

Preface

“Let me give you a word of the philosophy of reforms. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions, yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will!”

Frederick Douglass

SNCC TRUTH TELLING TIME: People of the Day Before Yesterday Reach Out to People of the Day After Tomorrow

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The Akan people of West Africa have long celebrated a symbol called the “Sankofa” for the guidance of their youth. The image depicts a bird in forward motion with its head turned backward. This equates to their proverb “go back to the past in order to build for the future.”

This Conference is our Sankofa moment!

Some two score and ten years ago a green band of patriots dared to pledge their lives, misfortunes and sacred honor to the proposition that human dignity can and must be a universal birthright; not as a dream or a mere declaration of principle, but as a constant struggle. On February 1, 1960, four students from A&T College, an historically black school in Greensboro, North Carolina, demanded service at a local lunch counter in Woolworth’s retail store in defiance of local laws forbidding integrated seating. Within a few months sit-ins by mostly black college students erupted across the South. The atomic energy unleashed by the student sit-in explosion importantly altered the course of social and political life in the United States and measurably influenced the course of human rights history throughout the world.

Dedicated to social change without resort to force or brutality, we by no accident named ourselves the Student NonViolent Coordinating Committee; colloquially abbreviated to SNCC and vocalized as “snick.” The commitment to avoiding violence came to some as a religious conviction and to others as the best tactic for avoiding disastrous confrontations with mobs and police.

Born of these novel morals and tactics, SNCC prided itself on building a movement rather than a mere organization. It determined to draw its strength and wisdom, inspiration and spiritual depth from the souls of the black folk/people of the South.

As evidenced by its extraordinary flash appearance, turbulent career and its seamless reappearance in a fiery burst of successor causes and movements, SNCC was never about institutionally preserving *itself*. If it had been, it would have operated like more traditional organizations worrying more about cash flow and hierarchy rather than the soul of its revolution. The only legacy sought was the altered condition of the people. Their awakened sense of self-empowerment was our dedication. Our creed was the ultimate liberation of the masses from deprivation and manipulation. Our ideal vision was of the last burden being lifted from the shoulders of the world’s last oppressed woman and man.

And while there have been numerous efforts by individuals as amateurs, professional commentators and historians to tell the SNCC story, this Fiftieth Anniversary Conference is designed to be our grandest *collective* effort to date to interpret and measure from within all aspects of SNCC as an enterprise, lest we singly and silently disappear, still misunderstood. Where better to make that declaration than here at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, where it all began in the first week of April 1960.

The reason we must be at great pains to collectively tell our own story NOW is not to indulge in SNCC breast-beating, but rather to embolden a like audacity in the generations to come to change the world, rather than accept victimhood. Hopefully through our story they will be assured that with no resources other than the courage of ideals, endurance and mutual trust, they can meet the giant enemies of their day and slay

them, however fearsome they may appear beforehand. More than anything else it is important today to reemphasize self empowerment over external appointment or anointment by those already in power. By making a permanent record of our narratives, our humor, our affections and our songs, we can together convey what it meant to be part of a happy insurgency against widespread and seemingly insurmountable tyranny, terrorism, and tragic traditions.

Lest we forget, the principal reason thousands of buds never bloom is for fear they might freeze, fail to find rain or be crushed without being seen. The counter counsel of SNCC's story is to trust your buds into flowers and Never Say Die, until you have won!

There is much that can be said about the stumblings, gropings and mistakes that characterized SNCC management. After all, we had no apprenticeship in large-scale logistics for regional or national leadership, nor for the challenges of facing down the entire weight of both the public and private establishment, nor for managing public relations on a world stage in the face of sophisticated daily propaganda assaults. We learned on-the-job and under constant fire. Yet it must be said to our eternal and undeniable credit that, in spite of these many handicaps and shortcomings: There was never a single case of internal corruption in our ranks. There were no traitors or betrayals found throughout our ten-year existence. No money was embezzled from our donations. None of us is embarrassed by our past affiliation or went over to the enemy by bribery or seduction. And no physical, political or financial threat ever succeeded in determining or even altering our programmatic directions. This was so because we suffered from no competing fears or incentives to do other than give power to the people, even in the face of death itself. Where in the history of American reform movements is there a superior record of institutional integrity?

In return our institutional loyalty has been equally steadfast to all of those who suffered in the trenches with us. When former SNCC participants and allies have come under attack for alleged or actual misdeeds after the sixties, they have not been summarily disowned or written out of our history, in spite of mainstream press condemnation or government-funded Intel-Pro propaganda. This likewise is a record of

distinction among our fellow progressive organizations, both before and since, because our mutual loyalties had been dyed indelibly in blood, rather than expedient self interest.

Furthermore, we not only sang the words *black and white together* and placed such clasped hands as the emblem on our buttons and stationary, we massively lived it as no other progressive organization has, until partially rivaled in the recent Obama presidential campaign. And oft-repeated rumors notwithstanding, gender differences were never the criteria for assigning leadership or authority. Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer had proved early on the error of any such idiocy.

It is the dual function of the words spoken at this conference to serve the interest of both catharsis and analysis. For those who were together on the journey of the sixties there is a longing to interpret the deeper meanings in the making of a human, as well as politically revolutionary movement. For these, the best use of this time would be to weave the music and story-telling of our yesteryears into a narrative to motivate today's bling and ME-generations to walk more heavily upon the earth, preparing the ground for those yet to come. For others studying us from afar there is a thirst for the cold stuff of dates, names, places, and statistics. Their preference would be spending these hours gathering historical facts and causal relationships. Hopefully, in collectively rather than selectively setting the record straight, we shall succeed in meeting some of both these objectives before we leave this place.

In summary, let us be clear here and now to friend and foe alike as to what is decidedly **not** the motive of our coming together. Our being here is not to reminisce nostalgically nor to self congratulate on past accomplishments and reopen unhealed wounds. It is not to rewrite history in our favor, but to provide one of its missing chapters to give a much-needed perspective on all that has been accurately written and miswritten about us and our times. It is also to correct the conventional oversight, if not deliberate mischaracterization of the Civil Rights revolution of the sixties as a parade of prominent personalities and oft-quoted speeches rather than a grassroots peoples' rebellion.

In contrast to the “post-racial” aspirants and escapists, for us major elements of the civil rights agenda of the sixties are still blatantly unfulfilled. This requires that even with our gray hair, we remain radical enough to insist on ceaseless action until the abuses are addressed and eliminated that originally moved us for a decade to nonviolently raise hell, risking life and limb, careers and comforts. For us the newfound privilege and affluence of the few must not be allowed to outweigh the plight of the majority of the poor and black left still left behind.

Because of this continuing need to struggle without rest, we who made what followed the sleepy Fifties, the uniquely vibrant Sixties, want the world to know the difference between the real thing and hypocrisy. Public intellectuals pimping off the good name of radical talk, devoid of radical action or sacrificial suffering in order to sell their books and lectures, are not our legitimate heirs. Their strong talk is a pale shadow of deeds, if not an outright mockery. And we swear to do our damndest to not go gently into that good night without challenging a new generation of youthful activists to step up to the personal responsibility for confronting such hypocritical theatrics at the expense of progress. We want to challenge a cadre of new abolitionists to put their bodies where the lyrics of their rap and hip-hop music profess their hearts are. It’s not just about verbal protest. It’s about action. Words are never a substitute for work. To borrow from Douglass, they never have and they never will be! It’s time for proud talkers to put some skin in the game to walk the walk as well as talk strong talk.

We seriously cannot afford a new generation of wishful believers in change who remain unwilling to pay the cost. So we have also come here in part to call out the griping and groaning disenchanted youth to put-up rather than shut-up about what they deem wrong with black leadership, their country and the world. Waiting for a perfectly written plan or the inspired words of a new charismatic voice is a poor excuse for avoiding self-help, risks, and creative initiative now.

We are here to remind them that without the Internet, without a booming pool of middle class parents, without a directory of well-established and well funded nonprofit agencies in air-conditioned downtown offices devoted to gender equality, peace,

volunteerism, internationalism and environmentalism, and even without an Obama in the White House, we who created SNCC took on a violent *status quo* establishment and we won!

It is not just written, it is right that from those to whom much has been given, much shall be required. Given its advantages at the starting point, how much more could this generation do for social justice? The challenge to today's youth is you had better get busy changing the world you complain about, for its materialism, its consumerism, its racism, and its class-ism; because unless confronted, it will soon consume the very ground under your feet. Before his death Jim Forman, the first official SNCC executive secretary, challenged the generation-next to chalk up higher and better human rights accomplishments for the present and the future. He urged, "Don't praise us, it is time for you to move on over us." He meant it and so do we.

The Chinese saying is that those who come early plant the tree, while those who come later enjoy the shade. Nothing has been more painful or disheartening in the intervening years than to encounter newly-minted black professionals occupying the opportunities from earlier tears of blood, who have not only turned their backs on the struggles of the common people in their careers, but also actively joined the ranks of the exploiters and oppressors. These have been the unkindest cuts of all. As a further aggravation, these with the least loyalty to the needs of the common folk have often been given the establishment's mantle to be media voices of "black public opinion" and in all too many cases, the institutional where-with-all to be its locally elected and appointed officials, with the community ignorant, but not always innocent, bystanders. The grant of a prayer is sometimes the birth of a new curse.

Now in the gentle words of an old Mississippi farmer, "Let's bring it down to where the goats can get it." This is especially appropriate, in as much as many of the would-be historians have missed it all these years. SNCC was not designed nor did it ever aspire to be politically correct. We intended to be bold, brash, and irritating. From the earliest days to those of Black Power, we accepted the fact that our message must often be unpalatable and impolite, if it was to be honest. We understood that brutality

could not be described or challenged in comfortable words and doublespeak, let alone ambiguous behavior. What the people needed and demanded were not more apologists, but diehard advocates who accepted the common man's anguish as their own. The single compromise we ever made on this was at the behest of our elders at the March On Washington. We softened our language to veil the truth about the Administration's betrayal.

Therefore, when we showed up in cities and little towns across the South, the warm welcome we and our message received was in large part due to the long acquaintance with the shadow of death that had preceded us. Like no others, the blacks of the South were committed to endurance, faith and hope in the ultimate arrival of deliverance. We came as tangible messengers of that spiritual optimism. Ella Baker told us, "If you provide the light the people will find the way."

When we came we did not come alone. Often the NAACP, CORE, or the Pullman Car Porters and others had been there before us. When we came we had the militant example of the rebellions of Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, and John Brown standing behind us, along with the cultivated criticism of Paul Robeson, Richard Wright, W.E.B. Dubois, Ida B. Wells, and Zora Neal Hurston wrapped around us. We knew the abolitionist stories and words of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth as well as the latest quotes from Malcolm X and Amiri Baraka. And suddenly the voices these peasant people had only heard dimly began to take on new clarity and immediacy in their lives.

They needed and wanted allies who used the same words to talk to them as used to talk to white power, without grinning and scratching over what wasn't funny or where there was no itch. They wanted participants to live in their midst rather than commuting from downtown hotels while working on problems of the community. They wanted to share their food with grateful mouths, rather than with suffering stoics holding their noses. They wanted beside them, those who willingly received and gave bits of earthy humor without distain, distance or embarrassment. They wanted camaraderie with those who had the same parental idioms, knew the same God they knew and were not ashamed

to say it. They wanted to see that we had the motions, melodies and rhythms of their hymns as well as the deep hurts and horrors those lyrics ministered to and spirits they supernaturally lifted. These were a peasant people tenderly prepared to meet us and whom we were prepared to tenderly serve as equals. This was the difference between SNCC and all other historical reformers to whom they had been exposed.

The young people required movement participants who wanted to dance and “play the dozens” with them and like them, not role models to be looked up to on a pedestal. Youngsters, who wanted to be not only heard, but also listened to, rather than talked down on or lectured. They were to be reasoned with rather than beguiled. They wanted encouragement to win and own their destinies rather than be shepherded. And we remembered that if the light were provided, the people could find the way.

In its commitment to these folkways, SNCC was radically different from every other visiting progressive or civil rights organization. We came to stay without financial and career incentives, in no pursuit of status, celebrity, fame, or personal advancement. They saw us share every risk and hardship without seeking exemptions.

Our blood was mixed with theirs at bus stops, courthouses, jails, and demonstrations all across the South and they knew it.

They knew our occasional “salary” of \$20 to \$25 a week left us as hungry as they, as much without health insurance, secure housing or reliable transportation. SNCC was totally merged “of” and “with” the people instead of merely being “for” the people. And we were in as much of a hurry for change as they were. This is why SNCC was different from others on a missionary’s errand among pagans. We were not dispensing enlightenment with a long-handled spoon.

Our work from the Eastern Shore of Delaware across the southern states to Texas provides a powerful case study of the SNCC version of community organization around local issues and political self-determination. In time our work spilled over nationally into an essentially white Northern Student Movement, Students For A Democratic Society, Young Christian Students, and the United States National Student Association, among

others. And while our hope and their fervent promises had been to parallel our actions among the poor whites of the South, this never happened. It has been the lack of this complementary action that has left us today with a continuing one-party South, still divided by race. There is still this unfinished work, only lately started by the Obama campaign to date.

With a world perspective of human rights as a universal given, we repudiated the meaning of race as a defining difference in all of its forms. This enabled communities in which we worked to see their struggle inter-racially and more widely than that of a single state, region or nation. Ours was an interpretation of revolutionary moral, spiritual and value change reminiscent of the religious Great Awakenings of the 18th and 19th centuries. We repudiated the nostrum that everybody lies and cheats as a way of life. For many of us, the ultimate end of our nonviolent goal was the achievement of the “beloved community.” And such language became routine for even the secular among us, if only as a tactic for most of them.

SNCC was not just about the integration of public accommodations, schools, access to government programs, or voting rights. It was instead about building community through organization from within on the moral, personal, spiritual and intellectual strengths of the participants themselves. And this distinguished SNCC from many of the other civil rights organizations and leaders acting as external providers selling their own organizational interests and strategies like a local network of franchises. Ours was not just a cookie-cutter strategy for legal rights but a moral guerrilla campaign. Even in the heady rhetoric of Black Power, our then chairman, Stokely Carmichael, always wanted to be clear. Integration was not the goal, the mutual acceptance between equals was. But those who heard but refused to listen distorted this to “reverse discrimination” and the rejection of interracial cooperation. And some of those not listening the loudest were our own.

Operating on the principle that there are no limits to human achievement and possibilities for those willing to act without concern for physical consequences, SNCC knowingly conspired to bring in white students to assure the national press coverage that

forced the American public to abruptly see the hypocrisy of its time honored moral and political creeds. Where others counseled caution, strategy and compromise, SNCC urged full-speed ahead, without regard for speed bumps or hairpin curves. – And this distinguished us from all parallel civil rights participants.

More profoundly, the members of SNCC enjoyed a fierce and steadfast personal loyalty to one another's well being only commonplace in the battlefields of war. There was no doubt whatsoever among us that others of the group would exhaust any and every risk to come to your rescue, well beyond the norms of family siblings and sometimes even parental love, if you were captured behind enemy lines.

These loyalties and reliable proofs of sacrificial devotion explain why there are few dry eyes at any veteran's songfest or reunion. We cannot but fondly and vividly remember every missing voice and face that we once relied on for strength and survival. We fondly and vividly remember the humble and huddled ghetto and rural settings and circumstances in which we first and last sang *This Little Light of Mine, We Shall Not Be Moved, The Storm Is Passing Over, Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around, I'm Gone To Walk the Streets of Cambridge, We'll Never Turn Back, I've Been In The Storm So Long, And Before I'd Be a Slave, then Lift Every Voice and Sing, We Shall Overcome, We've Been 'Buked And We've Been Scorned*, and finally *This May Be The Last Time*, and *Lord I Done Done What'cha Told Me To Do*.

Throughout all of this we enjoyed the beneficial guidance, companionship, care, love, and affection of an earlier generation of living mentors, role models and fellow travelers. Some were sharecroppers, yeoman farmers, postal workers, schoolteachers, lawyers, Masonic lodge and union leaders, deacons, preachers, old ladies, shopkeepers, and wrinkled old men. But especially it was lots and lots of bright children and teenagers who flooded into our Freedom Schools with eagerly open minds who both believed in us and came to believe in themselves. There were the sainted names of C. B. King in Albany, Donald Hollowell in Atlanta, Fannie Lou Hamer in Ruleville, W. W. Law in Savannah, Miles Horton in Highlander at Monteage, Bill Higgs in Jackson, Septima Clark, Medgar Evers, Anne Braden and Victoria Grey, and on and on to both infinity and

immortality.

Lest the rocks cry out, we cannot neglect to specifically honor and call the name of those who were tragically martyred in the course of pursuing SNCC related assignments and services. To avoid their loss in the sands of time, we name them here to once more bring them to life in our midst. With less media coverage than Mississippi's Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney, as well as Viola Liuzzo, there were in Lowndes County, Alabama, murders of Selma's Jimmie Lee Jackson; Birmingham's Rev. James Reeb; and Herbert Lee of McComb/Liberty. This is a list none of us can with certainty complete. The rest remain like anonymous foot soldiers lost in the great wars of the world, known only for the outcome of their devotion. Their names are written elsewhere.

But somewhere above all of these immortals there floats the driving, patient, alternatively soft-spoken and fiery voice of Ms. Ella Baker, a community-organizing veteran before us, born of the WPA, YWCA, NAACP, and SCLC. Ms. Baker prophetically counseled us against the dilution or subordination of our voice within any of the already established adult organizations of Martin King's SCLC or Roy Wilkins' NAACP. She will always be celebrated as the den mother of SNCC and the inspiration for all that we were able to bring into being during those fruitful and turbulent years, if not forever since as well. As her life was woven from those before, so ours also are woven of hers.

In painting with such broad strokes here, it is impossible to do justice to the range of rich local episodes and personalities that when fitted together made up the broad panorama of our movement. That will have to be left to the many writers among us who have produced and are still promising the several dozen books with these varying perspectives.

It deserves mentioning, however, that being the upstarts that we were, with little notice, we managed to determine the critical outcome of the presidential election within the very first year of our founding. Still in its infancy the SNCC affiliate in Atlanta, the

Committee on Appeal for Human Rights, conceived the student demonstration joined by Martin Luther King, Jr., which resulted in his arrest. What followed were the well-publicized Kennedy expressions of support that sparked the last minute wildfire in the black vote that provided John F. Kennedy the critical 100,000 vote margin of victory over Richard Nixon in November 1960. Yet history has largely failed to carefully document this account of JFK's journey to the White House as a path paved by SNCC, except in a few scattered footnotes. This is how sometimes the most pivotal events in time get lost in the annals of history, and why we have the obligation to write our own histories.

Within three years of its founding SNCC had garnered the resources to field a staff of 300 plus paid workers and annual operating budgets sometimes in excess of \$15 million. It not only completed the CORE Freedom Ride campaign after its bloody near collapse in Birmingham, but in doing so there and elsewhere it led to the *de facto* unmolested integration of inter-state travel throughout the South by order of the Interstate Commerce Commission and U.S. marshals.

In its formative years, two distinct camps arose in the SNCC inner circle. There were those committed to continued nonviolent action as expressions of conscience. Others saw political action and the vote as the key solution to the problems of Southern blacks. On this divide the secular *versus* religious motivations among us came into sharper focus. As it developed the political-action wing ultimately became predominant. As a result, the secular side of SNCC grew, attracted resources and staff for political action, and became the greater emphasis in our activities. Along the way the SNCC vocabulary shifted to economics and politics over evangelizing for nonviolence, *per se*.

SNCC increasingly spearheaded voter education, registration, student lobbying and mass mobilizations throughout Mississippi and the entire Deep South. By the public acknowledgement of the US Justice Department, SNCC thereby laid the foundation through its work in Greenwood, Mississippi, the Atlantic City Challenge to the Democratic Party, and elsewhere that made the legal case for the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In three years, this resulted in 50% black registration in nine of thirteen southern states for the first time since the Civil War enactments of the 13th, 14th,

and 15th Amendments to the U. S. Constitution. Between 1964 and 1968, the southern black vote tripled. In Mississippi the number of registered voters went from 7% in 1964 to 59% in 1968. This was in spite of the withdrawal of support there in the fall of 1963 by the Voter Education Project, funded by several liberal foundations. Similarly in Alabama black voters went from 21% to 57% during the same time period. As an update, let us not forget that without the overwhelming black majorities in the primaries of these states, Barack Hussein Obama could not have won the Democratic Party's nomination.

It also must be remembered that back in 1966, it was the political SNCC that took up the completion of James Meredith's march, which led to the militant "Manifesto" that left it, SCLC, and CORE estranged from the other civil rights organizations. This divide continued to deepen nationally, close to hostility until Dr. King's death. And this was the precipitation of modern black militancy that spread to the great cities nationwide.

While we surely cannot claim a direct parentage of the many successor organizations that followed our celebrated decade, it is undeniable that the SNCC DNA is in the lifeblood of all of them. These include those newly fighting to end war, the advancement of environmentalism, the recognition of women's rights, gay/bi/and transsexual liberation, black studies, promotion of fair trade, movements for farm workers and immigration reform, full employment and jobs, universal health care, animal rights, the Black Panthers and Gray Panthers, tenants rights, the protection of the handicapped and homeless, and lately the defense of public property from privatization, as well as the drive for quality-education as a human right. All have telltale fingerprints of SNCC direct action, teach-ins and civil disobedience methods, language, tactics, ideology, and the rejection of silent suffering and political correctness as the preferred strategies for survival. Do we not hear from all their lips our anthem, *We Shall Overcome*? Is this not the same song being echoed in the brogue accents of Ireland, in Urdu in Pakistan, Farsi in Iran, in French immigrant ghettos outside Paris, and with native accents in the townships of South Africa? Now as the grand ancestor of them all, we must help to rally these progressives' voices anew to deal with an emerging generation of crossover issues that threaten to stand in the way of the continued forward movement of them all.

Circumstances no longer allow the discrete protection or advancement of rights for isolated interest groups. We need a grand progressive alliance and network to save the next generation of tuned-out, doped-up and dumbed-down alienated youth purposely left ignorant of our proud heritage of protest for self-empowerment. My Space, Facebook, Twitter, Grit TV, Democracy Now, Al Jazeera, et al. should not be the only alarm bells sounding our story. Tomorrow's organizations need to build a collective for intergenerational youth initiatives for the presentation, analysis, debate and mobilization around **our common agenda and issues** for all of America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. No human rights issue can be seen as an island any longer. Originally foreshadowed by the universal reach of SNCC's getting in the peace and anti neo-colonial movements, this re-awakening needs to be re-invigorated to keep our country from repeating its bad habits of the past at home and throughout the world. Globalization cannot be limited only to trade. Its needs must include human and civil rights as equally critical components.

For lest we forget, the neo-conservative opposition is already integrated across issues and lines of demarcation. They are building a new "Hitler-Youth" derivative with a new image, of button down collars and expensive suits, instead of brown shirts, crew cuts, and tattoos. These would-be neo-Nazis are quietly programmed for high corporate suites and public policy influence peddling. Their common agenda links abortion with opposition to unions, healthcare reform, fair trade agreements and bank regulation. They have mobilized against immigration reform and anesthetized the left with the fear of terrorism, coupled with support for reactionary foreign strongmen for drug wars. And they want to provide ever more guns for our youth to kill one another, in the name of the Second Amendment rights. The cynical, if not satanic voice of Rush Limbaugh and his ilk hawking this treason demands an answer of sustainable idealism, beyond occasional rhetoric. The darkness of the right must be met with the light of the left, each and every day.

Here we are required to be supremely sophisticated in our politics, however. Opposition to things Right does not translate into uncritical allegiance to all things Left.

No national administration once elected should be allowed to ignore our opinions and earned patronage. We must be ever aware of sheep in sheep's clothing. The lessons of the FBI evils and the inevitability of war during the Kennedy years into the Johnson era must not be forgotten. We need to demand people who not only sound but also think like us in high appointments. We need to see political risk-taking by our friends for the advancement of our causes. We need to put continuous pressure on weak-kneed "liberals" to fight back against their corporate donors, hostile to the peoples' priorities. And we need to insist that losing elections is sometimes better than losing one's soul for Pyrrhic political victories. There can be no legitimate exchange of militant birthrights for a lukewarm pot of political porridge.

Culturally moreover, just as SNCC and the Freedom Singers took the old spirituals and work songs and turned them into anthems for marching, we need more mainstream entertainers to compose progressive lyrics for their ballads just as the 60s singers did in Curtis Mayfield's *People Get Ready There's A Train A-coming*, Bob Dylan's the *Answer My Friend Is Blowing In the Wind*, and James Brown's *Say It Loud-I'm Black and I'm Proud*. A new generation of artists and popular vocalists has come into being and needs to be massively expanded for today's causes and social needs without attention-grabbing misogyny or vulgarities in their lyrics. As SNCC's freedom songs associated with sit-ins, wade-ins, and kneel-ins became cultural phenomena as well as a political mobilizing tools, a whole new genre of Hollywood is beginning to put their celebrity on the line along with their resources and their bodies as they did before—with our Belafonte to Baez becoming their Bono to Beyonce, and a host of others. Artists are also warriors. These new stars need to be the models for cultural and artistic activists again for Darfur, the protection of indigenous peoples in Tibet, the Americas, Australia and Appalachia. This is the work the wrinkled radicals of our generation must collaborate on with our children and grandchildren. Our skills and their skills need each other to be whole.

The slave narrative : "The ole sheep they know the way. The young lambs, they got to learn" also works in reverse. Mutual learning between yesterday and tomorrow

must begin in earnest now. Let this Raleigh Revisit not only remind the nation and the world who we once were, but who we can become again—continuing agents of intergenerational change. We paid the price for the ticket that allowed the Obama generation to ride. Now the new Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamers, and Ella Bakers, who are surely out there need to come forward. In the first edition of his *North Star*, Frederick Douglass insisted, “What you suffer, we suffer; what you endure, we endure. We are indissolubly united, and must fall or flourish together.” As it was then, it is now. The light has been provided. Now it is time to, together, find a new way. In a united voice of yesterday and tomorrow, let the cry be made: “Once More Into the Breech!”

Langston Hughes’ *Dream Deferred* must not be allowed to “crust and sugar over like a syrupy sweet” for the few, while it dries up “like a raisin in the sun” for the many! From those to whom much more has been given, much more must be our demand.

Let it be recorded that at this conference in April 2010, the people of the day before yesterday met with the people of the day after tomorrow only to discover that they must become one people for progress today.

The SNCC Struggle Continues. By holding up and magnifying our light, the people will hopefully once more find the way. “Let it shine! Let it shine! Let it shine!” The people united can never be defeated!

Sankofa!

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[Address to SNCC's 50th Anniversary Reunion and Conference,
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