

SNCC 50th Anniversary Conference
Shaw University, Raleigh NC, April 2010
Transcript Video Recording #7
(Raw, unedited, no annotation)

Speaker 1 (00:00:18):

And on our panel, uh, we have John do, uh, who was the head of the civil rights division of the United States department of justice, um, in the sixties when we were all in SNCC. And a lot of people have, uh, stories to tell about how Mr. DOR, uh, got her ass outta jail. I don't know how else to say it. Uh, there was, I had one story, uh, when I was working in Northern Mississippi, they gave us all radio was for our cars, these CB's, which were supposed to be safety things we could call in. I, I could never figure out how to work mine and I, nobody else I knew did either, but I was pulled over once by a deputy was giving me hell about something or another. And I said, um, would you speak a little bit louder? Because John do is at the other end and is listening in and, um, gave him some pause. Cause he didn't quite know how the thing worked either. Didn't help. He arrested me anyway. But for about five minutes I had him gone using John do's name.

Speaker 1 (00:01:36):

Um, since then, uh, John worked in bed Stu for Bobby Kennedy. That's really from the pot into the kettle, um, and has been practicing law in New York, uh, for, for many years, Tim Jan at the end, uh, was one of the first and most important advisors, uh, to SNCC. Um, he actually led one of the workshops at the session where SNCC change from being the temporary, an organizing, uh, student non or, uh, coordinating committee to the permanent student nonviolent coordinating committee. And, and Tim was quite involved in that. Um, and he was an advisor, uh, through NSA through the national student association among many, many other accomplishments and, uh, position that Tim has had was as the president of the university of DC.

Speaker 1 (00:02:44):

Uh, we're very, very pleased to have him on the panel. Uh, Pinel Joseph, um, is a, um, professor at Tufts university at the school of, uh, arts and science and Dotty Zelner, uh, to my right was one of the first staff members that SNCC had. Um, she was among many, many other things responsible for, uh, doing media and basically as is a national office person responsible for, I can't say preventing the chaos of SNCC because that's what we did, but keeping it to a manageable, a manageable, uh, level in recent years, Dotty has been very in the peace movement in the middle east, working with Israelis and Palestinians And, um, I'm Larry Rubin. Um, I was a field organizer for SNCC in Southwest Georgia. Um, and then in Northern Mississippi, The subject of the panel is the societal response to SNCC. I think that's a very general, probably too general of a title. I think we have to divide it into segments, societal to society. What does that mean? And I'm going to, uh, challenge the panelists to perhaps address their remarks to the following types of divisions. First, I think there was those folks who involved in politics across the country,

Speaker 1 (00:04:42):

Um, and their response to SNCC. And when I say involved in politics, I mean the official folks in Washington and within the democratic party who were the, the leaders of the country, their response to us was with the full knowledge that we were about in voter registration, was to empower the constituents of the people who were running this country, the Southern senators and congressmen, they were running the country because their constituents, many of them couldn't vote. Um, and they were destroying really everything. The new deal had started. Um, They were, I think by and large, uh, wanting to change that system where the, the Southern, uh, Congressman and senators ran the country. On the other hand, they were being realistic. Of

course, the Southern senators and congressmen were running the country. Uh, and they had to deal with that. I think, um, If you deal with people who were more socially active in, uh, attempting to change society, what SNCC represented to them was first of all, The true death. Now, the last nail on the coffin of McCarthyism here was a group of people who were directly taking on the establishment. Uh, and Although they were being red, baed, it wasn't McCarthyism. It was something different. Um, and I think this generated a lot of excitement, a lot of energy in many different directions, not just in the south, not just for SNCC, uh, but it represented, uh, an example to a lot of people that McCarthyism was if not completely dead on its last gas. And I think not only did it generate, um,

Speaker 1 (00:07:04):

Uh, energy and enthusiasm, but perhaps, um, a, an over zealous view of what was going on, was this the true second American revolution in the traditional sense or not? That was another societal, uh, reaction. I think the people most directly involved The, um, African American people in the south who were involved in voter registration and way after all Were the courageous people registering to vote men, uh, putting your house at risk, putting your job at risk, putting your life at risk. Um, they and the Southern Congressman and senators really knew what this was about and their action was, um, Perhaps the most direct, Uh, They UN they understood both the risks and the gains to be made With that. Um, let's start with Mr. Do

Speaker 2 (00:08:26):

Well, I suppose in a sense that I was part of the establishment that, uh, Mary is referred to as those that were running the country. But let me say that for the lawyers in the civil rights division, which was very small in 19 60 61, uh, we regarded ourselves as law officers and with the responsibility and the accountability of enforcing the 1957 civil rights act in the 1960 civil rights act, which most people thought were very, very tame, lame effort to bring about any kind of change in this country. But the 57 act dealt specifically with voting. And it is that challenge that we in the civil rights division accepted to the extent that we could make any kind of a contribution through the processes of the law. And I guess the, What came out of that was with very few young lawyers, uh, who traveled extensively through Mississippi, Alabama, and, and Louisiana that, uh, we developed develop a Enormous respect for the student nonviolent coordinating committee. And although we were very limited in what we could do as lawyers in the civil right in the civil rights division of the department of justice, uh, their courage and their perseverance and their determination just really did, uh,

Speaker 2 (00:10:28):

Amazing things to the lawyers in the division to make them wanna work as hard as they could to bring about a change. And, uh, what, what, what was the division able to accomplish? You must understand that, uh, our challenge was to run against, uh, federal judges who had been appointed by the political processes and the south, and they were all to the greatest extent, um, obligated to the senators who, uh, proposed them for, for nomination and confirmation. And So we ran at the, we ran at these judges through lawsuits and what, what, what did we have to offer? We had to offer energy and speed. Uh,

Speaker 2 (00:11:30):

We tried our best to bring cases on as fast as we could and, uh, to move them through the court as quickly as we, it, out of that process, that started with three suits in Louisiana and Mississippi. Uh, we grew to maybe 50 suits by the end of 1964, but very early in that period of time, uh, we came upon a of, of, of a fact that was of, of I think of enormous significance. And that fact was that, uh, where, when I came to the justice department, uh, there was a concept that the states, the individual states regulated the qualifications for voting. And the second concept was that it made sense to try to have a literate, intelligent elector for it. And therefore, uh, the people in the country, the, the, uh, professors in academia, uh, found themselves focusing on the situation of

where the registrars in the, these three states were rejecting qualified blacks from registering and through the fact that the civil rights division lawyers did, they own did their own investigation.

Speaker 2 (00:13:10):

They didn't rely on the FBI. They relied on going out into the field in, in pairs and just talking to people and talking to the SNIC kids, and then bringing these cases on, we came across a fact that if it was known and it must have been known by the Southern politicians, but it wasn't known to the people of the country. That one fact was one discriminatory fact was occurring, which was that intelligent, literate, educated blacks were being refused registration. But on the other hand, what we came across was that the system was totally, absolutely corrupt. And by that I meant if you were white and you were 21 and you breathe, you voted. And we hammered at that for five years, we hammered at the fact that the had to knock the qualifications, the standards for voting down to the standard that had been applied in the past for many, many years, uh, to the least qualified white person and the least qualified person by by many, many number were people that could not read or write.

Speaker 2 (00:14:41):

And if you look at the consequences, the 65 act, the consequence of sweeping away, all requirements, all standards for registration, all standards for voting except residents and age, that that made a enormous, uh, consequence with respect to the surge in black registration, following us a 65 act. And to that extent, uh, the, the, whether whether the, the, be the black of whether the people in power, uh, realized what was happening or realized what the situation was, uh, they, the whole barrier to voting was swept away. And as a result of that for the first time in this country, after the voting rights act, we had an honest system of self-government. And the consequence of that is now obvious to all of us. Uh, it took over 40 years thereafter to demonstrate it, but, uh, no one can doubt now after the 2008 election, that, that dishonest system no longer existed and to that, and I think the, the power of the law, uh, supported and assisted the students in doing what they did, which of course was to generate the motivation and the drive and the persistence to get out and get all of the local people in those three states to, uh, once the polls were open to get out, to register, to vote, we had to get out to vote.

Speaker 2 (00:16:46):

I remember the first election in 1966 in Dallas county, Alabama, where for years I was lectured by Southern white people. That though the blacks are not interested in voting. They're not interested in politics. They like music. They like to have fun, but they, they, if you get this, if you get these laws for up with these regulations, SWEP aside, uh, there won't be much participation. Anyway, I have a picture in my office in, in Washington of, of, of a rural area in Dallas county, the head of the, the little town of Orville with probably 600 P people. It had a machine shop and a general store and a post office, and a, in the general store, it was called a sugar shack. And I have a picture of the first vote first election after the 65 act. And believe me, there were over 150 black people lined up outside that, that sugar shack to vote. And that to me, was the most inspiring and satisfying, uh, experience that I've ever had.

Speaker 1 (00:18:12):

Um, during the question and answer, period, you might want to ask, uh, John, uh, the events of the sixties are very much alive for him. Now. He is being sued by the guy that was recently put in jail. One of the murderers of the three civil rights workers, killings is suing Mr. Do, and some others. And he'll explain that during the question and the answer period, speaking of the question and answer, period, um, perhaps we can limit our remarks to about five minutes and then we'll open it, uh, up to the floor. Uh, Tim,

Speaker 3 (00:18:51):

No refuge could save the hiring enslave From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave And the star Spangled banner in trial, the wave Or the land of the free And the home of the brave. I

bet that's a clause of the star Spangled banner that you never heard. They don't sing that In the 20th century, America, America, God, men, nine, every flaw Con firm, th soul and self control That Liberty in law, America, America may God die gold Refine to all success. The nobleness In every game, divine America, the beautiful, another loss phrase. That's not some, I think we characterize the impact of SNCC on the society of America, too narrowly. When we just look at the politics of it, The politics is a subset of the culture And what SNCC really he had as an impact on the, on the culture of the United States is much more profound than just its political life. It has to do with its artistic expression. It has to do with the aspirations that people have. It has to do with the self sense of empowerment and their entitlement to be treated as human beings. When you talk about the impact of S snake, it's easy to talk about the women's movement, the environmental movement, the age movement, the, uh, one, uh, anti-war movement. All of those things have been impact,

Speaker 3 (00:20:49):

But the most profound impact Was when we had those freedom schools And little Leon youngsters came in there who had been abused in their educational life. And for the first time Were told what they could be. And they believed that That is the impact of snake. And when we told those youngsters who came down from the Northern student movement, That they had an obligation to go beyond their neighborhood and deal with the problems of Mississippi, South Carolina, Alabama, to register people to vote, because this was an expression of their franchise. They could not get progressive legislation as long as Eastland. And those people maintained a stranglehold on the politics of the United States. That's the impact of SNCC on America. When you think of the artistry And the way in which The freedom singers reclaimed those ancient anthems of black expression from the soul And turned them into Pans And anthems of militarism. And self-empowerment, that's the impact Of SNCC on society. Don't allow yourselves to be Tricked into the quantifications of the numbers of new elected official. The new people registered to vote. The suits that have been filed, the, the handful of people who have gone and merged into, uh, wall street, uh, firms and things like that. And think of that as the full measure of S Nick's impact on society.

Speaker 3 (00:22:48):

What S's impact was was that a generation, the people were convinced in their heart and in their mind that everybody doesn't steal Every doesn't cheat and everybody doesn't lie. And they had an opportunity to decide which side they'd be on.

Speaker 1 (00:23:15):

Thank you. Um, Dotty Zelter.

Speaker 4 (00:23:19):

I am speaking from the ground. I first walked into the SCC office in October, 1961. I became a staff member in 1962. So I'm the person who was using the, uh, hand crank Mim graft machine. I am the per one of the people, one of the many people who would call the FBI and say, so, and so is missing. Oh, really? Oh, really, we'll call you next week. Uh, I am one of the people who called people's parents and said, your son, your daughter, uh, has been arrested, uh, and so forth. And I did that for several years, as well as writing on, uh, the student voice and press releases and so forth. Okay. So it seems to me that what society had here was a very unusual event, an autonomous, not, non-controlled not affiliated with any party, the democratic party, the communist party, any party group of young people who were bent ongoing, right to the heart of the matter, how was the society going to cope with these young people?

Speaker 4 (00:24:30):

So there were certain various techniques to try to cripple snicks influence on the civil rights movement. And one of course was the old tried and true the red bathing. And it's very important for you to know, Nick was one of the early civil rights organizations that internally decided it

would not cooperate with the house on American activities committee and other governmental investigations. And it's my view that because Nick decided to do that, and no doubt there was an informer at these meetings. They, they were going to have their hands full if SNCC was going to be subpoenaed because SNCC was not going to cooperate. Okay. Then what was the other way to deal with these young people? Well, it was to co-op them in some, in some kind of way, which is why Ms. Baker is our hero. She wouldn't let the young people affiliate with anybody.

Speaker 4 (00:25:27):

We were not gonna be co-opted by anybody. Um, SNCC tried to open the door, you know, the famous James Baldwin quote, you know, why be integrated into a burning house. And for a while, I think SNCC wanted to get in the door. And what has been overlooked to me, uh, there is no book about the Atlantic city con convention that I know of in 1964, that there deals only with that convention. And that convention was the moment of SNS, greatest triumph and greatest failure simultaneously because the door would not open. And the people who were supposed to be our friends were the ones who stabbed us in the back. Um, and this was a turning point. So there's this group of young people and this immense indigenous black movement that can't be control old. Uh, how does society deal with that? So that's something that I hope will come up in the discussion because it seems to be COINTELPRO and various other things.

Speaker 4 (00:26:40):

You know, people will think of, um, we were lucky in those days because we had some really wonderful press people who understood what we were doing and who worked with us and Mary King is here and she knows some of these, uh, press people. There are many others. Uh, I'm not the only one who was on the ground in this room. Others were, um, the press has really ignored SNCC. And I think it's only in the past, maybe 10 years from now, uh, in the last 10 years, sorry that, uh, uh, important books have been written about SNCC. There's an awful lot left to write and SNCC as an organization of independent minded, fierce, unbelievably funny, intelligent people is not in the consciousness of our people today in this country. And certainly not our young people. And this morning I went to one workshop and people of course are saying, you know, where is the generation? Well, this, this generation doesn't know, except of course for this conference, which is wonderful that there was a model before. And the model now for the young people is, do you have your iPod? And do you have your iPad? You know, and did you stand in line all night, not for the homeless, but to get your iPad. So I hope that this conference will rectify that and that SNCC will be back where it belongs, which is in the forefront, uh, of the national consciousness. Um, that's it for now.

Speaker 1 (00:28:19):

Thank you, Pinel Joseph. Thanks.

Speaker 5 (00:28:31):

Thank

Speaker 6 (00:28:31):

You. Uh, first of all, it's an honor, um, to be here. Uh, I come here as a scholar activist. Um, I'm the son of Haitian immigrants by way of New York city. And my mom was an 1199, uh, trade unionist for 40 years. She just retired at 71. Um, and so I, I first heard about SNCC through my mom, um, who introduced me to Stokely Carmichael, threw a picture of Carmichael during the Meredith March in 1966. And he's wearing a hat, um, that says 1199 on it. And that was my mom's my mom's union. And I, I, I was on my first picket line at eight years old in New York city, um, on strike with, with my mom and my older brother. So I'm coming to this in, in a very specific way. Um, when we think about SNCC very briefly, I agree with everything that's been said on the panel.

Speaker 6 (00:29:24):

We don't have SNCC and our consciousness, uh, in the heroic, in the narrative of the heroic period of the civil rights movement. And even the president of the United States, who obviously is a remarkable individual, but certainly can and should be criticized. Um, in his book *Dreams from My Father*, he recounts, uh, listening to Stokely Carmichael in the early 1980s at Columbia university. And he really looks at Carmichael as somebody who's anachronistic, this sort of unreconstructed radical, who, who, who doesn't understand in Obama's words, that the movement had fragmented into a million pieces in, in the 1960s. So Obama has a very sort of romantic sepia tone vision of the civil rights era being led by Dr. King and Selma. And we've got the new biography, *The Bridge*, and these things are important, but they really miss a larger point of the way in which, uh, grassroots activists, specifically SNCC and Reverend Lawson talked about how SNCC is coming out of a movement.

Speaker 6 (00:30:23):

And Monday afternoon, February 1st, 1960, uh, is, is when the North Carolina a and T four actually really sparked the direct action phase of that movement. So SNCC is coming out of that two and a half months later. I think when we think about the societal responses to SNCC SNCC actually transforms American democracy. And that's, that's one of the biggest things that we can tell our students and, and SNCC has bequeathed the legacy. I, I, I agree with what, um, uh, with what Mr. Jenkins was saying about, it's easy to talk about feminism, the women's movement anti-war, but at the same time, I think it's much more difficult to look at SNCC as something that's even bigger than just looking at the civil rights movement as something that was led by Dr. King. Because when we think about SNCC, we see that people had self-determination. We look at both inter racialism self-determination feminism, black nationalism, cuz SNCC is about civil rights and black power, but the main thrust really transforming American democracy, local regional national level with global reverberations.

Speaker 6 (00:31:29):

So SNCC is really the single most important group act, social activist group of the postwar period. And, and that's been lost in a very purposeful way. Sometimes we think of the United States of America. Uh, it should be better described as United States of amnesia where it's a country that deliberately remembers to forget. And when we think about SNCC, um, SNCC is more than a group of, uh, black and white idealists. SNCC is a group that's actually has a broad vision of what citizenship and democracy actually means. So in this, this sense to very much connect to what Dr. King says in his last speech, April 3rd, 1968 king, who's a non-violent warrior in an American revolutionary, just like the SNCC group is, is a revolutionary social activist group. Dr. King says, be true to what you said on paper. So what SNCC does in one of the most robust, forceful and principled ways in American history is really advocate that the words of the founding fathers will actually come true.

Speaker 6 (00:32:29):

So instead of taking the, the, the Gulf between democratic rhetoric and reality as a given SNCC, actually argues that the rights of black sharecroppers in L county, Alabama and the Mississippi Delta are equal to those of people who are living in the white house. And that's extraordinary and that's remarkable. So they believe, uh, in Kennedy's words, more than Kennedy to an extent, right? When Kennedy talks about a new frontier and asks not what your country can do for you. And January 20th, 1961, SNCC has already been around for a year and a half at that point and inspires the freedom writers. They're gonna inspire, um, a really small R American revolution. And when we don't think about SNCC in terms of American democracy, we set them aside. We put them as a fringe group and we make civil rights just about black people, right? And it's easy to marginalize something that's just about black people.

Speaker 6 (00:33:22):

Civil rights was a universal movement for social and political justice. And SNCC is at the forefront of that. So way before the rainbow coalition, we had SNCC, we had a group of blacks

and whites and everybody in between who were arguing for radical democracy. And I think I'll close by saying on this fifth 50th anniversary, and we've seen the 50th anniversary of both the A and T four of the founding of SNCC. It's more imperative now than ever to acknowledge what SNCC has meant to all of us and including, including the president of the United States. But SNCC is also a combative group. What the president and the country do to of rights is turn it into a bedtime story with a beginning, middle and end. And everyone knows that a children's bedtime story demands a happy ending. So Obama says, look with my election. We've got the happy ending. That's not good enough people. That's not good enough. So SNCC SNCC SNCC would be both supportive of Obama, but some of Obama's biggest critics. And, and when you're a critic, it doesn't mean that you hate Obama or like the young people say your player hating, why you hating on Obama. It means that you're you're after something that's much bigger than what Obama represents. So Obama is only the, he's not the culmination of anything. He's only a chapter in a much larger story that still has to be written. Thank you.

Speaker 1 (00:34:53):

Now, now I know most of us are, are very shy about expressing our opinions. Uh, but if, if we can really motivate ourselves to get up and, and ask questions and express opinions, we have a microphone here that Jim is, is gonna handle, um, and or pass around.

Speaker 7 (00:35:15):

Um, hello, I'm uh, James Jones. I'm an American history teacher from McComb, Mississippi. And I have a question, um, a, a tactical question for SNCC, do y'all think it was a tactical mistake when SNCC and the civil rights movement in general took focus off the civil rights movement to a degree and began to focus on the anti-war movement. And then it became fragmented. Was that a tactical mistake in that it, uh, I guess to, so some would think took the eyes off the prize for a little bit. It set up, cause there was still, when SNCC came out against the war in the civil rights community, there was still so much to be done. And y'all on behalf of the people in McComb, Mississippi, uh, all of you were involved with SNIC. Thank you very much.

Speaker 4 (00:36:03):

I'd like to shake your hand, this first white person from McComb that I've ever met. Uh, the short answer, I think, no, it was not a mistake. Uh, it was the way SNCC was evolving and developing and had it lasted longer. It would've involved more issues. And when you look at SNCC, it planted the seeds of almost everything that followed afterwards. Women's rights, gay rights it's on and on. Uh, so I think the flower was opening. Unfortunately it was cut off, but I don't think it was a mistake.

Speaker 3 (00:36:47):

May I comment on that? Or you can. Um, McComb was the theater that I went to first, when I went down into Mississippi and we arrived on a dark night And It stayed dark for a long time.

Speaker 3 (00:37:09):

There's no dichotomy between the peace movement and the civil rights movement. It really wasn't a question of choice. They were, they were the same issue. It's the manifestation of the dis the, the denigration of yellow people that is equivalent to the denigration of black people and the denigration of poor white people for that matter, it's the same kind of thing. And so it wasn't, it wasn't necessary to make a choice to move from something to another. It was to understand what you were dealing with in the first place. The violence of the United States is not confined to its borders nor to its states nor to its counties. It is pervasive. And obviously it's not limited to the United States. It's worldwide. So if you're going to be honest and you're really going to be radical, and if you're going to the roots of what you're talking about, then you can't tell lies. And it is a lie to think that war is different than civil war. The civil rights human rights is civil rights. War is anti-human rights.

Speaker 8 (00:38:34):

I very gracious. Good afternoon. Each of you that young man from McComb, my name is Charles Jones. I was blessed to be in the group, Tim and I drove into while when we went past the Mississippi border and a huge sign said the governor and the KU Klux Klan welcome you.

Speaker 8 (00:39:00):

We got south. We had been just having fun and for a half hour. So we realized we now in the civic, now we changing from Mississippi. If you don't mind for that period, feel like you've never known and all of us, but we rolled into McComb and were issued into a whole nother place in the movement. These young children who had gone and set at the lunch counters got arrested, got expelled from school. We had to go and meet 'em and Bob Moses. And that was when I met this young mother next to Tim there. Russ do, we called, I was one of the ones who had to stay out. We had a tactical process. If everybody got arrested, then nobody could yell for help. So I, everybody was arrested and I was the one out and I called, uh, Harry who Bobby Kennedy's number as a party in, in, in, uh, Los Angeles who told me to call this one in Virginia. And I called him and said, hell, where's the Cav. And we talked for a moment and he literally came down, called me from Jackson. And he came on in McComb. And I remember this as vividly. I don't know your recollections of this, but I remember this as vivid as I'm standing here. He said, Ms. Cho, yes. Where are you? So I was at this building where we had had the movement in son hall and he came and knocked on the door and said, this is John do. And I said, thank God. He has a CA

Speaker 8 (00:40:46):

He was assistant attorney general for civil rights. I looked at him, he looked at me and, and we both agreed to close the door. And there was a moment of truth about Mississippi, about the government. We all began to realize, cause they had followed you from Jackson all the way down. That is other folks, some of whom were Klan members who were FBI. And we had been saying that and, and the government. So no, but rate at that moment, our realize, oh my gosh, we, we kind own our, he was there. And I, and I appreciate you. I wanted to say that to you in a public forum, because it was a realization that the movement, as we knew it transcended the us government transcended all of the plans, folk who also males and all. And that at that moment in time, we were on our own, you know, in McComb. And it's like jumping off a cliff and learning how to fly on the way down, not knowing. So the observation about the movement is that was that creative energy of spiritual commitment that took us far beyond all of the definitions of politics. So as I recognize you today, my brother, and tell you how much I appreciate you. McComb is in my core, going back and do what you're doing. And I understand now black history is being required to be taught in Mississippi. And that ain't true in other places in the country. So be blessed.

Speaker 9 (00:42:32):

There seems to be a part laws for silence. Historically, nothing has happened in this country. No great social movement has occurred without the assistance, if not the provocation of the church and the church has been quiet over the last 10 to 15 years. Very. So it is a wonderful historical perspective. Have this meeting today to have this seminar today, yet my question is what's next. My question is what is the next step? As we look at our historical perspective and what we were able to achieve in that synergy of union, what is next? Be it Obama not being the fulfillment of a dream, but a part in a chapter day in yes, but what are the tenements of the dream? What are, what are the pillars that go into a full society where everyone has the opportunity of equality? What is the tenements that go into SNS organizational structure that allows to talk about what healthcare is and the effect that the healthcare is, and may and may not be the new human rights of the nation and of the world, the environmental effect that has on not only this country, but every country in the world, alternative fuse, where are we with that?

Speaker 9 (00:43:52):

Please don't provide me with a historical perspective. Although I know we must know our history to go forward, but what is the forward that we look at?

Speaker 5 (00:44:02):

Thank you everybody.

Speaker 6 (00:44:06):

No, I think, I think everybody's asking that same, uh, question Mr. Crutchfield. And I think that, um, one of the things that we witnessed in, in terms of contemporary activists, sometimes people has the activism gone. Um, I think the people who ask that question are people who are not involved, right? So we know there's activism going on globally, nationally, regionally all over the place. There are long marchers here. No, no, no, no. I'm not. I'm not criticizing. I'm not criticizing. No. And I think that's a great point. So I'm not, this is not, um, let me, when, when you see my full explanation, you'll see. But I think the, my point is that there is activism going on all around the country, but one of the things we haven't seen at least, um, until the 2008 election was this, this national, uh, synergy around a single goal, right.

Speaker 6 (00:44:55):

We saw that during the civil rights movement, we saw, um, a push for voting rights. Uh, uh, Mr. Do we saw, uh, civil rights, um, open housing act. There were different goals. Um, the problem with 2008 was that the goal was to get Barack Obama elected, right? And once, once the election finished, what we haven't seen since then is that group of that diverse group, because really, um, the argument can be made that a social movement gets Obama. Um, in there there's gonna be critics against that argument. You say Obama represents sort of, uh, corporate imperialism in blackface, but at the same time, it's still 66 million votes. So if somebody, if you respect social movements, you don't think that 66 million people just got fooled and bamboozled, right? Although some people will accuse them. They'll say they're just a bunch of lemmings and I've got the answers.

Speaker 6 (00:45:47):

So I'm not as arrogant to say that I've got all the answers and if they just follow my line, uh, everything aint gonna work out. But what I do think is that what we haven't done since the Obama election, whether it's on healthcare, whether it's on, um, the issue of mass incarceration, the best new book that I've recently read is Michelle Alexander's the new Jim Crow. Um, it's an extraordinary book about how mass incarceration is the new racial segregation of our time. Um, and the way in which we've gone from 300,000 people incarcerated to over 2 million with predominantly black, black, and brown people, and how that really affects their employment opportunities, where they can live the recidivism rate one in three, and then the disproportionate rate of, uh, sentencing for crack cocaine versus powder cocaine. And so one of the biggest, uh, civil rights issues of our times is mass incarceration.

Speaker 6 (00:46:37):

That's, that's, what's really the drug wars. And Reverend Lawson said this earlier are destroying black and brown communities and poor white ones too. Yet we have an African American president and no one's talking about changing the, the sentence disparities between crack cocaine and powdered cocaine. So there has to be, at least we have people like TAVI smiley, other critics of the president saying, they're gonna come up with a black agenda. There has to be something that's not just even a black agenda, but that transcends that that includes blacks, whites, Jews, a multiracial, radically progressive agenda. And I say radical on purpose because the president said while he was campaign, that he was a progressive. So that means there must be different kinds of progressives. Um, so, so the, the only thing we can do is come together around a very specific, clear set of themes. And it can't be a hundred themes. They'd have to be two or three. And I think that the main, uh, cause of our lifetimes has to be right now, the issue of mass incarceration of African American men and women and, and blacks and Browns through the so-called drug war,

cuz the drug war is a war on the poor. It's a war to extend racial and political and economic domination in poor black and brown communities and, and empirically that's. So yeah.

Speaker 1 (00:47:57):

Um, I wanna take a very, uh, quick bite of an answer of that. I work for the carpenter's union and the union movement has always seen itself, um, as that vehicle where people can get together, uh, fight for their rights fight for their economic rights. The biggest question within the union movement today is what to do next and how to do it within our movement. There's somebody over there Al

Speaker 7 (00:48:28):

Hi, my name is a Alan Haber. I'm from the students for democratic society, a ally of SNCC and actually, uh, SNCC had a great influence on the SDS. Two weeks after this meeting, 50 years ago, SDS had its first national meeting in Ann Arbor. SNCC people came up, it was really the first meeting of north and south black and white, young and old church, labor and student. And it was really a founding of that spirit in the new left of the beloved community. These many struggles on all the fronts all together, changed the system in your F a direct action. And I was, and so, and SNCC also in the support of the Southern students in the north, where I was at the university of Michigan, we had in our student governments, how do we give support to the Southern students? The culture of the university administration is you are a student in the university and you stay on campus.

Speaker 7 (00:49:35):

And our student government said we wanna give money to get students outta jail in the south. That was the first crack at the university domination in Loco, parentis of the students all over the country. And that really was part of the transformation of the university. What I wanna say is if let's see 2003, the organization of American historians had a meeting in Memphis on the 4th of April at the place where Dr. King was assassinated. The topic of the panel was remembering SNCC and SDS. And in my little time to talk, I said, this is a very well named panel because indeed we should remember SNCC. Remember SDS that the political culture suffers for the lack of the direct continuity of the action movements of SNCC and SDS change the system. All the questions are related globally. And we need again to see how do we come together in an organization where we share the broad vision of an agenda for end in the system of war and domination and patriarchy and begin the new culture of peace, sharing, caring, partnership, and healing from this last 5,000 years of war and domination, we need a cultural shift and that's what everybody says, but we really need to begin the organizational form that says that is our agenda on all fronts, one struggle.

Speaker 7 (00:51:12):

And I hope the outcome of this meeting somehow will be not simply that we meet some of our friends again, which I'm very glad to, but also that we come out with some continuity of organization in some sense of what is the global agenda. That's what people are looking for all over the disappointment with Mr. Obama is that he stirred in us that dream of the broad movement, but in power he's become the captive of power and he needs underneath him the movement to liberate the dream that he, uh, expressed for us all. And so I think that's what we need outta. I hope that we come forward and I wonder how the panel views the outcome of this meeting toward remembering SNCC, remembering SDS in terms of members. Thank you,

Speaker 1 (00:52:00):

Tim. Do you want to start?

Speaker 3 (00:52:03):

Well, Al and I go back a long ways. Not only was I a member of the executive committee of students for, uh, SNIC, but I was also on the executive committee for SDS. I don't put that on my

resume anymore, But one of the things that I think we we need to really do is to move with the flow and the paradigm has shifted. I think it's less likely that we can have an impact as a movement in the old sense than in the new sense.

Speaker 3 (00:52:44):

We need an intergenerational transfer of the fire that is in our bellies. There's the wrinkled radicals to a new generation of people who see the techniques that we used as tools that they can use too, for their agendas. And while I'm deeply pessimistic about what has happened with the bling generation and the me generation, I'm also inspired by some sparks of hope. I was student body president at Howard university in the sixties when things broke out and we were very active. We had nonviolent action group and we integrated stores and we did all kind of it's good stuff. And then it died and everybody started, their Bush was modification. And the real interesting thing was, you know, when you, you threaten the society, it doesn't ne necessarily have to fight. They accommodate. So they accommodate. So they started inviting people. Hey, you got some activists, you, we got some corporate opportunities and internships for you. I was offered, uh, a, um, a, uh, road scholarship said, you, you are a leader, you got a athletic degree, uh, or letters. Why don't you come on in and into the Rhode school? And one of the professors told me who Cecil rose was.

Speaker 3 (00:54:09):

What I'm saying is that what has happened is that they've, coopted so much of what used to be militant opposition to become part of them. They've absorbed them, including the church. They put 'em on panels. They get of them grants. They brought 'em into the white house. They give 'em an office. They told the secretaries of the different departments. You're supposed to give out so much money to the churches. Well, how, what church is gonna stand up there and, and raise hell with the hand, that's feeding them. These are the kind of things we have to get to our next generation. We have succeeded in a lot of things, but we have failed in terms with exception of perhaps our own immediate families and getting another generation of kids mobilized and concerned about these issues. But there's hope. And Howard they've started a thing called the alternative spring break.

Speaker 3 (00:55:05):

They used to go to King's dominion and they used to go to all the places when they had the spring break. Now they're going to, to new Orleans, Detroit, Chicago, Anacostia to work on rebuilding houses, training kids, having after school programs. What we really need to leave here doing is leaving here with a commitment, like the algebra project that Bob Moses has undertaken and planning the seeds for afterschool program and getting these churches off their D and have 'em spend their time doing something other than praying to the Lord for the hereafter. And that includes not just the churches, but the synagogues and the mosques. Because if you look at the doctrinal SIM, uh, uh, uh, syndrome of all those faiths, you see that they, the serving the needs of the poor and the oppressed is Cardinal, and yet they don't do it. And what they don't see is a way to get young people energized on something other than wall street careers. That's what we need to be at work on. That's what we are. Leave this movement, making sure we're gonna reach another generation,

Speaker 5 (00:56:24):

Please.

Speaker 9 (00:56:27):

Mr. Do, um, I'm Dory Latner and, um, June 16th, 1963 at Mega's funeral, there was a breakout. And, uh, you were very instrumental in stuff. A lot of disaster. Would you like to tell? I was only told the story secondhand, what happened? I had been, I had been arrested, but if you could describe that I've only read narratives of it. I know you came and got us out of jail and following

date, but, um, this is very important. Med GS was killed and he was very instrumental saving a lot of lives in Jackson, Mississippi. Do, could you,

Speaker 2 (00:57:14):

Well, well, when I first went to Mississippi in 1961, after the Kennedy's came into office, um, another lawyer and I put together about 10 county maps in south Southern Mississippi, Southwestern, Mississippi. And, uh, these country maps were very specific with respect to where houses were located and where farm roads were located. And we went down to Mississippi dressed as oil, oil, oil workers, and we had quiet called med GRS and asked him if I could come to see him. And we got to Jackson the next morning, we went out to Medgar's house. This is 1961. And probably may, may of 1961. It was, it was in 1961 in may of 1961 that we sat at Medgar ever's kitchen table with he and his wife. And we went over these and he showed us where we could go and talk to people who had had some unsatisfactory experiences in trying to register to vote.

Speaker 2 (00:58:36):

And since that time in 61, I came to see med GRS many times between then and 63. And, uh, I considered him to be a friend and he, he was a friend and I had also considered him to be, uh, quite a man. And so when he was killed assassinated, I went to his funeral. And after the funeral, uh, the people that attended the funeral wanted to have a peaceful March down through, uh, the middle of Jackson, Mississippi, and the police officers. The police commander said that they could March down to the main street in, in Jackson, but they couldn't March on the main street, they'd have to cross the main street and go into the street where most of the blacks shops were located. And the March would had been absolutely dignified and P peaceful and respectful in every respect when the marchers crossed the street and went into this side street where the black shops were, and I'd gone across the street to get a cup of coffee.

Speaker 2 (00:59:57):

And somebody said that there was some thing going on over there. And so I walked back across the street and at that time, the city, the city police had cordoned off the end of the street leading to the main street. And there was a group of, of, of young black men and women who were, uh, lined up just to tow, to toe with the, uh, with the city police, uh, asking and demanding that they'd be permitted to peacefully walk demonstrate on the main street of Jackson. And, uh, and nothing was nothing was happening. Uh, but, but there was, uh, more tension building. And, uh, the city police had had either authorized, or the Sheriff's department had decided to bring up the deputy Sheriff's to fortify this line, new policeman across the street, and looking at it from where I stood behind the line. Uh, it looked like, uh, there was a potential for trouble because the, all the deputy sheriffs had shotguns.

Speaker 2 (01:01:18):

And I didn't have any confidence that they had any judgment or, uh, ability to handle a kind of a crowd that was building. And as I say, there must have been 20 or 30, 40, uh, young people face to face with the police in the street. And then I, I don't know what happened, but I suspect, I speculate that one of the black students may have touched a police officer. And at that point they started to grab the young blacks in the street. And one by one to put 'em in a pad wagon that was located just behind the police line. And at that time there was some, uh, rocks began to be thrown in, uh, whatever I was thinking of. I, I decided that this was not something that we could, you could go get any, any go on any further. And I went out in the street and, and, uh, uh, I think that the, uh, it was the kind of a thing that maybe you could do once, but you ought not to try to do it twice.

Speaker 8 (01:02:43):

Um, my name's Howard Morland, I just wanted to offer a thought about the, uh, society's response to SNCC in the class of 1965. I was at all white Emory university in Atlanta. And, uh, I

was one of three people who concept to the civil rights movement on the Emery campus. And we had an Alliance with Spellman and, uh, Morehouse across the town, but we thought we were on the right side of history, but there was another student on our campus, same class, 1965. We thought he was also on the right side of history. Name is nut Gingrich. And as I've watched the career of Newt Gingrich and seen the entire Southern Dixiecrat party switch parties dominate the Republican party, all the liberals leave the Republican party. And now we have a basically rock solid Q Lux Klan slash Republican party, which is walking in lockstep. And, uh, I just think that's one of the, uh, one of the society's responses.

Speaker 3 (01:03:52):

Can I make a comment on that? Yes. Uh, I, I do this in, because this is a rare opportunity when I can, uh, discuss the fact that I'm a Republican. One of the things that I think we've missed is taking over the Republican party. The Republican party, demographics in big cities, north and south is a very thin and all the progressive people are demo. The easiest thing in the world would be to get 10% of the people who are registered as Democrats switch their registration and become Republicans so that you could destroy this whole business of one party rule of the most chocolate di mentality in the, having the ability to pose candidates in the primaries. I mean, it's, we fought a whole civil rights battle against white primaries. When you had one party system. What we have is, is white primaries in the Republican party, the Republican party was created by black people and it's time for black people to take their party back and to be a fighting force in ER, now I can say that with impunity. Cause when I, the, when double Deonte signed a, a portrait of his, to me, he said, I'm the only Republican that can make him smile.

Speaker 4 (01:05:26):

I've heard a lot, um, over the years about how my generation doesn't really have a cause to fight for. And I've been talking with my friends about it, people about it, about how there's so many issues, we're all focused on that. Um, G B T rights or prison reform or immigration rights. And I was wondering, how do you think we can, the whole entire left can come together and be United for something instead of just against the right, but how do we all, how do we all, um, come to come together and motivate it to fight for the same thing instead of one, one side saying, well, let's fight our G T now or let's fight immigration now. Like how do we come together as one left, like right United, um, I've been talking for 25 years and there has never, ever been a time when I'm given a talk in a high school or anywhere when people say, well, what should we do?

Speaker 4 (01:06:35):

And I don't, we exactly know what we can do. And I think we should be, you know, honest about it that, uh, this is extremely difficult situation. Uh, I never thought I would ever agree with the single word that came out of the Republicans mouth. But I do agree with what Tim said about human rights and our rights are already enshrined in the United nations declaration of human rights, uh, which was signed in 1946 at world war II. So it's not, I, I think what you're talking about is what I would like to, how to get there. I don't know. And that is a group that deals with all of these issues because they're all connected instead of everybody just doing L G BT, everybody doing something else in this fracture, whether the social form is the way I don't know. But I think what we're talking about is unify our own energies being, if we wanna take a page from the SNCC book being independent, we're not gonna rely on grants.

Speaker 4 (01:07:51):

Okay. There's a book called the foundation. What is it? Foundation? The revolution will not be funded. Okay. So we can't rely on that. Um, we have to organize groups that are independent, autonomous, and will fight for human rights. And I include incarceration issues, poverty issues, education issues, all of these were actually enshrined in international law more than 50 years ago. And we have yet to see them. So I would say to you just in your life, if you were organizing in a high school, I would organize a group that would do many different things, because they're all connected

Speaker 10 (01:08:40):

Societal response. This is what the something we sometimes forget. Uh, I think, uh, I was in Atlanta 66, 67 and as stick kind Evolv in somebody pointed earlier, or asked a question, whether taking the war, taking the position on the wall was the wrong thing. The fact that the matter was we were going through a lot, we had earned a lot. Everything was kind of interconnected. Uh, all of a sudden as this phrase, black power and a whole another way of looking at the, looking at the world, cause we have been building political, Russian people to vote and the next step is building political power. But at the same time, we also, most of us at someplace else, we thought even do some more work or different kind of work. I returned to Maryland created, uh, sick, uh, operation, including, uh, following, uh, uh, Stokley, you know, trying to build a unit black front and whole host of things, assassination of cane came and the truth of the matter it's societal response, but we're going to kill people.

Speaker 10 (01:10:04):

You know, these tea party folks are threatening to bring guns. And it seems like a casual conversation, but in the late sixties, early seventies, uh, when black folks talk, talking about defending themselves or anything else, there was a reaction, a very severe reaction. You know, I joined labor movement stick died. What I thought was a very progressive union, 11 nine. And we did some marvelous things today. My city is worse often than it was then, you know, kids are not getting trained and educated the economy, which was built on industrial jobs disappeared, you know, that's, what's Detroit's problem. And on top of that, you know, it's great. There is a historical. Yeah. And that is that in addition to race in the development of society, you know, there's also a question. We got a us Senate, which is based upon a principle that true democracy is not real and that people have to be guided, uh, that shapes the conversation.

Speaker 10 (01:11:19):

Uh, democracy still is something people believe only certain people are entitled to. So we can't get prisoners, the right, we can't spend money on education because that's still like a handout it's like, so we have all these things in the country's history that have to also be overcome on top of racism, American labor group, which you can argue at periods of time was invited very dynamic, progressive social force, but it was also an exclusionary force. It gained real thought and power. When people decided when, uh, rule decided we should change the economy a little bit and allowed to organize that that still did not organize most of the working deal. It did not change, uh, uh, the democratic structure. And so black people wind up in sixties and seventies fighting. And today we got a president Iowa, which is very good and I'm very happy with that.

Speaker 10 (01:12:27):

Uh, and I do think the question to what we do now kind of difficult. Cause I thought I was doing the change back in 19 since now, when I went to 1199 and today the labor movement is in severe practice crisis. And so out there, you know, you don't see any significant progressive force uh, that can change for do very much. And I don't one don't know the answer. I please appreciate the inspirations here, but the answer in many ways lies in the question of what democracy should or ought to be, you know, in the 21st century, as opposed to what it became, you know, in the 18th.

Speaker 3 (01:13:16):

Thank

Speaker 11 (01:13:16):

You. And, uh, before we all slick, I wonder if there's any last comments the panel like to make 10.

Speaker 3 (01:13:26):

One thing I, I think we need to remember is that was shaped in that spirit of elevate and S comment was always, don't go into a community with your agenda and expecting people to buy

into it. You go into the community and ask the people, what do they want and organize around that. When you ask what is the, the next thrust we need to inquire from the, of people with the next, it's not for us to sit here in Raleigh and set up a scheme. That's been tried in Moscow as well as in, in London. And it's all fail. We need to go to the people and find out what their priorities are and shape a movement that is responsible

Speaker 12 (01:14:19):

To it. Mr. Do I don't think it's from me to, to describe, go about groups, go about things, but it certainly any individual can be great inspiration for what the students did. The student in the sixties professor. Yeah.

Speaker 6 (01:14:59):

In terms of the young lady who was in the 10th grade, we just passed the biggest piece of social legislation, 45 years in terms of healthcare. And I think progressives are disappointed in the left is disappointed cuz they wanted more. Right. But really there was no way to expect more. If you look at the movement that got Obama in the white house, he, he always said he was gonna ratchet things up in Afghanistan. So no one should say that they were surprised. He said it right. And people still voted for him at a 66 million plus clip the biggest in American history. So the only way, one thing we haven't talked about today, public policy, and so you would have to connect it to social movement that would get not just the president, but elected officials. Cause we see with healthcare, you needed 216 votes, um, to get healthcare, couldn't get a public option because you weren't gonna get the votes, uh, in the Senate.

Speaker 6 (01:15:47):

Um, we, we know the Democrats, uh, were supposedly had 60 before, uh, Scott Brown, but they really didn't have 60. Uh, so some, some of this is connected to, uh, not a naivete, but people were so passionate about getting Obama in. Um, they weren't thinking about things like mass incarceration and unemployment and sexism and racism. They figured if he got in, somehow those issues would be tackled. That was never the agenda that was ever, ever. The agenda healthcare is all you're gonna get. And it's not a single payer either. This is all you're gonna get. And even then what's interesting about our politics is that even with this flawed healthcare bill, we have tea partiers who say we're gonna assassinate the president, right? So our politics are so out of whack, we've got a healthcare bill that just got passed. That's still the biggest thing we've gotten past in 45 years.

Speaker 6 (01:16:36):

That's not nearly enough to reverse decades of social and political and economic inequality yet. There's people who are willing to set the country on fire a right wing cadre because in his healthcare bill. So that's how screwed up we are. But for, for people on the left, who are so passionate about rock Obama, people shouldn't be that disappointed in the sense that he was honest. He never said that issues of mass incarceration and racism. He never talked about racism until March 18th, 2008, when he was gonna be kicked out of the primary because of Jeremiah Wright, he scrambled and came up with the king Solomon speech where racism is 50 50, and everyone applauded and cried and said, this is the best speech on racist Lincoln. So we, we, we, we shouldn't be surprised at where we are politically. We shouldn't be surprised,

Speaker 10 (01:17:26):

But you sure what was second?

Speaker 6 (01:17:30):

Absolutely. Absolutely. I don't disagree to that. I'm saying we have to be so reminded about just where we are.

Speaker 10 (01:17:36):

Professor. We, we talk all the time about how we reach the young. What you don't understand is that the young voted is that says you where and law racism up. You cannot ask the young to participate when you bash who they are and what they do.

Speaker 6 (01:17:56):

I'm I'm not bash, I'm not bashing.

Speaker 10 (01:17:58):

You cannot ask the young to be involved with where this, this act should be moving to, but we don't give them the credit for who they are. We have to meet them where they are and hope that we can rise together. We, you have to stop bashing the president.

Speaker 6 (01:18:12):

Actually, I don't, I don't disagree with the whole thing about the young and I wasn't bashing the president. What I was saying is that people can't be surprised at where we are given, who was elected that's all. So anything is let let's face the people, everybody on the left and black people, especially we have the right and the democracy to criticize the president of the United let's let's face. There there's, there's a difference between, um, some kind of right win criticism of the president and just critiquing the president. He's not God, he can be critiqued

Speaker 11 (01:18:40):

Folks. Uh, people are coming in for the next seminar. Uh, Donnie would like to speak

Speaker 4 (01:18:49):

The reason why everybody is here to talk about this unbelievable organization. If there is no reason unearth that it can happen again, everybody thinks, oh, this was a singular event. There will be another Ernest. I want people to leave here. Not I have my own criticisms of Obama, but I don't think that necessarily needs to be discussed right here. And now in this, in this meeting, what I wanna say is that I'm sure that people in January, 1960 had no idea that one month late, everything was going to change and everything can again. And of course it's up to us.