

Tulsi Gabbard Comes to San Francisco: “I am Running for President to Bring About this Sea Change in Our Foreign Policy, ... for Us and for the World.”

By [Rep Tulsi Gabbard](#) and [Rick Sterling](#)

Global Research, March 20, 2019

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Introduction by Rick Sterling

Tulsi Gabbard visited the San Francisco Bay Area last weekend. The 3 term Congresswoman from Hawaii is 37 years old and ethnically diverse. Remarkably, she has 15 years military experience in the US Army and National Guard as well as substantial political experience. She was elected to the Hawaii State Assembly at age 21.

Tulsi Gabbard supports progressive domestic policy issues including criminal justice reform, healthcare-for-all, national and international steps to protect the environment. She has a [high approval](#) rating on gay issues.

What makes Gabbard really distinctive is her emphasis and approach to US foreign policy. While other candidates largely avoid the subject, Tulsi Gabbard says the issue is “central” to all other issues. She says we need to change the policy of “regime change wars” and “new cold war” with Russia and China. She advocates cooperation instead of conflict.

Gabbard said “We are at a greater risk of nuclear catastrophe than ever before in history.” She described the scare of an incoming nuclear missile attack which occurred in Hawaii last year. Even though the alert turned out to be false, the threat is real. “It should alarm every one of us here that leaders in Washington are either not paying attention, they don’t know, or they don’t care. This should alarm every one of us because that means not only are we not addressing this threat, but the actions that leaders in Washington are taking are actually making it worse.”

Tulsi Gabbard says that as a soldier in a medical unit she has seen the “costs of war” first hand. Thousands of US soldiers never made it home alive. Many others suffer visible and invisible wounds of war. Where the US has intervened or invaded, the people are worse off not better. The “costs of war” are trillions of dollars which should be spent at home.

Gabbard says the bad policies are the result of ‘self-serving politicians, greedy corporations and special interests.’ She calls out the military industrial complex and decries the “powerful forces that have ruled over both parties in Washington for far too long.”

No wonder there is so much misinformation and attacks on Gabbard. She is challenging the core policy of US exceptionalism and identifying who benefits and “who pays the price” for

those policies.

Her 35 minute presentation at the University of San Francisco can be viewed [here](#). Following is the text of her speech followed by her response to questions regarding Bernie Sanders, her religion and age.

Tulsi Gabbard Speaks

University of San Francisco / 16 March 2019

It's tough sometimes when we see what is happening in our country. There are a lot of challenges that we're facing and it's heartbreaking to see in so many different ways how we are being torn apart as people, how our country is being divided, how that vision that our founders had for us as a country, as a united country with a government of, by and for the people has been lost. It's heartbreaking to see how people are suffering.

Our family, our friends, our neighbors are dealing with things that we shouldn't have to be dealing with in this country. We're in a place where we have a government that is not of the people, by the people and for the people, but rather a government that is controlled and influenced by self serving politicians, greedy corporations and those special interests who can afford to buy their seat at the table as laws are being made.

Who pays the price? We do. Who suffers as a result? We do. Who is left behind? We are.

The place that we are in as a country right now, is exactly counter to the vision that our founders had for this great country: where we have leaders elected by the people, who are of the people and for the people and whose sole interest and focus is on serving the interests of the people of this country, putting the well-being of our people, our planet, and our future at the forefront of those decisions that are being made. Instead, what we see is what's happening in Washington where we have people who live in a bubble that is so disconnected from the reality that we are living in our lives across this country. And this corruption of spirit that's casting a dark shadow over us is what we must defeat. There's only one way to do that. And to me, this is why we're gathered here today because we care. We care for each other. We care for our country, we care for our planet and our future. We want to do something about it, right?



Tulsi Gabbard visited the Bay Area this morning and hosted a town hall at San Francisco University
(Source: KITV Channel 4)

YOU are why I am hopeful because gathering together in this spirit of – what we in Hawaii call Aloha – is truly the answer of how we overcome the challenges that we face. Now, a lot of people know Aloha is a word that means hello or goodbye, right? Because this is how we greet each other in Hawaii. But there's a reason why we start our conversations and our gatherings with this word Aloha because there is so much power in what it actually means. When we greet each other with Aloha and we gather in the spirit of Aloha, what we're really saying is I love you, I care for you, I respect you, and I recognize that we are all brothers and sisters, we're all children of God regardless of where we come from or the color of our skin, who we love, how much money we make or don't make, what kind of education we have.

All of those things that are so often used to divide us, whether it's by politicians or corporations or people in positions of power who pit one group of us against the other for their own gain, who tear us apart, raising fear and suspicions and fomenting bigotry between us for their own gain, without any care for the, the pain and the harm and the impact that it has on all of us. This Aloha spirit is what has the power to defeat that darkness with love and care for each other and that love for our country. It is this spirit of Aloha that unites us, that reminds us and inspires us about how we can build that path forward, that path that leads to a future that is bright, that is peaceful, that is prosperous, that provides that opportunity and justice and equality for every single one of us.

So we look throughout history, especially during those darkest moments and we see how we have found our way through. It has always been when we, the people, stand up and stand together, when we speak as one for what is right and what is just and for each other. And it is this time that we are in now that calls upon us to once again rise up and stand together knowing that when we do that, when we stand together, motivated by this care for each other, this love for our country, there is no obstacle that we cannot overcome.

The obstacles seem great and this is why sometimes it's easy to feel disheartened and frustrated and to say how do we move forward? How can we ever overcome? Just a couple of weekends ago in the days leading up to the anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama, I had a chance to go and walk on a civil rights pilgrimage led by congressman John Lewis, who was one of the youngest leaders of the civil rights movement at that time. And it was an incredible experience to hear directly from him as we walked through those steps where he and Dr. King and so many others were beaten and bloodied. They were called every name in the book. They were threatened, their very lives on the line as they worked for justice. They worked for equality. They worked for the right to vote to make sure that their voices were heard and it was heart wrenching to hear from him about what they went through. It was inspiring because of how they responded to that hatred and that darkness, how they responded to that physical violence that they endured, they did not respond to that hate with hate. As Dr. King said, they knew that darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that.

Their example and those wise words are what inspires us today. They show how we can bring about the real change that we need to see. How we can pass legislation like Medicare For All to make sure every single person has health-care.

How we can bring about real criminal justice reform.

How we can pass legislation that I've introduced to end the federal prohibition on marijuana. That will have an incredible impact on this country. In the press conference that we held as we were introducing this legislation, which is the only bipartisan piece of legislation to end the federal prohibition on marijuana in Congress, we had a few people there who shared their stories. We had small business owners and people who were working on providing medical marijuana to those who need it. We had researchers who are gathering evidence and data to say this is important to help impact people's lives. We had people who are helping those who are fighting opioid addiction. We're seeing every day how in places where medical marijuana is legal, opioid addiction is dropping, opioid related deaths are decreasing, and people who are going through very difficult problems are finally finding help.

We also had a guy named Harry from Virginia who was there who shared his own story about how when he was in college about 10 years ago, studying computer science, furthering himself and seeking better opportunities. He was convicted of marijuana possession and thrown into prison for 10 years: two mandatory minimum sentences of five years each. This was for marijuana possession. He talked about how his cellmate was convicted of murder and he got out of prison before Harry did.

The injustice that exists within our country because of the failed war on drugs and our broken criminal justice system has to end. We cannot have another generation of people whose lives are ruined in this failed war on drugs.

You know, there are a lot of different issues that we need to address. I've mentioned a few of them. Dealing with the climate crisis that we're facing in this country and in the world is an urgent one that we all must stand up to demand real change to address. We've been talking about this issue for a while. We've been talking about how our policies and the way that we live has a negative impact on our environment. But we have not yet seen that kind of bold action and recognition from our leaders. That has to change. We also have to recognize how important it is that even as we take aggressive action to address this climate crisis in this country, that alone will not be enough. This is a problem that is facing our planet. It is facing every country in this world and in order to tackle it, it will require us to build relationships based on cooperation, not conflict with other countries in the world and work together to address this crisis.

Things like re-entering the Paris accords is a necessary and important step, but that alone will not be enough.

Retracting from the world and treating other countries in this zero sum mentality where you're either with us or against us, with this approach of conflict rather than cooperation must end.

I want to close by talking about an issue that is central to all of these others that are pressing and urgent and impact our everyday lives and that is the issue of the cost of war. I am a major in the army national guard, serving now for almost 15 years, deployed twice to the Middle East where I served in a medical unit on that first deployment to Iraq in 2005. I saw firsthand every day the high human cost of war and who pays the price. I saw it in friends of mine who were killed in combat, who never made that trip home with us. I see it in my brothers and sisters, our veterans who continue to pay the price after coming home, dealing with wounds both visible and invisible, the lack of quality care and benefits provided to them to help them when they come home. The price for these wars that people don't often recognize is the one that every single one of us pays. The fact that we are spending trillions of dollars on wasteful regime change wars and this new cold war between the United States and nuclear armed countries like Russia and China. Tensions continue to increase and a nuclear arms race has been kicked off by actions like the one President Trump took recently by withdrawing from this historic INF treaty negotiated between Reagan and Gorbachev.

These actions have put us as a country and the world in a position where we are at a greater risk of nuclear catastrophe than ever before in history. Now, what's interesting is that, as I share this information and talk about these issues with leaders in Washington, they say "Really? Really? More than the Cuban missile crisis? More than the Cold War with the Soviet Union?" . Yes, the answer is yes. This is the reality of the existential threat we're facing today. And it should alarm every one of us here that leaders in Washington are either

not paying attention, they don't know, or they don't care. This should alarm every one of us because that means not only are we not addressing this threat, but the actions that leaders in Washington are taking are actually making it worse.

I want to get to why this issue is important to every one of us. We in Hawaii had a huge wake-up call about a year ago when there was a text alert that went out to over a million phones all across our state that said, "Missile incoming. Seek shelter immediately. This is not a drill." I want to let that sink in for a second. We all have phones in our pockets. Imagine that on a Saturday morning like today, people in Hawaii, were just waking up, maybe thinking about going to the beach or going to hang out with friends, when this message came across their phones. Think about what you would do and how you would feel, who you would think about, where you would go if you got that message. As we're sitting here today, think about knowing there are just minutes to live.

It was terrifying.

People thought "Where can I take my family? Where can I find shelter? Where can we be safe?" A father was trying to figure out which of his children he would spend the last minutes of his life with. Another father lowered his little girl down a manhole thinking that may be the only place where she could be safe.

That alert turned out to be false, but the reason why we reacted the way that we did is because this threat is real. And it's important for us to recognize this. Not because we should sit here and be afraid and think we're doomed, but because we have to recognize the power lies in our hands to make sure this is not our future.

Because it doesn't have to be this way. We have the power and we must take action to change direction, to bend this arc away from war and towards peace, to make sure that our foreign policy is one that actually serves the interests of our people, that secures our country and moves us closer to peace rather than nuclear catastrophe and war.

This is why I'm running for president. Because none of you should have to go through what we went through in Hawaii. No family in this country should have to go through what our families went through in Hawaii. Not a single person in this country should have to live at any point in the day thinking about what would I do if I got that message?

We must change our foreign policy, the way we are relating to different countries and build those relationships based on cooperation, not conflict and work towards this future where we are getting rid of nuclear weapons rather than building more of them.

To build this future we need to take those trillions of dollars being spent on wasteful regime change wars and a nuclear arms race. We need to take those dollars and bring them to serve the needs of people here at home, to make sure that we have health-care for everyone, to make sure our kids have a great education and a great future, to invest in a green, renewable energy based economy that serves us today and for generations to come, to make sure that we are investing in the right kind of infrastructure and sustainable agriculture.

There are so many things that we need to do right now to invest in a bright future for every single American. In order to do that, we have to change the course we are on. We need to take those dollars wasted on regime change wars and a nuclear arms race in a new cold

war. We need to place our priorities put those dollars where they need to be, which is right here on our people, on our families and on our future.

To do that requires strong leadership, leadership and all of us standing together, standing up against those in the military industrial complex and those who benefit and continue to push for these regime change wars and this nuclear arms race. The only thing that will overcome those powerful forces that have ruled over both parties in Washington for far too long are us. We, the people are the only ones who have the power to make this change. No one else is going to do it for us,

We cannot forget or underestimate the power that we have in our own hands and we cannot take lightly the threats that we face in the urgent need for us to stand up, speak out, and make sure that our voices are heard now. Not tomorrow, not next year, not in five years or 10 years. Now our future is in our hands. I ask for your support. I ask you to stand with me so that together we can take on those challenge and shape a bright future for every single one of us.

In the Q & A following the speech, one person asked about Bernie Sanders and her religion. Her response was as follows:

"Bernie remains a good friend and I think he brings such an important voice to this country and the conversations that we're having.

My decision to run for president was really based on the recognition that the most important job that a president has is as commander in chief. So the experiences that I have in serving as a soldier for almost 15 years, of being deployed to the Middle East and seeing and experiencing firsthand the cost of war and the consequences of the failed policies of this country directly firsthand [are crucial]. I am not someone who is going to go into the White House and sit back and rely on the foreign policy establishment in Washington to tell me what to do. I don't have to.

That is what differentiates me from every other candidate who's running for president right now. Because I'm walking in on day one with that experience both as a soldier directly, but also as a member of Congress who served on the Armed Services and Foreign Affairs committees for years, who has engaged with leaders of other countries who has held the feet to the fire of people like the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I'm not intimidated by the stars that someone wears on their shoulders.

I am not intimidated by the military industrial complex and what they are fishing for. I'm not running for president to be president. I'm running for president to be able to bring about this sea change in our foreign policy that is so necessary for us and for the world.

Quickly regarding the last question, I'm a practicing Hindu. I practice Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga. I dedicate my life to do my best every day, to be of service to God and to be of service to others. That pretty much sums up my spiritual foundation and my motivation throughout my life.

Another person asked how her young age as potentially the youngest president in US history

and how she would cater to the needs of young people. She responded as follows:

What matters most to what I bring to the White House and the presidency is the experience and perspective. In 2020 millennials will be the largest demographic. Millennials will actually be that majority to determine what kind of future we want for ourselves.

To me this is not about catering, that I'm going to cater to quote unquote young people or this group or that group. The message that I shared with you today about why I'm running and the kind of change that I seek to bring about is the kind of change that serves every person in this country, not just one group or another, not one age or another, one race or another, one religion or another. This is about every single one of us.

The key to that, rather than pandering to one group or another, the kind of change we're talking about is centered around putting people first, putting people ahead of profits, putting people ahead of politics, putting people ahead of the powerful, really working and centering our policies around how does this best serve the people of this country and our planet? That's my goal. That's my objective.

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