

Creating a Sacred Unity of Peoples, Cultures and Nature for the Americas

Emanuel's campaign speech on North, Central and South America, August, 2020

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*The United States of America is a term that contains in it all the hope and all the contradictions of our country, and of the Americas. That hope dates far back in the past, to the inspiring words of the **Declaration of Independence** that articulated a form of governance that was, at least in terms of its potential, unprecedented.*

The enslavement of Africans and the attacks on the native nations belied those powerful words "that all men are created equal." But the power of those words transcended the limitations of the men who wrote them and echoed around the world.

America's contradictions, which we have buried out of shame, continue to hold us back from realizing our potential to be great in word and deed.

If we were at last "united" as "states" we could achieve our destiny and find strength in unity. But that would require us to recognize not only the shadows that have accompanied the bright light of hope, but also the tremendous wisdom left to us by the original peoples of the Americas, men and women who wove intricate tapestries of life and spirit that were completely invisible to the dull men who drafted maps far away, who sold off mountains, rivers and forests as a dry and exchangeable thing called "real estate."

The sad legacy of those past sins is that politics and economics in the United States have been reduced to a game of division.

- People are divided using symbols and motifs that appeal to unconscious associations;
- nations are divided using misperceptions and false generalizations;
- land is divided using alien concepts like real estate, national borders and property rights.

- Security for one's family and for one's home has been distorted into a right to destroy nature and community in the pursuit of profit.

The "United States of America" ends today in a militarized wall, a DMZ of the South that defines in a precise manner, to the inch, where one nation state ends and where another nation state begins. But for all the precision of this division, it has no basis in human experience, in the natural world and it certainly means nothing to the sun and the moon that have offered their light to the diverse nations of the Americas for hundreds of thousands of years.

When the sun and the moon look down from above they see a long stretch of land between the two poles that narrows to a delicate isthmus in the middle, forming an exquisite whole, balancing the mountains that rise up above the ground with those that lie beneath the ocean.

Unbroken bands of culture and natural chains of plants and animals link together the Americas from South to North. From the concentric stone circles that form Moray, the agricultural laboratory developed by the Incas to assure a sustainable future for all, and the soaring temples of Tenochtitlan, erected by the Aztecs to reflect the unity of Heaven and Earth, to the delicate communities of the Karitiana people deep in the pristine jungles, and the Mesa Verde city carved into the face of a cliff by the elders of the Pueblo Nation, the human achievements of the Americas are diverse and exquisite.

From the soaring peaks of the Aconcagua Mountains, and the surface of Lake Titicaca that reflects the skies so perfectly, to the waves of sand constantly reshaped in fantastic patterns by the winds of the Mohave Desert, the surface of the Americas forms an inspiring mosaic.

Those climates and habitats are inhabited by the golden lion tamarin that swings gracefully through the lush Amazon trees, by the magnificent Magellanic penguin standing watch confidently on the shores of Patagonia, by the indefatigable armadillo that has roamed over the grasses between Big Bend Ranch and Canon de Santa Elena—from long before humans gave those formations names.

Moreover, the working people in the cities of the Americas, whether they speak Spanish or English, or other tongues, have so much more in common with each other than they could possibly know. There is a great unity of experience, whether it is the pleasures of being with our children in the mornings, or the frustrations of work, or the sorrows of communities torn apart by hidden forces.

Yet, there are hidden powers and subterranean currents that are not blocked by borders. No, those powers make the borders, enforce the borders, so as to keep the little people, the honest people, North and South, penned up like cattle, so as to deny them the freedom of the eagle or of the taruca.

There is the flow of money and currency, a flow of agricultural goods, finished products and components, a flow of information and data controlled by the powerful, and used for their own selfish ends. That flow is unimpeded by borders.

The powerful drink deeply from that flow of money. They want us to be separated from each other, and they will do anything to encourage us to think that it is the hard-working families

from the South, struggling to feed themselves, and not the multinational corporations that are responsible for the pain we feel.

Powerful politicians, Democrat and Republican, promote borders, enforce borders, and militarize borders. They have built a horrific DMZ between the United States and Mexico. They make fortunes for their friends pouring concrete where there were once cactuses and wildflowers.

Who are those borders for?

Those borders pin us up inside and make us prisoners. They are also building walls in our neighborhoods, walls around their mansions and their exclusive communities, and walls around private prisons and camps where they detain us and abuse us.

Sadly, many in the United States think that what is being done to Hispanics has nothing to do with them. They could not be more wrong.

What has been done to immigrants in the camps over the past few years is but a trial run for what will be done to all working Americans. The time has come for all Americans to realize that they have much more in common with the immigrant family locked up in a camp than they do with the billionaires.

The peoples of the South do not travel to the North because they like the cold weather, or because they like the wretched taste of processed foods like hamburgers. They would rather live in their villages, farm their fields — the fields where their ancestors farmed for decades before they too lay beneath them.

They are forced to move, compelled to leave behind family, friends and familiar landscapes because of the hidden flow of money over borders that powers the takeover of farms by corporations for wasteful and destructive production. Corporations force farmers to use one-use seeds and pesticides and herbicides that poison our sacred land. They drive the butchery of the majestic jungles and encourage the drilling for natural resources underground at any human cost.

That oil and metal should stay underground where it is. Those soaring trees must be left alone.

We are subject to a psychotic pursuit of profit powered by forces far from the jungles and rivers of the Americas. Investment banks in London, in Hong Kong or in Dallas that seek quick profits for their wealthy clients are driving this suicide march. They care nothing about nature or about people.

Americans do not know about the horrors unfolding in the South because such truths are kept secret from them by a corrupt and decadent media, a media that is a tool for control, a weapon of deception.

Americans see those forced to immigrate, forced to work for almost nothing to survive and they feel threatened. They would feel solidarity with those people if they could see how much they have in common.

Instead, they are told by the dark powers that these people are the enemy. The

newspapers, the public opinion leaders and church ministers repeat those lies.

Those newspapers and those churches have been bought off by the billionaires.

It was those billionaires who manufactured this disaster.

We can certainly understand why some Americans respond emotionally to what seems like an invasion of foreigners. Their emotions are not unlike the emotions felt by those in the Amazon when they see tractors destroy their jungles in search of oil, minerals and timber.

The shooting at the Walmart in El Paso, Texas, on August 3, 2019, represented a terrible evil that is invisible even as it stalks the streets in daylight.

August 3 is not just any day. It was on August 3 of 1492 that Christopher Columbus set off from Spain to “discover” this land and set up, unknowingly, a process that would unleash tremendous evil. It was on August 3 of 1914 that Germany invaded Belgium and started the First World War. It was on August 3 of 1934 when Adolf Hitler declared himself as “Fuhrer” (leader) and ended the rule of law in Germany.

The El Paso attack left 23 dead and 23 injured. It was an obvious bid to turn fear and loathing into outright war.

Who knows what happened in El Paso? We know that people died there and that a terrible evil was unleashed that slouches now toward a murky horizon.

The Bible teaches us that evil is colorless, that evil is invisible, and that evil is seductive. This evil is not the obvious evil encountered by superheroes.

No. It is a far more pernicious, more subtle and more enticing evil — an evil that demands that we be prepared for an epic battle over the soul of humanity.

We do not need a “United States” of finance, of manufacturing and of distribution. We need a “United States” of teachers, of doctors, of social workers, of students, and of farmers.

We need a “United States” of mothers and fathers. When we have that, then we will discover how much we have in common. Our universal concerns cross over borders, languages and habits of the mind.

We must go back to the original sin, to the manner in which the Conquistadores took over the Americas, doing such terrible damage, and bringing with them a new culture that remains with us today, a culture that offers us great depths, but also savage cruelty camouflaged as piety. The sins of this day are but the latest variation on that original sin.

Remember that it was Jesus on the cross that gave authority to the Conquistadores. It makes no sense, but it is the truth. Jesus, who lived among the poor, among the homeless, the beggars, Jesus who refused to possess anything, Jesus who died on the cross for his spiritual resistance to the decadent power of the Roman Empire, **that Jesus was invoked as a cause for the destruction of the cultures of the Mayans, of the Incas, of the Aztecs and of many, many other peoples.**

And now, we witness a similar erasure of cultures and of peoples across the

Americas.

At the heart of this transformation we find the concept of ownership, specially the ownership of land.

Consider the famous case of the island of Manhattan.

The story we learned as children in school is that Peter Minuit of the Dutch West India Company met Lenape Nation representatives in May 1626 and that he purchased for his company the island of Manhattan for 60 guilders.

We assumed that the Lenape People were simply naive, that they did not understand the value of Manhattan. They were too ignorant, or too foolish, to see how these rocks and forests would become a great center for global finance that would rise up in the form of skyscrapers where once there were trees.

Now we know that the truth was the complete opposite. The Lenape people were wise and the Dutch West India Company was foolish.

The Lenape Nation did not see the exchange of currency (coins, or beads or trinkets) as anything more than an agreement for cooperation. The very idea that the soil, the rivers, the forests and the wildlife that filled that sacred island of Manhattan could belong to any one person, let alone to a soulless corporation, made no sense to them.

The concept of real estate and of assets embraced by the Dutch West India Company was an irrational, and in a sense a psychotic, misperception of the relationship between people and nature. Perhaps a five-year-old child may have such a self-centered concept of the world, but for adults to be so indulgent suggests it was a spiritual sickness.

The conflict that followed was, at its core, not a conflict between peoples, between interests, or between nations, but rather a conflict between means of perception, between basic values.

A terrible blindness seized the souls of those who trampled on the cultures of the Incas, the Mayans, the Aztecs, and those of their brothers and sisters. Many of those involved in this original sin were not aware of what they were doing.

And now, the environmental and cultural crisis is so great that we are forced to recognize that a sustainable society must be integrated with nature and that there will be no future otherwise. That is what Lenape people and the Mayan people knew all along. The myth of development and growth that we believed in for so long was a falsehood.

The scars created in the violence of the past are like the bluffs along a river. They are aged, but the fractures are still clear.

The harm resulting from the violence of today in the detention camps, and in the prisons, in places where children are locked up alone and families are torn apart, that harm remains a gaping wound.

The scars and the wounds are a part of who we are.

In some cases, the scars make us stronger; in other cases, they hold us back. We can be

sure, however, that any progress forward must also involve a return to that painful past.

In some cases, money can help. In some cases compensation can ease the pain of the past.

But if compensation to the native peoples of the Americas and of Africa is only seen in terms of money, the results will be limited. If we assume that everything can be solved by money, that assumption will reinforce the horrid centrality of money in our society, in how we perceive land and water, plants and animals, people and cultures.

Memory and history are critical. They are more critical than money because if people remember what existed before, then they will value the past.

If there is no memory, there will be no political will. No political will means no money.

First, before we talk about anything else, **we must tell the painful tale of how native cultures were destroyed, recognizing that we are talking about that potential for evil that rests within all of us. There is no border between North and South America when it comes to those past sins, or to current sins.**

One possible first step is to establish two new Holocaust museums in Washington, D.C.

A Holocaust museum stands on the Mall in Washington, D.C., that faithfully records the horrific killing of Jews in Europe in the 1940s. It is a source of information of tremendous value to us as we strive to understand the nature of evil. I recommend that you take your children to the Holocaust museum.

Yet, we must remember that the Holocaust documented at that museum happened in Europe, and not in the Americas.

There were, however, two terrible holocausts that took place in North and South America, two holocausts that cry out from the grave for a fit and proper memorial on the Mall. My administration will fight tooth and nail to build both Holocaust museums.

The first Holocaust museum will be dedicated to memory of the hundreds of millions of native peoples in the Americas who were slaughtered, or left to die of starvation, or of disease, in the brutal process of colonization and development that took place over four long and cruel centuries.

We need a Holocaust museum that documents the history of the peoples of the Americas, and records their cultures and their arts. We need this museum so that all of our children learn about that tragedy, about what humans are capable of doing in their blindness.

We need another Holocaust museum on the Mall. **We need a Holocaust museum that documents the sufferings and the losses of the hundreds of millions captured in Africa and shipped to the Americas for slave labor over 400 years.** Millions of men, women and children died on the slave ships, millions more were worked to death, or grew old and died miserably in slavery. Their cultures, their families and their very souls were trampled into the mud. All schoolchildren should visit this Holocaust museum as well and learn what was lost, what was affirmed, and what hope remains for the United States if we look back on our past with honesty.

Because these two memorials will make no distinction between North and South America, they will draw the attention of Americans to the common sufferings and the common tragedies of the Americas. The term "American" itself will expand to include both North and South and the artificial divisions created will start to fade away.

Part of that healing process must involve the introduction of the best of the cultures, the medicines, the spiritual practices, the clothing and designs, the architecture and the history of our native peoples into all aspects of contemporary American society. Our fashions should draw on the patterns of the Navahos and the Incas, our hospitals should use the herbs employed by the Hopi and the Cari, and the legends of all the original nations should be integrated into our contemporary dramas, movies and songs.

Only then will their true value be made manifest. Only then will their living spirit, after being buried for centuries, be brought back to life, be rekindled for a new age.

When I imagine the relationship of the United States with our southern neighbors, with our southern partners, with our southern brothers, I keep coming back to the inspiring work of Henry Wallace, the remarkable politician who implemented President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy" toward Latin America. Vice President Wallace fought for an equal relationship with all nations in the Americas, a balanced dialogue on education, on agriculture, on science and on society that created an inspiring consensus on what was possible. His tour of Latin America in 1943 created excitement about true unity, and ardent opposition to Fascism, that has not been matched since.

It did not stop there for Wallace. He was passionate about the spiritualism of the native Americans and he believed wholeheartedly in the depth to be found in the original cultures. He grasped a potential for growth, not merely in terms of money and products, but in terms of civilization itself.

The policy of my administration toward the Americas will assume the same potential for harmony and unity in the pursuit of a true "new deal." It will be a harmony with all peoples that is respectful, and a harmony with nature that is sustainable.

We will assert that small is beautiful and that the greatest wisdom can be found in the subtle thinking of ancient people, in the cultures of those who left only the slightest traces on the natural environment.

We will shy away from the gaudy rituals of politicians.

We will step back and promote a dialogue between people that dissolves away borders much as a swift current cuts a beautiful canyon through the hardest of stone.



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