

Reclaiming Civic Power to Reverse the Corporate Erosion of Civil Rights

Ralph Nader Speaking at the NAACP's 91st Annual Convention
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Thank you very much, Chairman Bond, President Mfume and distinguished and honored guests on the dais. Yesterday, I read Chairman Bond's address. And I found that I had to adjust my remarks quite a bit, otherwise I'd be accused of plagiarism. President Mfume brings back memories of what he did in 1991 when almost single-handedly he saved the Community Reinvestment Act which opened up for lending.

We appreciate it very much, because we've been working on bank and insurance redlining for years. We have maps of cities all over the country showing the discrimination in terms of where mortgage funds are available and lenders are operating. And we are amazed at the consistent attack on the Community Reinvestment Act led by Senator Phil Gramm from Texas and how close it almost came to oblivion in last year's Bank Concentration bill which unfortunately made it through and into law.

There are so many people here who are veterans of past civil rights, and civil liberties and economic justice struggles and I can see also there are people who are young of age who intend to take the achievements of the previous generation to new heights and to new levels of thoroughness, but I can't go into my remarks right now without illustrating what those new heights can be like by mentioning my friend, Randall Robinson because he is really a frontiersman for justice in the sense that he's willing to take risks and break through paradigms, as he did on the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. And what he has done since then, in breaking through again and again, illustrates that we cannot be satisfied with the least of the worst options, whether they are policies, whether they are politicians, or whether they are parties.

We cannot continue to wait decade after decade for injustices to be prevented and problems to be solved while our economy goes to new levels of growth, while corporate profits are at record levels, while budget surpluses are at the federal and state levels getting larger.

We have fewer and fewer excuses for ignoring or being indifferent or sloganizing the very serious and in many ways growing injustices in our society. We have no excuse anymore in terms of saying that we don't have the funds, that we don't have the capabilities, that we don't have the technology, that we don't have the know-how.

I bring to you a little fact from California. For those of you who are skeptical of people who tell you that things are getting better but we got to make them even better, try child poverty in California. In 1980, it was 15.2 percent; today it is 25.1 percent. And if you take near poverty -- the children who are near poverty, who I would consider in poverty because I think the official levels of poverty are absurd, how can anyone support a four-member family on \$17,200 a year -- before deductions, before the cost of getting to work, et cetera?

If you add the near poverty, 46 percent of all the children in California are in the category. This is not just a badge of shame for our country, the richest country in the world, it's a reflection of our inability to focus on the signal phenomena that is blocking justice, and that is the concentration of power and wealth in too few hands. That's it.

A few lessons from the past illustrate that.

What do all these movements have in common? The anti-slavery movement, the women's right to vote movement, the worker trade union movement, the farmer, populist, progressive movement, the civil rights, environmental, women rights movements of recent decades, other civil rights movements, disability rights -- they had one common theme: They took power away from people and institutions who had too much power and made that power be shared by the many.

That is what made it possible. It wasn't just the documentation of injustice. It wasn't just the feeling by people that they had to have a better life. It was the strategy of power. It was the strategy of deconcentrating power. It was the strategy that confronted the dominant business powers of our history which uniquely were always in the forefront of saying no to social justice movements.

Who opposed the anti-slavery movement? Who opposed the women's right to vote movement? It wasn't just some men. It was the railroads, it was the liquor industry, it was industrial interests that didn't want women to speak out with voting power against child labor and the injustices of the Industrial Revolution.

And who opposed the workers in the steel, coal, textile and other areas trying to unionize? It was the corporations. And who opposed the farmers, dirt-poor farmers coming out of Texas? It was the big banks and the insurance companies.

It's much the same today. Who opposed Social Security? The corporate lobbies and their allies in Congress. Who opposed one advance after another in terms of equal opportunity of employment, in terms of anti-discrimination efforts in housing? Who opposed the consumer movement to try to reduce death and injury on the part of innocent consumers because of hazardous products and toxic chemicals and other sources of trauma? The corporations did.

Who opposed the drive for environmental health in our country? Who opposed the effort to end this silent cumulative violence that we too charitably call pollution, air, water pollution, pesticides? Who opposed those? The corporations did.

Who opposed the effort which is now 60 years in failure to take lead-based paint off crumbling tenement walls in the cities, the kind of deadly lead-based paint that to this day is poisoning 200,000 minority children a year, damaging their brain and other organs? It was the interests, the prosperity holders, the landlords, the big apartment owners, the slum lords.

All of these social justice movements finally prevailed, with few exceptions, and America was better as a result, and still we must ask ourselves, what are the sources of power that are keeping us from progressing and advancing?

We live now in an apartheid economy. It is an economy of such staggering inequities that mere words and statistics hardly can do it justice. It is an economy where one man, Bill Gates, has as much wealth as the combined wealth of the bottom 120 million Americans.

That means -- apart from what that says about the great software imitator from Redmond, Washington -- that there are millions of Americans who are working, year after year, decade after decade, who are just plain broke. They have no capital share, they're moving, if they're lucky, from paycheck to paycheck; if they're less lucky, from payday loan to payday loan, paying outrageous levels of interest to the loan sharks and going deeper and deeper into debt, which now totals, for all consumers in this country, \$6.2 trillion -- \$6.2 trillion.

The inequities are even more staggering worldwide. I just received information, the latest data: The 250 richest people in the world have the combined income of the bottom three billion people in the world. To give a further illustration, the top 1 percent of the richest people in our country have wealth -- financial wealth equal to the bottom 95 percent.

Now let's look at ordinary working folk. We have 130 million paying jobs in this country; 40 million are part-time. And according to the Department of Labor, if you work 21 hours a week, even if you want a full-time job and can't get it, you're considered employed. So let's not pay much attention to the 4 percent unemployment rate. It's more like 13 percent generally, and more like 25 percent for minorities.

But 47 million workers in this country who get up every morning and go to work are making less than \$10 an hour. Many of them, 10 million of them, minimum wage -- federal minimum wage, \$5.15, others \$6, 7, 8 an hour. You can't make a livable wage at the level that Wal-Mart or Kmart or McDonald's pays, much less afford a family on that. Today the minimum wage is far less than it was in 1960, 1970, in terms of purchasing power. Imagine, we're sliding backwards at a time when our economy overall is booming and corporate profits are booming and we have government surpluses.

Now there's a lesson in that. The lesson is why is that happening? There are a few principles that I have operated by in my 40 years of work in trying to advance justice in our country. One of them is the definition of freedom that goes back to ancient Rome. I think you'll like it. Freedom is participation in power. Freedom is participation in power.

The second is a description of justice as the great work of human beings on Earth, justice. You notice a lot of politicians give speeches -- like I've read almost all of Ronald Reagan's speeches and it's full -- their speeches are full of liberty and freedom, but they never use the word justice. I wonder why. Because justice means redistribution of power and opportunity and income and livelihood, that's what justice means.

And, third, a society that has more justice is a society that needs less charity -- more justice, needs less charity.

And, fourthly, the only place where democracy comes before work is in the dictionary.

And, fifthly, and this is out of ancient China. An ancient Chinese philosopher once said, "To know and not to act is not to know." To know is not to act, not to know. You can put that one

on your friendly politician's back once in a while. They know, but they are not acting. And we know that they know and they are not acting. In this country of ours, when it comes to indifference to injustice, I would almost prefer a provocateur than an anesthetizer.

I'd like to start with the global description first, because this is where we really see the deficiencies of a system that needs major, major renovation. All over the world, we have millions of people, many of them children, dying from global infectious diseases. Malaria is killing over one million people in Africa, most of them little children. Tuberculosis, which is a curable disease starting in the 1950s, is taking about two million lives. And I needn't describe the horrible scourge of AIDS.

Now, what are we doing about this as a nation? What are we doing in terms of training people to deal with these infectious diseases that are coming our way in drug-resistant form? What are we doing in terms of the resources? We're almost doing nothing. We are willing to spend \$60 billion on a missile defense system that doesn't even work, according to the leading physicists of our country.

You know what we spent last year on global malaria? \$47 million. We spent about \$50 million on tuberculosis. A B-2 bomber, which the Pentagon doesn't want any more of but which the PAC-greased Congress majority seems to want to demand more to be constructed on behalf of their corporate sponsors, costs \$2 billion.

A few months ago I was meeting with the scientists at the Walter Reed Institute of Health at the Department of Army. These are the Ph.D.s and the M.D.s who almost alone in our country, on a tiny budget, are working to find vaccines and drugs against malaria, hepatitis and other deadly diseases. And their entire budget for research and development was \$25 million a year. And for the laboratories around the world that spot epidemics it totaled about another \$70 million.

I asked them, How much do you spend to produce a new drug? They discovered three out of the four anti-malarial drugs, for example. And they said between \$5 million and \$10 million.

Do you know what the drug companies tell us as justification for their high drug prices, how much they have to spend for a new drug? \$300 million to \$500 million. That's so-called private enterprise, and right in our own government we have scientists who are showing the way, but they don't have enough support. It's the best kept secret in Washington. I had to open up appointments with members of Congress for these brigadier generals and captains, all of them Ph.D.s and doctors, to go up on Capitol Hill a few months ago for the first time. That is such a distortion in the expenditure of tax money as to boggle the mind.

Let me give you an illustration of how easy it is to go after some of the worst problems of poverty in our country. It comes from the UN Development Program. The UN Development Program, which is an extraordinary research and development effort, is part of the United Nations, and I just want to give you an illustration of what it is.

They say for \$40 billion a year -- that's \$40 billion -- applied to the needy of the world, they can provide basic sanitation and drinking water safety, basic nutritional needs, basic health care and significant education for these children. That's \$40 billion a year in the same world

that spends \$850 billion a year on military equipment.

This is, in a sense, a message of hope, is it not? It's a message that if we can get enough civic power to redirect some of the enormous tax dollars that go to corporate subsidies, giveaways, handouts, bailouts, and that go for the military machine driven by corporate profits of Lockheed Martin and General Dynamics and others, we could redirect some of these monies to accelerate at unheard of levels the well-being of the oppressed and the impoverished and the desperate people and children in this world.

That is the national purpose that's connected with a new definition of national security, is it not? Isn't that national security well written? The security of reducing poverty and infectious diseases and the destruction of environments which are undermining the very ability of people in the world to eke out a living -- massive soil erosion, poisoned water, contaminated, choking air pollution, just for starters; areas of forest cut down, perhaps never to be revived again.

The concentration of power is an issue that must be high on our agenda. Indeed, you talk to Maxine Waters, she knows what the concentration of power is like. She tried to get checking accounts for poor people -- lifeline checking accounts in the bank bill last year, and the Republicans and the White House turned a deaf ear. Do you know there are over 25 million people in this country who cannot afford checking accounts? That's raw power by the banks.

John Conyers knows what raw power is. He's been trying to raise the issue of commercial crimes, especially in the inner city but generally all over, a corporate crime epidemic that is eating the life out of family budgets. Just look at the major newspapers and the TV, and see how they are documenting these predations.

In just one area, health care, the General Accounting Office estimates \$1 out of every \$10 is drained away from us by billing fraud and abuse. You know these bills that are in code, who can understand them, right? You know what that amounts to this year? That's 10 percent of the health care budget. That's over \$110 billion -- billion. Now that could cover a good many of the 46 million people who are not covered by any health insurance policies.

The agenda that we are proposing here is an agenda that is marked by three characteristics: one, it doesn't cost all that much money. To shift power from the haves to the have-nots and give people a chance to band together to pursue justice, which is essential to the pursuit of happiness, does not cost that much money.

Secondly, this agenda deals with the essential premise of democracy, that all people have to feel that they can participate, they can deliberate, and they can have an impact on their own grievances and the future of the country.

Third is that we have to recognize that those who are excessively greedy and excessively powerful must -- must give up their privileges. They must give up some of their power. I will read you a quote that many of you are familiar with.

We have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and non-violent pressure. Lamentably, it is a historical fact that privileged groups

seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture, but as Reinhold Neibuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

That was the Reverend Martin Luther King in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail.

Let me go through the agenda very quickly and you'll see more of what I mean. This is in addition to the NAACP agenda which all of you have, and it's in addition to many of the advocacies that you've heard at this convention. Some of it is redundant, but I want to elaborate it.

First and foremost, the biggest single obstacle to honest, just and effective government action, a government of, by, and for the people, is the corruption of special interest money in our election campaigns.

As the NAACP has said, we must have full public financing for public elections. Where in the world did we ever get a system where public schools are publicly financed, public parks are publicly financed, but the essential phenomena of a democracy, public elections, are up for bid to the highest bidder as if it's an auction block?

I commend the Fanny Lou Farmer's (ph) wonderful initiative that is just under way to have full public financing. And those of you who missed the handout here that described it, just look at the second page and the comment by civil rights veteran and history professor Roger Wilkens when he said,

I believe deeply that the deprivation of the poor and the excluded, by making our electoral process a rich, white, male corporate game, is as brutal an exclusion of the poor and the black and other minorities as any form of discrimination that we have known and categorized as civil rights all our lives. I think it is undeniable that it is a basic civil rights issue.

Very, very well said.

Number two, we need to discuss the question of a non-livable wage in our country. There are a number of ways where we can lift the economic standards of living of people, in addition to enforcing the civil rights laws. One of them is to repeal the restrictive labor laws which obstruct tens of millions of Americans from the same right that people have in other Western countries to form trade unions, and that includes the repeal of the notorious Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.

Less than 10 percent of workers in this country in the private sector are unionized. This is the lowest level in 60 years in our country and by far lower than other Western nations. We need also to address the minimum wage and change its name. A minimum wage that is not a livable wage can never be a minimum wage in our country. The livable wage should move to \$10 an hour as soon as possible -- as soon as possible.

Do the more affluent people understand how much it costs just to get to work in America, how much it costs waiting for the buses that almost never come on schedule, or too few

buses, or having to buy another car, or an insurance policy, and repair, and day care, and wondering who's going to take care of the sick parent, and being clogged in traffic, and losing time, and not being able to spend time with children or a family or community? That's the cost of getting to work.

In Europe they have laws that they call a social wage law. It doesn't matter whether you belong to a union or not, you're a worker in many of these countries in West Europe, you have certain rights. You have a month's paid vacation, you know not just 12 days off for family leave unpaid, you have paid family leave, you have longer maternity leave, you have the kind of civilized rights that our country, the richest country in the world, still hasn't gotten around to provide. It is time for a change; the system is not working.

Another way to raise standards of living is to have progressive taxation mean what it says, instead of these rich corporations and rich people who have all these tax lawyers showing them how they can become tax escapees. They're not paying their fair share. There are corporations in this country that get off paying virtually no tax.

General Electric for three years, in 1981 to '83, made \$6.2 billion in profit, didn't pay a penny in federal income tax. That means one worker in General Electric, one worker, paid more to Uncle Sam in sheer dollars than the giant General Electric company -- which, by the way, finagled the tax laws where it got \$120 million refund on top of paying no taxes.

And then there's the estate tax. Have you heard about that one? I thought Charlie Rangel devastated the arguments of the Republicans and some Democrats who want to get rid of the estate tax, when it only applies to the top 2 percent of the estates and in terms of the \$27 billion it raises every year it's only a few tens of thousands of super rich estates who didn't happen to be counseled by clever estate lawyers.

Number three, we need a law and order campaign against powerful lobbyists and institutions. That means we've got to crack down on the consumer fraud that goes on in this country. And as you know, the poor pay more, the poor are sick more, the poor die more. These are some of the most rapacious, predatory practices that the imagination of a gouging corporation or merchant could possibly conceive.

We also need, of course, a way to effectively distinguish the words "welfare," "violence," "regulation" and "crime." When reporters ask me about these questions I say, You better specify: Are you talking about corporate welfare or poverty welfare? Are you talking about street crime or corporate crime?

Which the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and others have chronicled as being far more devastating in terms of lives lost, injuries inflicted, disease perpetrated than even street crime, horrible as street crime is. Far more die from preventable criminal negligence in the workplace, in the factory, in the mine. They die from toxics that they're exposed to -- asbestos, lead. They die from reckless hospital practices. They die from the kinds of addictions that are coming from some of Fortune 500 corporations, beamed to the very young to hook them into a lifetime of smoking and other addictions.

Fourth, universal health insurance -- not much needs to be said about this except two things:

It's got to be accessible -- it's got to be accessible, it's got to focus on preventive health, and it's got to be monitored by organizations of health care consumers so they can monitor the HMOs and monitor the hospital chains and in many ways be the majordomo to make sure that the vigilance is there and that these systems, once put in place, work.

Fifth, we need to end corporate welfare as we know it. And I'm not even -- I'm not even willing to say five years and out. This is aid to dependent corporations. And it's time that their bleeding of tax dollars by hardworking Americans be ended so that these tax dollars be used for serious purposes, not for stadiums and arenas while schools and clinics crumble from lack of repair. Not corporate subsidies to big drug companies who don't want to do any research for drugs or vaccines on AIDS or TB or malaria or other diseases in this country because they can't make big money off of it. We have to stop that.

Sixth, we have to look at our criminal justice system and ask why it's so criminal. Why is it that it breeds exactly the opposite of what it's supposed to deter and prevent? This criminal justice system with its corporate prison industry and its is notoriously discriminatory death penalty -- there was an executive in California the other day, you may have read it. He ran a sausage plant and he got really upset with two federal meat inspectors and a state inspector and he shot and killed them. And people saw it. Do you really think he's ever going to get the death penalty if he's convicted? No way.

This is an extremely discriminatory penalty that is a scar, it does not deter. Defendants who are poor are not given competent counsel who even stay awake during the trial much less the kind of defense that our Constitution warrants all accused defendants.

We need also to recognize that legal service for the poor is underfunded. I just realized the other day, its budget is under \$300 million a year. And did you know that the Pentagon now has a policy of using your tax dollars to subsidize mergers between two big defense companies? And they spend \$1.5 billion just for the marriage of Martin Marietta and Lockheed. That's five years budget of legal services for the poor. It really is time to ask ourselves how can we allow the rich and powerful not only to rip off people as consumers, but to continue to rip them off as taxpayers?

Institutional building is another part of the agenda. In 1908 and 1909, the same people who were fighting for civil rights in those days could have said to themselves, We're too busy fighting the specific struggles right now in Philadelphia or New York to start a new institution. Instead, they didn't do that. They started the NAACP. And that is what institution building is all about. Think of the leverage -- think of the leverage throughout the decades from the NAACP's championing of civil rights; it's winning one Supreme Court case after another.

I was a law student when I first heard Thurgood Marshall come and speak. And he was -- this is before he was all that well known. And he inspired us, all of us -- 550 members of the class of 1958, with two African-Americans in the audience.

I also remember other institutions which were built -- the ACLU and others. We now have to build more institutions. We've got to build institutions to deal with the horrific risks of biotechnology -- you want to talk about genetic discrimination, just think what's coming -- to

deal with the artificial intelligence of computers, and the replacement of interpersonal education, with our children looking at screens, day after day, at age 6, or 8, or 9, as if they don't look at screens enough when they go home and watch television.

We need institutions that allow us to band together *vis-a-vis* banks, insurance companies, HMOs, cable companies, landlords. All of these can be done. We know how to do it. We've just got to focus on it.

We started in our class at Harvard -- the 1958 law school class. Let me tell you, there were a lot of corporate lawyers in that class. Yet we are now starting centers for law and justice all over the United States. We've got them in 12 states, and we're going for almost all the states. That's just one law school class shoehorning and mobilizing people of good will to start systemic centers for law and justice -- systemic, not remedial, not charity, systemic.

Environment -- environmental racism especially is a disgrace of neglect. How long, oh how long must we wait before we remove this constant intimacy between deadly toxic materials and our children? Asthma levels in Hartford 41 percent among minority children -- 41 percent. And around the country, they're reaching record levels. Aren't we a country that can at least give our little ones a chance to breathe, literally? To breathe?

We also need to pay attention to controlling what we already own. That may seem abstract, but we own, as a people, the public airways; we don't control them. We own the public lands, one-third of America, rich resources; we don't control them. We have \$5 trillion to \$6 trillion in pension, worker funds; we don't control their investment.

Imagine, what can happen if political campaigns began paying attention to controlling what we own. Here's what could happen. We'd have our own radio station, our own television station, our own cable channel. People who are trying to improve their local cities will become civic celebrities.

Look at your late-evening news, if you can bear it. Look at it. It's 30 minutes. Nine minutes of ads; three minutes of street crime right at the beginning, never corporate crime, very superficially covered; one minute of impromptu chit-chat between the anchors; four minutes of weather; four minutes of sports and that's what happens in your town tonight. And we own the public airways. It's a disgrace.

I remember -- many of us remember Julius Hobson here in Washington, D.C., a government statistician who was a civic leader trying to improve education in this district. And he could command a press conference. When he spoke people listened.

Today, you have similar people trying to improve the District of Columbia and other jurisdictions, but they don't get on the evening news. Nobody knows what they're doing. Nobody can be motivated. Nobody can join what they're doing because what we own, the public airways, has been surrendered to the most myopic and avaricious corporations running these TV and radio stations as if they can trivialize our public trust, marginalize our public commitment, and sensationalize our time. I ask you, is there a word greater than grotesque for this phenomena?

Consider all the news of the distressed and the disadvantaged and the transgressed that should be on TV and radio so that they can commit a process of resolution. And then look at all the thousands of hours that covered Tonya Harding and O.J. Simpson's trial and Elian. Think of the thousands of hours crowding out the kind of real news that we want. It's time to have our own television station, radio stations and cable channels.

Do you know what's going on on Capitol Hill now? The community radio licenses that the FCC wants to give to neighborhood groups. You know they they have a three-mile radii so people can mobilize their community.

The broadcast industry, having gotten the public airways free -- they don't pay any rent, by the way, to us the landlord -- they got \$70 billion of new spectrum free four years ago. Now they're up on Capitol Hill to reverse the FCC and prevent the neighborhood groups from having their tiny little community radio stations. Is there anything -- is there a word beyond greed that can describe that kind of over-reaching?

Education: You've heard about repairing schools? How long, how long does it take to repair schools? I'm so tired of these symbolic gestures, you know. How long does it take? And you know, I know the Democrats like to blame a lot of this on the Republican-controlled Congress. But, you know, how bad a party do you have to be to let the Congress of the United States be taken over by the likes of Newt Gingrich and Trent Lott?

But in education, I have two points to make that aren't often made. The tyranny of standardized testing is becoming the be-all and do-all for principals and teachers and school districts. It is distorting the whole curriculum.

We first blew the top off standardized testing fraud in 1980 with a study on the Educational Testing Service. And guess what? We found there was an invincible correlation between test scores and family income. I wonder why.

We also found that these tests are straitjackets. They don't recognize multiple intelligences. They don't recognize the assets that people have that spell success in life. Do they measure determination? Do they measure stamina, creativity, idealism, wisdom, judgment, experience? They don't.

Now they're becoming a yoke on our school system where school districts, principals, teachers all measured by test scores and guess who develops these tests? Corporate consulting firms who have their eye on the public school system of America in order to corporatize them.

Finally, we need a national Marshall Plan to abolish poverty in the United States of America. A hundred years ago -- 100 years ago reformers said that we could abolish poverty in the next generation. And in the next generation we have enormous poverty in the country in the midst of enormous affluence by the few at the expense of the many. There are corporations who must be scheduled for reparations in our country, Aetna (ph) being one for example.

It's often said there is an intergenerational responsibility for slavery, for brutality, and people in this generation say, Well, I didn't have anything to do with that. And what's that got to do

with me? Well, you know what? Corporations have been around for a long time. They've got perpetual life. And they operated and benefited from the repression of innocent people in this country, and they should be required to pay.

And I might add, you can even talk about a Marshall Plan for the poor in one life cycle. Our society takes away so much from innocent, poor children that it's only fair to give back some of that to them as young adults so they can have a chance. When I'm asked about affirmative action, I ask -- I answer with this question, What affirmative action? Three hundred years of white male affirmative action that have benefitted that have benefited us?

Talking with Justice Department lawyers -- let me tell you how far symbolism has gotten. Justice Department lawyers today in the Civil Rights Division have informed me that the actual enforcement of those laws in terms of litigation is less today in two out of three major areas than in the previous administration. It's less in the area of affirmative action and police brutality, and it's higher in the area of housing discrimination.

I think we've got to really get beyond the symbolism here and ask ourselves whether only by building new political power, new economic power, new media power, new civic power for all Americans, only by doing that are we going to turn around the headlong rush into systemic and institutionalized injustice shortchanging the lives of future generations and damaging the lives of present generations.

This is why I am running. This is why I am running for the presidency of the United States. My mother once told us as a child, Determination is what puts your dreams on wheels. We have got to be determined that we are not going to be flimflammed, we are not going to be sweet-talked, we are not going to be regaled with rhetoric, that we are only interested in justice as a result, not justice as a broken promise.

In conclusion, it is important to look forward to this November as a way for people who have been told too long by both parties that they have nowhere to go other than to stay home and not vote or to vote for one of the two parties.

If you ever wondered why the right wing and the corporate wing of the Democratic Party has so much more power over that party than the progressive wing, it's because the right wing and the corporate wing have somewhere to go: It's called the Republican Party. And so they're catered to and they're regaled -- like the Democratic Leadership Council, they're catered to and they're regaled.

But if you look at the progressive wing, if you look at working families, if you look at trade unions, look at groups trying to advance civil rights and consumer rights and environmental rights, they have nowhere to go. And you know when you're told that you have nowhere to go, you get taken for granted. And when you get taken for granted, you get taken.

So I hope that you will connect with us. Our web site is either VoteNader.org or VoteNader.com. The Green Party platform is the most thorough, justice-saturated platform of any political party platform of the day. Reminds me of some of the great platforms of many decades ago when parties -- at least one stood tall for the working people of this country.

And I hope that in many ways you will eschew the counsel of those who say that things are getting better, that just keep on with us, that just stick with us, and every four years both get worse -- both parties get worse. And we've waited 1980 and '84 and '88 and '92 and '96, and as Martin Luther King said in his famous Letter from the Birmingham jail, "How long can we wait?" We cannot wait any longer. Too much is at stake.

And I thank you very much for your patience and listening to me.

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