

SNCC 50th Anniversary Conference
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Transcript Video Recording #10
(Raw, unedited, no annotation)

Speaker 1 (00:00:17):

I have the pleasure now to, uh, begin the proceedings by, in introducing to all And, uh, the panelists, uh, for this afternoons discussion. My name is Owen Brooks and I, I live in Jackson, Mississippi. And you might remember that I had some involvement with the Delta ministry in Mississippi for about 18 years. Are we ready to go?

Speaker 2 (00:00:45):

Yeah.

Speaker 1 (00:00:45):

Close the north right on my far right. The illustrious Mr. Lawrence, GIA, who is in fact native Mississippi, but now resides in Washington DC, but still says that he is a citizen of Mississippi. So that's fine. We'll settle with that. And the next is the preacher Willy blue. Raise your hand, Willie. So everybody know who you are. Willie blue is from Charleston, Mississippi. Now these are all members of the Mississippi, uh, veterans of the civil rights movement. In fact, aren't we blessed. And then my immediate right is Michael's sister who happens not to be a member, but we will get him to be shortly Michael. Then I don't know where, uh, your origins are. So you might want to speak for yourself,

Speaker 3 (00:01:40):

Not even a Mississippi from, uh, Oregon. I come to this as a historian of the Mississippi movement. Most specifically the freedom democratic party. I'm currently an associate professor of history at Greensboro college and trying to blow the dust off a, uh, dissertation on the freedom Democrats and turn it into a book before all these guys die, who keep encouraging year after year after year to finally get it done.

Speaker 1 (00:02:03):

Thank you very Mel. Thank you very much, Michael. And on my left here is Brenda Travis, who is a native of McComb, Mississippi, and she has a particular story that she will share with you. So

Speaker 2 (00:02:21):

Hollis Watkins, he just got the right record.

Speaker 1 (00:02:24):

Oh yes. We were to have Hollis Watkins. Join us, Hollis, Join us. Not from afar. What is he on the telephone?

Speaker 2 (00:02:40):

No, he's

Speaker 1 (00:02:41):

Yeah, he's on the phone. Oh,

Speaker 2 (00:02:42):

Okay. He's on the telephone.

Speaker 1 (00:02:45):

All right, we'll begin. Uh, and we'll defer to, uh, the only lady on our panel and this is Ms. Brenda Travis. So Brenda, would you like to start us off and, uh, tell us, tell us your story.

Speaker 4 (00:02:59):

I'm um, from McComb, Mississippi, and I became involved in the, uh, civil rights movement in, um, 1961. Um, and there was through, uh, CC Bryant, who was the president of the NAACP. And I became the youth president of the NAACP. And my introduction to SNCC was through, um, Bob Moses, who came to McComb, um, to Mr. Ryan's home, uh, to discuss and talk with him about voter registration. So at that point, that was how I became involved with, um, with SCC. And during that period, um, we went, um, to, uh, knocking on doors and stuff, trying to encourage people to register, to vote. And those were difficult times because many of our family and friends that we knew, um, would close the doors when they saw us coming.

Speaker 4 (00:04:20):

Uh, but you know, we continued, you know, we had to be strong, um, warriors. I say, I can say that we were truly warriors, uh, because we didn't give up. And many times we lost battles in that we lost people that we knew and people that we loved such as, um, um, Herbert Lee and I forget the other guy's name, but, uh, Louis Allen, those were all people that, that we, we knew. Uh, so that's why I called, you know, the, the, um, the battle. But anyway, um, there were three of us, well, Hollis and Curtis were I, and I don't wanna tell Hollis's, but

Speaker 1 (00:05:03):

You count.

Speaker 4 (00:05:07):

Okay. Holl and Curtis, when, uh, we did decide to, to do, um, direct action Hollis and Curtis were the first two, um, young people to go to jail in McComb for sitting in at FW Warworth. So after Hollis and Curtis was arrested, they wanted this action to continue. So they asked for volunteers, uh, to go to jail because we just couldn't allow those, these two individual to be in jail and not do something, you know, to show that we were organized and that this was a movement that wasn't going to die. So, um, Bobby Talbert, uh, I Lewis and I volunteered to, uh, sit in at the Greyhound bus station and that was to test the interstate commerce law. So, uh, we were arrested. I spent, uh, 30 days in the pike county jail in Magnolia and at, uh, return to my, uh, high school found that I was expelled from high school due to my civil rights activities. Now, mind you, these activities did not happen or were not over the school year. It was during the summer months, and yet I was expelled.

Speaker 4 (00:06:37):

So, uh, some of the students, um, marched out of the school with me and we went to, uh, city hall, McComb city hall, where we attempted to, to pray. And one by one, uh, were arrested at that point. I was returned to jail later, um, went to, uh, reformatory school where I spent six and a half months now after, well, during this period, um, my mother never knew exactly where I was up until after three weeks, um, in the reform school, uh, and a group of, uh, students from Acomb attempted to visit me in the, in the reform school. And they were turned back, uh, turned away with dogs in, uh, the local police in Raymond and Jackson, Mississippi. So, um, I was released from a reformatory school and I have a funny story to tell you, I just met, um, what's the FBI man name? John do. I just met John do. And they were always telling us that John do is going to come and get you out. John do is going to get you out. So, and I just told him, I waited and waited and you never came.

Speaker 4 (00:08:08):

He said, well, what can't I tell you? I said, well, just say I didn't come. But, um, I was finally, um, released to the custody of a professor in, uh, Talladega college. And, uh, some of you are familiar with this story because I shared it with the veterans of, uh, the Mississippi civil rights group, uh, just a couple of weeks ago where this, um, German professor came in from Talladega college. And, um, he came in supposedly as my liberator, but Jack Young, who was, um, the, um, attorney for the civil rights movement was unable to obtain my release, even though he had

attempted, uh, you know, to get Ritz and stuff. So this guy came in from Talladega and, um, as my liberator, supposedly, and it was, um, the Easter Sunday morning or the Saturday before Easter Sunday in 1962. So, um, I went to Alabama and as you know, the, uh, NAACP was outlawed in Alabama at that time.

Speaker 4 (00:09:25):

I don't know what's happening with it now, but anyway, uh, he took me to Alabama and, um, I stayed there for a very brief period because this individual, um, tried to molest me. So I had to run away from him. And at that time, Jim foreman was the president, uh, I'm sorry, the director or chairperson of SNCC. So I ran to some people that I met in Alabama that he didn't know, I knew, but anyway, I ran to them and asked for help. Um, and he said, well, who can I call? So I said, well, call Jim foreman, which he did. And Jim and Mildred, uh, foreman told him to send me to Ali. I mean, send me to Atlanta, uh, to put me on a bus to Atlanta. And he would, and when he returned to his home to call him and let him know what time the bus was arriving and how much it was for him to send me to, um, to, uh, Ella, I mean to Georgia. So after a period after Jim and Mildred is Mildred here. Okay. Oh yeah. That's my mom Mildred come up. I don't want them to see you. Let me tell you had not had been for Mildred and Jim.

Speaker 4 (00:10:59):

Okay. Um, anyway, um, after a brief period of, of, of being in, in the foreman, uh, home, there came a knock up on the door and Jim recognized a knock. And I don't know how, but he said, well, that's harmonizing. And sure enough, when we opened the door, that was Jim and there was myself and Mildred and Jim had me sandwich in between them. They were my protectors at that point. And as soon as he opened the door, this, uh, Mr. Eman Herman eman told the Atlanta police to arrest this girl, she's a fugitive. So, um, Jim was trying to reason with him and told him, said, Mr. Eman, can we go talk, no arrest this girl? So Atlanta police asked me how old I was. And I told them that I was 17. Well, it so happened in the state of Georgia at 17. You're no longer considered a minor. And that's why I'm here today, because my sentence was that I was to be in reform school until I reach 21. So that's my story. And I'm sticking to it.

Speaker 1 (00:12:22):

Let's give her a nice hand, uh, in case you haven't guessed, it, we'll be abiding by a very simple format. Each panelist will have roughly 10 minutes to make their presentation. And, uh, at the conclusion of all the panel panelists and their presentations, we'll open up the floor for, uh, for the participation of, uh, the audience through questions or any other way they want to participate. Is that all right? Well, nevertheless, we'll continue with, uh, Mr. Lawrence, GIA, who? I said it is a native Mississippi lives in Washington, DC.

Speaker 5 (00:12:58):

I'm a resident of the district of Columbia.

Speaker 1 (00:13:00):

May I finish the introduction? Oh, excuse

Speaker 2 (00:13:02):

Me.

Speaker 1 (00:13:05):

Thank you. Currently residing in Washington, DC and a former, uh, chairman of the, of, uh, snake. Am I right? Mr. Lawrence? The

Speaker 5 (00:13:18):

Mississippi freedom

Speaker 1 (00:13:19):

Democratic the freedom democratic party. All right, sir. Go ahead, Mr. GI,

Speaker 5 (00:13:23):

I wanna, first of all, honor, our moderator. He was educated as a scientist and he comes to Mississippi right after the Delta ministry is organized. He has a pit in his leg, but he walks every step of America's March. He joined with the freedom democratic party, and that brought in the national council of churches with us. There's a book called divine agitators. It spells it all out, but I'm proud to know Warren Brooks and if, and when I grew up on to be just like him, I also want to introduce you to a woman named Regina reg, please stand Regina. And I work together in the marionberry organization. We work together in the Jesse Jackson campaign, and Regina has more Mary than I have Regina maintain our citizenship in the district of Columbia. While she served as secretary of state of the state of New Jersey. She also told me that she was gonna get a resolution passed by the democratic national com committee to honor the Mississippi freedom democratic party in the 2004 presidential convention. Here it is right here. So I, I want

Speaker 5 (00:14:41):

My, and I wanna, there's a, there's a lady there named Vicky Malone. Stand up Vicky. Yes. Vicky Malone, McComb that heads heads a project in McComb that provides a teaching process for the civil rights movement in McComb. Yes. Now lemme just give you a little clue about what McComb is McComb in 1964 by more churches than any other 10 cities in Mississippi now, blacks and whites. So if you worked in McComb or if you're interested in, how do we get this program throughout the United States? Talk to her now, I'm not gonna introduce everybody I know in this room, but I'm gonna certainly introduce the great ones Tim Jenkins over there got himself almost messed up at Yale, but despite his education, he came to Mississippi and he started thinking of a guy of, of a process of using challenge ballots. We reformed that process a little bit and conducted the freedom election.

Speaker 5 (00:15:45):

Uh, the student nonviolent coordinating committee made Mississippi and Mississippi made the student non violent court committee. There is I'm on quote, David GARS in his book Selma. And if you know, right when I'm talking, I'll stop talking. Cause I'm here to teach. I'm not here to muse David GARS in his book, Selma 1965 points out that the Mississippi freedom democratic party did more to pass the voting rights act than any other state. And he talks about a memorandum. The Mississippi freedom democratic party conducted a freedom election. Martin Luther king supported us in that 80,000 people participated. We conducted the summer project, which I think was the one of the most brilliant political acts in America that brought up. We couldn't bring Mrs to America, but we could bring America to Mississippi. Out of that blows the freedom schools. The freedom schools are continued to this day by the children's defense fund.

Speaker 5 (00:16:41):

I go and teach 'em every year and I teach 'em. And I think what we have on our hands is a awakening of political million militancy in Mississippi. That is fair. Now I know the governor acted just as ignorant as he could on slavery a couple of days ago, but that same governor signed the bill 2 7, 18, that compelled his teaching and this, it was passed by the state legislature of Mississippi. So please don't. And I, you know, I just came out of a panel that was so cloaked with and ignorance that I could bar stand or contain my lunch because I think if we in America and in Mississippi, we must understand never in our lives, again, will a non-political decision ever be made is not gonna ever happen. There's no such animal. And, and what I'm concerned about is building a movement by getting people to organize throughout this country.

Speaker 5 (00:17:40):

And I'm not talking about organizing an organization. I want people to organize around cross industries. If you organizing on green stuff and she's organized on peace stuff, and he's organized on voter, we need to bring those people together. And we have, because we don't really have a

choice. The right wing has said by the right wing, I mean the Republican party and the tea party, they're both part of one party. The no party they've taken the position that we are no are run in the country. Therefore the country's no longer be run. When, when first you cut off dialogue, then you frighten congressmen. And I want to publicly predict they're gonna kill 'em a couple congressmen very soon. Cause once you unleash terror, no one has ever been able to control it. So our choice is to simply watch them take over this country and redefine it.

Speaker 5 (00:18:29):

So we won't recognize it when we see it here or we can organize. Now I know some of my more purest friends will say, GI, there you go again, trying to bring us into the democratic party. Well, I'm guilty as hell. I think that between now and November, we should organize at least 50,000 new organizers and in every congressional race that's in which a Democrat pits battle. I liked your question earlier, young lady, because I think this is a beautiful time in which we have a lot of advantage to move providing. We don't get trapped up in either fractional or turf, a personality politics. We've. Now Bob Moses is talking about a constitutional amendment for a right to an education. I support that unequivocally. I hope we'll. I hope some of us will, even if this conference does not take a far more position on it, I hope all of you will start doing it.

Speaker 5 (00:19:28):

I support, I believe when I listen to the conversation in the last session, I believe that black people and women should commit themselves to be the last second class citizens in America. And that means we support same sex marriage. That means that we support liberal, uh, immigration laws. And that mean that we, we, we become more actively pro-union when, when, when acorn was first attacked in my newsletter, I've joined today. Defense. I say, I know these people I've worked with them. They're rational. And I trust them. And they, and they destroyed acorn. The people who destroyed acorn made it very, very clear. Their next target is S E I U what's the similarity between both of those organ. They were doing mass mobilization and mass organizing of people who otherwise would not have been represented. So ladies and gentlemen, I think, let me repeat now, Lindon Johnson, God bless his soul said there's America. There's the south. And then there's Mississippi. We Filed a case called Whitley versus Johnson. And that man sitting over there who was at with the department of justice at the time filed on Amicus. And we won that. Please write, please stand up, John, do

Speaker 5 (00:20:59):

Thank you.

Speaker 5 (00:21:04):

We won that case in case the Supreme court was at its best. The way the voting rights act was originally written, the attorney general would have to Institute a, a complaint. The Supreme Supreme court said the attorney general is a very busy man. So we're gonna create a concept that everyone who is aggrieved by the voting rights act has the right to go into federal court and argue under section five. Now ladies than gentlemen, section five is the most beautiful piece of words I put together. It says very simply that if a covered subdivision wants to change any law that has to do with voting, it either must submit it submitted to the department of justice per pre-clearance, or it must litigate it on the merits in the court of appeals. In the district of Columbia, we won so significantly that we overturned 24 laws that had been passed by the straight legislature.

Speaker 5 (00:21:55):

All of them had been objected to by MFD P. So when we look at the fifth circuit, there's a book called unsung heroes by Jack Bass. When we look at the creativity of the fifth circuit who, and, and a classic hit, a department of justice, brought a case called woods United States versus woods. Well, there was a man, a stick fell named Hardy John Hardy, who was registering people in that county. And the, the, the registrar hit him with a cane and a gun and drove him outta there. And they, they, they wanted to charge him with disturbing the peace. The department of

justice took the position that if any attack on him would be an attack on every black voting in that county. The fifth circuit court of appeals agreed with him. So what we now had was a process called injunction pending appeal. Before that Southern judges would just sit on an opinion and we'd have to wait until we get it to the fifth circuit.

Speaker 5 (00:22:50):

We never lost in the fifth circuit where it was when it was really important. So it's very important that we know that the freedom democratic party, not only used every forum to fight, but that some of them had quite a few mutual political dividends. Number one, we felt, and I wanna say this again. None of the greatness that happened in the political infrastructure, ferment in Mississippi would've happened, but for SNCC. And I wanna congratulate Bob Moses on one thing, Bob Moses took the position after Atlantic city that some of Snick wanted to come in and straighten out the freedom democratic party. And Bob Moses said, if you do that, we gotta just take our own geat. So we are not gonna do that. Now. Now, Bob Moses was the only one who could say that and it'd be listened to if Bob Moses had been quiet, I wouldn't be talking about the wonderful work of Mr. It would've never happened. Now. I want you to understand there's some books I want you to read. One of them is I've got the light of freedom by Charles's pain, many minds, one heart by By Wesley Hogan, uh, pillar fire by Taylor branch, which is his best book. I don't care what the damn award people say. This is his best book of the trilogy. And then I want you to help me get reprinted. A book called freedom song. This is one of the best books ever written about the civil rights movement and the best book ever written. Isn't it. Mary,

Speaker 5 (00:24:29):

Uh, also wanna push a book called pension lift every voice

Speaker 5 (00:24:36):

By Grier. The beauty of this book is it points out the need for political organization and litigation simultaneously. Now I wanna also say to you, we have a president of the United States who taught constitutional law. So when the question was, whether or not Mr. Burs would be seated, he played politics rather than use his known knowledge. I knew that Mr. Burs was gonna be seated because I had a lawyer named Arthur Cano who when Adam Clayton Powell was kicked out of the Congress, Arthur Canino went before the Supreme court and got him put back in there. That's the precedent. And I watched how the president played this. He said, you know, his strange statement was yes. Uh, Mr. Bur is fine, man. But we wanna process the speed free of the governor. And then black people through America kept saying to him, he's the only black man move with him. Forget the nasties of the political ethical caliber, Chicago. And then he start doing that. Then he, then he was asked again, they said, Mr. Perry, when do you think Mr. Spars? He said, oh, he is a fine gentleman. And if you see it, I'm gonna treat him just like any other Senator. What, what Brock was doing was saying, I don't wanna antagonize the Senate. I don't wanna antagonize these fool in Illinois,

Speaker 1 (00:25:57):

Mr. Geat, Mr. Geat, would you, would you allow others to please make their presentations

Speaker 5 (00:26:03):

By all means, Mr. Sir, thank

Speaker 1 (00:26:05):

You. Our next panelist will be Mr. Hollis Watkins. He'll introduce himself and tell you what he does.

Speaker 6 (00:26:25):

My father was a freedom fighter and I'm his freedom son. That's what he does. I'm going to stay right here and fight for freedom until this battle is one.

Speaker 1 (00:26:39):

Which side are

Speaker 6 (00:26:40):

You on? Which side are you everybody? Which side are you on? Board? Which side are you on? Don't Tom from Mr. Charlie. Don't listen to his lies as poor folk. We ain't a chance unless we are good. Now, everybody, which side are you on? Boy? Which side are you on? Everybody? Which side are you on? Boy? Which side are you on? It's on Sam Hollis, Hollis Watkins. And I'm from Mississippi. I came from a state that took black people out of office through a process, a redistrict. And when it came down to the congressional level, once that happened, it took us at least exactly 100 years before we were able to get another black person in Congress, a come from a state, whereas in the early sixties, less than 4% of all of the blacks in, in that state were a voting age, were registered to vote where there were only three black attorneys in the entire state of Mississippi.

Speaker 6 (00:28:13):

And the only place you could find a black elected official was in a little small town by the name of mound Bayou in miss. In the Delta of Mississippi, I got involved in the civil rights movement in 1959, worked with the NAACP in 59 and 60, and then got hooked up with SCC in 1961 as a result of being involved. Yes, I went to jail where in jail was attempted to be set up on different occasions. One time I was attempted to be set up so I could be accused of attempting to rape a white woman while in jail. Another case was a time when I was attempted to walk out of the prison to allow them to put the dogs on me. I'm thankful for that. I didn't fall for either one of those. I came from a county and a state where the police officers would allow men in plain clothes to come with the rope that had a hanging noose in it and sand to a little black boy, a little like man, okay, nigger, get up and let's go.

Speaker 6 (00:29:29):

We gonna have a hangin here tonight. And you gonna be first looking down the rope that they had in their hands. I must say that I'm thankful that I was able to be involved in the civil rights movement because it afforded me a lot of different opportunities. It afforded me to meet people that I never would have had the opportunity to meet before it afforded me to have of the courage and strength to look down the barrel of shotguns and pistols and rifles being pointed at me by white people while they were saying, yes, this is the nigger I'm gonna kill. The question is whether I want blow his brains out or whether I want to blow his guts out. This allowed me To not just go to the Mississippi state penitentiary, but to go and be put in maximum security unit on death row, Handcuffed to the bars, Treated almost like a wild animal. Had I not been involved? I would've missed all of these Came from a state where as a young black man, I was told that if you walking down the sidewalk and you meet white folks, step off to the side and drop your ahead until they pass by. Because if it's a man, he may consider you to be disrespectful

Speaker 6 (00:31:11):

Kicked. You hit, you do a combination of both or even put you in jail. But if it's a woman, she might decide that you eyeball raped her. And that automatically meant that

Speaker 6 (00:31:26):

That's part of the journey that I have taken that I have been involved in in more recent years, looking at the work that I did in the civil rights movement still remained in, in Mississippi 20 years ago, I started an organization that was all Southern echo, which is a leadership development education and training organization that provides training and technical assistance to individuals and organizations throughout Mississippi and the south. We do it in all areas of politics in the area of education, in the area of environment. Man, part of our environmental program also includes us working with small farmers, teaching them how to produce the crops used in organic and sustainable ag practices. We try to profit by the mistakes that we made in the

civil rights movement so that we don't make them right now. Now, and we try to utilize all of the good stuff that we did as a part of the civil rights movement.

Speaker 6 (00:32:36):

And that's one of the reason we promote an intergenerational model of doing work by which all of those that's involved come to the table and create a collective vision, develop an effective strategy and a meaning for program or work to bring that vision in to fruition. These are some of the things that we are doing right now, promoting, promoting community organizing. This is a little bit of what have been doing what I have faced and what I'm doing now. I don't want to use up you more time than necessary, cause I would like to save some time to get at least a few questions. Thank you.

Speaker 1 (00:33:33):

Our next panelist, our scholar, Mike System.

Speaker 3 (00:33:41):

Thank you, Owen. Uh, to say it would be an honor to be included is pretty much an understatement. Since I'm looking at a room full and a conference rule of white and black heroes, uh, of mine. And beyond that as a, as, as a historian of the civil of the black freedom struggles and particularly the Mississippi movement, there are also, uh, authors upon whose shoulders I stand, whose work is foundational to my work. Uh, Larry mentioned just a, a few of them. Um, John dimer's, local people, Charles Paynes, I've got the light of freedom. Taylor branch's work, uh, and a couple others that I'll mention, especially some wanna highlight some work of scholars, I guess a little closer to my generation who are laboring in the similar vineyard of, of studying about Mississippi. Uh, the freedom party was the subject of my, uh, doctoral dissertation way back in 2002 called authors of the liberation.

Speaker 3 (00:34:28):

It's a broader sort of synthetic, uh, history of the, of the movement of the party and takes things well past the mid 1960s, uh, into the early 1970s, I have the advantage of other work to build on the advantage of taking darn long to do it, that new sources get released. Uh, and I try to not just extend the timeframe beyond what some works have done, but also add some new, uh, interpretations to it. I wanted to, to focus just briefly as a, uh, as I talked with Owen about on the nature of current scholarship, on the origins of the Mississippi movement, uh, after world war II up to its evolution, uh, up to freedom summer, and then to suggest some avenues, perhaps some questions to raise for future study. I've heard a couple comments and other panels about no one's written a book about this yet.

Speaker 3 (00:35:12):

And no one's written about that yet. The good news is yes, in some of those cases they actually have, and maybe I can point you to some other titles, but the better news is, uh, I think historians are, are heading in those similar kind of directions. Uh, it would be another hour to go into the wealth, the extraordinary wealth of, of secondary and primary sources on freedom, summer itself, the memoirs that several of you have written, uh, I just had a chance to review, uh, Tracy Sugarman's new memoir. We had freedoms, uh, we had sneakers, they had guns. Uh, but as I said, I wanted to, to focus on, on just a couple of, of where the briefly where the state of the scholarship is, particularly in the origins of the Mississippi movement is up through the early sixties as the, at least the nominal focus of this panel.

Speaker 3 (00:35:54):

Um, building on dimer and pains, larger synthetic works. There have been some good recent local community studies, which ground their story in the emergence of black organizing and protest from world war II up to 1961, when SNIC enters the scene, Emily Crosby's little taste of freedom that some I hope you, uh, everyone's aware of or will become about Southwest

Mississippi, Todd Moy, who's here, uh, in the audience today, let the people decide about sunflower county, uh, Connie Curry's to contextual biographies, SI uh, silver rights and Mississippi harmony. Uh, I think Crosby's work is especially good in discussing the role of local NAACP churches, black veterans, progressive voters leagues from world war II through the fifties, up until, uh, when SNCC enter a scene and builds on a, on a long movement. Something else that all of you veterans have been reiterating over and over again is important as understanding SN is understanding the context out of which it grew in Mississippi else and elsewhere, all of these works make the key point that in analyzing the significance of these efforts, attention has to be paid, not just to the limited end results terms of numbers of black citizens, registered national attention, garnered the backlash of the white power structure.

Speaker 3 (00:37:03):

Would've been kind of the emphasis of, of more traditional, shall we say, uh, treatments of the Mississippi movement that man, these guys got pounded on. And after all that effort, what did they have to show for it? But I think in addition or more important, the organizing network or the organizing tradition to use Charles Payne's is important term. That was what that Mississippi movement up to 61. And after it was all about those same works and a few others beginning with, with Clay Carson's of course tell the story of SNCC efforts in Mississippi up to 1964, uh, more recent works, uh, Joseph's uh, Crisp's in search of another country is a good example of reflecting on how white, Mississippi backlash against the movement, even before 1964 fed into the emerging national conservative counter revolution within the Republican party, which is one of, I think in, um, of several interesting themes worth historians developing just a couple of, of questions, I think, worth moving forward for historians to look at in this period of the origins of the Mississippi movement up until, uh, freedom, summer one, uh, would be well.

Speaker 3 (00:38:07):

And what I'm attempting is a kind of broader synthetic work. I think there's always room for more community studies, ones that put a community in its long trajectory of history. Well before 1960, well, after the summer of 1964, uh, that as, as, um, Emily Crosby's work does as Todd Moy's work does as Connie Curry's work does, uh, I would nominate Hattiesburg as probably the best, you know, nominee for a new actually like that, uh, a candidate for a community study given how unique Hattiesburg was and is as a community, given its seminal importance in the larger, uh, Mississippi movement. You know, if only there were a few veterans who were especially active in the Hattiesburg movement, who might contribute to such a, such a project, uh, second more on the period up until 1960, obviously that's before SNCC gets rolling, um, and a work focused, especially on that period of Mississippi during, from world war II up in, through the fifties, up until 1960, I kind of bridged between Neil McMillan's work and, and John Dimer's work, not just a chapter or chapters within a larger work, but one particularly focused on that.

Speaker 3 (00:39:10):

I think Charles Payne's work comes closest to doing that, but, you know, he, you, he carries a story up through the later 1960s, at least to, uh, to a degree, more, uh, work more on the response and reaction of average white Mississippis to the movement, not just a simple story, a, a brutal story, though. It is. And one worth telling and remembering of official the official white power structures, terror campaign, economic bullying, legal chicanery, that as Larry was saying last through wealthy the late sixties, but how average white Mississippis dealt with the con the, the, the issues that this movement brought up and just as a final one, and again, there are four or five others, but as a final one more on the effort, the effect of the Mississippi movement, especially up, uh, up to freedom summer, not just during freedom summer, but up to freedom summer on national opinion, espec on members of Congress as they, as they debate the civil rights bill up through August of 1964.

Speaker 3 (00:40:01):

And then of course later, uh, on the voting rights act, that obviously includes the credentials to the credentials challenge at Atlantic city, which is a couple of chapters of my work. It includes the 1965 congressional challenge, which I spend, uh, try to spend a good deal of time on, but on general public sympathy on media attention, on the pressure generated by trying to bring America to Mississippi that, uh, needs more attention, deserves more attention to understand the role that Mississippi had on the nation in getting these important legislative victories, which were only a chapter in the story, or only another big step along the long and still unfinished journey. There are, as I said, four or five other, uh, fruitful, uh, areas of the vineyard worth, worth pruning, but, and worth, uh, worth going into, uh, I'm still trying to finish mine. So I'll leave that to, uh, to, to, uh, to other people and leave that to you guys to either, if you, if you agree with go find some graduate student somewhere and tell 'em, here's what you ought to be worth on

Speaker 1 (00:41:14):

Our last panelist for this afternoon is, uh, Reverend Willie blue and river.

Speaker 7 (00:41:21):

He's got this one too, give back up,

Speaker 2 (00:41:24):

Back into

Speaker 8 (00:41:25):

Giving thanks to my higher power and to all the members, uh, on this panel. And especially to all of the people of the student nonviolent coordinating committee and all the people haw university that has made this day possible. I thank you. Uh, my, my introduction into the movement, I, I came in right. Other rather old, I was, I was 22 years old. I had been in the Navy four years and I was a veteran. I was a combat veteran at 22. And people when I got back to Mississippi, things were worse than when I had left. People were chop and cotton in the field for \$3 a day. And they wanted me to do this. Uh, uh, you know, it was, it wasn't about, uh, uh, any kind of prestige. It was about pressure, no black man, 22 can walk around without a job and not, not go to work.

Speaker 8 (00:42:38):

But what they didn't know is that when I was discharged from the Navy, uh, I got \$30 a week, unemployment, \$30 a week. And here they want me to work for \$15 a week. And I had a real serious attitude. And, uh, NAACP lady that worked at the, uh, funeral home in Charleston, she said, I heard that it, some, some of those freedom riders is in Greenwood and you should go down there and be with them, cause you not gonna live long around here. So I took her advice and I went to Greenwood and I met Bob Moses. I did not know who I was. I did not know how I got to be in the condition that I was in. And Bob Moses said, well, the requirements for being in the movement is you go to freedom school. And my first assignment at freedom school was what is the emancipation proclamation and how did it get to be that way? And when I could answer that question, that was my right of passage into the movement. God bless Bob Moses.

Speaker 8 (00:44:10):

Since that time, uh, in this book, that brother G I just mentioned, uh, pillars of fire, uh, by Taylor branch, Mr. Branch dedicated two thirds of one page on page four 50. It for my introduction into the movement under fire, uh, Mr. Bellafonte was bringing money for the summer project. Jimmy Travis, my friend, God bless Jimmy, uh, had just been shot whose usual driver and I got to drive the car and they tried on us off the road and so forth and so on. And my passion at that time was, I believe then that if African American people had the right to vote in Mississippi, we could be the captain of our own chip. I believe that then I believe more now than I did then. And, uh, uh, that's what I worked on, uh, in my formative years in the movement. But I keep on having this dream.

Speaker 8 (00:45:22):

I I'm a student at Jackson state. I do, uh, tutoring after school tutoring for, uh, elementary school kids in the afternoons. And the most pressing question that keeps on coming up over and over and over our young people do not know who they are. And my answer to them is this. They did not sit at bar Moses feed freedom school. Cause if they did, they would know exactly who they are and how they got to be that way. And that's what I work on. I'm, I'm, I'm a dreamer. When you get 70 years old, I, I stayed up all night cause they told me I wasn't gonna make 21, but I did. And now I'm 71 and I still have this dream. I would love for every 10 year old in country to be able to say, uh, uh, what the emancipation proclamation is and how it got to be like that. God bless you. Thank you.

Speaker 1 (00:46:32):

Well, the floor is yours.

Speaker 4 (00:46:37):

My sister do, and I grew up in Palm, was crossing outside Harrisburg. And I wanna know why do you think Harrisburg is an ideal place for our community study to be done?

Speaker 3 (00:46:49):

Of course now every, every, everybody else from somewhere else in, Mississippi's gonna say, why not? Uh,

Speaker 3 (00:46:56):

Not being, uh, in the Delta makes it somewhat unique. Uh, it's economic background, you know, more, a labor movement earlier makes it unique. Um, the importance of the Hatty freedom days in Hattiesburg, one, uh, makes it first one, uh, makes it important in the larger movement. Uh, how significant the role that, that Hattiesburg folk played like, like you and your sister, uh, like Reverend Adams, who, who gave me the title for my dissertation office of the liberation, uh, all and, and lots of other reasons. And now it certainly shouldn't be the last one, but I just nominated that as you know, first next on the list for, for an important community study, that would take it from your early origins through the more familiar story, 63, 64 and well beyond it,

Speaker 9 (00:47:41):

Um,

Speaker 8 (00:47:42):

Holl, you're not saying anything, but you were there. And so was Curtis, you went up there for a McComb. So Hattiesburg also was a Delta ministry project. The Delta ministry was up in, uh, in the Delta, but they had two other projects in McComb and Hattiesburg. There's a lot to read and a lot to write about it.

Speaker 10 (00:48:16):

Yes. I wanna thank the entire panel for being so courageous to tell the story. But the one question that I have as a former secretary of state of New Jersey, which had arts history and culture within its, um, within its portfolio. The one thing that I was bound to do was to tell the story. I am a little disappointed that some of my colleagues, uh, and I'm 54, uh, are not here to hear the story because when we went through schools and schools to tell the story of Fannie Lou Hamer and tell the story of, of Harriet Tubman and the, like the children begged for more, so much so that we passed a law saying that this history had to be taught in new New Jersey schools. That was, uh, SimMan Payne Congressman Don Payne's brother. And so it is important that you guys not tell the story to each other and show up and have a family reunion, uh, but it is important and that we know what you went through.

Speaker 10 (00:49:14):

Uh, I know we did young folk did a lot of organizing for Obama, but the reality is, is no lives were at stake while they were doing it. And so I encourage each and every one of you, the

academic, uh, also, um, not just to write the stories, but you tell it when I woke up one day and a historian on my staff told me that I stood on the shoulders of Fannie Lou Hama. Not that I didn't know it. And not that I didn't say I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired years. Not that I did not work for Lawrence GI and Mary and Barry and know the Laers, but the fact that I had ignored it. And the day that I remembered it was the day that I was committed to continue to tell the story so much so that New Jersey has been given, uh, the land that Fannie Lou Hammas body is on that.

Speaker 10 (00:50:09):

We put a statue, uh, on it. That is how committed, uh, I continue am. So I urge each and every one of you tell the story to somebody, if you don't know how to Facebook and textbook, just tell it and hope that the story gets told. I am telling you children be for these stories to be able to touch somebody that wanted to register the vote and life was at stake is intriguing to third and fourth graders. They are so encourage that the, that the civil rights Memorial and Atlantic city is believe visited now by more children, just so that they could see the words. And so I stand here at 54 telling you to continue to tell these stories. What

Speaker 5 (00:50:56):

About the documentary you helped produce? Tell

Speaker 10 (00:50:59):

Us about that. We did documentaries, but we, we, we did children. So the children could have the real books. The real facts we were tired of children being told is that they could not be told. And so the African American historian on my staff, the late jails, right since died, but we begin to, to, to literally write this is funded by the government. And we passed because teachers kept saying you can't charge us in a legislation to teachers story that we don't know. So we funded institutions to begin to tell them and teach them so that they can teach somebody else. Folk just know the 32nd sound bites. And they know the bad parts, which gets into racist issues or black versus white. We begin to tell the real stories of, of organizing and young folk, young folk, young folk. And so I encourage you to, to do so.

Speaker 3 (00:51:57):

I would just second that say the reason it, you know, has taken me so long is cuz I would much rather teach than write and I'd try. And the other thing I would urge all of you to do is, you know, contact the local, um, social studies curriculums specialist in your school district can say, I'm here. I can tell the story and even more important to tell the story of the local movement where you are, if you're in Cambridge, Maryland important for the students to know who Mrs. Hamer was, but even more important. I think for them to know who the local activists were young and old, that's why, you know, I teach in Greensboro and all my, you know, several of my classes have community history projects where they go out and help collect and preserve the history of the local community, especially the local African American community, especially movement stuff. That's beyond just the, the February, 1960 sit-ins. And it takes not very long before the students realize this is way more than a class assignment. This is much more important than that. And they get, I hope a lot, a lot out of it.

Speaker 9 (00:52:53):

You got time here. Go ahead.

Speaker 11 (00:52:59):

I'm Ken Lawrence. Uh, I spent 20 years in Mississippi. Uh, my, my actual beginnings with, with SN, uh, uh, were a at the, uh, Atlanta conference in October of 1960. So I go back a little while with this organization, but I, I, I was intrigued by this discussion about history. And so I want to tell you some of the things that I did, uh, because I, I think that people are not necessarily as creative as they ought to be. One of the things relatively minor things that I did when I was in

Mississippi was to start a, a project called the, the deep south people's history project. I have no degree. I dropped outta school when I got involved in the movement and I've never gone back. That was when I was 17 years old. So, uh, you know, this is all just, uh, doing history is what I call it.

Speaker 11 (00:53:54):

Um, but, uh, one of the, one of the projects that I think was very successful, uh, we did when, when Benny Thompson was mayor of Bolton, uh, we decided that we wanted to teach kids the reality of reconstruction. And one of the great heroes of Mississippi history is Charles Caldwell, who was probably the, the boldest and bravest and most visionary member of the legislature in the 1870s who was murdered on Christmas, 1875 by the Klan or their equivalence by, uh, by the, uh, whites who were armed by James Z, George and ordered to gun him down. But the reason why they killed him was because he had successfully organized a black militia to suppress the first attempt to overthrow reconstruction in Mississippi. And when, uh, when the federal government refused to send troops, he marched from, uh, Clinton and Bolton, uh, station into Jackson and protected, uh, the, the capital from seizure by the forces.

Speaker 11 (00:55:08):

So we thought that what a great thing to do would be to reenact Charles Caldwell's March on its Centennial, which we did with Benny and the lead and, and so forth. And we, uh, you know, people reenact the civil war frivolously, uh, and even more frivolous peace of history, but we made this real, we, every kid got a map of the, of the route of Charles Caldwell's March and the story of, of, uh, reconstruction in Mississippi. And they learned at least what the first attempt at freedom in Mississippi had meant and how it play out and how it was violently overthrown and so forth, which of course they had never learned in school. Uh, I think people need to be a lot more creative about how to, how to teach these lessons to younger people. And I offer you just that one example. Uh, I'm sure there are a lot people here who could figure out a lot more interesting ways than Benny and I did, but, uh, uh, you know, just, you gotta start someone.

Speaker 5 (00:56:15):

Yes. I, I wanna respond. Uh that's

Speaker 12 (00:56:22):

Okay.

Speaker 5 (00:56:25):

I think that's an excellent suggest. John Perue who worked in Southwest in Alabama, brought a play to this conference, the education of a Harvard person into the movement. We need more, plays, more poems, more contest around political information because information is power. I argue aggressively that the best organizers in America is the student nonviolent coordinator. But I cuz I wanna be challenged on that because cuz I have a literary foundation that can justify that, but I want to also talk about Harrisburg just quickly. There's a book written by a former member of the department of justice about Harrisburg. You have to remember that Hattiesburg, the fifth circuit court of appeals was prepared to send th Lynn to jail. Even though he was seven foot two, they were worried about him dying in jail and, and the federal government at that time did not want to pie the state of Mississippi after all they'd come through. The Merital situation had Burg is also significant because Robert spike who headed the national cons of churches did not support the national cons of churches coming into Hattiesburg. Hattiesburg is also important because it had an excellent school system and by Mississippi standards and it was flunk in a lot of people who shouldn't have flunked had Burg is also the, the place where we held the first AR demonstration about the right to vote in which they were no arrest.

Speaker 6 (00:58:00):

I just want to add one other piece as we talk about, had you generally we talk about, as I would say, starting from Above the ground, just above the trunk for a couple feet, but I think what's extremely important for us to learn and study about is the things that burn dam Mr. Bowen, and a few other people were doing and had going on before Curtis and I went there and the things that they continued to do for a few months while we were trying to get our barrings together and getting other people to come in there. So I just want to say that, cuz that really gives you the true foundational peace about had spirit.

Speaker 3 (00:58:59):

We,

Speaker 4 (00:59:07):

So my name is Whitney white and I attend Swarthmore college, um, senior, however, um, I was raised in Memphis, Tennessee and as you know, a lot of African Americans in Memphis have, um, a lot of ties to miss Mississippi. Um, recently I picked up, um, for freedoms sake, um, by China, Kylie. And that's a story about Fannie Lou Hamer. And um, I was just sitting here noticing how little time, how I, how few times her name was actually mentioned, um, with reading this book for freedom's sake. Not that it's the only one and not that Fannie LA Hamer was the only person in the party worth mentioning, but um, Fannie LA Hamer had, um, well she not, there was a transition in that MF. Um, the MF DP after, after the, um, after they went to Atlantic city and she noticed how the sharecroppers, the grassroots people were being replaced by a class of professionals who were not origin in the movement. And I want to know why that was left out. Were you all not a part of the MF DP at that particular time? Or did you think there was something else more important to mention

Speaker 5 (01:00:37):

God bless you. Who

Speaker 1 (01:00:39):

Wants to answer that?

Speaker 5 (01:00:40):

Fannie Lou Hama was, was one of the founding members of the Mississippi freedom democratic party. The, the change you're talking about is a contest for power after Atlantic city and the people moving in to take over. Didn't take over the MFD P along with the help of the white of, of Linda Johnson, they established a group called the loyalist and they fought MFD P in every county. They fought the child development group. We were providing money and employment and training throughout the state with the children's defense, the children's defense fund. No, no, the children of Mississippi Marion Wrights group head head, it was, it was a head start program. CDGM now that provided three thought thousand jobs. And Senator said, we can't have black people associated with a movement providing those numbers of jobs now, but I'm glad you gave me the chance to talk about Fannie Louma. There's a committee now established I'm on it. Regina Thomas is on it to raise money, to build a statue for Fannie Louma. So, uh, you can join with us because Fannie Lou Hama is so central to the movement in Mississippi. There is no one who would be foolish enough to forget her and, and those who do attempt make that attempt do so at that per

Speaker 1 (01:01:59):

One other one other piece, offer another answer to that palace. Yeah, I have another, the answer also, uh, freedom, the freedom democratic party, uh, did not have the kind of support that it needed to sustain organization in the various counties that it had been organized. Uh, a piece of that related to that was that SNIC had also made SNCC was the, were the organizers on the ground in Mississippi when I got there. And in 1965 or a little later, they made a decision to lead Mississippi. And, uh, this was part, part of their philosophy being that the folks should do it

themselves should continue organization themselves. Now, there were certain of that were, uh, that stayed okay. And unfortunately I was with the Delta ministry at the time and we tried our best to help to, uh, help the FDP organization carry on. But we did not have the resources that were needed to keep people in the field and keep, uh, the freedom democratic party organization, uh, alive long enough to do the kind of organizational work that it should have been able to do in organizing independent. And, you know, their thrust was independent black political organization at that time, that was their priority. And that was our priority. The ministry, our organizers were also, uh, a very committed to help to, uh, build independent black organization, black political organization in the state of Mississippi. So you need to know that. And I did bury Mrs. Ham. So I was very close to

Speaker 6 (01:03:52):

Her. One other thing that contributed and led to the demise of the freedom democratic party was that after the lawless Democrats had been established and what they pledged to do, many of the people that had been a part of the freedom democratic party said, well, if they gonna do all these kinds of things, then for the most part, that's really not a need for us to continue because of that, the support was eroded.

Speaker 5 (01:04:25):

It is very significant and it is historically true that the delegation that was seated at the democratic convention in 1968 was 50% loyalist and 50% MF DP. That's a matter of history. That is a fact. And I, I think what's what the seating did. Was it the democratic party pledged in 1964 that they would never see another de a segregated delegation in 1972. Uh, some people took what we had won in 64 and extended it. They said, okay, we want 50% of all delegates to be female that's that's the law. And it happened because of that MF DP party.

Speaker 3 (01:05:07):

I think if, if you look at, uh, Todd Mo's book or John Diner's book or ally, any book about the movement, there isn't any credible one that Mrs. Hamer isn't right at the center using her words and her, uh, papers that are now at, at a couple of different archives

Speaker 5 (01:05:25):

Point point.

Speaker 13 (01:05:26):

My name is IRA grouper. I spent some time in with Hattiesburg and Columbia

Speaker 13 (01:05:32):

Vernon DER's name was mentioned earlier. Vernon was an exceptional human being. He was the president of the NA a P. He was a very wealthy African American lived in Kelly settlement, just outside of Hattiesburg. He went on the radio who offered to pay the poll tax of any person who wanted to register to vote. The poll tax request was a way of keeping people out to you. Young students, you need to study this piece of history, but I wanna say something else also briefly to me, the limited understanding that I have of the movement and how it changed my life. It was ordinary people, ordinary people made it, you don't need a PhD to change it. There was a certain amount of anti-intellectualism on the part of people who are in college and had degrees, and then say, you don't need a degree, but there was also true that ordinary working people say, I live now in Louisville, Kentucky, and I teach a class on the civil rights movement.

Speaker 13 (01:06:30):

And I ask my students, how many of you have spoken to the janitors at work? None of them have. So we, you need to, to train students, not just to become educated in, in book learning with Theios and the opposites and all, but to understand who really built this country, um, it's also a matter of respecting people, not glorifying, but respecting people. Um, what I get from the

movement, what I've I've learned, I think is that you don't get anything without fighting for it. And you don't keep what you got unless you continue to fight for it. And there are so many examples of that things get taken away. There was a fight for the, for the 12 hour a day, and then the 10 hour day and the eight hour day. And my grandma was a garment worker that used to be a sign on, on the wallet said, if you don't come in on Sunday, don't come in on Monday.

Speaker 13 (01:07:31):

And then what does the system do? What do these companies do? They say, okay, we'll make you work overtime, but we'll pay you time and a half. And to the always finding ways. And the, the last thing I wanna say is that the system has learned how to deal with things they have learned to adapt to change circumstances. And so now I, another hat that I wore I'm I was an official, I was the vice chair of the Louisville, Jefferson county human relations commission. I ruled on discrimination cases. Now there's a system in place of not denying African Americans or women or lesbians or gays or older people or disabled people positions, but they have a system of well spoken tokens. People who are put into positions of power to show the things are okay on the plantation. And unless we adapt to these changed circumstances, this is the dress to the young people. Yes. You need to read the books that have been suggested very important, but you need to analyze also the particular conditions of today. Thank you.

Speaker 4 (01:08:33):

I urge all the young people here too today also to begin to study the lives of the unsung heroes in the movement. Uh, we all know Mrs. Hamer, miss Hamer was phenomenal person. We know that the well known people, but think about Hartman turn. There you go. Um, you've never seen a more complex, um, courageous person who was arrested for setting his own house on fire after they fire white people, fire bombed it. Uh, but I, I remember when we went to Atlantic city, we were all, uh, assigned to work, to lobby, to go with a comedy of a member of the freedom of democratic party, uh, to make calls on members of the credentials committee. I went with Mr. Mrs. Turn bow to see Edith green and Senator Wayne Morris mean if you wanna see courage and real dignity without fear, and just think of here's a man who, who, I can't even describe how he, he turned the phrase.

Speaker 4 (01:09:37):

He had a very special way speaking. You have to hear a tape of, uh, but he stood there and he spoke very eloquently and straightforward to Edith green who was going to who supported our, our position at first. And then because of the political pressure of president Johnson, I think was at a, the off George shipper, her husband. Yeah. Uh, she painfully backed down, but, but there was also a human, an interesting anecdote in the movement. Mrs. Turn vote was a soft spoken woman. She always carried a little brown paper bag. She had it with her in Atlantic city. You know, what was in it? A pistol.

Speaker 5 (01:10:21):

Let me just, let me continue on tongue, bro. Mr. Turnbull killed one of the people that came to burn his house, but the state of Mississippi was faced with a problem. They couldn't have. They couldn't really prosecute a man for defending a ending house that was his with his daughter and his wife in it. So the state of Mississippi took the position that this man died of a heart attack. And it is, this is the only time in Southern history in which I was asked to go to the sheriff of LA Flore county, get him to sign a bond, to take it to the sheriff of Holmes county, Mr. Turn, Bahrain reigned and get him out. And it was turned over to my car. That's never been done before. Can you imagine two sheriffs getting out of cooperating to put a freedom, fight outta jail? It happened then that's why it happened.

Speaker 1 (01:11:12):

Your question did,

Speaker 4 (01:11:13):

My name is Emily. I'm 20 years old. And I flew down here from Ohio and skipped three days of classes because I respect and admire you all so much. And I wanted to say, thank you for what you've done for my generation. And, uh, my question is this has already come up unintentionally, but I wanted to ask you this directly, if you could give one piece of advice to people age, what would it be?

Speaker 5 (01:11:36):

Do not be afraid, determine what you want, determine who are the best minds that are doing that and

Speaker 1 (01:11:45):

Get involved,

Speaker 5 (01:11:47):

Get get it. And, and, and if you, if you know people who are organizing young people in your area, join with them, find out what they're doing, how do they do it? But remember organizing is fundamentally establishing a relationship one to one. And then to the group, anyone who is above the age of seven should be able to organize.

Speaker 14 (01:12:09):

Would

Speaker 15 (01:12:09):

You like first of all, given honor, thanks to God. I'm glad to be here. And I, it to be in the midst of you all, thank you all for all that you've done before. Um, my name is Nefertiti bird. I'm a local radio personality. You've probably seen me on the program. Um, but, but one of the things that I wanted to acknowledge, um, while I have the time is that, um, I'm 25 again. And all of us who are 25 plus or, or a little bit younger are not all, you know, insane. And we need your help. We need your help because they're trying to kill our minds with this school board education. I've been at the meeting when they actually passed whatever they call, what they passed and to hear ESCO and the chairman refer to certain students as certain classes of people. And to hear some of the language that was being used, that lets you know, that there is no in between.

Speaker 15 (01:13:18):

There is no trying to find a logical solution. Young folks like myself, we have not been through the civil rights movement. So we may not know how to organize, but we, we have very strong numbers. Unfortunately, a lot of the media and been a part of this. I do a gospel show now, but in media we have not helped. I've specifically been told not to talk about this issue on my shelf. Um, I've also, uh, at the meeting with the school board, the teachers have been told not to talk about this issue or feel losing their job. Are you kidding? I think some of these are the things that need to be brought to light and I respect everything that you all have done. And up until this point now, presently, we need your help. We need, we need the mentorship. We need some direction because number one, we haven't done it before.

Speaker 15 (01:14:14):

Now we could figure it out. But I think since you've done it before, you know, it might help. So I just wanted to bring those, those few issues to light. And um, I'm also working with the democratic party and I know everybody may or may not be a Democrat, but uh, but that there are, um, it's called a blue crew and, and it's specifically tailored to the board of education issue. And on April 20th is the next meeting. We need to either have buses of people or, or have as many people as possible to sign up and speak so that they know that were not going to leave the issue alone. I already told him when I spoke last time that if I have to, I'm gonna March, I don't have a problem doing that. I'm not gonna let Dr. King and everybody else die in VA because

what they're talking about doing will affect the, the next 10 to 15 years for these kids that are in school now. So I just thought, I would say that

Speaker 5 (01:15:12):

Thank you as the person who was so harsh as I was, I wanna personally apologize to you, not to the group I made it about, but to you and I want, I wanna be, I wanna meet with you as soon as this is over right in this room.

Speaker 13 (01:15:25):

My name is, uh, Keenan Walker. Um, I'm blessed to be the, the lead tour guide that the national civil rights museum in Memphis, Tennessee. And I say blessed because I didn't apply to do it. I was originally hired by the museum as an actor, um, as part of what was called the living history tour, which is right around the 40th anniversary of the assassination. And for those three months, if you were tour the museum, it certain spots that would've been live actors that would've reenacted things from the civil rights move movement for you. But I figured if I was gonna be at the civil rights museum for three months, I'd be a fool not to get in there and really just learn as much as I could. And honestly, when I got in there, it changed me. It, it, it had, it had a personal effect on me and the person that I was cuz it, it, it made me ashamed ways that I used to conduct myself when I was younger.

Speaker 13 (01:16:16):

But at the same time, it filled me with pride and it, it made me want to be a better man. And I say a better man because in my city there in the city that I come from for Forbes magazine says that the number two most dangerous city in the country with the number three most miserable city to live in, in, in the United States of America. So the, the black community in my city is more concerned with being little Wayne than Langston Hughes. But at the same time, I wanted to continue to learn this history, but I was so passionate about it. I wanted to teach people about it because I figured if it could change my life at 27, I'll be 30 this month. But if it could change my life is by learning a piece of history. There's no telling what effect it might have on people.

Speaker 13 (01:16:57):

If somebody's just passionate about teaching it to 'em. And the, I guess the, what my question is to you is if learning a piece of history could change my life at the stage that I was at, then why is it so difficult for me to reach the, the, the, the young people in my community? Cause it seems like all the people that come through the museum, the people who have the most interest are people that are not from the city. They're nine times out 10 they're foreigners, or they're not of the African American community. The, the hardest people for me to reach in the, in that museum is the young African American community in my city, because it's, they're concerned with what the surroundings are. They concern of what they have to face when they go home. And my question to you is how do I make this movement relevant to these, to, to the people in my city, because our city is dying. These kids in my city are some things that, that I, that are UN insurmountable. And, and I just wanna see, I just wanna ask how do I reach the young people in my community to make this movement relevant to them

Speaker 8 (01:17:58):

Or freedom, school, teach all what the proclamation is and how it got to be like that.

Speaker 6 (01:18:06):

One other thing that I would suggest you do is to figure out how to reach out instead of them coming to you. You go to them, you have to realize that everybody other than the children from your city is taken out of that environment that they came from and is put into a whole, another new environment. And in many instances, the environment which people are in has a tremendous effect. So I would say that's another thing that might be helpful is to look at reaching out and

going to them in their environment and perhaps maybe take them on a trip somewhere else, to look at some things, to meet with some people and to do some things.

Speaker 4 (01:19:02):

Okay. I wanna say something to the young man that just got finished speaking. I just got finished asking a question. Now, when you approach people just have something by to offer them, you know, show them how you can help to make a difference, you know, get, you know, out of the drug programs, you know, create some kind of program where they can realize some benefit that they will be receiving from, from that program.