**Bernie Sanders’s Speech After Losing Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, and Illinois on March 15, 2016.**

**15 March 16**

Phoenix, Phoenix, thank you! This is a huge crowd! And this is a loud crowd! Thank you. Thank you all very much for being here this evening. Phoenix, are you ready for a political revolution? Are you tired of a handful of billionaires running our economy? Well, if you are, you’ve come to the right place. You know, what excites me so much as I go around the country is to see the incredible energy of hundreds of thousands of people who love this country but know we can do so much better. We started this campaign at 3% in the national polls. We have come a long way in 10 months. And the reason we have done as well as we have, the reason that we have defied all expectations is that we are doing something very radical in American politics - we’re telling the truth. And the truth is not always pleasant. It’s not always what we want to hear. But we cannot go forward unless we deal with the realities of American society today and that is what we are going to do. Truth number one is that today we have a corrupt campaign finance system with Wall Street and billionaires spending unlimited sums of money, which is undermining American democracy. To my mind, democracy is not complicated. It is one person, one vote.

You want to vote for me - great. If you don’t, that’s okay. But what I do not want to see are billionaires spending unlimited sums of money buying elections and undermining the democracy, which has made our country so great. And that is why together we are going to overturn this disastrous Citizens United Supreme Court decision. And that is why we are going to move to public funding of elections. And that is why we are going to take on vigorously those cowardly Republican governors who are trying to suppress the vote. And I say to those cowardly Republican governors, “If you are afraid of a free and fair election, get out of politics. Get another job.” When in our country today we have the Koch brothers and a handful of other billionaires spending hundreds of millions of dollars to elect candidates who represent the wealthy and the powerful, that’s not democracy; that is oligarchy. And the people of our country will not tolerate oligarchy. But it is not just a corrupt campaign finance system. It is a rigged economy - an economy in which we have today a grotesque level of income and wealth inequality which is unsustainable and un-American. Now, the Congress may not talk about it much. The media may not talk about it much, but it is unacceptable to me and the American people when the top 0.1% now owns almost as much wealth as the bottom 90%. It is unacceptable to me that the wealthiest 20 people own more wealth than the bottom half of America - 150 million people. I want to give you one idea - one example - of what a rigged economy is about. Turns out that the wealthiest family in this country is the Walton family of Walmart. Turns out that the wealthiest family in America who owns Walmart pay their workers wages that are so low that many of those workers have to go on Medicaid and food stamps in order to survive. And what a rigged economy is about is that the middle class taxpayer pays more in taxes to subsidize the employees of the wealthiest family in America. That’s a rigged economy.

So I say to the Walton family, the wealthiest family in America, “Get off of welfare. Pay your workers a living wage.” The United States of America today is the wealthiest country in the history of the world, but almost nobody knows that and the reason for that is we have people working two or three jobs. Mom is working. Dad is working. The kids are working. Marriages are stressed out. Parents don’t have time to spend with their kids. And despite all of that, 58% of all new income generated goes to the top 1%. You know what we are going to do together? We’re going to create an economy that works for all of us, not just for 1%. And we are going to tell the billionaires and corporate America that they are going to have to start paying their fair share of taxes. And when we talk about a rigged economy, we are going to end the absurdity of millions of our people working for $8, $9 an hour because you can’t make it on $8 and $9 an hour. That is why we are going to raise the minimum wage to a living wage - $15 an hour. And when we talk about a rigged economy, we’re going to end the absurdity of women making 79 cents on the dollar compared to men. And I know that every man in this room will stand with the women in the fight for pay equity. A few weeks ago, I was in Flint, Michigan. And what I observed there and what I heard there was literally beyond my comprehension and it shook me and upset me enormously. And what I observed there is that children in that city were being poisoned by a water system that had very heavy amounts of lead in it. It is incomprehensible that this is happening in the United States in the year 2016. But it’s not just Flint. All across this country our infrastructure, our water systems, our wastewater plants, our bridges, our roads, our rail system is falling apart. In the United States of America, we should have a first class infrastructure and that is what we’re going to build. We’re going to put $1 trillion into building our infrastructure and when we do that, we create 13 million decent-paying jobs. What this campaign is about is asking the American people to think outside of the box, outside of the status quo, think about a nation not where our children are being poisoned by lead in the water but where we have a cutting-edge infrastructure in roads and in bridges and in rail and in air transport. That’s where we’ve got to go.

This campaign in terms of the rigged economy is telling corporate America that we are going to end these disastrous trade policies, which are destroying the middle class of this country. No, you cannot continue to shut down plants in America and move to cheap labor countries all over the world. All of us, all of us want to help poor people throughout the world. We can do it without destroying the American middle class through disastrous trade policies. So I say to corporate America, “You want us to buy your products? Start manufacturing those products here in America, not in China.” This campaign is about fixing a broken criminal justice system. Once again, I ask you think outside of the box, outside of the status quo. America should not have more people in jail than any other country on Earth. We should not be spending $80 billion a year locking up 2.2 million Americans, disproportionately African-American, Latino, and Native Americans. All over this country, we see very high rates of youth unemployment. For white kids - 33%, for Latino kids - 36%, African-American kids - 51%. What we will do is create jobs and education for those young people and not more jails and incarceration. And we are going to create a criminal justice system where unarmed people, often minorities, are not shot by police officers. Well, I have worked with police departments all over my state of Vermont and all over this country. The vast majority of police officers are honest, hardworking and they have a very difficult job. But like any other public official, when a police officer breaks the law, that officer must be held accountable. We need to end the militarization of police departments. Police departments should not look like occupying armies; they should be part of the communities they serve.

We need to make police departments look like the diversity of the communities they serve. In my state of Vermont, neighboring New Hampshire and all across this country, we have a major crisis in terms of heroin addiction and drug overdoses. We need to address that issue of substance abuse and addiction as a health issue, not a criminal issue. We need to re-think the so-called war on drugs. Over the years, too many lives have been negatively impacted through arrests for possession of marijuana. Right now at the federal level, marijuana is considered a Schedule I drug under the federal Controlled Substance Act right alongside of heroin. Now, scientists disagree about the pluses and minuses of marijuana but all of you know heroin is a killer drug. And that is why I have introduced legislation to take marijuana out of the federal Controlled Substance Act. I want to just tell you a brief story - a brief story about what I mean when I talk about a rigged economy, a corrupt campaign finance system, and a broken criminal justice system. I want you to hear this. Last month, Goldman Sachs, one of the large - you know Goldman Sachs. Okay. Goldman Sachs, one of the large financial institutions on Wall Street paid the federal government a settlement fine of $5 billion. They paid that fine because they were selling worthless packages of subprime mortgage loans. Paid a $5 billion fine. Now, all of you know that eight years ago this country was plunged into the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. As a result of Wall Street greed and illegal behavior, we lost of millions of jobs. People lost their life savings. People lost their homes. That took place because of the greed and illegal behavior on Wall Street. Now, today, this is the broken criminal justice system. Today, some person in Arizona or Vermont gets picked up with a small amount of marijuana. That person has a police record for the rest of their lives. But if you are a CEO or an executive on Wall Street whose illegal behavior destroyed the economy, you get a salary increase not a police record.

Now, what we have got to do - not going to be easy but we will do it - is we are going to restore justice to a broken criminal justice system. What America is supposed to be about is justice â€“ equal justice - under the law. You’re poor, you break the law, you’re rich, you break the law, you both pay the price. That is what we’re going to do. This campaign is doing well because we are listening to the American people and not just wealthy campaign contributors. I am very proud that our campaign does not have a Super PAC. We have received over 5 million individual campaign contributions. Anyone know what the average contribution is? Try $27. Now, my opponent raises money in a slightly different way. She has a Super PAC which among other special interests has received $15 million from Wall Street. She has received money from the drug companies and the fossil fuel industry. She has given speeches on Wall Street for $225,000 a pop. Now, in my mind, if you’re going to give a speech for $225,000, it must be a really great speech. And if it’s such a great speech, all of America should be able to read it. Our campaign is listening to senior citizens and disabled veterans. And here is a principle - a bedrock principle of my campaign - and that is we will be judged as nation not by how many millionaires and billionaires we have but by how we treat the weakest and most vulnerable amongst us. Now while we have seen in recent years a proliferation of millionaires and billionaires, we have millions of seniors and disabled vets trying to make it on $11,000, $12,000 a year Social Security. And you know what? Nobody can make it on $11,000, $12,000 a year Social Security. My Republican colleagues in the Senate, they want to cut Social Security, and they want to give huge tax breaks to billionaires. Well, I have some bad news for them. No, we are not going to cut Social Security; we’re going to increase Social Security. No, we’re not going to give tax breaks to Donald Trump or the other billionaires. In fact, they’re going to start paying their fair share of taxes.

This campaign is listening to the Latino community. What the Latino community is telling me is they are tired of living in the shadows. They are tired of living in fear and being exploited. They want - I want - comprehensive immigration reform and a path toward citizenship. My father came to this country at the age of 17 from Poland so I know a little bit about the immigrant experience. And let me just say this we’ve got 11 million undocumented people in this country. If the Congress does not do its job, I will use the executive powers of the presidency to do it for them. I do not want to see young people like Catherine [sp] look at the television and watch their parents arrested. I do not want to see families broken up. The function of immigration reform is to unite families, not divide them. And let me say this. I know that in our country not everybody agrees with my views on immigration reform, and that’s fine. We’re a democracy. People have different points of view. But what is not acceptable no matter what your point of view is is to throw racist attacks against Mexicans. The reason that Donald Trump will never be elected president is the American people will not accept insults to Mexicans, Muslims or women. The American people will not accept a president who insults our veterans or who several years ago led the so-called birther effort which was an ugly, ugly attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the presidency of Barack Obama. Now, you can agree with the president, you can disagree. That is democracy. But don’t tell me he is not the legitimate president of this country.

And when we talk about racism in America, I always find it interesting. President Obama’s father was born in Kenya. My father was born in Poland. But nobody asked me for my birth certificate. And I kind of think maybe it has something to do with the fact that my skin color is a little bit different than the president’s. I am a member of the Senate Committee on the Environment. I have talked to scientists all over the world. Climate change is real. It is caused by human activity. And let me tell you what the scientists are telling us and that is if we do not get our act together in the very near future, we are not going to leave a planet for our kids and grandchildren which is healthy and that is unacceptable. It is literally beyond belief that we have a major political party - the Republican Party - which rejects science, refuses to acknowledge even the reality of climate change. But together we are going to take on the fossil fuel industry, transform our energy system. We can create millions of good-paying jobs by moving to energy efficiency and sustainable energy. My Republican colleagues run all over the country talking about family values. I want you to know what they mean by family values. What they mean is no woman in this room has the right to control her own body. I disagree. What they mean by family values is that our gay brothers and sisters do not have the right to marry. I disagree. Jane and I have been married for 27 years, and we believe in family. But when we talk about family values, what we mean is ending the embarrassment of the United States being the only major country on Earth not to provide paid family and medical leave. Today in America, a woman here in Arizona or in my state of Vermont is giving birth and if that woman is a working class woman or a low-income woman, in all likelihood, she will have to go back to work in one week or two weeks, separating herself from her baby in order to earn income to take care of her family. No mother should have to be separated from her baby because she lacks necessary income. And that is why together we are going to pass three months paid family and medical leave. One of the important jobs of a president of the United States is to conduct sane, effective foreign policy. On the most important foreign policy of our time, the war in Iraq, I listened very closely to what President Bush and Cheney had to say. And I did not believe them and voted against that war. Unfortunately, Secretary Clinton voted for that war when she was in the Senate.

And let me make this pledge to you: Yes, we will destroy ISIS but we will do it in a way that doesn’t involve our men and women in the military involved in - our men and women in the military will not be involved in perpetual warfare in the Middle East. Now, I have been criticized for saying this so let me say it again. I believe that human beings are entitled to certain inalienable rights. And we have a Constitution that grants us - and it’s a great document - a lot of political rights. But I believe we have got to go further than that and I believe that we have got to guarantee our people economic rights. Because I remember the great leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he led the great march on Washington in 1963 it was called the march for jobs and freedom. Jobs and freedom. And when he died - you all remembered when he died - when he was assassinated, it wasn’t on a “civil rights” demonstration; he was standing up with exploited sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. And he understood and I agree that to be truly free, you need economic security as well. Now, it turns out that every major country on Earth- Germany, United Kingdom, France, Holland, Scandinavia, Canada - every major country guarantees health care to all of its people. If elected president, I will do my best to have the United States join the rest of the industrialized world - health care for all. And what this campaign is about again is thinking outside of the status quo. You do not have to accept the status quo. We can do better.

Don’t let people tell you that you can’t think big. Now, I’m a member of the committee that helped write the Affordable Care Act. It has done a lot of good things. We should be proud of that and proud of President Obama’s leadership on that. But we still have 29 million Americans uninsured. Many of you are under-insured with large copayments and deductibles. And all of us are getting ripped off without mercy by the greed of the pharmaceutical industry. They are charging us by far the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. People are dying. People are dying in this country because they cannot afford the medicine they need. That is unacceptable. And after all of that, after all of that, we end up spending far, far more per capita on health care than any other people. That is why together, we must fight to make sure that we pass a Medicare for all health care system. Now, I do not understand why if Canada can do it, the UK can do it, France can do it, all of these other countries can do it, we can’t do it. And I want to give you another example of where as a nation we have got to think outside of the box. For 100 plus years, we have had free public education in this country from first grade to 12th grade. The world has changed. The economy has changed. People today need more education. The simple truth is that today in many respects a college degree is the equivalent of what a high school degree was 50 years ago. And that is why I believe we have got to make public colleges and universities tuition free. This is not a radical idea. It exists in Germany, Scandinavia, other countries. If they can do it, we can do it. And the other related issue we have got to deal with is the outrageous level of student debt in this country. When you think about crazy, listen to this. We tell young people, “You’ve got to go out and get the best education that you can for yourselves, for your country.” And yet, millions of our people are $30,000, $50,000 in debt because they got an education. That’s crazy. Now, I find it interesting that when Wall Street with their greed and illegal behavior crashed, Congress bailed them out. Now, I believe that we should impose a tax on Wall Street speculation and use that revenue to make public colleges and universities tuition free.

Everybody here understands one important historical fact and that is change - real change - never takes place from the top on down. It always takes place from the grassroots on up. Workers 100 plus years ago said they would not be treated like animals and they struggled and went to jail and were beaten up in order to form unions and get collective bargaining. That’s how we fight for workers’ rights. For hundreds of years, African-Americans and their white allies struggled together to end racism and bigotry and segregation in America. Those changes did not take place from the top on down. It was blacks and whites standing together and saying we will not accept racism in the United States of America. People forget but 100 years ago, women in America did not have the right to vote, could not get the education they wanted, could not do the jobs they wanted. But what happened is that people looked around and they said, “Hey, in America, we will not accept women being treated as second class citizens. It’s going to change.” If we were here seven years, 10 years ago, and somebody said, “You know what? I think gay marriage will be legal in every state in this country by 2015”, nobody would have believed it. But it happened and it happened because the gay community and their straight ally said that in America people have the right to love whoever they want. If we were in this room five years ago, five years ago, and somebody jumped up and said, “You know, Bernie, I think this $7.25 minimum wage is a starvation wage. We’ve got to raise it to $15 an hour”, the person next to him would have said, “You’re nuts. You’re wanting to double the minimum wage. That’s crazy. Can’t happen.” Well, you know what happened? Fast food workers at McDonald”s and Burger King went out on strike. They stood up and fought back and then you know what happened? Seattle - $15 an hour. San Francisco, Los Angeles, $15 an hour. Oregon, $15 an hour. And that $15 an hour movement is sweeping the country.

But here is my point. The most important point. Do not settle for the status quo when the status quo is broken. Don’t tell me that we cannot have a political system in which we have one of the highest voter turnout rates in the world rather than one of the lowest. Don’t tell me that we have to have the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world when we have a proliferation of millionaires and billionaires. We can change that. Don’t tell me that veterans in this country have to sleep out on the street; we can change that. Don’t tell me that in America we are the only - we have to be the only major country that does not guarantee health care or paid family leave to all of our people. We can make real change. But we don’t make change if they divide us up. What Trump is about and other demagogues have always been about is scapegoating minorities, turning one group against another group. But we are too smart to fall for that. So if we stand together as black and white and Latino and Asian-American and Native American, if we stand together as gay and straight, men and women, if we stand together as people born in America, people who have come to this country, if we stand together, there is nothing we cannot accomplish. Next week, Arizona has a very important election. We will win! We will win if the voter turnout is high. Let’s make it high! Thank you all very much!

What The Folly. 2016. “Bernie Sanders’s Speech After Losing Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, and Illinois on March 15, 2016.” Accessed March 17, 2016. http://www.whatthefolly.com/ 2016/03/16/transcript-bernie-sanderss-speech-after-losing-florida-ohio-north-carolina- and-illinois-on-march-15-2016-part-1/