

[AUDIENCE BOOING]

SPEAKER 1: All right. All right.

SPEAKER 2: Lots of questions they want answered, but we've got to keep it going.

[OVERLAPPING SPEECH]

SPEAKER 3: Shut up!

SPEAKER 4: Shut up and let him talk.

SPEAKER 1: I really did not come here to attempt to defend myself or to ask you to do anything for me.

[OVERLAPPING SPEECH]

SPEAKER 5: Why not?

SPEAKER 1: In the hope that I might be somewhat helpful to you, and we might all together do something about the state of this nation.

[CHEERING, APPLAUSE]

When I decided not to run for re-election to the United States Senate was in Grant Park in Chicago in 1968. Some of you were there. And I said I would not be a candidate again in view of what the Democratic party had done to us in 1970.

It had nothing to do with who might succeed me, but rather that I was not going to go to the Democrats in that year and say I'm a Democrat and support me, and then in 1972 say, well, thanks, fellas, but I don't think I'll be with you in '72. So the decision in '68 was made for '70 in the light of what we might have to do in 1972, which is where we are now.

[APPLAUSE]

We haven't blown it yet. It may happen. But let me say that I came into this in 1965 when we sat in the hearing rooms of the United States Senate and began to see what was happening. And we challenged it step-by-step, and nothing did happen. Escalation after escalation. Not just an increase of military power, but a falsification of the justification for being there.

We started with the administration saying, it's just a Civil War and we're going to help settle it. And then it was said it was an invasion from the North. And then we were saving all of Southeastern Asia from the Chinese. And then it was the security of the free world, and then the honor of the United States. And I challenged it at every step as best I could in the United States Senate.

And now we're told we're there to get the troops out and to relieve the prisoners of war. This is the ultimate justification, which says that the consequences of what we did are the causes of what we're doing now. But at every step, we raise the challenge. And in 1968-- some of you know what I did-- at least I committed myself to go all the way.

But we didn't succeed in 1968. Yes, we did go all the way in '68-- as far as we could. And here we are back again with everyone feeling helpless and hopeless. And to some extent, we are back marching in the streets again, as we did in '65 and '66. I was in two protests in California in the last two days. I wish we didn't have to do it this way. I don't mind if you're blackwashing the block this-- Washington Avenue, it was blocked for months to put in a new bridge. Why not block it for several days to stop a war if it would help?

[CHEERING]

This is no great issue.

[CHEERING, APPLAUSE]

People have crossed this river before in other places, and they can do it again. But what we're dealing with is what has come close to being a national emergency. And, well, I don't want to retrace the whole thing, but in every way, the spirit of this nation is being destroyed by our involvement in Vietnam. And the worst manifestation of it is the corruption of the language.

And I'd kind of forgotten about this until I heard Melvin Laird again yesterday because we'd gone through it in the early stages-- something called pacification, which meant you were going to burn the villages, and drive the people out into the fields, and kill the water Buffalo and call it pacification. And then Vietnamization was another name, a kind of latinization of what we were doing under Johnson.

And then it came to be Vietnamizing. The French had a word for what both of these terms meant when they were there. They had a policy of yellowing the bodies, a kind of honest description of what it was all about. And if you heard Laird yesterday, he was saying, well, look, don't be disturbed. Americans aren't dying. We've got the kill ratio down now almost to zero to x, which is the ultimate ratio, if not zero to infinity.

And we're supposed to be reassured because Americans were not being killed over the last six months, as they were in the past. The language of the administration at My Lai or of the men in charge never used the word kill, say this is a free fire zone, and don't generate any prisoners. And so, finally, a corporal said, after you've been told to take care of the people, do you mean to kill them?

But until that point, no one had used the honest word about what was expected at My Lai. And here we are in 1972. And the Secretary of Defense speaking yesterday said-- well, he said, don't be too disturbed that the South Vietnamese haven't done very well. He said they're just an expansion team.

This is the Secretary of Defense of the United States talking, saying don't be upset. They don't play very well. And he talked about how they have an operation linebacker now. We're all supposed to be drawn off from thinking about the war in realities and to give it treatment as though it was a kind of a weekend game. Well, I'll tell you what I'm going to do-- what I'm going to try to do. You do your thing, and I'll be helpful and I'll do mine.

I don't think there's much to be gained by talking about politicians who were for the war and built us into it. Although, I do think that both President Johnson and President Nixon have proceeded without any genuine moral or legal mandate as they have progressed along the way. And I've said that before. I don't think we can profit much by talking about anti-war politicians who stood up on the hills and danced in the moonlight in 1968, and wouldn't commit them to the course of political action.

But rather to talk about what we can do now. And the first is, of course, to demand that the president end the military action in Vietnam, and now.

[APPLAUSE]

And do it now. For those Democrats who say 90 days after they're inaugurated, they'll end it, we might have to settle for something of that kind. But the demand should be now, and the demand should be made to the president. And we ought to suggest, as I did in California, that there are two ways to ask the Congress to cut off money, but also to suggest that failing in this, that this is a time for impeachment proceedings.

[CHEERING, APPLAUSE]