Hello all! I was invited to deliver an Earth Day message to the students at Cal State Northridge. I hope you enjoy my remarks:

Cynthia McKinney
Earth Day Celebration
California State University, Northridge
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I would like to thank the students at Cal State University, Northridge for inviting me to speak on campus today. I have just returned from an exciting trip to Mexico City and I'd like to share some of my observations with you this afternoon.

First of all, it is important to note and ask the question why is it that the corporate press are not even touching the events playing out right now in the capital city of our neighbor to the south and their importance to us? Had I not actually been there myself, I would be hard pressed to convince any audience that events of this magnitude were actually taking place anywhere in the world, let alone in a country as important and close to us as Mexico.

A quick review of today's press shows us that we are currently being titillated by news of sex tapes featuring Marilyn Monroe and another such tape featuring an unnamed British Royal. The top of the news hour greets us with information of an interminable statement made by a former television executive about a current Presidential candidate; video is plentiful of the contorted Presidential theatrics around the Olympic Games Opening Ceremony in Beijing. We were treated today to the visual of the Pope descending from the Altalita jet. But, while we have more television stations that feed us 24-hour news, we are less informed. We have more and more political pundits feeding us, what Fred Hampton described as "explanations that don't explain, answers that don't answer, and conclusions that don't conclude."

CNN even tells us in a feature story who suffers as a result of a choice made by our policy makers to emphasize ethanol as a preferred method of weaning a hulking, overfed economy off its petroleum-based consumption habit. But they forgot the other half of that equation: who's winning? And it's the 'who's winning' part that is just about always the key piece of information, that could guide us, especially when the choices of our elected leadership diverge from the core values of the voters who elected them.

And yet, as we speak, the Mexican Senate Chamber has been occupied. The massive rally held today has probably just ended, and some of the opposition Members of the Mexican Congress are inside the building on the dais and have announced a hunger strike. Days ago, one of the leading papers in Mexico City had a photo of the Chamber of Deputies of the Mexican Congress with an unfurled banner covering the Speaker's Rostrum, proclaiming the Chamber "Closed." The banner was hung by elected Members of the Mexican Congress who constitute the Frente Amplio Progressista that has dared to draw a line in the sand against U.S.-inspired legislation just introduced to allow foreign corporate ownership of PEMEX, Mexico's state-owned oil company.

Mexican women are energized around the idea of nation. I wrote my Master's Thesis on the "Idea of Nation." And to see the women, in their t-shirts and kerchiefs, so committed to their country, their nation, their identity. To them, that's Mexico's oil, natural gas, electricity, land, and water and it ought to be used by the Mexican people first and foremost for their own national development. But sadly, it's the public policy emanating from Washington, D.C. that threatens that.

But to tell that story accurately, would also require that the U.S. corporate press expose why this citizen outrage exists in the first place. And to tell that story, they would have to expose the fact of a stolen Presidential election, where a private U.S., Georgia, corporation, possibly played a role in stripping citizens of their right to vote and have their votes counted. Well, while that might sound like what happened in the United States, centering in Florida, in the U.S. 2000 Presidential election, I'm really talking about the 2006 Mexican Presidential election in which the popular candidate didn't win because all the votes weren't counted.

According to Greg Palast, the U.S. corporation involved in the Mexican move was none other than that now infamous Georgia-based company: Choicepoint. We know that in Florida, Choicepoint, then doing business as DataBase Technologies, constructed an illegal convicted felons list of some 94,000 names, many of whom
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Agreement. President Bill Clinton’s push for passage of the North American Free Trade

In 1993, the Democratic majority in the United States Congress supported then-

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The stated purpose of the legislation was to remove barriers to trade and investment that existed in North America. The propaganda had it that the objective was to lift all boats, in Canada, the United States, and Mexico through trade and investment. The result is the stripping away and transfer of Mexico’s patrimony in terms of their natural and human resources. And the Mexican people are taking a stand against it. They are taking the same stand that the little people in Haiti, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Argentina have taken. With the power of the vote, the people of these countries dared to believe that they could peacefully defeat the colossus to the north. And they did.

And so, in a way, now, I guess I understand why the corporate press can’t tell you and me the truth about the valiant stand for dignity that’s going on in Mexico, because to truly cover the story, they’d have to uncover and point out some inconvenient truths.

One of those inconvenient truths particularly meaningful to me: There comes a time when silence is betrayal.

We, the little -- and yet so powerful -- people in this country have been way too silent for way too long on all the issues that mean so much.
Dr. King also said that our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.

On one of my early days in Congress, I was late for a vote. I looked up on the board and only saw green votes; I presumed that the vote was a non-controversial item on the calendar. Since I was among the last to vote, there was no time to inquire. I pressed my green button. Afterwards, I learned that the vote might have been what others would have called an “easy” yes vote, but for my conscience it was a no vote. Later that night, my heart sank as I watched the news. One man of 78 years was so angered by that vote that he threw stones. Only thing, he had a heart attack throwing stones, and died.

My heart sank. I felt personally responsible for that man’s death and vowed that I would never cast what they call easy votes, again. My one vote would not have changed the outcome of the tally on the resolution. But my one vote would have been true to my values and my ideals that everyone is entitled to human rights that are to be respected.

I got into trouble often after that, because I recognized my responsibility to read the legislation, think analytically, question critically, and vote independently.

That was while I was in Congress. But now that I’m not, does that mean that the responsibility is gone? No.

I happened to vote against NAFTA, and I’m glad for that. But imagine if the all the voters in the entire United States understood that something as simple as a vote in a federal election might determine who lives and who dies in another country. Imagine, if we in the United States were as certain of the possibility of peaceful change through the vote as were the people of Haiti, Mexico -- despite having their election stolen from them, Venezuela, and the rest. Then we would vote Members of Congress out of office who support Plan Colombia. We would vote Members of Congress out of office who support Plan Mexico -- which like its Colombian counterpart, is the military answer to the cry of the people for dignity, self-determination, and that idea of patria. We would not vote for any political party that did not have as its agenda extending the same respect and love of life to all others as we reserve for ourselves.

And so I come to the additional meaning of Earth Day, today. I met people in Mexico City who are willing to die in this struggle -- But they shouldn’t have to because the United States wants their oil. Let us express our respect for the planet that sustains us by first showing love to our brothers and sisters beside us. We voters in the United States do have as much power as the voters in all those other countries. All we have to do is believe in ourselves and use it.

Finally, I’d like to recognize the role of student activists in promoting change. Of course, it was high school students who faced the water hoses and the dogs in the civil rights movement. It was the university students who faced the riot gear and the bullets in the anti-war movement. The current anti-globalization, pro-peace rallies are all organized and led by young people. Keep it up and don’t ever give in.

Remember that Bobby Kennedy always said “Some men dream of things that are and say why, I dream of things that never were and say why not.”

Thank you.