

Speaker 1 (00:00):

Great. Okay. <affirmative>

Speaker 2 (00:20):

One thing I was going to say, I jumped up and said,

Speaker 1 (00:24):

Mm-hmm <affirmative>

Speaker 2 (00:25):

You were a perfect, so children bringing anything to do with its star war?

Speaker 3 (00:40):

Yeah. I got some beating when I got home, they find out I used to hang up in that SNIC off. I got, I mean, she beat me all the way with a switch. I'd be holding my leg and saying it, talking how soon as I get around that corner going back and I'd be right back up in there. Well, my sister and my sister was, was the one that was in love with the boys. I was really interested in what Bob and was talking about. Yeah. But they tricked me up and there, I get the stuff and I get, get the equipment. After I got home, we laughed about it the day. I said, girl, you made me getting mini of your beat. And then my mother ended up in the, she cooked full.

Speaker 4 (01:51):

Are you working with Carolina central university law school? Yes. <inaudible>

Speaker 2 (01:55):

Yeah. Yeah. Portwood. Or

Speaker 4 (01:58):

He was here yesterday. Got one of those working with some of the students doing legal research. I know.

Speaker 2 (02:06):

Yeah. Yeah. Um, we usually keep

Speaker 1 (02:09):

At least

Speaker 2 (02:10):

Two full time students. Um, we try to develop a, so that we can get to more of our students engaged in these issues. Um,

Speaker 4 (02:36):

You wanna know what I'm up to just pick up a subscription

Speaker 2 (02:38):

Because

Speaker 4 (02:39):

The work that we do is, uh, cataloged in there.

Speaker 2 (02:42):

Right. <laugh>

Speaker 5 (02:43):

And I don't know if anybody, uh, can tolerate, uh, a hour and a half panel, which is what we're prepared to do. Um, so there are, there are a couple of options. Uh, we can just suspend with all of it and we can have evaluation of the conference, or we can do a mini version of what we plan to do and, and hopefully engage in some discussion on what the, uh, panelists have presented and then maybe, uh, end up with a, a slight evaluation or some feedback. Uh, so what, what's the pleasure to folks?

Speaker 1 (03:16):

I would like to hear what the people were thinking.

Speaker 5 (03:20):

Yeah. Option two. I'd

Speaker 1 (03:21):

Like to hear yours. Yeah. Okay. I'd like to hear

Speaker 5 (03:24):

Evaluation. Okay. That's why we can consensus that vote, right.

Speaker 1 (03:29):

<laugh>

Speaker 5 (03:32):

Yeah. I mean, actually it's, it's, uh, supposed to be called, uh, where do we go from here? And as I was telling my friend how this morning it should be, where did everybody go?

Speaker 1 (03:41):

<laugh>

Speaker 5 (03:46):

But I, I mean, I think, uh, we knew full well that with such a long weekend that it wasn't likely that, you know, we'd have a big participation, but, uh, I think what Charles wanted to do was to present, uh, some of the local work that's going on. And of course, even some, some national work, as we see with Debbie's presentation, uh, not so much as a, a, a plan or outline for where we should go, but just some things for people to think about that we think kind of comes out of the spirit of, uh, of the conference. Uh, but I wish you would indulge me for one minute. Everybody got a chance to tell a SN story this weekend. Uh, so I get to tell mine. Okay. Uh, and actually I grew up in a house behind Ivanhoe.

Speaker 5 (04:29):

Okay. Uh, he doesn't remember me. He was five years older. He ran track. He was an athlete, a pretty good runner too. My crew came behind me and wanted to run as well. So we looked up to Ivan hole as a track star who went off to Michigan state. I believe it was alright. And we heard, he joined the civil rights movement. He went to SNCC and we never saw him again. We never saw it. Really. This is the first time I seen him, uh, since he went off to school, right. Uh, that many years. Uh, and so it's kind of been in thinking about him all these years. His work, uh, was influential, uh, in 1964 at Bradley university. Uh, we, uh, got arrested, uh, for, uh, uh, sitin and traffic stoppage, uh, trying to integrate a white barbershop in Peoria, Illinois. Uh, in retrospect, I mean, what

Speaker 1 (05:21):

<laugh>,

Speaker 5 (05:22):

What was it? It was a barbershop that we didn't frequent. We had, uh, uh, we called Jack laid barbers in the dormitory that cut our air, uh, probably a hundred black students, uh, on the campus. Uh, uh, but one student, uh, who had a pretty nice Afro in 1963, uh, worked with the NAACP and they figured they needed to, to do this. And so kind of spontaneously. And we did it and we were arrested at that moment. If SNCC had have been around and somebody had said, you need to come work with us somewhere in the south, I would've been gone, but it didn't happen. And then I think in 1966, uh, students at Tennessee state were involved in a battle with the state police. And, um, Stokley had been in contact with someone and we formed a friends of SNCC chapter there and had a demonstration on West Virginia state's campus.

Speaker 5 (06:13):

And I remember he sent us literature. The black Panther poster was the, the, the prominent thing that he sent and we got it around the campus at that time. Uh, so I didn't get a chance to join SNCC. Uh, it's one of the, the tragedies of my life. Uh, but certainly from that point on always influenced by the work of SNCC and in, you know, later years had an opportunity to meet and work with so many people that are part of a slick experience. So kind of like this weekend is like kind of bringing it all together, uh, for me personally. And, um, I really appreciate all the people that put it together and that came here. So what we want to do, it's not an, an, an agenda for struggle, but just a little look at, uh, what's going on in North Carolina. First, we want to hear from Stefan, Bolens worked for the land loss fund to talk a little bit about the struggle of black farmers, primarily here in North Carolina, but throughout the south and the environmental justice movement.

Speaker 5 (07:07):

And we kind of think that's fitting. I mean, those of you who had that strict experience know how important black land owners were, uh, during that period, uh, bail money, uh, having meetings, uh, and providing even a, a safe Haven from the, the KU Klux Klan in so many places, but particularly in Mississippi. So we want to hear about that work that's going on. And then we're gonna ask and guys a laughing house from the black workers to justice to talk about organizing workers in the south, uh, and the importance of unions. And I think he's gonna say a little bit about the African American Latino Alliance that, uh, we are trying to build in this area. And then finally, we're gonna hear from Debbie bell from Philadelphia, who's a SNCC veteran from the Atlanta campaigns. Uh, who's gonna talk about the black radical Congress as a, a kind of modern day expression. At least the black movements, uh, uh, attempts to bring together, uh, a coalition or United front of people, uh, to fight on a program which many think represents the lessons that we've learned over the last 40 years. So that's what we've got, and we'll probably ask people to, to sleep maybe for 10 minutes or so at best. And then, uh, we'll, uh, try to open it up for some discussion 10 minutes or less. Okay. So first we'll ask step on both.

Speaker 5 (08:20):

You can sit, stand,

Speaker 2 (08:22):

Um, well, I guess, first of all, good afternoon, good afternoon. My name is S Stephan Bowen again, and I'm an attorney and the executive director of the North Carolina association of black lawyers land loss prevention project. We call ourselves land loss prevention for sure. Um, and our project was founded in 1983 to try to curb systemic and widespread land loss throughout North Carolina, since 83, our project has worked, uh, feverishly not only to address issues of land loss in North Carolina, but to address issues of land loss throughout the Southern region of the United States. Um, more particularly, uh, I was asked to talk today, uh, briefly about some of the things that are going on presently as it relates to land loss, as it relates to civil rights, and as it relates to how we improve the state of America. And in doing that, uh, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the black farmers.

Speaker 2 (09:28):

Um, in 1920, the United States had more than a million black farmers today. We have less than 16,000 black farmers, and that has been through, um, hook crook and ping of African American farmland and of, um, of the general way in which the American system and the United States system of laws work in some respect to the disadvantage of people, uh, who are sometimes language and money poor, uh, in some real respect. What we've found is that for example, the United States department of agriculture has been a big impediment to the retention of land in the African American community. And in looking at that, what we, what we, what we really have to think about is what does land mean in America? What does land mean in America? And for many of us, we think about, well, how can I get my first house and get them one acre of land and, you know, have a decent subdivision where I can raise my children and sustain my family, but as many of us know, and, um, as it was previously alluded to farmers for the most part had access to land, which meant that they had access to capital because land and capital in, in this state, in this United States are synonymous in some very real respects, um, and holding of land was power.

Speaker 2 (11:19):

And in a real respect, the investment of black farmers from that land was a investment of an economic base and of a social power. And so in putting, trying to put the black farmers in some context in the, in the loss from, you know, 1 million, 80 years ago, down to 16,000, that translates to a tremendous loss of equity and stake in this country. And we have been representing, uh, most recently, uh, little bit over 3000 black farmers from around, um, the United States about, uh, 500 in North Carolina, specifically, um, against the, against the United States department of agriculture for, uh, systemic practices of discrimination. And in looking at those practices discrimination, uh, just to give you a typical example, uh, and it's all too, uh, often heard type of scenario farmer comes in for assistance. Um, he's told to sit in the lobby and wait, he's the first one there in the morning yet a white farmer comes in, uh, two hours later is given an opportunity to meet with the county supervisor immediately and given the assistance, uh, that ultimately when that black farmer is seen later that day, um, is denied.

Speaker 2 (12:56):

And that's a typical scenario. And, um, there was a huge class action, um, actually led by two farmers from North Carolina, one named Tim Pickford, uh, from the, uh, Southern portion of the state and one named Cecil Brewington. And, uh, both Mr. Pickford and Mr. Brewington were black farmers who were subject subjected to tremendous acts of discrimination that I couldn't begin to, to, to, uh, quantify to you yet to say, not only in, for example, in Mr picker's case, did he lose his farm, his livelihood, his connection to the land. Um, but the manner in which it was done was most horrifying to find out that you go to the government for assistance that every other American enjoys, and they deny you that very assistance. And then they turn around and foreclose upon your property, and you go ho you leave in the morning and come back home, and your doors are locked and shackled your children and your wife are told that they can't go in to get personal items like clothes, things of that nature.

Speaker 2 (14:15):

And you have a sheriff who's telling you that you have to do best, that you can, based on the circumstances that have been presented to you, but by no means, and no circumstances, will you be allowed to go back into your home and get those things that are important to you and important to your, your family's livelihood. Um, and you're, you're basically left destitute. That's kind of, that's the struggle of black farmers right now. They have been left destitute. Um, you know, you, I think some have heard the, the saying of a nation of people without a land. Well, in this case, in the United States, black farmers are a nation of people without land. Um, and so we're fighting, we're fighting, we're struggling, and we're working very closely with a number of organizations, a number of, of, of groups, uh, for example, the black farmers and agriculturalist

association, um, here, uh, based in Tillary North Carolina, uh, with Gary Grant and, uh, some other leaders from around the country, uh, to try to get farmers, get black farmers back into agriculture, back into the holding of land, because it's important to rural communities, but it's also important to urban communities because the land base is something that can never be recreated.

Speaker 2 (15:42):

You know, we can make up a lot of money and we can do a lot of things, but without the land wealth, it's meaningless because the land is one thing that can't be regenerating. And, um, the significance of that land wealth in communities can't be, um, understated. So the, so the second thing I wanted to just briefly touch on, um, before I move away from the black farmers is the fact that right now there are about 20,000, um, people who have claimed that there were problems with discrimination at U S D a of those about 11,000 cases have already been heard of the 11,000 cases. Almost 5,200 people have been denied, um, claims under this consent decree, what that really translates, what was told to the farmers when they applied for this assistance from the government as a result of a class action lawsuit settlement was that if you could tie your shoe and I'm not, I'm quoting now lead council, um, that represented the farmers.

Speaker 2 (16:51):

If you can tie your shoe and you were black and you farmed in America, you were received benefit of this agreement and you probably received a cash settlement, and you would more than likely if the land was available that was taken from you by the government, you will receive that land back while I'm here to tell you today that less than 60% of those farmers are receiving the cash settlement, much less, even of, even less than 20% are receiving any of their land back. Um, so it, it is again, a dream, ER, you can say that too. <laugh> and I wouldn't argue with you. Um, so we're working diligently with those farmers and, and they're working hard to try to continue to be that base, uh, for society because truly without food and without plan, um, you can't have a fight for struggle and for justice.

Speaker 2 (17:49):

Um, truly people don't fight if they're hungry. Um, the other issue that we work on, uh, as an organization is environmental justice. Um, some call it environmental justice, some call it environmental racism, call it what you will, what it means to me is the unwanted siding of, of types of facilities that no one else would want in their community. I I'm trying to put this, this in very plain language. Uh, for some time we represented a community in, uh, the Southeastern part of North Carolina in a community called Jones in a county called Jones county, uh, in a town near town called Ville in a community called gosh, ocean is one of the oldest African American communities in North Carolina, but also in the United States, it is historically significant. Uh, had a historically significant African American, uh, graveyard yet instill the town of Ville in Jones county in all of their Magna mag.

Speaker 2 (19:14):

Well, all of their Slen <laugh> chose to place a, um, wake quarter treatment facility in the community of gosh, if you know anything about Jones county, and if you know anything about the town of Polishville, you know, that the town of Polishville is 80% white, you know, that the community of Goshen is 100% black. You also find that the, the residents of the ocean community, this is the most interesting. And in my opinion, the most damning thing that could be said about the placement of this facility were never given notice an opportunity to be heard on the placement of this facility. But more importantly, weren't even going to receive the benefits of this wonderful facility, which was bestowed upon them. In other words, we're gonna take our crap for lack of a better word, and we're going to put it in your community, but not only are we gonna put it in your community, we're gonna spray it on fields adjacent to your land, where you grow your crops that you feed your family with.

Speaker 2 (20:28):

And we're gonna tell you it's okay. Well, the grocery community created a, uh, created a community action team called great gosh, ocean road, environmental action team. And this community team worked diligently with other groups and other organizations from around the state and around the country, uh, to try to stop this facility and land offs being one of them. And I have to say, this was one that we didn't win. This is one where the facility is up and running. And unfortunately the residents of ocean are receiving the waste treatment from, uh, the town of policy. Despite the fact that the town of Ville had the opportunity to place it. For example, on a 600 acre plant former plantation, where there was only one owner who was known, uh, in the community, uh, despite the fact that the, the fact that this particular facility is being placed in the community, where there were a number of people and a number of residents who would've been impacted, um, this facility is up and running and all the efforts and the lobbying, the Marchy, the complaining in this incident didn't were to no avail.

Speaker 2 (22:08):

We argued before the, um, four circuit court of appeals, uh, in January. And it was very striking the argument before the four circuit court of four circle court of appeals, uh, for the United States, uh, was, was very simple. We, you know how sometimes they say lawyers argue about the facts when the law isn't on their side, and then they say, they argue about the law when the facts are on their side. Well, in this case, I had the pleasure of arguing about the facts and the law cause both were on my side. In this case, whenever justice taught, asked me a question, I could point to them specific facts about why the council didn't send notice to this community about where they were gonna place this facility. In each instance, I can point point to specific facts about how the notice was supposed to go out under the law and the fact that it didn't yet. The one thing that I couldn't do was ensure that the law is going to be interpret, interpreted fairly and appropriately. And in this case it was, and it's amazing to me to be able to see the machinations that the court of appeals went through to deny these farm, these, this community, an opportunity to live in a safe and healthy community and enjoy the benefits of society that all of us should enjoy.

Speaker 2 (23:50):

Finally, I wanted to talk very briefly about the Holly Springs landfill case, which is another environmental justice case that we became involved in. Um, some of you who are from Holly Springs may be aware. I won't aware, um, some of you who are from North Carolina may be aware of Holly Springs, Holly Springs is a growing bedroom community of Raleigh. Um, it's just about 15 minutes away from here. Um, a little bit less than 13 miles from right from this very point. Holly Springs in the early eighties was a predominantly African American community. Um, and since then the growth of weight caring has begun to spread out into Holly Springs. Well, prior to the growth coming to Holly Springs, wake county decided that they needed a new landfill. Not only did they need a new landfill, but they needed the largest landfill in the Southeastern United States.

Speaker 2 (25:02):

So they went about developing plans and receiving, uh, approvals and obtaining permits to place this landfill in the Holly Springs community. And in 1990, they began that process in 1992. Um, the process was formalized and, uh, they waited until 1996 to really begin the process of developing the landfill. In 1998, the land loss prevention project was approached by a number of local groups, um, including the, uh, NAACP and, uh, other community leader leaders to look at this issue of deciding well, what was significant about deciding in Holly state? The significance was that there were at least five other existing landfills within the community already. The significance was that the location of the landfill was decide an old landfill that had previously been closed because it was an unlined landfill. And of course, online landfills have numerous health hazards associated with them. And the residents of that community were then going to be

asked to bear the burden if you will, of a new landfill, which would be the largest landfill in not accept Southeastern United States.

Speaker 2 (26:36):

Um, and certainly had the potential for taking, uh, unwanted trash from other states with that in mind, uh, the residents of Holly Springs got together, uh, and challenged in petition had opened public meetings, uh, issues related to the sightings. And when that went to Noah avail and the permit was ultimately approved, uh, we filed, uh, an action in the administrative, uh, office of, um, office of administrative hearings. And ultimately that was successful. The, the administrative law judge ruled in our PO in our favor, in our client's favors on every single issue raised. Now, what you might have heard most recently, if you kept up with the newspapers is that the Holly Springs case was appealed to the department of environment and natural resources. And that Deaner in fact, ruled in our favor. What you may not know is that they reversed every single point that in finding a fact that the administrative law judge made in our favor, in our client's favor, and essentially created a mechanism in ruling in our favor, by which they could argue that they have adhered to environmental justice, because the only issue that remains the only issue that prevented Diener from going forward with issuing the permit two weeks ago was simply that wake county did not do, um, the requisite of things under environmental justice act, which provided them to do a socioeconomic status of survey and study to determine whether or not there were issues, um, that were related to socioeconomic factors that may adversely impact the appropriateness of deciding of the facility.

Speaker 2 (28:39):

So essentially all wake county has to do at this point. At least their argument would be, is to go back and do that study and then rum stamp deciding of the facility. So in some respects, one may argue that's a victory and we take victories nonetheless, but in some respects, it's a victory, uh, with some real serious and longlasting, uh, ramifications. And at this point, the case in the court finally imposed by saying, um, is going to superior court. Wade, county's going to appeal their denial and we're going to appeal the issues that were overturned. But finally, I'll say that the issue is not that you have litigation going, but it's that you have litigation, you have, uh, political action it's that you have social action going, and you have a multifaceted approach to dealing with issues, as well as having, uh, a community based sense of encouraging and empowering you to be in engaged in these issues as they arise. And that, that is going to be the key to ensuring that, um, issues of social justice, economic justice, and environment and justice are

Speaker 5 (30:03):

So there some chairs in the front row. Um, okay. And guys are laughing house, the black witness for

Speaker 4 (30:09):

Justice. Yeah. First I'd like to extend everybody just very warm, heartfelt, uh, greetings girl, cuz this has been a very special event. Some very special people. I really sort of enjoyed this very inspirational celebration and educational opportunity. Um, just wanted to say that, but I would like to address, um, just basically three main developments here in the south, particularly here in North Carolina and wanna give it some context of, you know, the main thing that we've been talking about is really, um, been the 40 years of struggle against Jim Crow segregation and the Rob Nick, and some of these great vision areas have played in helping us, uh, lead that by. But as we all know, the other side of the coin in this whole struggle for democracy has been one for democracy in the workplace, you know, struggle for workers' rights, the struggle for, um, a living wage and want to make sure that all of us understand the legacy that has been left by right to work by this segregation, as you know, continued to deny us this basic, uh, democracy in the workplace.

Speaker 4 (31:16):

So, um, in addressing those issues, I just think it's just important that we be mindful that, um, that's the context, you know, the struggle against, um, uh, uh, right to work is still a struggle for democracy, you know, regarding democracy, particularly in the workplace. But, um, just, I've just been privileged, man, that to work with, uh, many folks around North Carolina, particularly, uh, the members of black workers for justice over the last 19 years. And, uh, also had an opportunity to work with farm work legal services and a couple unions as an organizer that has really been insightful in terms of just understanding just how environmental these is, how monumental these struggles are. Uh, you know, those, these struggles in these three areas are, but we like to first maybe try to address the question of, um, the struggle around the right of public service workers to unionize and their right to collect the bargaining rates.

Speaker 4 (32:09):

Um, I know, uh, way back in the 1980s, uh, that was one of the things that the black workers for justice had, had attempted to do. They attempted to try to develop workplace organizations, organizing committees and unions and the public service sector. And, um, it's, it's been a long fight, very long, difficult fight cause of the political climate, the Jesse hens climate, the, uh, Confederate flag wave climate that has made it very, very difficult. But, um, I think that the, uh, founding of UE one 50, the North Carolina public service workers union has really been just a monumental advance, you know, in this particular fight. Um, and, um, I think it's part of that fight. Um, you know, it's an ongoing fight. It's not only to organize, you know, workers into the union, but also taking up the, the fight for the right for collective bargaining, which is again requires, you know, building a very strong labor community Alliance, not just within the African American community, the white community, but particularly with the growing Latino community.

Speaker 4 (33:15):

And again, I'm, I'm trying to rush through this cuz I want to get some feedback from it. Uh, which brings us to the question of the long fight for organizing agricultural workers here in the south, particularly here in North Carolina. I recall in 1983, when I first had an opportunity work with farm worker legal services. Uh, and I remember the black words for justice attempted to start organizing and packing houses, uh, also and poultry plants. And again, very challenging. Uh, many of you heard of the Hamlet, Imperial food fire. I think that that represents, you know, some of the conditions and the need and also the fear that exists amongst workers. Any of you are familiar with the 85 worker that burned up in that poultry plant out of fear of challenging their boss, putting those locks on those fire exit doors. Again, uh, this has been a very long, difficult fight.

Speaker 4 (34:06):

It's been a fight that again requires a certain sort of political climate. And, um, I just think that we're, we're moving in that direction as we try to build, um, an Alliance and community to, um, a community labor Alliance that also includes the Latino, uh, of, you know, brothers and sisters in the workplace. Um, I just think that that's, that's critically important, but in particularly the, the fight that flock the farm labor organizing committee has led particularly their boycott, how many y'all familiar with the out, you know, the, uh, boycott olive pickles, raise your hand, give some idea

Speaker 6 (34:43):

All North Carolina,

Speaker 7 (34:45):

Olive, is it still going on?

Speaker 4 (34:50):

Well, well the form labor organizing the meeting.

Speaker 4 (34:56):

So that part, part of it is just, I have a respiratory, uh, problem, excuse me. I assure you that I'm not interviewed to stand up. That's why I keep talking. I have a bronchitis, the brochure on Mount table, but, um, the farm labor organizing committee of the AFL C O and over 5,000 workers in North Carolina, I've been fighting to gain a, uh, labor agreement that has been initiated by, uh, this boycott of the Mount olive pickle plant here at Mount olive, North Carolina. The black works for justice have been participating in that. Boycot trying to educate folks and actually going to some of the grocery stores and trying to, uh, educate many of the workers as well as the sewers about this particular, um, boycott and, um, you know, it was initiated in March 99. And, um, I think, um, the main thing is, is that, um, we all have to, um, try to support this particular boycott, but more important, as you know, in terms of trying to organize many of these workers is the question of, of many of the, um, of workers as you know, are, are migrant workers, some legal, some illegal.

Speaker 4 (36:10):

And as you know, that too is, is very divisive in terms of how the bosses use that to try to undermine their particular organizing effort. Um, one of the things that that's really critically important for all of us is to try to understand why we must, uh, all make a call for just general unconditional Amerson for all undocumented workers. Cause otherwise, as we try to organize in these workplaces, whether pickle plants, poultry plants, where a lot of our Latino brothers and sisters are presently working, it just makes it a lot easier for the boss to split our unity and prevent us from organizing unions in of various workplaces. So one of the things that, um, comes out of this, these struggles is the need for solidarity and the black workers for justice is always upheld. That solidarity is a question of necessity, not one of gratitude.

Speaker 4 (37:06):

And one of just, you know, doing someone a favor, you know, in order for us to win these fights, we need that type of solidarity. It's a necessity. And, um, as a result of that perspective, um, the black race justice has initiated building an Alliance, uh, of, um, African American Latino workers, the African American Latino workers Alliance as a, as an effort to strengthen these two very important fights in the, in the public sector where more and more Latino workers too are coming into the service, uh, you know, uh, sector of, uh, you know, the public sector as well as the, um, in the agricultural, uh, area. Um, so, um, we're, we're gonna, we're asking all folks to support this petition, uh, drive that we have going on. I just wanna share with you what this petition's about. It's a petition to the president Clinton and the us Congress, um, calling for a grant of unconditional amnesty for all undocumented workers and also to ratify a, um, international labor organization, uh, convention that addresses the fundamental rights of all workers to number one <affirmative>.

Speaker 4 (38:24):

So number one, their right to freedom of association, their right to organize also their right to also, um, um, uh, uh, recognize the collective bonding rights that all workers should have. And finally to defend the human rights of all migrant workers before all of you leave. I'd like you all to, uh, more or less either sign one of these petitions, or if, if it's possible to take one of these petitions and to have it, um, have, have friends and supporters and your coworkers sign these petitions. And I wanna make sure that all of you either get a chance to do that before you leave here today. And there's an address on these petitions here, where, where you can now send them back. You can just send them back to the black workers for justice address that's on the top of the petition. So, um,

Speaker 4 (39:22):

The other point I just want to touch on, um, is the, just the question of globalization and why it's important. We try to develop a broader international perspective on what's going on with

working people, uh, today. Um, I had an opportunity over the last few years to work with unite, industrial textile employees, uh, and some textile plants in the Western state. And, um, it's amazing what the Gulf American free trade agreement globalization is done to what was left of, you know, part of the state. We really have a lot of industry other than furniture and textiles. Um, in order for workers to develop that sort of international consciousness, understanding the black works for justice, to see the importance of trying to make sure that there's some sort of educational piece going on to sort of broaden that sort of understanding of why globalization is something that we all got to try to get a handle on terms of understanding in terms of how it impacts us and why we gotta build broader international solidarity with workers abroad.

Speaker 4 (40:30):

Um, so as a result over the last couple of years, the black Bruce for justice has convened a international worker school. It was, that was a phenomenal experience, uh, brother John, and then, and others probably attended that particular to do particular schools. Um, there was an opportunity to really learn firsthand from my sisters and brothers from, uh, Britain, Germany, uh, South Africa, uh, Brazil, and many of these other places where the auto industry's running and our textile plants are running to just see the devastation that globalization has really meant for all workers in terms of, uh, lowering the standard living for workers. Um, I just think it's very important that folks really support these efforts here in the south, the efforts to, uh, um, support the right of all public service workers to unionize and have collect the bargain rights, the right of, um, agricultural workers to, um, uh, organize the, uh, uh, agricultural sector.

Speaker 4 (41:41):

And also just the critically important, uh, issue of building this Alliance with the Latino community, um, in closing, cause I really want to really have an opportunity to, uh, hear questions and have some approach on these particular questions cause they're critically important. And I know the VW a has been struggling with Blackboard justice has been struggling with trying to answer some of the, the important questions of how to build the broader political climate. And as you all know, all of us have a role to play in building that broader political climate and building support for these particular struggles. So, um, in closing, I just like to say that it's really been an honor man, to have been a part of this development and to work with some of the best organizers really, um, that, that, that I've ever had an opportunity to work with labor organizers, community organizers, and looking forward to just occurring some of your comments question.

Speaker 5 (42:48):

I think part of our perspective on, on this panel is at least that this is a conference who comes to reflect on and honor, uh, uh, life and death struggle in the south, uh, that, uh, initiated was initiated 40 some odd years ago that we certainly ought look at what is the conditions in the same areas today. And that's, uh, pretty much a sense of, of what we've tried to do at least from hearing from the first two presenters, our third presenter, Debbie, Bell's gonna talk about, uh, some organizational developments in the black liberation movement. Uh, and, and I might argue in others might too that in many ways it represents an extension of what it was that SNCC, uh, sought out to do many, many years ago. So, uh, Debbie bell,

Speaker 8 (43:31):

He took my opening line away <laugh> I'm

Speaker 8 (43:38):

But professor right. Um, we learned to be creative it's part of the Ella baker, uh, teachings. Um, yes, I, I, I don't think it's arguable, uh, but what, uh, to follow up on that, I also, uh, note just by sitting on this panel, uh, and from some of the discussions that have taken place, uh, during the course of the last four days that, uh, people are in motion, uh, and people are trying to change, uh, their communities. Uh, but the thing that the black radical Congress is trying to address, or

the issue that the black radical Congress is trying to address is how do we, uh, unite? How do we coalesce, uh, all of these energies so that we're not just chipping away at our one little corner. So the issues that were just presented to you are issues that fall within the purview of the black radical Congress agenda.

Speaker 8 (44:41):

Let me take a step back and give you a little background. Uh, first on the name, uh, the black radical Congress has been, or is basically information to try to, uh, give a, a vehicle for anyone who considers themselves, uh, one black, whether they're blonde blue wide, or, or African or whatever. But if you self define yourself as black, then you, uh, are eligible to participate. So it does not have a rigid, uh, definition of how many crinkles we have in your hair. Uh, although that was one of the discussions by the way, <laugh>, um, and it is, uh, an attempt to, uh, bring together the full spectrum of black people, uh, on the left, so that all avenues or, or, uh, spokes of, uh, of radicalism can unite with their, with whatever the issues are. And we have tried to bring these issues under an umbrella, a working umbrella, uh, so that your issue is not isolated from all of the issues that affect the black community within that umbrella, as part of this radicalism, uh, we clearly state in both the two, two formal documents that we have are principles of unity and the freedom agenda we state that capitalism does not work, and that it is not an alternative for the African American community.

Speaker 8 (46:41):

And cause it's not an alternative because of its history of oppression. Uh, and it hasn't shown that, uh, that it's going to reform itself or that, or that it can be reformed, uh, that this is not an option, uh, uh, for freedom for the black community. So with that premise, uh, we, uh, we are trying to, uh, organize, uh, to, well, we're not looking to overthrow the government yet, uh, obviously, but, but there is a significant left, uh, body of thought that has never moved in the same direction. And oftentimes it's been antagonistic to each other Juneteenth of 1998. Uh, we had an exploratory conference that was held in Chicago and that con conference was to, uh, by our estimate draw about 500 people to begin to explore. What are the possibilities of getting this whole diaspora of, of thinking left thinking together and, and beginning to form an organization?

Speaker 8 (48:10):

Well, we not 200 people showed up, uh, not, I'm sorry, not 500 people showed up 2000 people showed up. So it far exceeded what we had expected. And it also told us that the interest and the need was out there and that something needed to be done the period between 98 and today has been a period of local organizing of I ideological discussion and some strategy, uh, development, uh, in that period, there has been a, a, uh, sort of a metamorphosis, a Genesis of all these divergent left forces, one, um, moving from, uh, a period of skepticism and looking over their shoulder, not quite sure what the next person was going to do and not quite sure where you wanted to go to a period of, to a, a, um, I think a state of, of confidence and beginning to, uh, to trust, which means then you're on, in a stage where you can now move forward and build in that light.

Speaker 8 (49:41):

Uh, we had a planned, an educational conference, which I think, uh, having, uh, had the marvelous experience that I had this weekend will somewhat mirror in many ways. Uh, some of the discussions we heard in terms of how SNCC was built, because the purpose of this conference, which will take place at Wayne state on June, uh, the weekend of June 25th, 26 and 27, uh, the purpose of that will be it it's called an organizing conference to teach ourselves how we can organize to carry out the agenda, uh, that we have set for ourselves. And it will be a working, uh, Congress, uh, in order to, uh, learn the skills and share the information that we need to, uh, go back home and hopefully start building and touching, uh, those people who feel that they want to move in a direction or change.

Speaker 8 (50:53):

Uh, what are some of the, um, issues we have? Uh, it's interesting. We, in discussing issues, everyone has their own pet issue, and we've gone through that. You know, um, you know, this one thinks theirs is the most important issue that's going to change the country and the next one thinks theirs is. But in reality, what we know is that all issues are interrelated one way or the other. Uh, the farm question, uh, is, is, uh, related to the reparation question to the education question, to, uh, the police state question and so forth. There is something that can, that there is some strand that you can find that will connect all of these issues. And those are the main issues in which we have chosen to begin to develop a program around. And, uh, for instance, almost all of what we call local organizing committees.

Speaker 8 (52:03):

And there are 16 local organizing committees, uh, that we have established since 1998, almost all of them are working on anti-police state issues, primarily the case of Maia, and Asata the cases of a Maia. And Asata however, uh, we know that in New York while they might be working on Maia, they are also working on Diallo. And that is the, you know, and that is the kind of, of latitude. And also the creativity that we would like to have in our, um, in our locs, New York has two locs. The other LOC has chosen to work on anti-police state Laia and education. And the relationship there is that if there, if you can improve the education system and work for quality, uh, free public education. And by the way that the premise here is that public education must be saved it as one of the last bastions of democracy that we have in our country,

Speaker 8 (53:29):

Uh, that with education, then there's the possibility of getting a job. And then the whole question of the police of, of not the police state, but of the, uh, criminal justice, uh, and what happens to young black men, uh, certainly will lessen if not become a Moo point because people will have a purpose in life and it will help to cut some of the criminal, uh, activity that people find necessary in order to, uh, to survive in this country. Um, we have, uh, OCS that are working on criminal justice and the question of reparations. And this is for those of you who are, uh, not quite plugged into this, uh, the question of rep reparations, or it has not become part of your daily work. And daily thought has become an increasingly important, uh, arena of struggle and more and more literature is written, uh, almost on a daily basis. And certainly if you go onto the internet, uh, there are many, many, uh, avenues and many, uh, articles pardon me that, uh, give clear, succinct and, uh, rational argument, uh, to the question of reparation, including, uh, who, uh, where the money would go and who would be, uh, the recipient of such, uh, reparations.

Speaker 8 (55:11):

And finally, but not least in terms of issues is question that was so, uh, well, uh, discussed under the, uh, black workers for justice, uh, uh, program. And that is economic justice. And this is where our distrust of capitalism, uh, takes its sharpest, uh, <laugh>, uh, turn here, uh, or connection. And that is that, um, that workers are the overwhelming majority of our population. Uh, black people are the over are overwhelmingly, uh, uh, in the working class. The working class is, uh, anyone who, uh, uh, has a boss and, and, and earns, earns a wage and is not in, in control of, uh, of where their wages are coming from. And, um, and, and the exploitation, particularly people of color, uh, in our economic system, uh, has, is, has just been, uh, stated I don't need to repeat, but, uh, this is a question that is, uh, uh, paramount and it's paramount, uh, for the growing numbers of people who are only, uh, being employed in, uh, McDonald type wage jobs, uh, and have to work two and three jobs, uh, in order to put bread on their table and a roof over their head.

Speaker 8 (56:54):

So those are our main, uh, our main, uh, areas. And let me just go back and I want to just say that, uh, you know, the question of a living wage, uh, I need to include under the economic

justice because, uh, you know, if, if you don't have a living wage, there is no economic justice, and this is what affects most, uh, most, uh, people of color. And by the way, in terms of workers, we include those people who, uh, are unemployed, underemployed, and, and all of the millions of women who have been, uh, thrown off the welfare roles and still don't have any kind of job. Uh, they are potential workers, and we need to look at them as potential workers and as allies. Uh, so, you know, this is the, the, one of the places that, uh, the racial discrimination and prejudice, uh, is, uh, is most, uh, easily identifiable is, is on the workplace, is in the workplace because of the types of jobs and opportunities that are available to, uh, African Americans.

Speaker 8 (58:16):

I don't wanna go on too much longer, but I do want to say that, um, that the BRC is a membership organization. It has a sliding scale of, of membership. Uh, those, for those who are unemployed to those who would like to, uh, give us a whole lot of money, <laugh> certain people welcome. Uh, and that, uh, to date, the, uh, composition of, uh, or of membership is, uh, is across the economic and, uh, intellectual, uh, uh, spectrum. Uh, so we have, uh, intellectual such as, uh, Cornell west, and we have, uh, uh, people who are unemployed, we have students and, uh, and we are certainly, uh, eager to have, uh, everyone who's interested join us. We have a number of websites. Uh, and the reason for this is that we have found that on the question of black radicalism and on any given issue and our websites, by the way, uh, one of our websites, uh, will have an issue for is for a given period of time.