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# America: Our Past, Present and Possibilities—Introduction

Karl Manheim

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# AMERICA: OUR PAST, PRESENT, AND POSSIBILITIES

## INTRODUCTION<sup>†</sup>

*Professor Karl Manheim\**

We are most fortunate to have with us today the Reverend Jesse Jackson, president of the National Rainbow Coalition and Operation PUSH. As you know, Reverend Jackson has been a lifelong participant and leader in the civil rights movement in the United States. As an activist in the 1960s, and before, he was arrested many times in the pursuit of his beliefs. He was at the side of Dr. Martin Luther King in Memphis, and works still to carry Dr. King's legacy forward.

Reverend Jackson is well suited to talk to us about the law. Just a few moments ago, he was in my Constitutional Law class describing the relationship between interstate commerce and civil rights, a relationship some have questioned in challenging federal power to pass civil rights legislation. His answer was both simple and compelling. Could Atlanta have hosted the 1996 Olympics, or the Atlanta Braves, if Georgia were still racially segregated? There painted in a single picture, that comes from experience rather than cases, is the obvious connection between civil rights and the national economy. It is in this manner that Reverend Jackson brings to life those abstract legal issues that we merely study and ponder.

Reverend Jackson is going to speak today on several items, but I have asked him to focus particularly on two past and two future initiatives in California. These include Propositions 187 and 209, which Reverend Jackson has been very active in opposing. And two measures that will be on the June, 1998 ballot; Propositions 226 and 227. The former will attempt to shut labor unions out of political campaigns; the latter will forbid bilingual education in California public schools.

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<sup>†</sup> Editor's Note: Reverend Jackson spoke to the students and faculty of Loyola Law School on February 18, 1998 concerning several controversial initiative measures and their impact on civil rights. Although a partisan in the political struggles embraced by these initiatives, Reverend Jackson's remarks provide valuable insight into the use of initiatives to effect social change.

\* Karl Manheim is a Professor of Law at Loyola Law School.

We are most fortunate to have Reverend Jesse Jackson with us today at Loyola Law School.