

Jon Stewart  
Rally to Restore Sanity  
Transcript (draft)  
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2:41:50

So. Here we are.

<applause>

We've had some really incredible musical performances here today. I hope you enjoyed them.

<applause>

We've had what some would classify as comedy as well <laughter>, and now I thought we might have a moment, however brief, for some sincerity, if that's okay.

I know there are some boundaries for a comedian, pundit, talker-guy, and I'm sure I'll find out tomorrow, how I have violated them. <laughter>

I'm really happy you guys are here.

<applause>

Even if none of us are really quite sure why we are here. <laughter>

Some of you may have seen today as a clarion call to action. Or some of the hipper more ironic Cats as a "clarion call" for "action." Clearly, some of you just wanted to see the Air and Space Museum, and got royally screwed. <laughter>

And I'm sure a lot of you are here to have a nice time, and I hope you did.

<applause>

I know that many of you made a great effort to be here today, and I want you to know that everyone involved with this project, worked incredibly hard to honor the effort that you put in, to give you the best show; the best that we could possibly do. We know your time is valuable, and we didn't want to waste it.

<applause>

And we're all extremely honored to have had a chance to perform for you on this beautiful space: on the Mall in Washington, DC.

<applause>

<2.44.36>

So, uh, what exactly was this?

I can't control what people think this was. I can only tell you my intentions. This was not a rally to ridicule people of faith, or people of activism, or to look down our noses at the heartland, or passionate argument, or to suggest that times are not difficult and that we have nothing to fear—they are, and we do.

But we live now in *hard* times, not end times.

And we can have animus, and not be enemies.

But unfortunately, one of our main tools in delineating the two, broke.

The countries' twenty-four hour, political, pundit, perpetual panic conflictinator <laughter> did not cause our problems, but its existence makes solving them that much harder.  
<applause>

The press can hold its magnifying glass up to our problems, bringing them into focus, illuminating issues heretofore unseen. Or they can use that magnifying glass to light ants on fire. <laughter> And then host a week of shows on the sudden, unexpected, dangerous flaming ant epidemic.

If we amplify everything, we hear nothing.  
<applause>

There are terrorists, and racists, and Stalinists, and theocrats. But those are titles that might be earned: you must have the resume. Not being able to distinguish between real racists and Tea Partiers—or real bigots and Juan Williams or Rick Sanchez—is an insult, not only to those people, but to the racists themselves, who have put in the exhausting effort it takes to hate!  
<laughter> <applause>

Just as the inability to distinguish terrorists from Muslims makes us less safe, not more.  
<applause>

The press is our immune system. If it overreacts to everything, we get sicker, and perhaps eczema.  
<laughter>  
And yet, with that being said, I feel good. Strangely, calmly good. Because the image of Americans that is reflected back to us by our political and media process is false. It is us through a funhouse mirror, and not the good kind that makes you look slim in the waste and maybe taller. But the kind where you have a giant forehead, and an ass shaped like a month-old pumpkin, and one eyeball.

So why would we work together? Why would you reach across the aisle to a pumpkin-assed-forehead-eyeball-monster? If the picture of us were true? Of course, our inability to solve problems would actually be quite reasonable. Why would you work with Marxists, who are actively subverting our Constitution, or racists or homophobes, who see nobody's humanity but their own?

We hear every damn day about how fragile our country is, how it is on the brink of catastrophe, torn by polarizing hate, and how it a shame we can't work together to get things done.

The truth is: we do. We work together to get things done every damn day.  
<applause>

The only place we don't is here <gesture to Capital Building> or on cable TV. But Americans don't live here or on cable TV. Where we live, our values and principles form the foundation that sustains us *while* we get things done, not the barriers that prevent us from getting things done. <applause>  
Most Americans don't live their lives solely as Democrats or Republicans, liberals or conservatives. Americans live their lives more as people that are a just a little bit late for something they have to do.  
<laughter> Often something they do not *want* to do. But they do it.

Impossible things, every day. That are only made possible through the little reasonable compromises we all make.

Look, look on the screen. This is where we are—this is who we are—these cars. That's a school teacher who probably thinks his taxes are too high. He's going to work. There's another car: a woman with two small kids—can't really think about anything else right now. There's another car, (<wind blows screen> swinging' don't really know if you can see it), the lady is in the NRA and loves Opera; there's another car, an investment banker, gay, also likes Opera. <laughter>

Another car is a Latino >, another car a fundamentalist vacuum salesman, another an atheist obstetrician, Mormon J-Z fan. <laughter>

But this is us! Every one of the cars you see is filled with individuals of strong belief, and principles they hold dear. Often principles in direct opposition to their fellow travellers. And yet these millions of cars must find a way to squeeze one-by-one into a mile-long, 30-foot-wide tunnel, carved underneath a mighty river—carved by people, who, by the way, I'm sure had their differences. <laughter> And they do it. Concession by concession. You go, then I'll go. You go, then I'll go. You go, then I'll go. Oh my God, is that an NRA sticker on your car? Is that an Obama sticker on your car? Uh, well that's okay: you go, then I'll go.

And sure at some point there will be a selfish jerk who zips up the shoulder and cuts in at the last minute, but that individual is rare and he is scorned... and not hired as an analyst. <applause>

Because we know instinctively as a people, that if we are to get through the darkness and back into the light: we have to work together. And the truth is, there will always be darkness. And sometimes the light at the end of the tunnel isn't the promised land. Sometimes it's just New Jersey <laughter> <applause>

But we do it anyway. Together.

Do you want to know why I'm here? And what I want from you?  
I can only assure you this: you have already given it to me: your presence, was what I wanted.  
<applause>

Sanity will always be, and has always been, in the eye of the beholder. To see you here today, and the kind of people that you are, has restored mine.

Thank you.  
<applause>

<end 2:54:50>