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New York Metropolitan Area Baptist Conference Speech: Version 1

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NY METROPOLITAN AREA BAPTIST CONFERENCE -- HARLEM, N.Y.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1984

THANK YOU, REVEREND BURSON, FOR YOUR GRACIOUS INTRODUCTION.

I AM HONORED TO STAND AT THE PULPIT WHERE REVEREND M.L. WILSON ONCE PREACHED. REVEREND WILSON DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO MAKING EQUALITY AND JUSTICE TRULY A RIGHT FOR ALL AMERICANS. I ALSO WANT TO THANK REVEREND BURSON, REVEREND GRANT AND EVERY ONE OF YOU HERE, FOR INVITING ME TO ADDRESS THE CONFERENCE TODAY. AND I WANT TO CONGRATULATE REVEREND GARDNER, AND WISH HIM LUCK IN HIS NEW POSITION.

LET ME SAY I'M TRULY EXCITED TO BE HERE TODAY, AND I'M PROUD TO TALK TO A GROUP THAT REPRESENTS THE VERY BEST OF THIS NATION'S SPIRIT AND DEVOTION. BECAUSE OF YOUR EFFORTS, THIS CITY HAS LEARNED THAT THE WAY TO JUSTICE IS THROUGH PARTICIPATION; THE WAY TO SUCCESS IS THROUGH HARD WORK, AND THE WAY TO EQUALITY IS THROUGH COMPASSION.

YOUR WORK TO FEED THIS CITY'S SENIOR CITIZENS AND HOMELESS, TO RESCUE THIS CITY'S YOUTHS FROM THE DANGERS OF DRUG ADDICTION, AND TO INVOLVE YOUR COMMUNITIES IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS ARE BEARING FRUIT. AND YOUR SUCCESSES ARE BEING WATCHED.

THERE ARE TWO PRINCIPAL ISSUES AT STAKE THIS YEAR FOR THE PEOPLE OF HARLEM. FIRST IS THE ISSUE OF OPPORTUNITY. IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS, IT'S BECOME HARDER FOR AVERAGE AMERICANS TO GO ON TO COLLEGE BECAUSE THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS CUT STUDENT ASSISTANCE. BUT IT'S EVEN TOUGHER IF YOU'RE AN INNER CITY YOUNGSTER. THIS ADMINISTRATION CUT HEAD START, TITLE I, AND BI-LINGUAL EDUCATION.

IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS, ONE OUT OF EVERY FIVE FAMILIES IN THIS COUNTRY HAS BEEN TOUCHED BY UNEMPLOYMENT. BUT FOR BLACK TEENAGERS, THAT RATIO HAS STOOD AT AN APPALLING ONE OUT OF TWO. ^{every}

IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS, AMERICA'S CHILDREN HAVE SUFFERED FROM DEEP CUTS IN NUTRITION PROGRAMS. BUT THE SUFFERING HAS BEEN GREATEST FOR BLACK CHILDREN, ONE OUT OF EVERY TWO OF WHOM LIVES IN POVERTY.

IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS, THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN ANTI-FEMINIST. BUT IT'S BEEN ESPECIALLY CRUEL TO THE ONE OUT OF EVERY TWO POOR HOUSEHOLDS HEADED BY WOMEN.

IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS, IT'S BEEN HARDER FOR THE AVERAGE AMERICAN FAMILY TO MAKE ENDS MEET. BUT IT'S BEEN HARDEST OF ALL FOR THE ADDITIONAL SIX MILLION AMERICANS WHO HAVE FALLEN INTO POVERTY UNDER THIS ADMINISTRATION.

IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS, MEDICARE CUTS HAVE TAKEN THEIR TOLL ON ALL THE ELDERLY. BUT NO PROPOSAL WAS MEANER THAN THE REAGAN PROPOSAL TO TAKE THE MINIMUM SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT FROM THREE MILLION POOR AMERICANS, NEARLY ALL OF WHOM WERE WOMEN.

DON'T MISUNDERSTAND ME. EVERY AMERICAN HAS A REASON TO VOTE FOR WALTER MONDALE. BUT THE AWFUL TRUTH IS, BLACKS AND WOMEN AND DISADVANTAGED AMERICANS HAVE ONLY THEMSELVES TO BLAME IF THEY STAY HOME AND LET RONALD REAGAN BE PRESIDENT AGAIN.

YOU AS COMMUNITY LEADERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO LET THE PEOPLE OF HARLEM KNOW WHAT'S AT STAKE IN THIS ELECTION. YOU KNOW IT. I KNOW IT. AND BY NOVEMBER 6TH, OUR PEOPLE BETTER KNOW IT.

THE SECOND ISSUE AT STAKE IS WAR AND PEACE. WAR IS A HORRIBLE THING FOR EVERY PERSON. BUT LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT THIS: WHEN AMERICA GOES TO WAR, BLACKS ~~will~~ ^{make up a} DIE IN DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER ^{of servicemen and women.}

EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM WOULD BE PROUD TO SERVE THIS COUNTRY, EVEN DIE FOR IT, IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES. BUT LIKE EVERY PARENT HERE, I DIDN'T RAISE MY SON OR DAUGHTER -- AND YOU DIDN'T RAISE YOURS -- TO DIE IN AN UNDECLARED WAR, AGAINST AN UNNAMED ENEMY, FOR AN UNCERTAIN CAUSE.

RIGHT NOW, THE UNITED STATES IS MILITARIZING A CONFLICT IN CENTRAL AMERICA WHICH SHOULD BE SOLVED BY PEACEFUL MEANS. AND WE ARE AMERICANIZING A CONFLICT WHICH IS PRIMARILY LOCAL. THAT'S NOT GOOD FOR CENTRAL AMERICA, IT'S NOT GOOD FOR AMERICA'S NATIONAL INTEREST, AND IT'S NOT GOOD FOR DRAFT-AGE MEN, BOTH BLACK AND WHITE. I WANT TO STOP THE COVERT WAR IN NICARAGUA.

LAST WEEK, AMERICA WAS STUNNED TO LEARN THAT THE CIA HAS WRITTEN AND IS CIRCULATING IN NICARAGUA A MANUAL THAT TEACHES ASSASSINATION, TERROR, BLACKMAIL, KIDNAPPING, AND MOB VIOLENCE. IT IS WRITTEN MORE IN THE SPIRIT THAN STALIN THAN JEFFERSON. IT READS LIKE MAO, NOT LINCOLN. IT BEFITS A DICTATORSHIP, NOT A DEMOCRACY. IT'S AN INSULT TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

MOREOVER, ANYONE WHO BELIEVES THAT REFINING THE MURDER TECHNIQUES OF CENTRAL AMERICANS WILL ADVANCE OUR NATIONAL INTEREST IS GRAVELY MISTAKEN. WE SHOULD BE BUILDING ECONOMIES, NOT MINING HARBORS. IN OUR OWN SELF-INTEREST, WE SHOULD BE HELPING PEOPLE FEED THEMSELVES, NOT KILL EACH OTHER.

THAT MANUAL IS ALIEN TO OUR MOST BASIC BELIEFS -- BELIEFS WHICH ACROSS THE BOARD, THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS FAILED TO PROMOTE. I REMEMBER WHEN JOHN F. KENNEDY LAUNCHED THE PEACE CORPS, WHEN HUBERT HUMPHREY STARTED FOOD FOR PEACE, AND WHEN JIMMY CARTER STOOD UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. TODAY WE HAVE AN ADMINISTRATION WHICH HAS BEFRIENDED DICTATORS WHETHER IN THE PHILIPPINES, CHILE, OR SOUTH AFRICA. AND AS A RESULT, OUR PRESTIGE AND OUR INFLUENCE AMONG THIRD WORLD NATIONS HAVE DECLINED.

LISTEN TO WHAT THIS YEAR'S NOBEL PRIZE WINNER, BISHOP TUTU OF SOUTH AFRICA, HAD TO SAY ABOUT OUR GOVERNMENT: THE NAME OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY IS "MUD" BECAUSE OF OUR SUPPORT FOR A SYSTEM THAT HAS BROUGHT "UNTOLD MISERY TO SO MANY OF GOD'S CHILDREN."

WALTER MONDALE AND I WILL CHANGE THAT. WE WILL PRESS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, NOT ONLY NOT ONLY IN THE SOVIET UNION, BUT ALSO IN THE PHILIPPINES. WE WILL TELL THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT THAT THEIR RACIST SYSTEM OF APARTHEID OFFENDS AMERICAN VALUES AND MUST FINALLY END.

THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CANDIDATES THIS YEAR. BUT YOU WOULDN'T KNOW THAT FROM LISTENING TO RONALD REAGAN. IN THE DEBATE LAST NIGHT, HE PRETENDED THAT HE SUPPORTS HUMAN RIGHTS, THAT HE'S FOR NEGOTIATIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA, THAT HE BELIEVES IN ARMS CONTROL. DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY WITH THAT.

— STAR WARS insert —

THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG, TRUTH AND FICTION. AND THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WALTER MONDALE AND RONALD REAGAN. AND I'M HERE TODAY TO ASK THE PEOPLE OF HARLEM TO VOTE FOR WHAT'S RIGHT, FOR THE TRUTH, AND FOR WALTER MONDALE.

HE HAS BEEN ON YOUR SIDE FOR AS LONG AS RONALD REAGAN HAS BEEN AGAINST YOU. WALTER MONDALE HELPED WRITE THE FAIR HOUSING ACT OF 1968. HE HELPED PASS THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT. HE WAS A FIGHTER FOR HEAD START. HE LED THE BATTLE FOR AN INDEPENDENT LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM FOR THE POOR. HE INVESTIGATED THE FLIGHT OF MIGRANT WORKERS. AND HE'S BEEN A FRIEND OF CIVIL RIGHTS FOR TWENTY YEARS.

NAME A DECENT CAUSE, AND FRITZ MONDALE HAS BEEN THERE, FIGHTING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE. AND IF YOU WANT TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, I THINK IT'S TIME TO STAND UP AND FIGHT FOR WALTER MONDALE.

HE BELIEVES WITH THE REVEREND MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., THAT "INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE."

STAR WARS INSERT

LAST NIGHT, ALSO
~~BARRETT~~, RONALD REAGAN SAID WE SHOULD LAUNCH AN ARMS RACE IN
SPACE. HE ~~SAID WE SHOULD~~ SPEND ~~A FEW HUNDRED~~ ^{HUNDREDS OF BILLIONS OF} DOLLARS IN SEARCH OF A
STAR WARS WEAPONS SYSTEM TO PROTECT OURSELVES. AND THEN, HE
WANTS US TO HAND ^{IT} OVER TO THE SOVIET UNION, ~~THE MOST EXPENSIVE AND~~
~~SENSITIVE MILITARY TECHNOLOGY EVER BUILT.~~

THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE AT ALL. WE WON'T SELL THE
RUSSIANS ORDINARY COMMERCIAL COMPUTERS. BUT THIS PRESIDENT WANTS
TO GIVE THE RUSSIANS OUR MOST IMPORTANT MILITARY SECRETS. ONE OF
THE MOST CRUCIAL THINGS AT STAKE THIS YEAR IS CHOOSING A
PRESIDENT WHO KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING WHEN IT COMES TO NUCLEAR
STRATEGY. AND THAT'S WHY ~~WE NEED~~ WE NEED FRITZ MONDALE.

~~BUT THIS IS MORE THAN A CAMPAIGN BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE. IT'S~~
MORE THAN A CAMPAIGN BETWEEN TWO PERSONALITIES. IT'S A CHOICE
ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER IN YOUR LIVES AND IN THE LIVES OF YOUR
CHILDREN.

LET ME BE CLEAR ABOUT THIS: WALTER MONDALE AND I ARE ON
YOUR SIDE. WE BELIEVE IN CIVIL RIGHTS. AND WE STAND ON A RECORD
OF COMMITMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT TO PROVE IT.

HE BELIEVES, WITH MARTIN LUTHER KING, THAT WE CANNOT STOP
"UNTIL JUSTICE ROLLS DOWN LIKE WATER, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE THE
MIGHTY STREAM."

WITH DR. KING, LET'S DECLARE FINALLY THAT PEOPLE SHOULD BE
JUDGED NOT BY THE COLOR OF THEIR SKIN, BUT BY THE CONTENT OF
THEIR CHARACTER.

WITH DR. KING, LET'S SAY WE FACE AN ADVERSARY, BUT WE HAVE
FACED ADVERSARIES BEFORE, AND THIS ONE TOO WE SHALL OVERCOME.

WHEN MOSES LED HIS PEOPLE ACROSS THE RED SEA, AND OUT OF
BONDAGE, NO ONE ASKED WHO WAS THE FIRST TO CROSS, BUT WHETHER THE
LAST ONES WERE SAFE. AMERICA HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE PROMISED LAND.
IT'S TIME FOR ALL OF US TO CROSS OVER. IT'S TIME FOR ALL OF US
TO WORK FOR WALTER MONDALE.

THE TIME TO BEGIN THAT WORK IS NOT LATER -- IT IS NOW.

THE TIME FOR A REBIRTH OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IS NOT LATER --
IT IS NOW.

THE TIME TO WORK FOR PEACE IS NOT LATER -- IT IS NOW.

AND THE TIME TO ELECT WALTER MONDALE PRESIDENT AND GERRY
FERRARO VICE PRESIDENT IS NOT LATER -- IT IS NOW.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

-- END --