

Patsy Mink Speaks at 1984 Democratic National Convention

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Patsy Mink of Hawaii, first Asian American woman elected to Congress, speaks at 1984 Democratic National Convention about women's issues.

Keywords

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Transcript

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CAROL BELLAMY (President, New York City Council): It is a real pleasure for me to introduce the next speaker, a stalwart of the Democratic Party, the honorable Patsy Mink of the state of Hawaii. Patsy--Patsy who is pres--presently chairs the Honolulu City Council is well known to all of us for her effective advocacy of women's causes and the rights of all Americans. Patsy Mink is a liberal and she makes no apologies for it. As a six-term Congresswoman from the state of Hawaii, as former president of the Americans for Democratic Action, and as assistant secretary of state during the Carter Administration, Patsy Mink has stood up for progressive government and candidates. So please everyone join me in welcoming Patsy Mink of the great Democratic state of Hawaii.

PATSY MINK (Democratic National Convention Delegate): Fellow Democrats, Americans, as we celebrate the past with Eleanor Roosevelt, and the progress women have made since her triumph of conscience, courage, and perseverance, we cannot ignore the pain and suffering that is still the daily agony of millions of our sisters for whom this convention and this election could make the difference. The women's agenda is not a special interest agenda. Women's rights are about fundamental justice, not only about laws and court orders, but about the way women are treated and regarded in this country, at the workplace and in the marketplace and at all levels of economic and political life.

Women's right is to ask you, all Americans, to deal with this real life situation and with the stark reality of poverty. As women we know millions of our sisters belonged to the worst neglected class in our society. We sometimes forget when we talk about the poor and the hungry, the elderly and the ill-housed, that women comprise 75 percent of the poor in America. For women there has been no economic recovery. Instead, the wage gap has deepened. Black women, Hispanic women, Asian women, earn less today than they did twenty-five years ago. More than a million women are added to the workforce each year, but always at the bottom of the wage scale with nowhere to go. One third of all working women continue to live in poverty. Two out of three workers who earn minimum wages are women. Women make up America's working ghetto. The stoop labor on our farms, the workers that fill our garment factories, where Asian women continue to be exploited with peace, work, pain. The workers in the hot, sweaty kitchens and basements, and in the assembly lines from the Silicon Valley in California to the textile mills

of Carolina.

Yes, some women in minorities did obtain good jobs under affirmative action and court orders, but Reaganomics and the worst recession since 1932 have called to a halt what forward momentum there was as the last hired was the first fired, now even sanctified by judicial decree. Women and minorities want America's attention. Jobs are not enough, jobs with opportunity for advancement and pay equity across the board is what we seek. Jobs segregation with women and minorities crowding each other for the lowest paid jobs is not justice. This economic policy must be ended. Pay equity for work of comparable value must become the single most important goal for America. With it, women will finally earn what they are worth in this country. But even with the hardship and inequality of low paid opportunity, even for such work, must not be stolen from women of color.

Simpson-Mazzoli's cruel and discriminatory requirements for job hire will close those doors of opportunity. Simpson-Mazzoli must never be allowed to become law, not in a rainbow democracy. Women work because they must, to support themselves and their families, but many have no benefits, no health plans, no insurance against illness or disability. Most have no adequate childcare for their children. Half of all working women have young children to care for. When will America wake up to this need. Why are children regarded as women's liability? They are America's responsibility. Why not a country that starts to put women and children on the top of the list of its needs and concerns?

Ronald Reagan's idea of fairness was to give tax relief to the rich and benefit cuts to the poor. What kind of America takes from the poor to feed the rich? What kind of America celebrates an economic recovery born from the misery and sacrifices of women and children? Women understand the need for economic security. We yearn for it. We, beyond description, understand the terrors of nuclear war and our struggles for daily survival include a plea for peace. An end to the nuclear arms race, a sane and mutually agreed-to freeze, a commitment to negotiate our differences, that is the call which resounds in our hearts and our bodies as we bear our children in the hope that there will be no more war. Let us women everywhere in America, because we care, create a stampede to the Democratic ballot box in the name of peace, economic justice, and equality and because our time has finally come. Thank you very much.