

What's Next for Marco Rubio?

If Tuesday night's concession speech in Florida was the last political speech Marco Rubio ever gives, he certainly saved his best for last.

I haven't had a chance to speak to him yet, but I want to congratulate Donald Trump on his victory, big victory in Florida. We live in a republic, and our voters make these decisions, and we respect that very much, and it was a big win. I want to begin by thanking all of you here today. And, I want you to know that I am the beneficiary of the best group of supporters, the hardest-working people I have ever been associated with and I'm so grateful to you guys, thank you. Not just here in Florida. Not just here in Florida, but around the country.

I want you to know that you worked as hard, not just here, but all over the country. I want to talk to people in Iowa and New Hampshire and South Carolina and in the great state of Minnesota, where I won, and territory of Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. All over. We have a great team.

I'm so grateful for all the help that you guys have given us. I just want you to know that there is nothing more that you could have done. You worked as hard as anyone could have worked. I want you to know, we worked as hard as we ever could.

America is in the middle of a real political storm, a real tsunami. And, we should have seen this coming. Look, people are angry and people are very frustrated. It really began back in 2007, 2008 with this horrifying downturn. People are very frustrated about the direction of our country. People are frustrated. In 2007 and 2008, there was a horrible downturn in our economy and these changes to our economy that are happening are disrupting people's lives. And people

are very upset about it.

And they're told that, you know, people are angry, they are frustrated, they're being left behind by this economy and then they are told, look, if you're against illegal immigration that makes you a bigot. And if you see jobs and businesses leaving to other countries you have no right to be frustrated. They see America involved in the world and Americans spending money and losing their lives and they see that there is very little gratitude for all the sacrifice America makes. And quite frankly, there's millions of people in this country that are tired of being looked down upon. Tired of being told by these self-proclaimed elitists that they don't know what they are talking about and they need to instead listen to the so-called smart people.

And I know all these issues firsthand. I've lived paycheck to paycheck. I grew up paycheck to paycheck. I know what it's like to have to figure out how to find the money to fix the air conditioner that broke last night. I know my parents struggled, and I know millions of people that are doing that.

I know immigration in America is broken. No one understands this issue better than I do. My parents are immigrants. My grandparents were immigrants. Jennette's parents were immigrants. I live in a community of immigrants. I've seen the good and the bad and the ugly. I've battled my whole life against the so-called elites, the people who think that, you know, I needed to wait my turn or wait in line or it wasn't our chance or wasn't our time. So I understand all of these frustrations.

And yet, when I decide to run for president, I decided to run a campaign that was realistic about all of these challenges. But also one that was—one that was optimistic about what lies ahead for our country. I know that we have a right to enforce our immigration laws, but we also have to

have a realistic approach to fix it. I know that we are living through this extraordinary economic transformation that is really disruptive in people's lives. Machines are replacing them, their pay is not enough. I know it's disruptive. But I also know this new economy has incredible opportunity. I know America can't solve all of the world's problems. But I also know that when America doesn't lead, it leaves behind a vacuum, and that vacuum leads to chaos. And most of all, I know firsthand that ours is a special nation because where you come from here doesn't decide where you get to go. That's how a 44-year-old son of a bartender and a maid, that's how I decide that, in fact, I too can run for president of the United States of America.

So from a political standpoint, the easiest thing to have done in this campaign is to jump on all those anxieties I just talked about, to make people angrier, make people more frustrated. But I chose a different route and I'm proud of that.

That would have been—in a year like this, that would have been the easiest way to win. But that is not what's best for America. The politics of resentment against other people will not just leave us a fractured party, they are going to leave us a fractured nation.

They are going to leave us as a nation where people literally hate each other because they have different political opinions.

That we find ourselves at this point is not surprising, for the warning signs have been here for close to a decade. In 2010, the Tea Party wave carried me and others into office because not enough was happening and that Tea Party wave gave Republicans a majority in the House, but nothing changed. In 2014, those same voters gave Republicans a majority in the Senate and, still, nothing changed. And I blame some of that on the conservative movement, a movement

that is supposed to be about our principles and our ideas. But I blame most of it on our political establishment.

A political establishment that for far too long has looked down at conservatives, looked down at conservatives, as simple-minded people. Looked down at conservatives as simply bomb-throwers. A political establishment that for far too long has taken the votes of conservatives for granted, and a political establishment that has grown to confuse cronyism for capitalism, and big business for free enterprise. I endeavored over the last 11 months to bridge this divide within our party and within our country because I know that after eight years of Barack Obama this nation needs a vibrant and growing conservative movement and it needs a strong Republican Party to change the direction now of this country or many of the things that are going wrong in America will become permanent, and many of the things makes us a special country will be gone. America needs a vibrant conservative movement, but one that's built on principles and ideas, not on fear, not on anger, not on preying on people's frustrations.

A conservative movement that believes in the principles of our Constitution, that protects our rights and limits the power of government. A conservative movement committed to the cause of free enterprise, the only economic model where everyone can climb without anyone falling. A conservative movement that believes in a strong national defense and a conservative movement that believes in the strong Judeo-Christian values that are the formation of our nation.

But we also need a new political establishment in our party, not one that looks down on people that live outside of the District of Columbia, not one that tells young people that they need to wait their turn and wait in line, and not one that's more interested in winning elections than it is in solving problems or standing by principles.

And this is the campaign we've run, a campaign that is realistic about the challenges we face but optimistic about the opportunities before us. A campaign that recognizes the difficulties we face, but also one that believes that we truly are on the verge of a New American Century. And a campaign to be president, a campaign to be a president that would love all of the American people, even the ones that don't love you back.

This is the right way forward for our party. This is the right way forward for our country. But after tonight it is clear that while we are on the right side, this year we will not be on the winning side. I take great comfort in the ancient words which teaches us that in their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps. And so yet, while this may not have been the year for a hopeful and optimistic message about our future, I still remain hopeful and optimistic about America.

And how can I not? How can I not? My mother was one of seven girls born to a poor family. Her father was disabled as a child. He struggled to provide for them his entire life. My mother told us a few years ago she never went to bed hungry growing up, but she knows her parents did, so they wouldn't have to. She came to this country in 1956 with little education, no money, no connections. My parents struggled their first years here. They were discouraged. They even thought about going back to Cuba at one point, but they persevered. They never became rich. I didn't inherit any money from my parents. They never became famous. You never would have heard about them if I had never run for office. And yet I consider my parents to be very successful people. Because in this country, working hard as a bartender and a maid, they owned a home and they retired with dignity. In this country, they lived to see all four of their children live better off than themselves. And in this country, on this day, my mother, who is now 85 years old, was able to

cast a ballot for her son to be the president of the United States of America.

And so while it is not God's plan that I be president in 2016 or maybe ever, and while today my campaign is suspended, the fact that I have even come this far is evidence of how special America truly is, and all the reason more why we must do all we can to ensure that this nation remains a special place.

I ask the American people, do not give in to the fear. Do not give in to the frustration. We can disagree about public policy, we can disagree about it vibrantly, passionately. But we are a hopeful people, and we have every right to be hopeful. For we in this nation are the descendants of go-getters. In our veins runs the blood of people who gave it all up so we would have the chances they never did. We are all the descendants of someone who made our future the purpose of their lives. We are the descendants of pilgrims. We are the descendants of settlers. We are the descendants of men and women that headed westward in the Great Plains not knowing what awaited them. We are the descendants of slaves who overcame that horrible institution to stake their claim in the American Dream. We are the descendants of immigrants and exiles who knew and believed that they were destined for more, and that there was only one place on earth where that was possible. This is who we are, and let us fight to ensure that this is who we remain. For if we lose that about our country, we will still be rich and we will still be powerful, but we will no longer be special.

And so I am grateful to all of you that have worked so hard for me. I truly am. I am grateful to my family, to my wife, Jeanette, who has been phenomenal in this campaign. To my four kids who have been extraordinary in this campaign. And I want you to know that I will continue every single day to search for ways for me to repay some of this extraordinary debt that I owe this great country. And I want to leave with

an expression of gratitude to God in whose hands all things lie. He has a plan for every one of our lives. Everything that comes from God is good. God is perfect. God makes no mistakes. And he has things planned for all of us. And we await eagerly to see what lies ahead. And so I leave tonight with one final prayer, and I use the words of King David because I remain grateful to God:

"Yours O Lord is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth. Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and You exalt yourself as head overall. Both riches and honor come from You and You rule over all. And in Your hand is power and might and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone."

May God strengthen our people. May God strengthen our nation. May God strengthen the conservative movement. May God strengthen the Republican Party. May God strengthen our eventual nominee. And may God always bless and strengthen this great nation, the United States of America. Thank you and God bless you all. Thank you very much.

Most political observers, however, don't think Rubio's career ended Tuesday. When he entered the GOP presidential race, he announced that in January of 2017, he would either be president of the United States or a private citizen. And unless he changes his mind about running for his now-open Senate seat, it looks like he will be the latter.

He could still jump into the Senate race, although he would face some stiff competition, and many of the issues that dogged him in his presidential run. He has said he doesn't intend to do that, though.

Rubio could, however, begin laying the groundwork now to run for governor of Florida in 2018. Gov. Rick Scott cannot seek re-election due to term limits, and would have to step down.

Building a resume as a governor of a swing state would make him a very attractive presidential candidate. At just 45 years old, time is definitely on his side, and in the meantime, he can work to build the new conservative movement he talked about Tuesday night.