



Title: New American Gazette: “An Agenda for America: David Duke on the Issues,” at Ford Hall Forum.

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Speakers: William Hahn, Steve Kurwood, David Duke

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Recording Summary:

Transcription of a Ford Hall Forum that featured David Duke, a former Klu Klux Klan leader and Louisiana State Representative. Duke discussed first amendment rights and welfare reform in a forum entitled, “An Agenda for America: David Duke on the Issues.” The forum was originally recorded on March 28 1991 and rebroadcast as part of the New American Gazette radio program on March 31, 1991. The radio broadcast is introduced by host William Hahn.

Transcript Begins

INTRODUCTION: From Old South Meeting House in Boston, the Ford Hall Forum presents the New American Gazette with guest host William Hahn.

[00:00:26]

WILLIAM HAHN: Few politicians are as controversial and even fewer provoke passions as deep as Louisiana State Representative David Duke. His name has become so familiar that United Press International once called him the "best-known state legislator in America."

A former leader of the Ku Klux Klan, Duke now serves as the Republican State Representative from a suburban New Orleans district. He was elected in 1989 on a platform that included proposals to end affirmative action, to implement drug testing and workfare for welfare recipients, and to oppose any new taxes. Duke is also the founder and former president of the National Association for the Advancement of White People.

David Duke supporters maintain that he is speaking out for Middle America, saying things that other politicians believe, but lack the courage to publicly endorse. His opponents argue that the racist views of his days in the Klan have not changed at all; they've just been dressed up so as to make him more acceptable to the voting public.

[00:01:35]

Whatever you believe about David Duke, one thing is certain: he is having an effect on American politics like no other state official in our country. His unsuccessful race for a US Senate seat last year was watched by the major political parties and covered by the national media. In that race, and despite the opposition from the national Republican leaders, Duke received 44% of the vote.

On March 28th, the Ford Hall Forum brought David Duke to Boston to discuss his agenda for America. That invitation created great controversy, and a number of local groups opposed both

Duke's appearance and the Forum's invitation. During Representative Duke's speech, several individuals attempted to disrupt the proceedings.

[00:02:22]

Tonight, the New American Gazette brings you David Duke's talk to the Ford Hall Forum and the question period which followed. During much of this program you will hear voices in the background. These are the voices of the protesters. We've left them in because as they attempted to shout down the speaker, they became an integral part of the evening's program.

Here to discuss his views on American political and social policy is Louisiana Representative David Duke.

[crowd chanting]

[00:03:08]

DAVID DUKE: I want to thank the Ford Forum for inviting me to speak to you. And it's a little bit ironic, isn't it? It's ironic to me that if David Duke tried to prevent you from hearing our gracious black host here, he would have been called a white racist. What should we call these people here? Obviously, the irony is that freedom of speech must live in this country for all points of views. At different times in American history and different times in world history, there have been men and women and groups of people who fervently believe that an idea only to later find out they were wrong in those ideas. Liberalism has dominated this country in terms of our social policies for the last 30 years. And when we open our eyes, we can see that liberalism hasn't worked.

[crowd chanting]

You know, I know some of you are having a difficult time hearing. This hall, where we stand right here, as much as any other place in the United States of America, is the birthplace of the American Revolution, is the birthplace of our freedoms. And when they try to stop freedom of

speech in this hall, they do not profane David Duke; they profane America and all that it stands for, ladies and gentlemen. [applause/boos]

[crowd chanting]

[00:04:48]

I'd like to thank Wendy Ballinger, Lisa Gerdeman, and Steve Curwood. Although Steve does not agree with my philosophy, for what he knows of it, at least he had the courage to allow these ideas to be expressed in a proper American way, with freedom of speech.

[crowd chanting]

[00:05:08]

You know, freedom of speech is the cornerstone of what we call America and all the rest of our freedoms. And when our forefathers gave us the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, they realized that all other freedoms rested upon that amendment. The ironic thing is the people who try to disrupt this speech, all they're going to do is make more people across New England and across the United States of America want to hear what David Duke has to say. Suppression doesn't always end up in suppressing the ideas. Sometimes it spurs people on and spurs a love of freedom on, for all people.

[crowd chanting]

Now, can you all hear? Can you all hear? I'll tell you.

[crowd chanting]

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe so much in freedom of speech, I came here, no fee, no honorarium. I've got to put up with people like this. I'll stay here all night if I have to so you can hear, if you want to stay with me. [applause]

[00:06:32]

Ladies and gentlemen, there is right now across this land a new form of suppression of speech, and it's been talked about in *Time* and *Newsweek*, and it's called politically correct speech. Ladies and gentlemen, I suggest to you that the only true form of political correct speech in America is freedom of speech. I suggest to you that we've got to begin to discuss the ideas and the issues that are truly affecting America. And we've got to start to reach a consensus about what's fair and what's good for the future of this country.

[crowd chanting]

[00:07:16]

Now, I know a lot of you have heard many, many things about David Duke. I've had an awful lot of opposition from a lot of the powerful forces that exist in our society. When I ran for state representative, it seemed like every powerful political individual in the country came out against me. Every state representative in Louisiana, every state senator in Louisiana, every US congressman, US senator, the governor, the ex-governor, even the president of the United States came out against me. And the ex-president of the United States came out against me. The only guy who didn't show up to oppose me in my election was the Ayatollah Khomeini. I guess he was sick in Iran with a cold, I don't know.

[crowd chanting]

But the point is, there is some reason why people voted for me. People heard what I had to say, listened to my ideas and judged with an open mind. Because those here who pre-judge my speech before hearing or seeing it for themselves in the true sense of the word, they are the ones who are prejudiced in this matter. They are the ones who are truly prejudiced.

[crowd chanting]

[00:08:26]

I see the Communist flag up there. And that's the kind of freedom they would have. Show us your red banner! Show us your Communist banner! I'm proud to be opposed by Communists like you!

[crowd chanting]

[00:08:42]

And you represent exactly the way the Communists have operated in this country and around the world – opposition to freedom, opposition to free inquiry, opposition to discussion. Why? Because you can't discuss, because your ideas are bankrupt, outmoded and are not working in the world. It's about time we have freedom. And I'm standing for it and you're standing against it, ladies and gentlemen.

[crowd chanting]

[00:09:11]

You know, discrimination comes in all forms. And the worst form of discrimination that we could possibly have in this world is discrimination against speech. Discrimination, because how do we know what is just or what is not just, what is right and what is not right unless we have a chance to hear from every point of view. That's sacred to our political system and we must have that if we're going to have freedom in this country.

[crowd chanting]

Boy, they are annoying. If you can hear, I'll continue to speak.

[00:09:47]

Ladies and gentlemen, there is massive racial discrimination going on right now in America. But for some reason, this discrimination is not talked about by those people who are truly concerned about social justice. I believe that if it is illegal or wrong or immoral to discriminate against a black person, a person of color, a person because of their religious beliefs, a person because of

their political beliefs, I believe that if it is wrong to discriminate against the black person in our society that it is just as wrong to discriminate against a white person. I believe in equal rights for every American. Every American.

[crowd chanting]

[00:10:33]

And when I say that, I can back it up. In the Louisiana legislature I authored a bill that prohibited racial discrimination. But again, we have the doublespeak. We have the people up there who are supposedly talking about freedom trying to suppress it. And immediately when I offered my bill that prohibited discrimination, when I offered that bill, immediately that bill was called racist by people like that. That's Orwellian doublespeak, ladies and gentlemen. And that's the kind of society that we live in. Everyone has feelings, whether you're white or black or yellow or red. You should be judged on your abilities and your merit, not on your race.

[00:11:17]

And there are individual blacks in America who are middle class and come from good families and good education, and there are individual whites in this country who've had to struggle with lack of education, who've had to struggle with sickness in their families, or broken families, or alcoholism. When we stop judging people by their abilities and start judging people by only their racial background, we back away from freedom and true equality in America. And it's a shame that I have to be the one here to stand up for that issue instead of many other people who should be standing up for that issue!

[crowd chanting]

[00:11:55]

We have so much hypocrisy going on in our country right now concerning this issue. The black undersecretary of education, Mr. Williams, had the courage to point out that if we have scholarship programs in America that are only for minorities, limited only to minorities, that that's against the law, it's unethical and immoral. This was not a white racist; this was a black

man who had intelligence and heart and ability. We should award our scholarships, we should award our advancement in this society not by someone's race, but by their need and by their ability. And certainly people can have need of either race or either background.

[crowd chanting]

You see why they have to keep me from speaking, ladies and gentlemen, or try to drown out my speech? Because they don't want you to hear what I have to say in my own words. They want you to hear what they have to say or what they say I say.

[crowd chanting]

[00:12:55]

Another issue which is so vitally important in this country is the fact that our welfare system isn't working. I think that the liberals in this country who crafted our current welfare system were well meaning. They wanted to solve the poverty, the crime, the injustice that exists in this country for many of our poor, many of our less fortunate in America. And for 30 years, we've tried the experiment of a very strong liberal social welfare system. We raised taxes, we've increased expenditures. In Louisiana in one program, ADC program, Aid to Dependent Children, in one program, in 1960, we spent \$5 million on it. In 1990, the state of Louisiana is now spending \$195 million in that program. So we spend 40 times more on that one welfare program today than what we spent just 30 years ago. But if you look around, you'll see that we have more poverty than we've ever had, more drug use, more crime. Our schools are in worse shape than ever.

[crowd chanting]

[00:14:05]

I don't know why these people aren't removed, because they're denying our freedoms. I mean, our forefathers fought a revolution against the most powerful nation on Earth for the very right

that we're faced here tonight, the right to be heard. Do you all want me to quit? [crowd noise]
Then tell these people to shut up so I can go on with my speech! [crowd noise]

[crowd chanting]

[00:14:51]

So welfare has been well meaning by people. It's been people with good hearts, and really the heart of New England. New England probably was the greatest impetus for the welfare reform that we had in this country over the last 30 years. And that really was translated all over the United States of America. But it was much like Prohibition. Prohibition started out with a good idea; people said, Well, wouldn't it be great to rid the society of alcohol and all the pain that it causes and the suffering and the broken families and the deaths. It was a noble experiment. But ladies and gentlemen, prohibition didn't work. And the current welfare system's not working because it's going against the basis of human nature. It's not encouraging people to work, to be productive, to be responsible in their lives. It rewards illegitimacy, it rewards laziness. It does not encourage people to become productive elements in our country. We've got to change that emphasis in our welfare system. We've got to reconstruct welfare in America.

[crowd chanting]

[00:15:55]

And let me tell you, you take a look at the drugs, which is another offshoot of what's happening. The United States government says that 50% of the children who are going to be born in the inner cities of this country will be born hooked on drugs. Will be born hooked on drugs, ladies and gentlemen. So the people being harmed aren't just the taxpayers, aren't just the productive people of this country. But it's really the very poor themselves. They are the ones who are suffering the greatest murder rate the nation's ever seen, where young males have more chance of dying from murder in these areas than our soldiers did in the Second World War, or certainly in the Persian Gulf. They're suffering the highest drug rates.

[crowd chanting]

If we really want to help the poor, we've got to reform the system. And I say there's three ways we can do that. First, it's time in this country to require the able-bodied welfare recipient to work for their welfare checks. That's what it's time for. That gives people some dignity back in their lives and it makes people know you don't get something for nothing. And there's lots of work for them to do. Daycare centers. Work for charity organizations. Civic organizations. There's work to do. If we just require them to go and volunteer or work with these civic organizations, it'll be something to add to their dignity and change the cycle of poverty we've been in for so long.

[crowd chanting]

[00:17:22]

Secondly, we've got to crack down on drugs, especially where drugs are most pervasive, like in public housing. The people in public housing right now who want to raise their kids in decency, without crime and without drugs, they have a difficult time in doing that. Whether they realize it or not, I care about those kids. And I know if those kids are helped, nobody in society, not the whites, not the blacks, not the rich, not the poor, not the Democrats, the Republicans are going to be helped. And they have to be able to know in public housing they can live there without having a threat of drugs. I say it's time in public housing to have drug testing, and if they're on drugs, get them out of there and make it safe for the people who are going to live there with their families and their kids. We've got to start helping the people who want to be helped! We've got to start helping the students who want to be educated in America.

[crowd chanting]

[00:18:19]

Thirdly, ladies and gentlemen, we've got to realize that the welfare system in this country is reproducing itself. There's a massive illegitimate welfare birth rate, and these kids are often born in terrible conditions of abuse and neglect, horrible neglect. And it seems like there are many people here who are going to university or are graduates of university who are taking birth control or using birth control methods. Yet at the same time, we have a massive birth rate in the poorer areas of our city and towns that's burdening the welfare mothers first. They find it

difficult after having a few children to go out and get the training they need, difficult to do the jobs they want to do. They find it difficult to live a life of decency. It's tough on them.

[crowd chanting]

[00:19:17]

And it's time we start to encourage welfare mothers to be responsible. It's time we start encouraging them and giving them bonuses and incentives not to bring more unwanted children in the world. I believe we need something like— one of the current birth control methods now in the United States is Norplant. And it's a system of birth control for a five-year period. What if we offer people who have already had children in the welfare system some sort of incentive with additional job training or additional cash bonuses if they'll use Norplant. Nothing mandatory; I don't believe in mandatory birth control. But how about something which gives them an option in their lives? Every child that's not born in society, gives society more money to spend on education, job training and to help the kids who are born into the welfare system.

[crowd chanting]

[00:20:15]

And every child that's not born is not another unwanted child; also it would mean less abortions. And I am, I'm a Christian, I'm opposed to abortion. I'm just telling you the truth. I don't know if that's the most popular thing to say in Boston these days, but Norplant would prevent thousands of abortions in our society and would help us, again, confront the welfare system that grows progressively with each generation.

[crowd chanting]

[00:20:46]

Ladies and gentlemen, we've got to begin to reform the welfare system because if we don't were going to lose society, and we are losing it every day. All of you know family and friends who've been accosted on the street by the criminal. We have a society now that seems to put more

premium on the criminal's rights than the victim's rights. We have criminals getting out of jail before their victims get out of the hospital. And it's time that we start to protect the decent people, the people who want to live and want to live and let live in our society, not the people who want to dictate to others and suppress others as those people up in the audience.

[crowd chanting]

[00:21:31]

Ladies and gentlemen, we're having quite a change in the country. Part of the Harvard alma mater says, "We must be champions of truth and we must be bearers of light till the soul of the Puritan dies." Ladies and gentlemen, we have a right in this country to preserve our heritage and our way of life. And I'm tired of the racial discrimination that exists right now against America's founding majority. When Jesse Jackson goes to campuses and screams, "Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, Western civilization has to go," when that happens— listen to this. [crowd chanting]

Ladies and gentlemen, these people up here are guilty of everything they accuse me of. And worse. Think about it a minute. Think about it a minute.

[crowd chanting]

[00:22:52]

You know, I'm going to continue to speak about the reforms that I believe we should have in America, and I hope you can hear me. We've got to begin to reform our educational system in the United States of America. Let me first start off by saying that I believe in public education, and I think there always has to be public education in this country. But I also believe there must begin to be alternatives for people who choose to use parochial, private schools for the education of their children. Because we all know cases in our major cities where taxpayers who finance the public schools can't even send their children to them because of the violence and the educational mediocrity.

[crowd chanting]

[00:23:38]

It's time we give people more choices in their daily lives. It's time we have less government and more individual freedom and choices in America. And that's what David Duke stands for, and that's what they stand against.

[crowd chanting]

And our public schools, we once had the finest public school system. And again, in fact people would say that New England – and this is the truth and I have to acknowledge this as a Southerner – it kind of chagrins me to say this as a Southerner. But if you took a look at the brains of America, and if you estimated where the brains of our country have come from, overwhelmingly it's been New England over the years – our writers, our scholars, our thinkers, our poets, our pundits. New England has been that. And one reason why New England had such leadership in this country intellectually was because you had a very fine and excellent education system. And now we've got to realize that public education right now in our country is failing.

[crowd chanting]

[00:24:44]

Twenty years ago, we had one of the finest public educational systems in the world. Now we're in last place in math and science. You go to Europe today and there's many European children who know more about American history than American children know about American history. I think that's appalling. We need some changes. And what we've got to do in our schools, in my opinion, in public schools is begin a system to make sure that those students in our public schools who want to be educated, who are ambitious in their lives and want a future in their lives, that they have the opportunity to do that.

[crowd chanting]

[00:25:20]

DUKE: I believe in something – and we have some of that here, we need more of it – I believe in something called comprehensive tracking. I think every school, whether you talk about a ghetto school or whether you talk about a suburban school, you've got to make sure that those students who want to study hard, who don't want to pose disciplinary problems, who want to be educated, that they have a place in that school to develop their talents and their abilities. Right now, we throw our kids in these inner city schools; it's like a cauldron, and nobody seems to get out of there with an education, because as we all know it only takes a few students to disrupt the whole class, or whole agenda of education. So I say we need tracking. And we should start dividing our schools for a group of students who want to work hard, study hard and perform well, a middle range section for those students who do average work, and a remedial section for those students who need a slower curriculum. And that system should be fluid so a student can rise and fall in the system as they're willing to work.

[crowd chanting]

[00:26:22]

Nobody ever promised absolute equality in America of reality. But everybody must have equality of opportunity in America. And that's what I believe in. And we must have, we must have opportunity, ladies and gentlemen. We must have opportunity for that child in this country who wants to work, wants to study, and wants to achieve. And right now, we're not letting excellence come forth in our country. And I say it's time to bring that forth.

[crowd chanting]

Ladies and gentlemen, a heck of a lot's been said about me. I was, as you all know, I was once in the KKK [Klu Klux Klan] years ago. I want to let you know that I've never hurt anybody in my life, but I was certainly too intolerant in my life. I was once as intolerant as these people up here, once as intolerant as they are. Okay? I don't know, I don't know if I was ever intolerant as they are. I've always believed in freedom of speech, I can say that.

[crowd chanting]

[00:27:37]

But ladies and gentlemen, the issue at hand with people, the reason why I received the vote I did in Louisiana, and the reason why I'll be Louisiana's next governor is not because of my past. It's because of the ideas that I'm speaking about today that must be spoken about in our political circles. Perhaps the fact that I was once in that radical organization, that gives me the freedom today to speak to you more frankly and more openly than almost any other politician in America, if we can use that word, politician. That gives me the opportunity to not have to mince my words; they've said everything about me that could be possibly said.

[crowd chanting]

[00:28:21]

There was an article in the Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate* today in our capital city, a newspaper that has opposed my candidacy repeatedly in all the races I've run. And he said, "What else can you say about David Duke?" He says, "The only thing they haven't said about David Duke is that the David Duke is Saddam Hussein's lover and sends him money in Iraq." Everything possible that can be said about me has been said. I speak before you with no skeletons in my closet. I don't even have a closet! I speak to you openly and honestly because it's about time we started facing the truth in America, the reality of what's going on. We talk about reforms in our prisons and rehabilitating prisoners, but at the same time we let prisoners back out on the street. There's a woman who worked at a discount store in Alexandria, Louisiana, and she caught a shoplifter. She caught a shoplifter. And the police arrested the man and put him in jail, and let him out of jail because they had no more room in the jail. And he came back and he shot the woman. When in the world are we going to get our priorities straight?

[crowd chanting]

[00:29:37]

We talk about decency, we talk about love. I believe in those things. And that's why in America it's time to clear the streets of the violence and the brutality that we have across this nation. The

innocent men and women who are victims of the brutality and the tyranny of the criminal and the drug dealer. I think it's time to recognize that drug dealers themselves are destroying lives and destroying children. I think it's time in this country that we start to punish the drug dealers. I think it's time in this country, ladies and gentlemen, for those who sell drugs to children to face the death penalty themselves in America.

[crowd chanting]

All I can get is really snippets of ideas out with this crowd, but I'm working as hard as I can to share them with you.

[crowd chanting]

ANNOUNCER: You're listening to David Duke on the Ford Hall Forum's New American Gazette

[crowd chanting]

[00:30:48]

DUKE: Ladies and gentlemen, you know what you people are up there in the audience? You're cowards. You're afraid to debate issues. You're afraid that people will hear what I have to say because you know you can't defend your position. And if you're not afraid, I will make a challenge to you right now. I will challenge you right now. And I think the audience will agree with me. Even though this was a time for me to express my viewpoint, if you have a spokesman up there with the red banner, if you have a spokesman and you want to discuss issues and ideas, you want to debate me and you want to argue with me, I'll debate you with the rest of the time I have allotted tonight. Would you all go for that, everybody? Do you have the guts to do that?

[applause]

[crowd chanting]

[00:31:50]

Well? Do you have the guts to stand up and debate me? Does your liberal organization have the guts to do that? Those of you who are shouting, those of you who are disrupting, those of you who are trying to stifle freedom of speech, do you have the guts to argue ideas, like men and women and not like—

They're not here. Well, I'm going to close my speech and then we'll open for questions, see what they do.

[00:32:32]

Ladies and gentlemen, listen, I mean, it's obvious in this hall that the overwhelming people who came here tonight came to hear what I had to say. You have an open mind and you may be opposed to me, but you had the decency and the honesty to come over here tonight and listen to me, or want to listen to me unfettered. I admire you for that courage. I admire you for coming out tonight facing hostile picketers, facing a hostile crowd. And I appreciate from the bottom of my heart the Forum. I appreciate the people here tonight. We're all here, and what liberties we have, and whatever freedoms we have, and whatever standard of living we have, whatever rights we have is because of freedom of speech. Freedom of speech. And sometimes people have to stand up, physically, to stand up for freedom of speech. And I appreciate those who stood up for freedom in this audience. I really do. [applause]

[crowd chanting]

[00:33:41]

I know I'm not going to go through my whole speech again, but I'm just going to say to you that, when you judge an idea or a concept before hearing or seeing both sides, it's called prejudice. And prejudice and intolerance and bigotry comes in all forms, all shapes, all colors. And it's time in this country, I believe that bigotry is much like the pupil of an eye – the more light you shed on it, the smaller it becomes. The best way to get at the truth of any subject is through debate and discussion and free inquiry.

And the trend in America toward limiting free inquiry I see as a dangerous trend. Even some of our higher institutions of learning have had situations when speeches have been stopped. We've got to allow freedom of inquiry in this country. But I think freedom of inquiry, the fact that there are attempts to suppress it and squelch it in this nation is a symbol of the fact that it seems that our government, our government, is becoming more powerful. Our government doesn't seem to want freedom of inquiry in many ways. We have campaign reform acts that are passed in Washington that only help the incumbent.

[crowd chanting]

[00:34:57]

It's about time that we completely— and this is the final thing I'm going to speak about tonight. We've got to reform the American political system. Money has too much weights on the scales of politics. It's time to eliminate PAC money from campaigns. [applause] It's time to limit contributions. It's time to make sure every candidate, left or right, gets time on media to express his viewpoint in America. [applause] If we can't have truly free public forums like this, at least in the realm of elections, we've got to be able to judge a man, not by the number of dollars that he receives, but the number of votes he receives, by the number of support he receives.

[00:36:30]

I read some of the literature before going on tonight, and they were talking about how I was a capitalist tool and I was an agent of the establishment. Ladies and gentlemen, in my campaign for the US Senate, 85% of my contributions in that campaign for the Senate post were under \$200. Eighty-five percent of the contributions of my opponents were over \$200. I had no PAC money. I had no great media support, obviously. Every paper in the state was against me. But I had the support of men and women who honestly looked at the ideas and the issues that I was speaking about, that endorsed those ideas and believe that it's time to judge a man, not by everything he's ever said in his life, in his past, but by living in the present and the future. That we need men and women in politics today who will speak openly, honestly, and courageously about any subject.

And I will stand and speak. And I will be here in Boston, or anywhere else in the country, to make that promise to you. And I'll be glad to entertain questions. Thank you. I love you.

[applause/crowd noise]

ANNOUNCER: The moderator for this week is journalist and public radio host Steven Curwood]

STEVEN CURWOOD: We will now begin the question period, if you'd line up behind each of these microphones. And I'd like to start with this gentleman here in the balcony. Sir.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Mr. Duke, my name is Robert Bell. I've had the opportunity to listen to you through all of this that's going on. You appear to be somewhat reminiscent of the movie called *The Omen*. That's my personal opinion. You're running for a seat. You're running to try to change things. You're trying to do things. I don't believe you. I have a feeling once—

CURWOOD: Do you have a question?

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Would you let me get to it?

CURWOOD: Please, the question.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Thank you. My question is, what makes you think for one minute that we should believe you, that you have changed your colors? I don't see it, and I don't feel it. [applause]

[00:38:56]

DUKE: Ladies and gentlemen, sir, I don't know what's in your heart, but the only way I can judge any individual in this country is by—

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Answer the question!

[00:38:28]

DUKE: I'm trying to, if you give me an opportunity. The only way I can judge any individual in this country is by what they do. I've been a state legislator for three years. I've voted on thousands of pieces of legislation.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: But you also ran a white supremacist hate group.

DUKE: Well, sir, I guess you'd never take back anything you've done in your life. I'll tell you, yes, sir, I was too intolerant in my life. [crowd noise] Let me finish. I certainly was too— I certainly was too intolerant in my life, but I think a basic right of human beings is the right to change and the right to evolve. If you deny me that right, then I think you deny my humanness, sir.

[00:39:21]

Now, as far as my legislation is concerned, I was called a racist because I had a bill in the Louisiana legislature. Let me give you the wording of my bill exactly. It passed the Louisiana House of Representatives. It simply said this: No affirmative action program shall discriminate for or against an individual on the basis of his or her race. That's all my bill said. Now, that's not racism. To oppose that bill is racism. If you think we should discriminate against someone on the basis of his race, then you'd be opposed to my bill.

[audience shouting]

[00:40:06]

That's right, there's nothing wrong with affirmative action. There's nothing wrong with affirmative action of a university trying to recruit in the black community or a radio station trying to recruit in the black community, or saying here we have jobs. But it is wrong and it is discrimination when they don't take the best, qualified person that applies for that job or that university admission or that scholarship. That is discrimination. [applause] So my bill would only outlaw affirmative action programs that discriminate.

CURWOOD: Let's go to this balcony over there. Sir, you're next. Your question?

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Hello. I'd like to ask if you could just briefly explain what you think is your transition from the 70s and 80s with the Klan to a congressman now. Have you gone through a metamorphosis? Are you the same? Do you renounce what you did? Was it something you did when you were younger? And just for the record, I think that the people protesting over there were about as mainstream as Mike Dukakis. [applause]

[00:41:07]

DUKE: Well, here tonight you definitely have a different kind of Duke than Dukakis. Look, I didn't have a road to Damascus experience, but I grew up in the late 60s as a teenager. And some people— during that period, my dad was in Vietnam, and I came to believe that the American government was not letting our troops win that war. I was very frustrated and angry. Some young people went to the left, some went to the right. There's many radical SDS types and anti-war types who are now more mainstream liberals. And there are many radical right-wingers from that period who are now more moderate conservatives.

[00:41:47]

I still have some of the same beliefs. I'm still a devout Christian. I still believe in the Constitution of the United States. I still am proud of my heritage. Now, I know you're not supposed to say that if you're right, I realize that. But I'm proud of my heritage. I want to preserve that heritage. But I certainly am a lot more moderate in my viewpoints. And I renounce the intolerance that I once held.

CURWOOD: Sir, you're next. Thank you.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Mr. Duke, my name is Bill St. George. You talked a lot about issues and giving a chance to debate issues with you. One of the things I noticed you were talking about was freedom; you mentioned that word quite often in the beginning of your speech. I'd like to ask a question about your policy on drugs. One of the things you mentioned

was drug testing in projects. Now, how does throwing people out of their houses for using drugs or possession of drugs, how does this help them solve the problem? [applause]

I'd also like to say, Mr. Duke, one of the other things you said—

CURWOOD: This is the question period.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: No, it's part of the question. Another thing you mentioned was Prohibition and the fact that it didn't work with alcohol. What makes you think that it's going to work with the war on drugs? [applause]

[00:43:10]

DUKE: First off, you say what good is it going to do to throw the drug abusers out of the housing projects. Let me tell you something, what good is it going to do? It's going to make the people who live in housing projects with children who want a decent environment have a better and a safer environment for their children. That's what it's going to do. Because those people don't want to live— I mean, you say it's the right of drug user and a drug seller to live in a housing project. I say it's the right of a person who's poor to live in a public housing project without the crime, the drugs, the murder, and the assault of drugs on their children in those areas. That's what I say. [applause]

[00:43:47]

Now, as far as Prohibition, I don't believe the answer to the drug problem in America— first off, let me preface it this way. Obviously, our efforts against drugs in America have not worked. And obviously, the answer is not still more huge amounts of money in terms of the law enforcement aspect of drugs and the incarceration aspect of drugs. It's not worked so far. It's not working in the future.

At the same time, I'm for a middle course; at the same time, I'm not in favor of legalization because I don't think some of these drugs who can destroy basically a life and a mind in a matter of minds— where alcohol can take five to ten years, hard drugs can destroy a mind and a future in

a matter of months. I don't think the answer is making those drugs more readily available in our drug stores or supermarkets or wherever.

[00:44:39]

I think a different course is required. I think what we've got to do is still continue to keep drugs illegal, and in fact I think we need tougher penalties for those who drugs into the country, but I think we've got to begin to treat the current drug addicts in the United States of America. We need to start maintenance programs for drug addicts. In other words, what's happening is the way the people who bring the drugs in and people who sell drugs make money is not from somebody who simply tries the drug one time. They make their money because people become addicted, and then they have to go back again and again and again and again to the drug seller.

[00:45:19]

If once people become addicted, if they go to the public hospitals or the public health centers and they are treated for their addiction, whether it be a maintenance with the drug, whether it be with other types of treatment, whether it be weaning off the drug, whatever they get treated, that takes them out of the incentive for those who import drugs in the United States.

So that's what I believe in. Tough penalties for those who import and sell drugs, but at the same time start taking the drug users and start treating them. It'll keep those people from having to go commit crimes to get their drugs. It would certainly take away the incentives for those who sell drugs. That's my answer to the drug problem.

CURWOOD: Our next question here in the balcony. Sir?

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: I'm glad for your ability for free speech, but that doesn't mean I have to agree with what you stand for.

DUKE: Of course not.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: My question is this: How can you say you stand for the Constitution and democracy when you have represented an organization, the Klan, that has done everything to represent inequality in America? [applause]

[00:46:26]

DUKE: Well, how could Teddy Kennedy serve as your Senator when he violated lots of laws at Chappaquiddick? [applause/boos] Ronald Reagan was once a member of the United World Federalists, a Marxist organization. That's not much respect for the Constitution of the United States. I think everybody in this country has a right to evolve in their opinions and their beliefs, and I think David Duke has that right, too. Thank you.

CURWOOD: In the balcony, the gentleman in the blue shirt, your turn.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Mr. Duke, the front page of the *Globe* today had a statistic that said blacks have a 2.8 times higher mortality than whites as infants. And as a practicing physician in the Boston area, it seems to me that what we need is more money for prevention or for healthcare for these poor inner city people, not a restriction in the amount of welfare. What is your constructive healthcare policy since you are running for a prime executive position? [applause]

DUKE: I have no problem with it. I think the first task of welfare must be to help the sick and the elderly. That's the first task. Those people who can't themselves, that's the first job of welfare.

[00:48:08]

Next, I think also that one of the reasons why this whole welfare system is fueled, and you talked about infant mortality rate, is you've got a lot of people having children right now who are using drugs and that causes a higher infant mortality rate. You have children who are having children, and that causes a higher infant mortality rate, and also causes many preemies being born, and the high cost of that.

[00:48:33]

If you find a way to reduce the high illegitimate welfare birth rate, you'll have more money to spend on medical care for those children who are born in our society and those people who truly need help. So that's my answer to that question.

CURWOOD: All right, you're next.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Mr. Duke, first and foremost, welcome to Boston.

DUKE: Thank you very much, I'm glad to be here.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: I was one of the unfortunate individuals sitting up in this balcony and listening to these hooligans, and I was unable to hear Mr. Duke's speech. So Mr. Duke, I ask you to elaborate on your views on affirmative action, so all the members gathered here can have a better understanding on your views. And lastly, David, I was one of the unfortunate victims of affirmative action. I've been turned down in the private sector—

AUDIENCE: Awww.

[00:49:44]

DUKE: Let me ask you something, gentlemen, ladies, those of you who go "aww," if he would have been black and said that he was turned down because of discrimination, would you have gone "aww"? [crowd noise] And if you were not concerned about him being discriminated against because he's white, isn't that racist, ladies and gentlemen? [crowd noise] Isn't that racist?

If your only concern about someone's rights is because they're black, then you are a racist. You are a racist. If you believe in the human rights of every individual, even him, then that's not racism. That's freedom.

[00:50:24]

I will elaborate because I was speaking about that while the crowd was yelling before. Ladies and gentlemen, I don't think affirmative action can be defended on any ground. The argument on

affirmative action is that minorities were oppressed in years past; therefore, we must oppress or discriminate against white people today to make up for past oppressions. That's like the old argument about war to end war. I don't think war ends war. I don't think discrimination ends discrimination. And if you want to talk about discrimination, you've got to be consistent. There are many individuals, black and white, in this country, many individuals who are white, who have not had a very good opportunity in life, who've been poor, sick. Per capita, you're right; per capita, more blacks are poorer than white on a per-capita basis.

[00:51:19]

But in terms of real poor, two-thirds of the poor in America are white, not black. Now, should a white child who's had very little opportunity, should he who studies harder or works harder, should he or she face discrimination when they do a better job? In spite of their poverty? Like the scholarship program, Mr. Williams showed it very well. There are certainly numbers of black people in America who are middle class. Should black people who are middle class and come from a higher income be given preference over a white child who comes from a dirt poor environment and a white child who's working harder and scores higher? I don't think that's justice. I don't think that's freedom. I think that's racial discrimination, and I think it's wrong.

CURWOOD: In the other balcony, sir, your turn.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: I have a comment and a question. The comment is not directed to David Duke, the comment is directed to Ford Hall Forum. I'm really disgusted that you've decided to give this gift to this man. [applause]

[00:52:34]

DUKE: Your opposition is my defense.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: In your defense against the criticism, I'm glad to say massive criticism you've received about this, I continually hear you say, as you said making the introduction, that in the past Ford Hall Forum has invited controversial speakers from the other

side of the spectrum like Malcolm X. To make that analogy between David Duke and Malcolm X is obscene. It's not only obscene, but it reflects—

DUKE: I think so, too.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: But it reflects exactly the same kind of thinking that David Duke uses to build his racist movement. That is to say, it's the same analogy that exists in the name of the organization he founded, the National Association for the Advancement of White People.

CURWOOD: I have to ask for a question from you. Do you have a question for Mr. Duke?

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Yeah, I have a question.

[00:53:37]

CURWOOD: Just a moment, let me respond on the record, for the Ford Hall Forum. Democracy does not work without discourse and discussion. If anyone dictates to me what I should think, I don't deserve to participate as a citizen in this democracy. We have the freedom of speech because we need that for our system to work. We do not equate Malcolm X with David Duke; we simply point out that both were highly controversial in their time and could not easily get a platform. We are here so that we can hear these ideas. I don't agree with what I've heard from David Duke. I do agree he has a right to speak, and, more importantly, he has a right to be heard. [applause]

Any time we muzzle the right of anyone to be heard, we are engaged in fascism, repression and totalitarianism. And America as we know it will die when we are not able to speak. That is why he was invited here.

[00:54:38]

DUKE: I agree. And who should decide who's to be heard? You, sir? Are you going to make the decisions for the rest of the people of Boston? Do you think you've got that right?

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: I didn't challenge—

[00:54:56]

DUKE: You think you have that right. You oppose my speech here. You oppose me having the right to come here. Who's the fascist? You, sir, are the fascist. You deserve that swastika on your chest. It fits you very well. [applause/boos]

CURWOOD: All right, sir, you're next. Your question?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Hello, Mr. Duke. I'd like to welcome you to the town I was born in. The Boston media has already distorted your point of view, as they will tomorrow and tonight on the television news. I'd like to ask you a question: Do you believe, if you had equal opportunity of fairness from the media, as any substantial minority candidate would have had in the great state of Louisiana, would you now be Senator, do you believe?

[00:55:48]

DUKE: I think so, yes, sir.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Thank you, Mr. Duke.

[00:55:51]

DUKE: I appreciate y'all. And listen, I'm going to close by saying I appreciate those of you who are not intimidated by the demonstrations, who really believe in freedom of speech. You all can come down and visit me any time in Louisiana. I love you, and let's go! Thank you very much!
[boos]

CURWOOD: Thank you, David Duke.

HAHN: You've been listening to the New American Gazette with this week's guest David Duke. This program was recorded at Old South Meeting House on March 28, 1991, by Anthony

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