

All Things Cynthia McKinney

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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
April 15, 2008

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 intemperate 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 Alitalia 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 Progresista 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. The idea of patria. 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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either convicted nor felons. But if your name appeared on that list, you were stopped from voting. Greg Palast tells us that for most of the names on that list, their only crime was "Voting While Black."

Under a special "counter-terrorism" contract, the U.S. FBI obtained Mexican and Venezuelan voter files. Palast learned later in his investigation that the U.S. government had obtained, through Choicepoint, voter files of all the countries that have progressive Presidents. Many Mexicans went to the polls to vote for their President, only to find that their names had been scrubbed from the voter list, and they were not allowed to vote. So now, not only in the United States, but in Mexico, too, one can show up to vote and not be sure that that vote was counted, or worse, one can show up duly registered to vote, and not even be allowed to vote.

I guess this is the way we allow our country to now export democracy.

Unlike in the United States in 2000, Mexico City was shut down for 5 months when Lopez Obrador, Mexico's Al Gore, refused to concede and instead, formed a shadow government.

The issue in the 2006 Mexican election was privatization of Mexico's oil; it is the riveting issue taking place in Mexican politics today. Teachers on strike at the same time as the Presidential elections in Oaxaca, one of the poorest states in Mexico, began their political movement as a call for increased teacher salaries and against privatization of schools. Due to heavy-handed tactics used by the government against the teachers, tens of thousands of citizens joined them and took over the central city area of that state. Today, after Mexico has added teachers and those who support teachers to its growing ranks of "political prisoners," teachers are still protesting their conditions, the reprisals taken against them for striking, and now, the teachers' union is a committed part of the national mobilization against privatization of PEMEX.

I was invited to participate in the Second Continental Workers Conference. The first meeting was held in La Paz, Bolivia. And so, people from all over Mexico and eight different countries told of their struggles, their hopes, their ideals, their values, their patriotism, their desire for peace -- no more war.

Representatives from Chiapas, another one of Mexico's poorest states, told us of the indigenous struggle for land and self-determination, the low-intensity warfare waged against them, and how now they, too, count themselves a part of the national mobilization against PEMEX privatization.

While I was there, mine workers had taken over the mines, and so, could only send a handful of inspiring representatives. They are pressing for the right to unionize, denied to them by the Government. And the mine workers are a part of the solid front forming in Mexico to protect this powerful idea of nation.

I participated in one of the many rallies organized by opponents of the government's plan to offer up Mexico's patrimony to the insatiable multiple U.S. addictions. One woman removed her brigadista t-shirt and gave it to me -- proud that a citizen of the United States came to stand with them.

Today's front page of La Jornada says that the women, who marched 10,000 strong on the day that I was there, have renewed their protests and civil disobedience. The threat of violence and bloodshed is very real.

Now, why should this massive social, political, and economic upheaval in Mexico, aside from its human rights implications, be important to us up here in the United States?

Because the sad truth of the matter is that, in many respects, it is our military and economic policies that are causing it. Of course, I recognize that all the way back to the practice of Manifest Destiny and the declaration of the Monroe Doctrine, U.S. policy decisions have at times sent shock waves to places outside our borders. You could say that the modern version of that is NAFTA.

In 1993, the Democratic majority in the United States Congress supported then-President Bill Clinton's push for passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement. 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.

Cynthia McKinney

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The Cost Of War

AMERICAN CASUALTIES OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Dead:	4,569
Wounded:	31,984
Injured:	10,180
Ill:	28,451

DoD and VA via Veterans for Common Sense (May 07 2008)

War comes home, or goes
a project of KPFA Radio

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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.

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