

SNCC 50th Anniversary Conference  
Shaw University, Raleigh NC, April 2010  
Transcript Video Recording #9  
(Raw, unedited, no annotation)

Speaker 1 (00:00:17):

Uh, good afternoon. Good afternoon. Oh, can you hear me in the back?

Speaker 1 (00:00:23):

All right. Uh, the panelists are still coming, but, uh, we have a lot of people here and, uh, we want to be able to make sure that at some point, hopefully after the presentations, we can have some questions. My name is Cortland Cox. The program says Eleanor Holmes Norton, but the Congresswoman is schedule for business in Washington, DC. And therefore, um, as far as we know, she's still there. Uh, in Washington, this panel is called more than a hamburger. And I think those who were there listening to Julian bond this morning heard that one of the things about SNCC was that we did not only pigeonhole ourselves to civil rights. Uh, there was tremendous pressure, uh, to, for civil rights organizations, just to pigeons hold themselves to civil rights issues. But one of the things that SNCC did was we broke barriers on the issues of civil liberties.

Speaker 1 (00:01:32):

We spoke out on the issue of Vietnam war and, uh, Julian was very modest this morning. He got kicked out of the legislature because his position or SNS position on Vietnam, we spoke out on issues of, of women's rights. We spoke out on issues, uh, of, of gay rights. We spoke out of many issues that went beyond the, the concerns of civil rights, because at the end of the day, they were all the question of human rights. So that this is what the focus of this, uh, panel, this seminar. This is our focus. Uh, right now we, we have two of our, I think, five panelists. And so we'll start with the panelists we do have, and when they come, they will fill in, uh, Doris Crenshaw is the, uh, the first go first Darris mm-hmm <affirmative> okay. Darris Crenshaw will be our first speaker. And, um, after Darris comes, we'll have, uh, um, after Darris speaks, we'll have Leo wise and as the other panelist comes in, we'll be able to, um, to ask them to speak. And we're gonna ask each panelist to give a, a bit about themselves. This is actually the first workshop I've ever been to where the, the, the workshop is Kathleen.

Speaker 1 (00:03:02):

We, we are, and people are so eager and really pleased. Um, we're gonna ask each panelist to give a bit about themselves before they, you talk about, uh, make their points that they wanna make this afternoon. You know, who they are, where they worked so forth so that people can have some context. So Darris,

Speaker 2 (00:03:25):

Thank you, Lin.

Speaker 3 (00:03:27):

Thank you very much, Lin. Okay,

Speaker 2 (00:03:32):

Sit beside.

Speaker 3 (00:03:32):

Do you me hear

Speaker 2 (00:03:33):

Me sit he's in a wheelchair.

Speaker 1 (00:03:35):

Sit, let him sit at the end.

Speaker 3 (00:03:37):

A charge to keep

Speaker 2 (00:03:39):

Somebody.

Speaker 3 (00:03:40):

I have

Speaker 2 (00:03:41):

Frank Smith,

Speaker 3 (00:03:42):

Frank, a God to glorify. That was a song we learned as we remembers of the youth council of the NAACP, a young man named Frank bra. His father was part of the postal workers union, bro, AB to us just, we became very fond of that. My sister and I who's here somewhere were asked by, uh, Mrs. Rosa parks to become part of the youth council of the NAACP. I was 12 and she was 11. Um, at the time of her arrest, I was vice president of the NAACP because the young man who was president was drafted into the army and it rose up as many of you my age know at that time in Alabama, the NAACP was not the most popular organization to be in. So they, we were few and far between and the officers rotated. I want to tell you a little bit about the climate in Montgomery. In 1954, there was a great deal of fear where men were afraid to look at white men. Women told their children, their girls to come in the house by dark. Another one, our panelists grand pat is making it worse. Also from Montgomery, Alabama,

Speaker 3 (00:05:22):

We would, they, we were rushed in the house because they feared that we would be kidnapped and raped by the white men.

Speaker 3 (00:05:32):

Black men who worked for the city of Montgomery were not allowed. It was against the law to give them a paycheck. So one of Gwen's and my sister's friends, Gladys daddy work for the Montgomery waterworks company. So he would have to stand on the court on Monroe street every Friday, and prayed that the white man that they had written his check to written his name in would cash the check and give him the money that was in 1954 in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Park's husband. You haven't read about much, but he was very active in the NAACP and was part of a group of people who were, who were active with the Scottsboro boy. Some of you heard about the Scottsboro case. Also shortly after that, a young teenage boy named Jeremiah Reid was a caring groceries for, um, a white merchant. And he delivered groceries in the white neighborhood.

Speaker 3 (00:06:43):

And one of the white women had, uh, engaged him in her pleasure. Should we speak? The neighbors became very suspicious. And they found out that they were having an intimate relationship. And during that year they executed Jeremiah Reed. That was the feeling that was the climate Mrs. Parks and the women of leadership in that community talked about freedom of our people, our right to vote. And we must have dignity and pride, and we had no choice, but the fight, the evils of segregation and discrimination. So Mrs. Parks was arrested. My sister, I and I, and a lot of the teenage kids passed out the leaf leaflet made by Joanne Robinson. I wanna emphasize too that, um, and I think Gwen knew Mrs. Um, Joanne Robinson, but a lady named

miss Dr. Mary FA Burke, whose husband was a jeweler, was denied membership in the women's. Um, your, you have eight more minutes.

Speaker 3 (00:08:07):

Okay. <laugh> all right. But at any rate, she founded the women's political part caucus because they wouldn't allowed to have become a part of the, the voter's league. So, so we had a passion for freedom in Montgomery at an early age, there was a lot of activity that centered around civil rights and equality for women, et cetera, when we were young. So when the hamburger deal started and the sit-ins, we had already attended the Highlander folk school, we'd already been a part of the youth, March for integration, where we talked about dignity and the compassion for humankind. That was the first time I saw Harry rete. And I thought he was the most beautiful thing in the world. Thought he was born

Speaker 4 (00:08:58):

<laugh>,

Speaker 3 (00:09:02):

But it was be, we, it was instilled in us that it was the teachings of God. It was our mission as Christians to serve our people. And at that time, the older people always referred to black, our people as our people. I hope that some of us will stop resting on our laws and began to talk about our people. Again, it's become very fashionable, be everything but supporting the black cause as we go down to drain. But I hope you will. And I want to challenge the young people and tell you a story I caught in, and it's gonna take two minutes about a young girl who came from a very poor family. And she invited all of her relatives to come to her graduation, except her mother. She did not ask her mother because her mother's hands were burned and disfigured.

Speaker 3 (00:10:09):

And when spiritual and when a family got to the graduation, they said, where's your mother. And she said, well, I couldn't invite her because you know, her hands are all dis figured and she's been burned. So I couldn't have asked her to come. They said, well, why do her hands look like that? She said, I don't know. They said, why don't you ask her? So she went home and she asked her mother, and she said, one day you were playing in the kitchen and I didn't have time to get water. So I used my hands to put the fire out and look how pretty your skin is. Look, what you've grown up to be. The question is, what are you doing with your hands today? And what are you going to do? What are you going to do with your hands, with the issues that face you today? We have a new Klux Klan. You sign up for the tea party and they they're addressing the same issues. They're saying, bring back the Confederates. And we are gonna have to sing louder and louder that we should overcome, and we are in it to win it. And we are in, what are you going to do? History is visiting you

Speaker 3 (00:11:38):

Take my eight minutes.

Speaker 4 (00:11:41):

No, you did good. You partly tell me when I have five and then one please.

Speaker 3 (00:11:47):

Good

Speaker 4 (00:11:47):

Afternoon. Good afternoon. Lunch. What

Speaker 5 (00:11:52):

Is that sleep? It's so, so wonderful to be here today with old colleagues and new ones, and especially to see these bright faces, young folk so much front. Yes. So I'm gonna speak a little bit

today. Um, you know, we all have stories to tell, but I really took this theme of more than a hamburger to also try to speak to some lessons. So I'm Leah wise, I came into the movement and well into the movement actually at age three, I was walking picket lines with my parents in California, where I grew up, which were about union strikes and stuff, and fighting for racial justice there as a kid. But I came into the movement in the south, really when I was in school in Madison, Wisconsin, Vicky greener is somewhere in the room. She was one of the people, uh, there very active in the struggle and students, there had projects in Gould, Arkansas, and we were a part of a black student organization.

Speaker 5 (00:12:55):

That first was called a self concerned black students, and then concerned black people. And we were affiliated with SNCC and we came into a, a partnership pretty much around, uh, fighting against the war in Vietnam and particularly the racism toward black soldiers and the privilege that that whole deferment system, um, did toward mostly black students versus white students who got all kind of deferments. And I came into the movement, um, having heard Stanley wise and Stokley Carmichael speak Stanley, who later became my husband and was thrilled to hear about the work and the experiences that they were having, reaching out to other struggles beyond the United States. And I have to say that, um, passion and that understanding that we were fighting a system that found folks close to itself in far away to oppress in order to bring privilege and wealth to certain sectors. So what I wanted to speak to today are a couple of points.

Speaker 5 (00:14:09):

One is, um, after coming into the, uh, work with SNCC, which was 67 rap was, uh, elected chairman and 67 and Stanley was elected the executive secretary that year. And I was, um, in negotiations with, uh, SNCC Stanley and Donald Stone had the responsibilities around having SNCC think about restoring collecting remembrances and archival materials of their movement and struggle and went across the south Hollis Watkins took me all over Mississippi collecting. This was sort of the first planned effort for the state historical society of Wisconsin. And later on, we Snickers formed with Vincent Harding, Dory Ladner was there William Porter, the Martin Luther king Jr. Uh, library documentation project. That again, went across the south into communities, helping people reflect on and, and, uh, participate in recording their own history. And we did it with a mission about this is our story. This is our story that has been suppressed.

Speaker 5 (00:15:24):

And I have to say two, I wanna speak to two mentors. One was Ella baker and the other was Faye Bellamy. And when I first talked to Ms. Baker, you know, we had some arrogance being young folk and some of that arrogance was around it, um, that the movement, anybody over 30 was irrelevant. But when I talked to Ms. Baker, it seemed like folk hadn't bothered to ask her, well, what did she do in her youth? And then to hear the stories of the Southern Negro youth conference and all the organizing and voter registration work and taking, um, trucks out to the, uh, rural communities and doing dramas for people to encourage folk, to overcome fear and to participate that all we were not the first ones and we are not, and it didn't stop either in 1968. And that's another thing I wanna lift up today.

Speaker 5 (00:16:26):

So what I wanna say is what I wanted to speak to about the, um, looking at the international perspective. And I'm saying these pieces, because these are things that we've lifted up in the work I have done since one of the things that SNCC did, um, in, in terms of its international solidarity was a boycott Gulf oil corporation campaign, which was to support the liberation struggle in Angola. Well, not only was this, um, you know, one of those things that a lot of folk who supported SNCC from outside the region were like a little nervous about what are they doing, but it also cost us friends because one of the major supporters for SNCC in Atlanta was a brother who ran the Gulf station on hunter street. And we had to mesh this challenge of how do we support this campaign. And yet a friend and support of the movement will suffer for it.

Speaker 5 (00:17:32):

So I wanted to lift that story up because as you take up your own struggles in your own communities, you will run a cup against these contradictions. And it is important to be mindful about keeping as the song says, your eyes on the prize, but valuing your relationships. And that's one of the lessons I wanna lift up about the student nonviolent coordinating committee that if you will have noticed, as we've had these conversations down in rooms today, there is a relationship that SNCC folk had that regarded each other as family, regardless of the squabbles that we had. And, you know, we all have, you know, our families are now, we all got our own squabbles, but we, we have three minutes. I God. Um, so what I wanted to, um, speak to about that though, is that the importance of community and the importance of relationship, because when SNCC had to become dismantled and I lived through that period in a day to day basis, we had to face the REM the ravages of COINTELPRO of cha pain and Ralph Featherstone getting blown up of folks, following us of rap, being harassed all the time.

Speaker 5 (00:18:55):

And it was eroding our, our own psyches. And as people pulled away from the community as human beings, we suffered for the lack of the community we had built. So these are things that I wanna speak to as in the course of doing work relationship is everything. And so I want you and principle relationship. So I wanna jump to two things. So we don't have much time. Um, and that is that what is important about the international dimension that, um, and perspectives that SNCC had was caring about people across the borders, whether it was across Southern borders or across us borders, as we cared for ourselves, we understood that this was a global situation. And what is important is to look at today, the context of the south. I brought this little map just as a reminder, cuz some folk have kind of left the south and don't really know what our region is today, but it looks like this, the south is now a global region.

Speaker 5 (00:20:00):

There are people here from over a hundred countries in almost every community, not the same folk in each community, but across the region, we are a global community. And that means we have to pay attention to our fate is now with the fate of those who also are experiencing the level of terror that we experienced in the sixties and in some communities still experience. So this is an important thing for you. All that the landscape has changed, but what's important is the role of the south. The strategic role of the south in the democratic promise of this country has not changed. And that is the message that I wanna bring so that these questions about immigration, about how we tell our stories about how we connect and understand each other's reality in order to understand what we're now facing. These are things today that are important to understand something like the north American free trade agreement that doesn't have a racial face, but the racism that it generates in our communities and disparities is humongous. So it's a new challenge. And how you find that out is to be bringing people together as SNCC folk, we're able to come together across region to have dialogue and to better understand their reality. We didn't start off with the knowledge that you've heard shared today, but people grew into this. It's a transformational process. It's a spiritual process. This work of justice is a spiritual enterprise and I hope you all will take that to heart. Thanks.

Speaker 3 (00:21:49):

Oh, good afternoon. It's really good to be here. And, uh, though, um, when we run SNCC, we say don't trust anybody over 30. I'm now 67 and I don't want to be around anybody. Who's over 30 <laugh> I wanna be around young people. I'm happy to see projects south and the youth, uh, committee just raise your hand. I work with them. I'm on one of their advisors from Atlanta and all of these other young faces. I'm just happy to be here because we are really depending on you to take this torch and run on, we are gonna be here to help and to assist. But a lot of us, we're not physically able and some of us are really mentally tired, but we are gonna be there cuz we know

you gonna accept the challenge. And the challenge is tremendous because our community as a whole, uh, even across the diaspora, uh, is in ruins and um, because of the bling bling.

Speaker 3 (00:22:50):

And I wanna just kind of move around quickly, uh, because, uh, the bling bling is not just with the inner city youth, you know, with the chains and the goal and all of that. The bling bling is also with some of us old grown people who began to measure our lives by cars that we drive or the square footage of our homes or our houses, cuz sometimes they're not homes. That's bling bling too. And when you lose sight of your values and what the other speakers the sisters have said before you that the values, the, the community, the, the support, the trust, uh, and get caught up with the bling bling, the ruins are gonna forever lie there. And so I see the challenge today is to clean up. And for those of us who are religious, perhaps you can get my metaphor, whether you're Christian or Jew.

Speaker 3 (00:23:39):

Cause I know that these young people today are not grasshopper. I know some of you consider yourselves, Joshua and Calebs and maybe we have to have a generation of Joshua and Calebs every day or every year or every period. But I want you to know that these folks up here and our SN people and our friends and our community, we show enough where Joshua and Caleb, we marched over there and marched around, shouted the slogans back power ungawa and all of that until Louis Walls came tumbling down and then we opened up those doors and some of us walked through and we walked through, we got caught up with the bling bling and that's where we are today with the bling bling and the, the ruins. And I wanna say something also, and this is not even on my paper, uh, about the rap, the negative rap, and I can't help, but to try and make a connection with my brother rap cause rap was a rapper.

Speaker 3 (00:24:37):

Rap was a poet. I could hear him now. I, I said, I was, we call him rap brother, rap, who are you? And he will say, oh, I'm the scribe who writes on the win? You know, I'm the blind man who sees the rainbow. You know, he could talk that talk and it was meaningful. And, and then all of a sudden we get rap. That's negative with the word rap, which I think is a part of that whole harassment that he has suffered through. Not only for these last 10 years, rap started suffering ever since he went to, to, uh, a football game in Montgomery, Alabama when he was 12 years old, when a white boy shot him with a little BB gun. So you have to understand that there are consequences when you stand up for freedom, but let me in. And, and, and Courtland is still playing that role.

Speaker 3 (00:25:22):

He's always been our teacher. Uh, let me know when I get to three minutes, because what I've prepared to say prepared to say is that you don't have to run to a movement. One of the problems I think we did have in the sixties is that we thought we had to leave college and run and search for a movement. The movement is wherever you are, wherever you are, whatever your position, whatever you are doing, that's where the movement is. And we have to make differences in rippling effects, you know, a trillion times over. And one thing that we did learn when we were in school, in, in college, like you was that the college itself was a movement. We had to turn that whole paradigm upside down. You know, we were brainwashed some of us and I've been in this movement since I was nine years old and have been a hellan ever since, but some of us went to college to run away from our community to escape our community.

Speaker 3 (00:26:23):

I think Doris's illustration talks about this mama with the Bermingham, you know, but we began to turn that around and say that education. I want you to remember this word, because this was a key word for us. Education has to be relevant for the building and the uplifting of our community and our community that Leah talks about is global. Okay. And if you are not doing anything and

you're not getting the education that you're gonna go back and Jennifer laws, I don't know if she's here, but she said it so well. She was a biology major and we were at Tuskegee Macon county, 87% in black. And she studied pathology all in the science lab and all of this business. And she said, my studying pathology means nothing. If I cannot do anything about the well water and the rule of little Texas Macon county.

Speaker 3 (00:27:12):

So your education has to be relevant for us. We fought for black studies. We didn't have to go and run and search for a movement. We fought for black studies. We fought for African studies. We fought for African liberation day. We fought for majors in those, uh, uh, in those fields. We began to see and throw off that, that negative consciousness that we had about ourselves being black. And we began to see and rap bless his heart can say it better than anybody. Black is beautiful. You know, black is angel food cake is black and angel of white and devil foods. Cake is black. And then he said, Santa Claus will come down a chimney down, a city, city, black chimney, and still come out as white as Knight, a whites day, all that. And that had a, a tremendous impact because we then began to know who we were, that we come from a culture that we are human, that we have roots, as we were say in Alabama, that we are not some Negro, we're not some kind of rational or racialized. We are people with feelings. And we got to do that again. And I'm asking white folks to come, go and do your internal thinking and talk about what does it mean to be white? What is whiteness? What is white skin privilege? How is it? We got tea partiers in this period of time. When they, when, in my period of time and Lisa crackers wore sheets, these crackers that they walking around, balling up with tea bag, hanging down, we got,

Speaker 3 (00:28:51):

Okay, we gotta stop that. I mean, I'm asking my white comrades, just like I ass back in the sixties, step up in there, find out what's making them think. Cause these crackers are mean, you know, they talking about people running for president talking about let's reload. If, if rap had done, why can't they? We put the H rap brown riot acting on asses. I'm about to get turned out up in here because we are in serious conditions. And let me wrap up, let me wrap up. Cause I'm still trying to stay on the theme of education and I'm talking to young people, hamburger, okay. That's which is more than a hamburger, more than a hamburger, a lot

Speaker 6 (00:29:29):

Of education.

Speaker 3 (00:29:31):

Let me say the three prongs for more than a hamburger are in terms of your strategy is politics,

Speaker 6 (00:29:37):

Microphone,

Speaker 3 (00:29:38):

Economics, and education. All of that. Those are the three prongs that we need to look at. At least those three prongs and make a, a, a strategy around them in terms of advancing our struggle. And I'm telling young people as we go to school and I wanna call out her son, cuz he says it so eloquently in his book. Bloody allows that there are those in my generation and under me. And I hope y'all don't follow who obtain law degrees to seek judgeships and not to serve justice. There are those of us who claim to become teachers, but they become misguided educators. There are those of us who obtain political science degrees and they became politicians and not public servants. Those who define their answer, their essence by the status and material. Things are nothing but bling blings. We have to get back together. We have to operate and function with love and a collective community. And we have to deal with these reins in our community. And I'm convinced we're gonna rebuild that wall. We're gonna rebuild that wall of

dignity mutual respect that is gonna protect us from the ever ongoing slot of racism until we get rid of it. Thank you.

Speaker 4 (00:31:19):

I don't have any, I have some your doors.

Speaker 7 (00:31:29):

Yeah. It's a beautiful, beautiful sight to see all your faces. I just wanna thank everybody for coming to this event. I mean this conference, because what you do is give a sense of tremendous energy appreciation and possibility. So thank you for being here. Uh, we only have 10 minutes, so let me get down to the point. I something about myself. I was, is there anybody here who was a student in the Albany movement who went to jail? Well, there's probably someone

Speaker 7 (00:32:01):

I was in high school in 1963 and I opened the paper in tell 'em who you Pennsylvania. And my name is Kathleen K Cleaver. I'm sorry. My name is Kathleen K Cleaver in 1963. I was in high school in Pennsylvania, opened the newspaper, Philadelphia inquire and saw these photographs of three women in the back of a Patty wagon, going to jail with big smiles on their faces. And I read the story about them being in jail and singing in jail. And I said, they're on the front lines, challenging racism and segregation. I was from Alabama, but I, I could not imagine anything more courageous and more bold. And I wanted to do that. I wanted to be there while I was in high school. By the time I got to actually connect with SNCC and join SNCC, it was in June of 1966. I was a college student in Barnard, in New York and black power had been the new call for the movement.

Speaker 7 (00:32:50):

And I saw that and I immediately responded when, um, I heard that, um, Carmichael had described it as the, uh, let me just skip over that. The, uh, <laugh> the movement for self determination. It was a phenomenal transforming moment in my experience. And I think in this country's experience, one thing that Carmichael said that I think is not widely enough reported is that he said he learned something in Mississippi. He said, I never learned from the most brilliant professors that I sat under. He said, I learned how not to be ashamed of my blackness. That's part of the black power movement to destroy the shame. Another part as Adam Clayton Powell had said, our purpose must be to implement human rights to demand. These God-given rights is to seek black power, the power to build black institutions. And so I have been formed by educated, by led by the black power struggle and the development of black power.

Speaker 7 (00:34:01):

One thing August Wilson said was that it for him provided ways to alter our relationship to the society in which we lived. And perhaps more importantly, searching for ways to alter the shared expectations of ourselves and our community of people. Now, I know that many of you here have either studied or know about the civil rights movement. Some of you have studied and know about the black power movement. And those of you have done this kind of studying have been exposed to this interpretation. Civil rights is good and black power is bad. Civil rights was peaceful and loving and black power is violent and hateful. Well, that's a bunch of incorrect analysis I want you to see and I want you to understand and I've listen, I've, I've talked about this and I wanted to join a movement called civil rights. And I talked about a movement called black power. But what I think we have to understand is that this is a continuum, amen. It's a social movement for empowerment of oppressed and exploited people. It's a social movement, whether or not you see yourself as colonized or whether you see yourself as segregated, uh, we're very much, uh, on the same page, but what I see, and I think I'd like to have more people be able to shift this analysis of what either of them, this continuum was a form of very powerful, extraordinarily significant community resistance, community resistance, leading to community revolution



Speaker 7 (00:35:39):

And whether or not you're in SNCC or you're in COFO or you're in the black Panther party for self defense or the deacons for defense or whichever organization. It was. And there were countless organizations and people moved from organization to organization. And when I say black Panther party for self defense, that's only one of the versions of the black Panther party that came into being, I see us, these activists, these militants, these, uh, subversives, whatever the government wants to call us as delegates of this community in resistance, without the community resistance, we couldn't have had those organizations and without the sense of revolutionizing and I mean revolutionizing from the sense of the revolution that was sabotaged at the end of the civil war as Jim foreman would T tell us in his hour long and two hour long speeches, beginning with the 14th amendment, uh, that community revolution of that social revolution that was sabotaged.

Speaker 7 (00:36:34):

We were picking it up and carrying it on giving some meaning to the 14th amendment and the 15th amendment, which gave, uh, black men the right to which prevented states from denying black men, the right to vote. And so I would like to have you think about it in that way and recognize that that community and not the individuals, this is a culture and a country that likes to elevate people into celebrities because of their sacrifice and their commitment. So you have someone like, oh, Martin Luther king led all of you. I, I couldn't even believe it when Clayborne Clarkson who's a professional historian told me that historians think all of us, the whole movement were Lulu tenants of Martin Luther king. No, no. It was king that ran it and we were all his helpers. So I want you to have this sense of it's collective it's communal it was resistance. And it was something that everyone participated in it from children to old people, just cuz you didn't necessarily go on that March. If you were the person standing in Lowes county, watching amen. Watching the March go by and thinking about the fact you gotta go back home to tent, cuz you've been kicked off the plantation you're part of that movement and that energy and that power has influenced all of us, kept us going and I hope it will keep you going. Thank you.

Speaker 8 (00:38:14):

Good afternoon,

Speaker 9 (00:38:16):

Afternoon.

Speaker 8 (00:38:18):

My name is Frank Smith and uh, I spent, uh, several years in Mississippi as a member of a student nonviolent coordinating committee. Uh, I'm gonna take a couple of my 10 minutes to introduce my son. Who's here with me today. Tarek IU deli Smith, where who teaches at Fisk university should be here somewhere with my grandson, Solomon they're in the back. I drove to, uh, I flew down to Nashville, Tennessee and drove 12 hours with them in the car with me to make sure they got here on time. Because I think that's how you passed the torch. You got to put in the work put in the time I, uh, started out, I went to Morehouse college in 1959 when Atlanta was very segregated. Uh, I was the time I put the key in the door. I was the most educated kid in my family. I, uh, left a plantation in Newland, Georgia with no running water and outdoor toilet.

Speaker 8 (00:39:21):

By the end of my freshman year, I was in jail in Atlanta and Atlanta civil rights movement. And I can say without doubt that Frank Holloway and who was here, Bob Matts and I picketed the richest department of storm board and anybody in the city of Atlanta. <laugh> wouldn't let 'em go until they integrated that lunch counter and agreed to hire some black people that was not about hamburgers. It was about forcing them to give us what we deserved, which was the right to, and lemme just say, for those of you who live in glorious Atlanta now and talk about it as the Mecca of the south. At the time that we went to the time I went to college, there were black

police officers in Atlanta, but they couldn't arrest white people. They could arrest white people, but they had to hold them until a white officer showed up because they weren't allowed to testify.

Speaker 8 (00:40:07):

'em against them in court. Now you could go to Rich's department store and buy a min coat. If you had the money, which MISSEY could do Dr. Ya's wife, but she couldn't try the coat on in there because they didn't allow black people in the dressing room. And so a few weeks ago, when I was in Atlanta for the 50th reunion of the Atlanta civil rights movement, one of those people out there told me that he said, you know, we were doing all right till y'all came up here and stirred up everybody and got this all, you know, I got old now I'm sick of these people. So I said, I said, if we had been listening to you, we'd still be riding the back of the bus, right? But the first civil rights movement demonstration, I went on the city of Atlanta. I went to the Southern bell telephone companies to apply for a job climbing telephone poles now was a freshman at Morehouse college.

Speaker 8 (00:40:51):

And back in those days, you had to be smart to go to Morehouse. <laugh>. Now I don't, I can't speak on that subject. Now I did not go to college to learn how to climb telephone poles. <laugh> I could have stayed in Newton, Georgia and climbed telephone poles. We went to college so we could get an education, frankly. I wanted to be a lawyer. But the fact of the matter is that they wouldn't even allow us to apply for a job climbing telephone poles. If we had tried to apply for a job to be the president of government affairs or the head of the office of whatever it is, they probably would've called a crazy Patty wagon, had us locked up. And I told this story to one of my 13 year old grandchildren in Washington a few weeks ago, she said to me, she said, grandfather, what the good did it do you to go to college?

Speaker 8 (00:41:33):

If you couldn't get a job, your folks could have saved your money. <laugh> they said, why did you go to college then that for the first time, I think I had a breakthrough with them to understand why we did what we did. And so, yeah, it was more than just a hamburger. It was about those of us who wanted to have a better life for ourselves and for our children. And for you, uh, putting, taking the time out of our schedule to go do this. And for me it took five and a half years. And I'll tell you I'm paying for it on the other end now. Cause I gotta work a little bit longer to bake up for what I lost while I was over there. Cause I got to make sure these grandchildren got some money to go to college with. So I'm working on that.

Speaker 8 (00:42:09):

Now I left after two years to go to the Mississippi Delta to become a full-time organizer for SNCC become one of a few people who left school. And by the way we picked, uh, Marshall county to go to because Marshall county was 76% black Marshall county during, after, during reconstruction, following the civil war had had a black sheriff and a black mayor. And we knew that before I went over there, Jim foreman and I, and others sat down, did all these analysis and all that stuff that peacock said, we used to do it. And uh, so we knew that already, but I got over there and I met a man over there who actually was a descendant of an African American civil war soldier. And that when I get a little older, I'm gonna tell people that I knew, then that one day I was gonna be living in Washington, DC.

Speaker 8 (00:42:53):

And I was gonna build a monument for those soldiers because nobody ever done it. <laugh> but I'm not old enough to lie like that. Yet. I got two more years before I can get to that point. <laugh> but in a couple more years, I'm gonna tell you that I always knew I was gonna do that colon. It was in the back of my mind. It just took me a long time. I had to go to Washington, get elected to the city council, spend the time to raise the money, declare all this stuff, get a bill through the Congress of the United States. But I always knew I was gonna do it. I'm practicing

for the day when I can lie about it. I'm not old enough for that yet. But the fact of the matter is that by the time I left Mississippi in 1968, the schools were integrated.

Speaker 8 (00:43:25):

Black people were registered in voting. I know because I drove these kids from strike city to the schoolhouse and I met one of 'em LA a few months ago. One of these young ladies who now has graduated and retired from the school system in, in, down, in, in, uh, Mississippi. And she told me about the time I drove 'em to schools so they could integrate the schools in Leland, Mississippi. Uh, she said, and uh, so, uh, schools were integrated. Black people were getting elected to office down there today. Mississippi has more black elected officials than any other state than the union. So when people talk about what happened to SN, well, maybe we finished our job. Amen. Maybe we did what we had set out to do finished our work. And it was time for those of us to get on with our lives. I had always promised myself I was gonna finish school.

Speaker 8 (00:44:09):

I went back and got a PhD. My wife wanted to go to medical school. She went back and finished medical school and we started a family. And then I went to Washington. DC started a new life, used my organizing skills in DC to get elected to the DC city council first to school board and the city council and took up some of the things, some of the things that we started to do in Mississippi, those of you who know me know the last thing I did over there was I started, I built some houses for a family up in for several families up in the death of little community. We built them ourselves. We bought the bricks, laid the mortar, built them ourselves. And as a council member, I started something called the homestead housing preservation program. We put thousands of people in the houses in DC that they currently own.

Speaker 8 (00:44:50):

And what is one of the house, the hottest housing markets in the country, thousands of people own millions of dollars worth of property. I learned that in the Mississippi Delta applied those skills. And I might just say, president Barack Obama used those same skills that we learned in the Mississippi Delta to get organized. So we get himself elected president of the United States and I'm happy to say I supported him and glad to know. I live long enough to see, uh, him be able to do that, uh, during my lifetime. So I wanted to just say, add one other point, which is that we saw a problem. We went out to try to solve it. We put ourselves on the line, we sacrificed to make it happen. And when it was over, some of us went on to do something else that was very different. And so, uh, we were able to not only, uh, get elected office in, in Washington DC, but I would dare say that we built the largest black middle class in America, in Washington, DC.

Speaker 8 (00:45:44):

That's right now, many of them have now moved to the suburbs to what we call ward nine and prince Georges county. But there's no question about it. And how did that happen? Because Marion Barry, who was the first president of SNCC, by the way, the first president of the student non violent coordinator committee, we got him elected mayor of the city. Ivanhoe Donaldson was his staff director. I was on the city council. We all, we ran the whole government. We ran the city in Washington, DC is the nation nation capital. You all y'all know that, right?

Speaker 8 (00:46:14):

That's the nations capital. We ran the joint for almost 20 years. And so, so, and, and we used that to help make this country a better place. And I think that's really where, uh, where we've left these things for what is now for what I now see as a new generation of young politicians, uh, they call themselves the Joshua generation. Uh, we know that because president Barack Obama declared himself to be the leader of the Joshua generation down in Selma. I wasn't there, but I saw it on television. He said, you all at a Moses generation and you all had brought us to this point. It's the Joshua generation's job to take us to that point. Well, let me just say something

about Joshua. Joshua did lead the children to the promised land, but Joshua, before going in sent Caleb into the promise land as to go to, he did the security advanced work for it.

Speaker 8 (00:47:03):

Caleb comes back and he says to Joshua, well, I got good news and bad news. The good news is the lists of land and milk. And honey, the bad news. They got some giants, some Republicans over there. I mean some giants over there and they loaded for bear. So if the Joshua generation think they gonna get there without fighting, I got some news for them. Okay. I hope you're up for the job. I believe you are. You certainly have had good preparation. You've had good training. You've had some good examples and we've set out a path for you that I hope is good enough for you to be able to solve these problems. May God bless all of you. God bless America. Thank you.

Speaker 10 (00:47:51):

Hello. My name is Eddie brown. Um, I was involved in stick since about 19 62 63 and not understanding the fact of all this gray hair and whatever. I was still re involved. Um, I started off with an organization called nag, a student nonviolent coordinating committee. Some of these people up here were my friends and colleagues during the time and went from nag to stick. Uh, as a part of nag, we integrated the route 40, which was the bus line that carried people who were the UN to walk to Washington DC, but who had no building to just stop along the way to get a meal or to live. Cause at that time was a segregated town and we decided to go and try and do something to go out.

Speaker 10 (00:49:26):

I started off as a student in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and became involved in trying to desegregate the facilities at that city got involved in demonstrations. I was a student of Southern university, got involved in, uh, trying to dis outraged about the situation that black people, black abuse found itself here and that the white community, uh, either was responsible for. But the very middle had created in terms of the situation. So we got, uh, a call as students in bad Rouge to go down and launch a campaign against segregation in the city. As it turned out, um, someone at the schools started a city process. It did process a CREs, which was in a store that sold all medium underpriced goods, two blacks, and had they had a counter there lunch counter, and you could not eat at the lunch counter.

Speaker 10 (00:51:29):

So the first group went down and sating at the lunch counter and uh, other people got an idea that maybe it was a good thing to go ahead and do that. So we started off, at least I started off that morning, supposedly going to school and decided that baby boy was the next target. It should be the bus company. And we went to the bus company. We sat in and, uh, gave the advice of our by father in Paris and everybody else who had told me, boy, don't go down and get picked up at that best boy, go down there. <laugh> and I went down there just like they had written instructions to go out there, went down left school, went to the grey house bus station. We sat in at the grey house bus station and we probably arrested and went to jail.

Speaker 10 (00:52:48):

Uh, that was my earliest beginning in terms of involvement with the movement such as such, um, came out of a, attempted to go back to school. And they said that, uh, society did not understand the Southern way of, uh, of living in the south. And maybe I should go to school elsewhere. So they'd probably put outta school. Well, I had exactly prepared for all of that. So I was thrown outta school and then question became, what, or what did you do? Whether what did I go down to school? So I wrote every school in United States said, uh, I'm an child who disobeyed the law was part of school, blah blah. Finally got scholarship to go to a school in Washington, DC called Southern university, not Howard university, right. Went to Howard RO lab immediately felt there was some other radical people. <laugh> a whole bunch of, so got

involved there and ultimately ended up as the member of the student of fire quality committee, which was, uh, a long way from trying to get a hamburger a long way from trying to do anything.

Speaker 10 (00:54:54):

So I left that yeah. School schools, a very exciting experience. I learned the, um, as the result marked the civil rights program roughly oh, for a number for years and got out, but I'd been bit by the bug at that point in time. And the next thing to do was to look for some more radical, radical activity to get in. So I waited guy join the pan African movement. So I worked for Liberia, South Africa, Southern Africa and cetera. Uh, then finally I got involved in, uh, went back to school, finally decided to achieve what was my, uh, I, uh, original goal going school, decided go, go back, go to law. School, went to law school, decided I really didn't want be a lawyer. Uh, I said, no, it's not my life. I'm not gonna be a lawyer. So, um, still bit bitten by this urge. And I went to Mississippi right now. I was in Mississippi. I set up two organizations. One was the human rights organization and the other one was, uh, organization for the development I did. Okay. I did that for a number of years. Society was time to go out, get out of all of that time and work, get back to living my life again. So I went to move to Atlanta after Mississippi and decided that what I'd do is, uh, I became all things. So all things I never con be doing. So I become an engineer.

Speaker 10 (00:57:40):

So, uh, while working for a group called the voter registration project, I left there after four or five years. And we joined a lot of engineering firm and became responsible for building bridges and all kinds of things. Um, finally retired from that and came back and started doing various things to keep a kind of in the struggle for, or the interest and benefit of I you today. So I finally did that and I got back and did worked for this firm and, uh, was there until a few years ago when they decided that they would go in a different direction and move in a different direction, I decided to retire and do something else.

Speaker 10 (00:59:12):

So I retired, went to living, uh, kind of off the reservation, comfortable life. <laugh> finally, uh, then in the meantime, what I did was marry a wonderful woman who was my wife in the meantime, my and my brother who had gotten involved in the civil rights movement as a result of my involvement and came here with a stick uptick, uptick. That's right. And basically I basically tried to do things to improve the community, uh, was sat upon by many people who decided that he was, uh, unreconstructed radical and decided that they were ho him until they said jail. So he went to jail. The last time we went to jail was for, he started a organization to really improve the community black community. And part of that was to try to do something about the drug problem in C attempted to try to do something about that was that arrested such prison is brown, brown, right?

Speaker 10 (01:01:11):

Currently in prison. He's been there now some 10 years. Um, he is, I've been trying to vocalize people to come to his aid, get him out of prison so that he can try and rebuild his life and, uh, do some good, continuing good for the community. Uh, this the mean society. And though he's been in prison and surgery prison for a number of years, they still refused to either grant him the simplest request of treating the human decency. Let's see. So he's currently in the super backs from hip prison and he, um, has been away from his family and everybody for the time that he, that incarcerated, I have years, some brochures I'll pass out to you, ask you to read them carefully and to send letters if possible, to the attorney general, as well as to people in the, uh, state government in, uh, Georgia asking him, they at least be released to give him a chance to spend some time with his family. His wife will be here tomorrow and, uh, tried to, to correct it, injustice that had been perpetuated for a number years. So thank you very much. I appreciate,

Speaker 4 (01:03:43):

Um,

Speaker 1 (01:03:45):

Before I open it up to questions, I want invite Ms. Whitney white to come up and make an announcement

Speaker 4 (01:03:58):

Table.

Speaker 11 (01:04:02):

Great. Um, this won't be too long, but, um, just wanting to let all of the current students know whether you're high school students or currently college students, we're having a meeting at nine 30 at the crab tree hotel. We want to meet at nine 30 and possibly actually, um, begin at 10 o'clock, which is what Mr. Cortland Cox was saying. But, um,

Speaker 4 (01:04:29):

Tonight what's,

Speaker 11 (01:04:30):

It's tonight, Thursday at nine 30 at the, um, crab tree hotel at the Marriot, the registration hotel. And, um, we'll just talk about issues relating to what's going on today in our current society. Um, so yeah, it's very informal. It's not required, but we would like to meet

Speaker 4 (01:04:56):

<laugh>.

Speaker 11 (01:04:58):

Thank you,

Speaker 4 (01:04:59):

Presidential and resolution. So good.

Speaker 1 (01:05:04):

Uh, thanks. Thank you.

Speaker 4 (01:05:11):

Thank you. OK, we got it.

Speaker 1 (01:05:16):

Okay. Can we, can we now, can we now, can we now get the questions? You have a question.

Speaker 12 (01:05:25):

Yes, sir. I do. Um, first I'd like to thank all of you for, um, coming here today and speaking, I really enjoyed listening to you all. Um, but mine is more so, like, I just wanna get your comments on something that, um, H rap brown said on the interview on, um, December, um, December the first, 1968, which can be YouTube. If you just write H rap brown, the whole interview in this entirety can be, um, actually viewed. But in it, he said that electoral politics in America was no good for black people because, um, the system mandates the response and that the country survives off the military industrial complex. So therefore it's always profitable to wage war, regardless of whoever's in the, uh, presidential seat. Um, and then the interviewer asked him about whatever a black candidate was to win. And at that time, Eldridge Cleaver and Dick Gregory were actually running. So it was a sarcastic type of question, but he said in response that if a black person was to ever win the presidency of the United States, then black people should be prepared to fight against this particular president. Um, if, if, if it's a capitalist system, when they actually are elected to be the president and we currently still live under a

capitalist system. Um, so I would like to get your, um, comments on this and what you think about this in this Obama area, um, free political para

Speaker 1 (01:06:46):

Who'd like to take that Kathleen.

Speaker 7 (01:06:48):

Well, I think the underlying issue here is the fact that as far as those who were influenced by, uh, SNCC and, uh, Fanon to understand the condition that black people faced within the United States, it was an analogous, extraordinarily close resemblance to the type of colonialism, to which Africans and Asians were being subjected to and fought against and eliminated. So if you see our situation as colonial or a product of imperialism and dominated by capitalism and racism, if there's a black president, but without any revolutionary change, then the black president is going to be in charge of a system of militar, imperialism and racism. Hello?

Speaker 3 (01:07:43):

Yeah. I wanna speak to that. We're gonna

Speaker 1 (01:07:45):

Be, um, go ahead. Uh GWE yeah, go. And then when then, um, Leah and then Frank,

Speaker 3 (01:07:54):

Uh, yeah, I was at a meeting when rap said it wouldn't matter for fourth grader was elected president. The script is already written. It was written with George Wallace. I mean, George Washington. That's right. <laugh> um, yeah, they about to train, but let me try to, uh, briefly put this in another context, because I agree with the principle, but I also agree that a black person, and in this instance, a black man Baracka has the right to run for president or any other office in this country. We, as black people have that, right? No, no, we might not win, but do I want you to follow me cl closely? And I wanna have to use profanity because sometimes I just think it makes the point clearer

Speaker 13 (01:08:52):

<laugh>

Speaker 3 (01:08:54):

Sweetheart. We don't. Oh, okay. We got some minors in here, but I'm using it within a contextual framework. <laugh>

Speaker 3 (01:09:05):

What we have to be careful about, which is an inverse of what we've struggled that black folks have to be super, super heroes. Black folks have to be super smart. You know, black folks have to do da, da, da, da, da. And we just had an idiot in, in the presidency for eight years. So black folks have a right to be stupid in those positions. I didn't say the principle, but the right, they have the right to make a mess out of stuff like white folks do in those kinds of positions. So we need to be clear. Now you have to choose what kind of work you wanna do. There are those who like electoral politics or political work. You choose that, but be clear. Barack is, he's a community organizer, like most of us, but he's not a revolutionary. And he has never claimed to be one.

Speaker 5 (01:10:10):

I think you've asked a really important question and there's, there's a lot to the question. Um, and so the first one I wanna speak to is the mistake of thinking about political power being solely in personality, because that is the kind of image that gets driven, but to come back to what you are hearing and learning about what the sick experience was, the revolution that happened in this country led largely by many of the people in this room was transforming community and people

understood and had the smarts learned as they went. Where are the decisions made what are the policies that have driven where we are, how do we get this foot or boot off our neck and then move on. So the issue of community organizing, which seems to at least where I live in North Carolina, you know, really not too popular folk, try to figure out how to use every kind of technology to not talk to people straight up, to not give voice to people, to not believe that the people themselves can really frame, develop and, and prepare and, and present policies that benefit them.

Speaker 5 (01:11:27):

So the clear issue to me is around what is the accountability of the system? What is the accountability of people who are in office? What are the principles and values by which they are promoting and how do people hold that relationship together? Now, to be honest, we ain't done so well in many places on that question, but this, the thing about what difference a presidency makes, and I'm not saying it doesn't make any difference, but it opens up political space. You ought to be thinking about what is the political space now open with Obama here that we didn't have with Bush, because that's the moment in which you act and where you are. How do you take control with principle for mutual benefit of the people you are working with to have the kind of society and relationships and resources that you want that's done in from community on up, no matter where you are. That's what I think the message is today.

Speaker 8 (01:12:32):

Okay. Since I, since I opened up this Obama thing, as part of my presentation, I felt like I had to say something about it. Um, first of all, I do live in Washington. I run the African American civil war museum. And I told you that when I started college, I was the most educated person in my family. My parents didn't have much education, but they taught me a lot. My father taught me before I left home. He said, son, the man ain't gonna give you no good job. So you have to take two piece of jobs to make a good job out of it.

Speaker 8 (01:13:01):

Now you think about that on your way home. Okay. <laugh> now Obama gotta take this job and make a good job out of it. What do I mean by that? Uh, we've got more black men in jail and we've got in college. We've gotta turn these colleges, these jail houses into colleges. That's what we gotta do. Cause we can't make it without these guys. Right? So we have some real tough issues in our country. Uh, and I think we need to try to press this government. And if he doesn't, if we don't continue to press him, he really is not gonna do anything about it because he's gonna respond to the people who are pressuring him. Exactly. That's what I, and trust me, they are pressuring him. They're more lawyers up there, more lobbyists than Washington DC now than ever was. Uh, and they're all aimed at the white house.

Speaker 8 (01:13:42):

Try to get the president to do something. Every time he signs a bill, somebody else gets rich. If we don't pressure him, we're not going to get much out of him. I wanted to say that really in no uncertain terms, we really can't sit on our, our, I mentioned our hands and think we've made it with that. Uh, it's important for us, I think to keep the pressure up. But lemme just say, finally, I don't know about you all, but I left out on the 13th and I was up till midnight, trying to finish my tax return.

Speaker 8 (01:14:08):

I that's right. I, I have to pay taxes. And as long as I pay taxes, I want somebody like me in the white house, figuring out how to spend it. So I that's why as long as I got to pay taxes as long, and if I don't pay 'em, I'm going to jail, right. As long as I gotta pay taxes, I want something to say about who it is. That's why I spend all over years of Mississippi. You gotta get the right to vote. If you can't vote and you don't vote, you don't have anything to say about what your tax



money's doing. That's true. I don't wanna live like that myself. You also, I'm glad to have Obama in the white house. Let's keep the heat up.

Speaker 1 (01:14:40):

Come on, go ahead, Congress as well. No, we are going to the microphone. If you have a question, go ahead.

Speaker 14 (01:14:47):

Um, just quickly, I find it more interesting to study the syntheses of interest between different administrations than the conflicts of interest. I think, um, we're in a point right now in our country and the world where we have to ask ourselves why after 10 years there isn't a well galvanized anti-war movement. And I think it largely has to do with the change of face and the PR campaign that the war machine has recently undergone, um, uh, Tupac, Tupac Secor says that most of the people in this room or most of the people presenting were born BC before crack. Um, so, um, Reaganomics has, has radically changed African American communities in, um, certain ways. Mm-hmm, <affirmative>, uh,

Speaker 14 (01:15:33):

SNCC organized, transferred into the black Panther party in different ways. And when I look at, um, community youth organizations today, I mostly see gang banging, um, Crips call themselves community revolutionaries in progress in acronym and bloods call themselves brotherly love over oppression and domination. And so, um, I think this is, uh, owed or omage to the Liber of origins of their organizations. Although they've become mired in criminal, cynism in different ways. Um, y'all as SNCC organizers. Um, what do y'all think are the possibilities of using SNCC organizational models for, for gang humiliation or for gang outreach? And what are the political possibilities of applying the already existing organizational networks amongst youth, urban youth? Um, for political purposes,

Speaker 1 (01:16:23):

We just wanted one answer, one answer. Did anybody have an well, would you sit in there? Okay.

Speaker 7 (01:16:34):

I appreciate everything you said. There was somebody who tried to do that. There I'll mention two men who tried to do that. Exactly what you said. One's name was Fred Hampton and the other's name was Tupac Shakur. So it's not that people haven't tried. It's I think that it's the crux of the matter.

Speaker 15 (01:17:01):

Hi, uh, my name is Dave Roberto. Uh, I'm a community organizer. I drove 14 hours to get here from Massachusetts. Um,

Speaker 15 (01:17:11):

I came here because I have a dream. I wanna be a physicist. I graduated from high school at 4.0, I, um, got scholarships to three different colleges, full ride, but I'm undocumented. And I couldn't take any of that. I don't work. I can't do anything. I pay taxes, but I get no benefit. And I'm organized my community to fix that. And how do you, can you give me advice on reaching my peers on reaching the community? Because this is an issue that we have to fight. This is brown is beautiful. Black is beautiful. We are all here together. We're all humans and we're all immigrants. So how can we fight this?

Speaker 5 (01:17:49):

Yeah, it is my question. I promise I didn't plant that, but this is definitely my, my, uh, uh, agenda here. I think the young brother has lifted up the point that first of all, our communities have changed. And those of us who are suffering, the brunt of oppression have gone beyond just black

folks today. And the, but the challenge is, and this is one of the things we, my organization, I work with the Southeast regional economic justice network has been dealing with in the Southeast, which has been this tension between African Americans and immigrants. And it's, it's a, it's a profound and painful tension because our folk are so our folk now speaking of African Americans are so angry, we're so angry that we had been pushed out of this economy and our, for the large part, working in an informal sector, slavery, that it is not spoken to by our leaders.

Speaker 5 (01:18:53):

For those Frank who went to DC in the south, there are many folk who are struggling to do catching hell. Don't have jobs. You talk about the comings of crack, but the reality is the system has pushed many folk out. It's produced a lot of relationship challenges within our community between Mon men and women, between women. So I raised this because part of the challenge is we don't understand why is it all these folk have been coming into this country, risking their families, leaving their homes, starving, risking death. I mean, I talked to a 13 year old girl who came across the Mexican border and walked through the desert at night to find her mama who was here. There are people whose communities that have been destroyed because of the policies that some of us didn't pay attention to that our country pervades that has made it.

Speaker 5 (01:19:56):

So they cannot survive where they are. That's right. If you listen to the stories about Haiti that are now getting some attention, you know, that us policy there and policy toward black immigrants has been so racist, bringing people, you know, now how you hear about folks who marry somebody abroad. And if you marry, you can bring your wife here. Well, for a Haitian, you don't get here for 15 years. So this brother is the reality of the us. Today is what I tried to say. Here we are, our global community and folk are suffering and we are in this together. And if we can't figure out how to be in this together to address this system that is oppressing us, this brother has a right to work. He has a right to eat as we have a right to work and we have a right to eat.

Speaker 5 (01:20:46):

And if we cannot figure out how to fight this together, so we can make that a possibility so that our children have some kind of hope. We have no hope. So this is the, the point of the struggle. Today is not a black and white term struggle because that's not who this country is anymore. That doesn't negate our need to address our, our challenges and problems. And I have to tell you to me, the, one of the failures of much of the elected leadership is they have not been in community enough to know what has been the condition of our people. So when we talk about looking at all these studies, and recently when all the stimulus stuff came out, the black economist got together to try to talk about, uh, Mr. Obama, this is what the situation is with black folk, but the numbers don't even tell the story, because they're only talking about what are the statistics of people who are currently considered in the labor force?

Speaker 5 (01:21:53):

Well, so many of us have been shut out of the labor force for so many years. We're not even counted, right? So this is one of the tensions and challenges that we have found the way to overcome it is to put people in the room together to share their stories. Now, first of all, many folk don't even know the relationships that exist of what was the story of African presence in Mexico, how Mexico received runaway slaves became a ha Haven, how black people fought in the Mexican revolution, which is why Mexico quit counting them as a part of the census. That was a deal of thanks. So they got basically, there were 10% of the population, but now folk don't talk about that third wave because they didn't get no credit for being black. And so many of the black villages for the last 10 years have started coming together were the kind of consciousness movement that we had back in the sixties, but still in the families.

Speaker 5 (01:22:55):

You remember how it was in the fifties who people would try to pass for Indian? Yeah. <laugh>, you know, we would try to be anything but black. Well, that's still troubling some of the families, but we have communities where I live in North Carolina. There are communities from Oaxaca and Guerrero. There are black Mexicans, some of whom are mindful and consciousness of that race background, some of whom are not. But the point is we have a rich history. There is a lot to build on suffering, you know, is not specialized to anybody, but has specialized experience in situations that we need to learn about. And together we can create a world that is just for all of us where all of us can eat and raise our families. But apart we cannot. So I think this brother has put the, the, to me, what is the crux of the struggle today that black folk don't even understand immigration as an issue that impacts them.

Speaker 5 (01:23:51):

We didn't, as a network know until we couldn't get people who look like us into the country. And then we say, well, what we can't get, 'em a temporary visa. How come? And then you start looking at the laws and you see in the laws itself, how preferential and discriminatory they are. And as soon as you talk to black folk about this is racist policy. Here they go. Oh, oh my goodness. I didn't even know about that. So there are all kinds of things. There's a whole system of guest workers. For example, most of us don't know where they are, how they get here. And what's the relationship, the displacement of other workers here. And yet right now, immigration policy is being debated. This is something we need to be up to snuff on quickly. So there's a, there is a lot to learn, but this is a, is a critical, critical issue because it turns on the race card like this.

Speaker 5 (01:24:49):

And the experience of immigrants who come to this country is the experience based on what is their complexion. And the problem is, and this is especially a problem in the south because we have a very racialized context. Every black person in the south understands and has a framework about race. But people come in here, they don't have that. Black people look at somebody of color and they think, well, they get it, but they don't get it because they don't have the same kind of experience and understanding. And they often have come here with this notion of, you know, land of the brave home of the free. And I will sit down with just sharing one story that happened when we were bringing communities together in North Carolina of black workers and immigrant workers. And this one brother, we had people, first of all, if you wanna start bridging gaps, you bring people together in small groupings in homes where they can share, ask each other questions.

Speaker 5 (01:25:46):

And the question that was on the floor was for those who weren't in this community, when they were born, which was Benson, North Carolina used to be an old clan run town. What do you miss? And this brother said, who was from Northern Mexico? He said, I'll tell you what, what I miss is my freedom. Everybody in the room set up. Not that any of us thought about us as land of the home and of, you know, home of the brave and land of the free kind of thing. But we didn't expect to hear that from an immigrant. So we said, well, what are you talking about? He said, well, I tell you what, when I walked on the streets at home, I didn't have to look over my shoulder. I didn't have to worry about my personal safety by hearing Benson. I can walk down the street and get my tail busted.

Speaker 5 (01:26:36):

They can throw me in the joint and I'll get my tail whooped. And that's what I didn't have to experience at home. So for y'all who think that we had made such progress that this kind of repression doesn't exist in our communities. Please look again, because this the situation right now, for example, in our state or in my county, we have this program called 2 87 G anybody here know what that program is. Young people. Now, this is a shame cuz the young people I see who raise their hands are not African American people. This program is worse than sorry. Sorry. I

didn't see you. Then the dread Scott, which is they deputize local law enforcement to be ice agents. And they put up driver's license checks, which they actually were my offices. They happen to do every two weeks. And as people drive along, they stopped every car.

Speaker 5 (01:27:36):

Now, if you white, they may wave you along some black folk. They might wave along, but they have a fancy car, but many they will stop. But if you are undocumented, which our state no longer gives licenses to undocumented people, you are immediately arrested. You are detained and you are deported. Now you think about what this does with a mother. Who's got children at home with kids and the result is just on our block. There are three buildings now boarded up empty because of this kind of repression. It's just one example. I'm sorry. Take a long time. All right. Sorry.

Speaker 1 (01:28:19):

Um, unfortunately, uh, time is up. I, I, I'm sorry. Um, you know, I, I, we, the, the, the panel on Alabama and, uh, black power will be starting, starting in here in 10 minutes, uh, so that we, in order to get the other panelists in here and to make the arrangements. And if so, you want to go to another place, uh, this time four o'clock when the next panel starts. Thank you.

Speaker 16 (01:28:50):

Well, I just wanna go.