation of the United States, and had the chance to speak with Premier Gorbachev, I raised the issue with him about Soviet Jews. Earlier this month, I went outside, I went around the Koreans, protesting the brutality of their own South Korean [08:00] government. Let's (inaudible) marched together, and were arrested together out of South Africa, embassies across this country. So, on the human rights issue, we must be united.

Look around this room. Look at the person sitting next to you. The people sitting in your row, in front of you, we're the people who care, the people who -- (applause) (inaudible) we care because we share. We have a choice not to be here. We chose to come because we care. I end not within this room, but outside. Among old (inaudible) communication, to spread fear and distrust, up against one another, because they're [09:00] both opposed to social justice, and human dignity, and (inaudible)

one against another. Look at this building. Think about the value of this college. The first (inaudible) educational experience the school made available. Think about the dedicated teachers and people who teach here, (inaudible), and the diversity, and live character. Think about how much education has contributed the (inaudible) in our society. There are those who want to cut back education. The president's budget proposed to trim \$5 billion, the presidential education budget. The (inaudible) to aid the poor, (inaudible) blacks that can be taught, are (inaudible), are textbooks that would be used. (inaudible) within this room, but outside the room, people talk about excellence, try to cut back education. [10:00] Look at the young people tonight. Think about our hopes and goals that we need for the age. Think of what they mean to us, to all of us as a society and a nation, and what the future can we expect, and decent jobs, (inaudible), America's economic base is weakened, opportunities for employment and education are disappearing. The (inaudible) is not within this room, but outside, among those people who allow our young people to (inaudible), outside, (inaudible). We get real [soft?] on the entire (inaudible), and turn to each other, and not own each other. (inaudible) is not in (inaudible), in Queens, [11:00] among the (inaudible) and the main, even (inaudible) in Georgia. Those extremes that threaten

and divide us all, the scourge of our plight, it's where Howard Beach and (inaudible) converge.

A plant date, they told the workers without notice. A shipyard, dumping goods, meat, and slave labor, South Africa, (inaudible) the grip of organized labor. A family farm, partly (inaudible). A missile site, threatening the human race. These are tough times for us because we are on the investigation. I submit to you, my friends tonight, [12:00] the blood and religious ethics that bind us are stronger than the tensions that (inaudible) us. Thank you very much. (applause)

M1:

Well, we promised a special evening, and I think we've been delivered a special evening, but it's not over. (applause) I would now suggest that if you still have questions, that when you (inaudible). The problem is, there's so many in here now, that I am convinced we're not going to get through all of these. [13:00] So, let me take the liberty of calling names, as we go to microphone number one. The first name and second name, microphone number two, then I'll (inaudible). There are no prizes. (laughter) (inaudible) Bloom, W33, on the left side to this microphone, please. Is it Earl Wellington [Pasal?], Pasal, Junior? P39. Bloom? (inaudible) to the microphone. Mr. Pasal,

the lights are in our eyes, so please forgive me. Are you there sir?

Pasal:

Yes, I am.

M1:

All right, why don't you ask the first question. Let Bloom go to the other one. And would you please indicate to whom you are addressing your question.

Pasal:

[14:00] This question is directed to Mr. (inaudible), Jesse Jackson. (laughter) I commended the fact that you ran for the presidency for the last election, and -- (applause) In doing so, you had a way of combining minorities into a common force, not just getting you elected as president of the United States, but reminding us as people, how we took over, and I found that highly commendable, and I'd like to know [15:00] if you're considering doing the same thing? (laughter) (applause)

Jesse Jackson:

Yes. (applause) Yes. (laughter)

M1:

(inaudible) (laughter) Ruth Bloom.

Ruth Bloom:

Yes, I'm here.

M1:

That Ruth Bloom?

Ruth Bloom:

Your Ruth Bloom.

M1:

I never even saw this lady before. (laughter)

Ruth Bloom:

I want to address my question to the Reverend Jackson. I had the pleasure of [16:00] hearing you at the Democratic Convention in San Francisco. I was a delegate to the convention, and I assure you, and everyone here, that the Reverend had a great (inaudible) for his communication. (laughter) I'd like to preface my question by stating that I, too, am a member of a minority. I'm a Jewish woman, and as such, I am a minority at risk in the United States. The question I'm going to pose is one

that I can't even (inaudible) almost -- I shouldn't say almost. I would say a large percentage of the audience here tonight. He spoke about the risks of allying ourselves with our jailer, and yet there are so many people here, in here, and the literal and figurative outside of this auditorium, who have the sense [17:00] that in spite of the fact that we heard so many issues tonight about rejecting the bigots, not hearing them, fighting them, whether here or abroad, many have known that you have identified, and not renounced your association with Farrakhan, for he is considered (inaudible). (mixed reaction) My point is this, sir. Everything that you said tonight, I agree with. Much of what I have read that you have said, where I haven't been in the audience, I agree with. But I feel that you are not fully advocating the cause of true liberty and respect of people to people, and such time, as you do have, [18:00] and I can't understand why you have not, to date, and are you going to tonight? (mixed reaction)

Jesse Jackson:

You asked a question that I thank you (inaudible). I will always respond. In my democratic tradition, I reserve the right to disagree with positions taken by people that I don't agree with. I reserve that right, and I exercise that right. (applause) In relation to -- I think there's tension between rejecting

someone's point of view, and rejecting their person. I have no religious basis for that. I'm not that good myself. (laughter) (applause) And so, in my own sense of [providence?] [19:00] and as a matter of strategy, I think it's a mistake for us to put, for emotional purposes, off of other purposes, Farrakhan the center of our relationship, to hang in the center of our relationship. (applause) They fit in the spectrum, but they're not in the center. They're not the test of who we are, and what our challenges are. The Congressional Black Caucus, more than three members, (inaudible) are black leaders, there are almost 6,000 black elected officials, (inaudible) religious denominations, cannot (inaudible) of these brutes, and their relationship have more weight, than (inaudible) [20:00] spectrum of things? I think it's about strategy, and tactics as a mistake, and I certainly will not measure my relationship to Jewish people by any one or any group of individuals as a litmus test for our relationship. I will not do that. (applause) (laughter) No, I hope that the audience (inaudible), but I hope we can continue this around a sacred dialogue, in a real atmosphere of civility because we're trying to run out anxieties and fears, two people [21:00] to get together can salvage our nation. This is a rather serious (inaudible) tonight, and if we get into scoring, and desponding, and these loud clap at the

(inaudible), thump at the monitors, we will mess up impressions.

(applause)

M1:

I need -- I neglected to call the names of the next people in line. Eileen [Marcia?], one microphone, and Gilbert Benjamin, and after the gentleman, Walter Hoffman, and Bernard Goldberg. I need an Marcia. And I wouldn't admonish those who are (inaudible) tonight. Please ask questions. We are all sophisticated enough to get our point of view into a question, and I think (inaudible). (laughter) [22:00] Pardon? Rabbi Tanenbaum.

Eileen Marcia:

I didn't think I was going to get picked. (laughter) I'm sorry. But I honestly didn't think I was going to get picked.

M1:

(inaudible) (laughter)

Eileen Marcia:

My question was concerning the two religious leaders here, you, and also Reverend Jesse Jackson, and the relationship. My question is my children, they're in school, and it needs to be

given, this unity, as small children, and the public school that my daughter goes to, (inaudible), the way they (inaudible), holidays, they'll bring over Hanukkah, and teach all that from the Old Testament, but the Christian side of it, there's Santa Claus, [23:00] or Passover and Easter, with the rabbit, instead of the resurrection of our Lord, the birth of Christ, and I don't object to my daughter coming home, singing the song, "Hanukkah (inaudible)" (inaudible), not at all, but I would like also the Jewish children to understand what the Christian holidays really mean. It's not Santa Claus. It's not the Easter bunny. Can it be done in the public schools, so that if they allow the Jewish tradition to be taught, why not the Christians? Or Muslims? (inaudible)

Marc Tanenbaum:

I'm getting the feel that it may be easier for me to talk about Louis Farrakhan. (laughter) I thought the real problem you had, the number of Christian parents now (inaudible) is that, [24:00] since Christmas is a time at which there's gift-giving on one night, and then Christian kids get involved with Jewish kids, and they get gifts eight nights a week. (laughter) They come home and say, "Where's my other stuff?" (laughter) With all respect, the assumption of your question is that in public school is the place for teaching the Christ story, and the

tradition of Christianity, in (inaudible), it is possible to talk about a religious holiday for various religious, cultural groups, from a cultural perspective. But out of my own experience, I learned, first of all, about Hanukkah [25:00] in the home of my parents, that were devout, traditional Jews, and in my own religious school, where I went regularly, and sat in services on holy days, that's the place where I learned, authentically, about my authentic holidays. I did not need, in fact, after a while, I began to find it offensive when an evangelical teacher felt an obligation to teach me about the story of the Maccabees during Hanukkah observances. It was something historic, and inappropriate about that. I think the real issue for us is, let's stop making the public schools a dumping ground for everything that we're now doing ourselves. (applause) It is [26:00] the obligation of parents, churches, and synagogues to carry out their religious functions. (applause) If they fail to do so, (inaudible) public school teachers become surrogate (inaudible), and surrogate priests, ministers, nuns, and rabbis. (applause) I hope that that doesn't upset you, but I (inaudible) can be a necessary approach to put it back into some perspective.

M1:

Mr. Gilbert Benjamin. To whom do you address your question?

Gilbert Benjamin:

(inaudible) (laughter) [27:00] This evening (inaudible), they would be able to collectively work for (inaudible) tension throughout the country, United States, and the foreign land. (inaudible). Jesse Jackson (inaudible). He accomplished a lot (inaudible) in seeing that the progress (inaudible)? (applause)

M1:

[28:00] (laughter) We understand your question. Do you want the (inaudible) (laughter).

Jesse Jackson:

The best way to do it would be to rob us of (inaudible) support, that's where (inaudible). (applause) (laughter) I support you. (applause) Buddy, thank you. (laughter)

M1:

Walter Hoffman. Are [29:00] you at the mic, sir?

Walter Hoffman:

Yes. (inaudible) the persecution of (inaudible). My mother left on [route 814?] in (inaudible), and of course, she became the (inaudible).

M1:

I'll tell you what, in the interest of time, since I am not a featured speaker, I'll discuss that with you (inaudible), but I would like to restrict the questions to Rabbi Tanenbaum or Reverend Jackson.

Walter Hoffman:

Thank you.

M1:

Bernard Goldberg. And would Fred, is it [Samparano?] come to the microphone? And Michael [Reese?]. [30:00] Bernard Goldberg. Shh.

Bernard Goldberg:

Reverend Jackson. I had a few questions, and one of them was asked a little while ago, that was in reference to Farrakhan. Your explanation to me was not too clear about what --
(applause) The second one is your association with the word *hymie*. (mixed reaction)

Jesse Jackson:

Yes, sir. First of all, we went through a rather long, discussion, expression about the term *hymie*, which had no intent

to do harm, but the (inaudible) was hurt, [31:00] so the [dress code?] of (inaudible) really interesting in dealing with (inaudible). It would not serve any purpose to go into that tonight. (applause) Only certain -- It seems to me that what we really must decide, tonight, it's very fundamental to our (inaudible). If we want to go farther, we have enough trials, the force, and enough common threats to do so. If we do not want to go forth, we have enough reasons to justify not doing that either. It's a very fundamental decision that we have to make. There's [32:00] an ad in a magazine in Milwaukee, it's (inaudible), African -- through an advertising campaign, and the term I'll deliver tonight, this is a picture of a black face, with white lips, and big eyes, and a (inaudible), natural habit, and it says that what Al Jolson did for the movies, the Apple does for computers. Now, this ad campaign is put together by Mr. [Alan Rosenstein?], president and CEO of Omnicon Group. We could let something like this become a centerpiece, and further divide us. Or we can come together, and say this is in bad taste, and this (inaudible). So, we will use this [33:00] to divide us, and we'd come together and fight. It's our choice. In a matter of a few days, a very big congressional report is going to come out about the Israeli-South African connection, (inaudible). We could use that occasion to say I told you so, (inaudible) come closer, and somehow (inaudible) on that which is evil, and

maintain that which is good. The choice really is ours if we choose to go forward. The reason why I think that even forgiveness must be equal opportunity as we move forward. You know, Mr. Reagan opened his campaign in Philadelphia, Mississippi is not known because (inaudible), is where they found (inaudible) a plan [lost?] that day, black [stigma?] real fast, and with the (inaudible), I encountered him face to face, and he backed off the client endorsement a little bit, (inaudible), the big bird, and didn't stop then when the (inaudible), and then didn't stop when he made Rehnquist -- Rehnquist as chief justice, who -- (applause) who signed a document that Jews --

(break in audio)

Jesse Jackson:

(applause) You have Rehnquist, as Chief Supreme Court Justice, and so I feel (inaudible). I'm here because I want us to relate. I want to form a coalition, and find our common [35:00] (inaudible), and therefore, I choose to meet on that which unites us. And (inaudible) are trying to get beyond that to divide us. But it really is our choice.

Marc Tanenbaum:

I said in my talk -- I've said it earlier, long before Jesse Jackson made a decision to run for the first time for the presidency of the United States, and he and I had a meeting (inaudible). There are few issues in public life [36:00] that would be more meaningful to me than to be able to rebuild the black-Jewish coalition with the same power of trust and intimacy and solidarity that we had in the 1960s, even during the 1970s. I can't begin to tell you that in detail. Just a few things to say something about what that trust meant.

There were some black children who were murdered (inaudible) mysteriously in Atlanta several years ago. You may remember that. We came down to Atlanta, my group, the American Jewish Committee, and organized a memorial service for them. Also black-Jewish leaders. [37:00] And we had a meeting with Daddy King, Martin's father. We didn't ask for this. We just came to pay tribute to him, and what he and Martin meant to us. Clear, unequivocal, unambiguous, straightforward, a (inaudible) of solidarity, everything that meant something to us, and we were equally clear, unequivocal in our response to them.

I (inaudible) start off by saying the stuff about Farrakhan makes me sick. Farrakhan talking about Judaism, and (inaudible) religion. What would we be without Judaism? What would we be

without your Bible, without Moses, without the Exodus? [38:00] I heard Farrakhan talking about Israel destroying the world, bringing Western Europe down. Then he said to us, let me tell you something, when we discussed our story with the Civil Rights Movement, Martin King wanted to organize the first meeting of the black movement in Atlanta, no hotel would open the doors to us. Only one hotel would open to us, that hotel was owned by a Jewish man. (applause) He was the first one to (inaudible). But then he said, "You know, the FBI and the Internal Revenue Service will then put on us, and try to screw us?" The Internal Revenue Service [39:00] took over all of our books, to try to prove that we were involved in fraud, and embezzlement. Nobody would touch us, except a few people. One was an accountant, a Jewish man. Second was a lawyer, and a Jewish man (inaudible). So, we don't forget our friends. And we will not let anybody [defame?] them.

I accept what Jesse just said to us in terms of wanting to put the large picture in perspective. I think there is a mainstream. There is that history, which is deep, and profound, and we have been touched on (inaudible). When I recall the National Conference on Race and Religion in January 1963, which brought together 1,700 top religious leaders of America, Greeks, [40:00] Greek Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Evangelical, Jew,

Whites, Hispanic, who met for the first time in the history of America, on the issue of what we could do together to end racial discrimination, I served as program chairman of that conference. I had the privilege of extending a personal invitation to Martin Luther King, to the first national ecumenical meeting in (inaudible), at which he made a powerful speech, side-by-side, with Abraham (inaudible). I know about that experience of trust in my (inaudible), and attempt to commit, which allowed for no (inaudible).

Now, I simply have to say, I think that Jesse Jackson is an enormously gifted man. I think Jesse can hit a (inaudible), historic contribution to the cause of social-economic justice [41:00] in America. (applause) I also have to say, with all friendship and respect, I think you're fooling yourself if you think that the issue of Louis Farrakhan is marginal altogether. (applause) (inaudible). Just this week, Louis Farrakhan, when he comes to New York, comes to Madison Square Garden, 25,000 people give him a standing ovation, when he utters the most vile, anti-Semitic bigotry. (applause) (inaudible). We are not dealing with a (inaudible). [Nothing quiet?] now. I want to see Jesse succeed for the sake of the Democratic Party, [42:00] for the sake of justice. It may well be that (inaudible), but Jesse Jackson becomes president of the United States, somewhere along the way,

there'll be a Jew after him, maybe, God-willing, there'll be a woman after that. (applause) We really want to turn a corner. We really want to turn a corner. I want Jesse to feel free to say to us, we're scared to death about Farrakhan, a man preaching racism, and death to Christians, and death to Arabs, and Israel. That's (inaudible), and I will say, you're absolutely right, and he had a right to say it, (inaudible), doing about it, and we are insisting that this man have his (inaudible) removed from the Knesset of Israel, which is not (inaudible). I want Jesse to feel for me to say to him, I get scared to death [43:00] when I feel Louis Farrakhan (inaudible) Madison Square Garden, going around (inaudible), not just (inaudible) anti-Semitism, but the worst kind of almost Nazi bigotry, which makes demons of Jews, to sit down and say, the (inaudible) religion. That's not innocent [talk?]. And when we try to be productive, that (inaudible) ideological problems of a very profound nature, we have got to deal with that, as almost a pathology. If the Vatican and the Catholic Church, after 1,900 years of preaching that kind of stuff, and inculcating the culture of Western, Christian civilization with that kind of imagery, that (inaudible) church has the courage to face it and say, it is wrong. We reject it. We will not (inaudible) end up being taught, preaching that, by anyone, any place, and (inaudible)

about it. We have a right to ask [44:00] in an appropriate place that we reject (inaudible). (applause)

Jesse Jackson:

The racism should be rejected, (inaudible), but as long as there's life, there's hope and visions, and we object. I feel (inaudible). I'm not going to ask you to do anything about (inaudible) for justice. And he's a Jew, and he's a human being, and he is an elected official. [45:00] He has a point of view that most Jews don't agree with in this country about Israel, and I accept that what you say it is, unrepresentative of who you are. And he does not scare me, if it doesn't scare you. And then endorsed my campaign in a letter to the *USA Today*, and threatened to lead a demonstration on the house of my wife and children. And the (inaudible) did not respond to it as serious, and (inaudible) the day my campaign opened, they threatened --

END OF AUDIO FILE