

SNCC 50th Anniversary Conference
Shaw University, Raleigh NC, April 2010
Transcript Video Recording #14
(Raw, unedited, no annotation)

Speaker 1 (00:00:17):

I'm very glad that I was here yesterday at the session that their niece of mine, Ruby sales moderated, because Ruby had the great courage

Speaker 2 (00:00:52):

To cut

Speaker 1 (00:00:52):

People off, to do something that one doesn't usually do in the midst of a SNCC gathering. And that is, she ask people to start off by being quiet, just taking a little time to be quiet in the midst of all this she's. She suggested that as we begin, we breathe deeply and come in touch with ourselves. You all are wonderful. Thank you.

Speaker 2 (00:02:33):

Thank that's.

Speaker 1 (00:02:52):

I think that it was because I am the oldest

Speaker 2 (00:03:00):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:03:01):

That I was asked to organize this panel of wonderful folks. And in the organizing, I was really hoping that my dear sister Barbara Ransby would be in our midst. Otherwise you are stuck with us, but we've been through that before. And we'll figure out a way to work that out. As you know, our panel has been given the title of the impact and influence of SNCC on American society from 1960 to 1968. And I am very glad to be the shepherd of this wonderful crew of people who represent a beautiful combination of scholarly work with the warm, warm blood of social activism running through their lives. I am not going to, because we don't have time to go through all the stuff that one does with introducing panels. I've asked them to be sure to mention three things in each case before he speaks the full name so that you know who is up here, even though there are mics down there. Our experience over the last couple of days was that we needed folks to be able to see from the back much more clearly than Mike's at the table would allow. So they will be here full name.

Speaker 1 (00:05:39):

Whenever I gather with people, I also ask them to tell us what is the place where they spent their childhood and three, what were the circumstances professional or personal when they first came in touch with SNCC? Let me begin. My full name is Vincent Gordon Harding. I spent my childhood in Harlem in the south Bronx, in New York city. And I amazing, and I first came in touch with Nick in ways that are too long to even do more than simply mention at this point. But it was in 1961 when my wife, my late wife, Rosemary Freney Harding, and I came south together to participate in the movement that we began to meet SNCC one year after they had organized much more could be said about that someplace. I'm hoping that some of the material that I have recently written about SNCC and my own meeting with SNCC is going to be available for you all to pick up copies of, if you don't get to pick up any copies of, of it, look for me wherever you go over the next two or three days, have no hesitation about asking me, where

is that blog that you are making available to us? And I will smile and pull it out of my, whatever I'm carrying at the time. Okay. So that's my part.

Speaker 1 (00:08:01):

These guys are gonna go in the order that they are on the materials, Charles Payne, till a branch with loving thoughts to our sister, Barbara, wherever she is, Clayborn Carson and Tom Hayden. So my brothers, you are free <laugh> as, as free as you can be for 10 minutes, do what you can and to help folks understand what it is that you think is important about the meaning of SNCC for that period of their life's activity. Okay, Charles, we want you to start.

Speaker 3 (00:09:11):

Thank if I had more than 10 minutes, I would say something about what Dr. Hardy and has meant to all of us in this profession. He is the Dean. He's the father.

Speaker 4 (00:09:18):

He, he

Speaker 3 (00:09:19):

He's a Patriot, right? Uh, I want everyone from U C w to stand, please. Uh, these are my favorite high school freshman in the world,

Speaker 4 (00:09:28):

University, Chicago high school. All right. They, they, they,

Speaker 3 (00:09:35):

They, they are going around interviewing folks while here, please be cooperative folks. Please give them a few minutes. This is such a wonderful experience for young people. Uh, I'm just so glad that they can make it. Um, I grew up, um, my, oh, sorry. My name is Charles Melvin Payne Jr. Charles Melvin Payne senior was a freshman at saw university. He came here on a track scholarship in 1940. He was only here for that one year, cuz the next year uncle Sam said he needed to be in Italy. Um, but I feel a personal kind of connection of my own to this, to this, to this institution. I grew up in a small town would buy New Jersey. Let's say, uh, uh, 30 minutes south of Atlantic city. It's a town that's about a third black when I grew up, uh, maybe a third Jewish and it was a growing Puerto Rican population at the time, which many was the pariah town in south Jersey.

Speaker 3 (00:10:22):

That's not the ethnic composition of, of, of the towns around us. And so it was sort of interesting, uh, to grow up in that context. I think I first encountered SNCC when I was, uh, the president of the student Afro-American society at Syracuse university, let's say 67 ish. And we were trying to, to learn how to connect with community organizations. SNCC was a thought of it. I mean, sorry. Syracuse was thought of as a kind of training ground for organizers. A lot of organizers, largely core organizers came out, came out of, uh, Syracuse and some guys came back from Mississippi. I remember Bob fully loved by name and I've forgotten some of the other names. And there were these references from Mississippi, right. Uh, from Mississippi SN and we just sort of looked up to them as kind of icons. Right. Uh, uh, and that was sort of my first human contact before that it was just me as a high school student looking at these pictures in jet of these young folk, challenging the self <laugh>, uh, in terms of, uh, uh, the impact of SNCC on the civil rights movement in, uh, seven minutes.

Speaker 3 (00:11:18):

I mean, there's some obvious things what SNCC does is I'm sorry, it's the impact of SNCC on America, I think is the title. Yeah. SNCC forces, the older civil rights organization to a more militant, more activist posture, a lot has been written about that. SNCC helps to force the movement and, and into the more dangerous deep south states and especially into the, uh, rural

areas more broadly. I think the first point to make is that SNCC and core, I would say defined activism for Americans for generation, right. SNCC was to, to, to, to quote, uh, uh, uh, Bernice Johnson, Reagan. It was the boring struggle, the struggle with shape and stimulated. The other struggles of that, of, of that area. And let me quote her, um, the civil rights movement being black at the bottom offered up the possibility of a thorough analysis of society.

Speaker 3 (00:12:05):

The exciting thing about the civil rights movement, and I would say about SN in particular is the extent to which your gay participants are glaring analysis of who and where they were in society. The civil rights movement was only a dispersion. Its dispersions continues to be manifested in ever widening circles of evaluation of human. And I'm sorry, ever widening circles of evaluation of human and civil rights afforded by this society. You cannot present an accurate picture of the movement to the 1960s and seventies, unless you show them resting on the foundation of the civil rights movement. I find generally that people who participated in those other movements, especially if those other movements were predominantly white, see whatever they participated in as central. It is again a distortion of what black people do to stimulate the salvation of this country. My point is that the movement board, not just the black power movement and the black revolutionary movements, but every progressive struggle that has occurred in this country since that time.

Speaker 3 (00:13:01):

And I think those, and some of you know, who know Doug MC Adams work know how carefully he has traced the degree to which the leadership of other movements came just outta the summer of 64, let alone the largest SN uh, uh, experience. I am still frequently surprised by a number of times, I meet people, including scholars of the sixties who understand SN to have been a spinoff from SDS, or literally heard people. I mean, I will say it. I mean, Chris jinx, who is just know he, he's not child liver as a scholar. I, I, I, I, I have heard him say that his understanding was the port Yuran statement, influence sticks, SNS statement of purpose as chronologically wards, just chronologically as back. Right? Um, anyway, one can make an argument, um, that SNCC set the bar of activism too high, right? Activism comes to mean you drop out of school, you give up any career aspirations, you fight dogs insurance on, on a daily basis.

Speaker 3 (00:13:55):

And you do that for \$10 a week, right? That's that dog gone high bar, right? Not, everybody's gonna touch that one. And not everybody who touches it is going be able to sustain it over time. What you can argue that what SNCC does by setting the bar. So high is the value of the forms of social action, right? Uh, which have value, but which do not have the drama, do not have the charisma of the kind of activism that SNCC came to to, to, to, to study for, and also helps to create therefore, a competitiveness about which forms of activism are more authentic than which forms of activism, who is more activist than whom, which then takes many often unhealthy forms. And one of them, I think is the, is the under commented upon relationships between southerners and northerners in the movement. I think that's an expression of this.

Speaker 3 (00:14:41):

And we talk a lot about whites and black and very little about northerners and southerners. And there's a reason for that, that we should talk about Bob Moses got Bob Moses, uh, has made several comments about how he saw in, in, in an interview some years ago, how he saw, uh, the impact of SNCC one. And I'm truncating this because of time. SNCC had a credentializing function. Most people come into historically in the social movements, come outta educational institutions or, or union institutions or church institutions, which told them they have a right to play the role. SNCC got to people who were never a part of those institutions and convinced them that they had a right to play roles they had never played before. And that Bob argues is how

many know movie stick plays. When you see people stepping into roles they've never stepped into before.

Speaker 3 (00:15:25):

One important part of that obviously is that SNCC created space in which women could emerge into leadership roles in ways. That was very unusual in American political history. We know that was a fraught uneven, contradictory process, but nevertheless, it was a process that happened there. Uh, and, and not to the same extent, integrate many other places. One of the things I do wanna put some emphasis on is that bomb puts a lot of emphasis on SNCC as nurturing culture. And I quoting part of what the movement did was just expose people to a lot. I mean, it was exposing people to all different kinds of people who were coming in and out of Mississippi, exposing people to people by taking them out of Mississippi, traveling and meeting people elsewhere. And the people there meeting are all people who are somehow part of this movement, culture they share in certain values.

Speaker 3 (00:16:08):

They're talking about certain things. If all those activities are really trying to get across the same message, which is that people have to take ownership over what they're doing. They have to commit themselves. There have to be this element of persistence. I'm sorry. Um, trying to figure out how to work with other people. If all of that is happening everywhere, then it begins to be more than just a sum of the parts. Something begins to take whole, which, which, which becomes a sort of culture, which then provides a place where people can grow and emerge. And then it goes on to talk about the young people who grew, uh, uh, Hollis Watkins and peacock and, and Curtis Hayes who grew and emerged in that cultural space that the movement had created for them. I'm emphasizing that because I go to a lot of sessions in which the activists of that generation talk to the activists of this generation, right?

Speaker 3 (00:16:52):

And a lot of that is framed as you elders, you tell us how to do what we want to do. That's probably not a useful way to frame that. Right. A more useful way to frame that would be you eldest tell us how to create an emergent culture, right. And a culture which is going to encourage our growth, tell us how to create a culture in which we can sustain the relationships with one another, right. That one needs to be a part of sustained struggle. That's probably the most that, that that's good. That's probably the most useful. One of the more useful ways, uh, to frame these cross-generational discussions that I, I don't think that, uh, we do enough of that. And, and finally, I think, I just wanna say that, um, we need to think about what it means that SNCC is not a part of the American popular, popular imagination about what it means to be the movement.

Speaker 3 (00:17:38):

Right. Uh, I think there were 20 authors. Who'd written about SNCC in that room last night, uh, for all those books, people still do not understand what SNCC is. There's some conception of the, sit-ins certainly there's a conception remaining of black power. There is no sense of the organization, right. Uh, that was connected to them and, and gave them birth. We need to think about what it does to the, to the American sense of possibility in, on social issues. That SNCC is as an organization has still, after all of the scholarship, it is largely obliterated from, from, from, from the imagination. And one of the exciting things about young people here is that they're learning about that for the first time. And, and, and we can talk about how, what that does to them in the end then, uh, lastly and redundantly for most of you, what SNCC represents. Uh, and I think the reason that some of us hold on so tightly, uh, to the, to, to, to the best in SNCC is that it's a moment when ordinary people living up to the best values were able to make visible change, right? Um, that what SNCC holds out for, for, for us is the, is the idea that activism can be based on profound faith and human capacity for growth and profound faith for human possibility. That's not technical, it's something profoundly spiritual. That is the heart of what we are trying to hold on.

Speaker 5 (00:19:07):

Thank you.

Speaker 6 (00:19:09):

Thank you, Charles. I'm honored to be here. My name's Franklin Taylor branch. I'm very seldom use my first name. So Homeland security is forcing me to now you can't go by your middle name anymore. Uh, but my mother wants me to, um, I grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, the son of a dry cleaner, my own, uh, an non-political anti-political dry cleaner. My only experience with race and segregation as a small child was that my dad used to go to regular Atlanta crackers baseball games with his cleaner Peter Mitchell. They had a very bantering relationship and they would always joke about the crackers, uh, going. But when we got to the ballpark, we had to split up and my father, uh, only once or twice said on the way to the game, I don't like this. And even as a seven year old, I knew that this was a very profound statement.

Speaker 6 (00:20:08):

He wasn't staying political, like he wanted to do anything. All he meant was that he wanted to keep joking with Peter and he didn't like having to split up. Um, but I also knew even as a seven year old, not to ask even one follow up question that this was such a radioactive topic, that that was the end of it. <laugh> um, so that even a seven year old in say, 1954 could feel the terror in the subtext of our culture. Um, and that's one of the things that I want to get across to you in a, in a broad sense about SNCC and its historical perspective. I first met SNCC people in 1968, uh, as a college senior, and by then kind of a student activist, um, involved in trying to work and get my toes into a little bit of civil rights, but also anti-war activism, Vietnam.

Speaker 6 (00:21:01):

We had the idea to challenge Lester Mads, the governor of Georgia who appointed all the delegates. And, uh, there were a lot of people conspiring around all the presidential candidates wanted to do that, and they needed gophers and volunteers to go try to recruit people to hold a convention modeled on the Mississippi convention. We modeled everything on the Mississippi freedom party, hoping we could follow them. And they sent me to Southwest Georgia to go into black churches, to recruit people, to come to a convention in Macon as a 21 year old. And all, I only had one name that gave me the name of, uh, CB king in Albany. So I went and he sent me out to all, all these churches and, uh, told me about SNCC folk. Now I had known about him as folk heroes then, but then when I came back, they said, you did such a good job. You need to recruit somebody to head this delegation. And, uh, so they gave me the phone number for Julian bond, the new, uh, Georgia house of representatives guy. And I went over and tried to recruit Georgia, Julian, and wound up, going to Chicago. We were seated and my job mostly was ironing his shirts, um,

Speaker 6 (00:22:05):

In the Chicago convention, but it was a great adventure. So that's how I first met SNCC people.

Speaker 6 (00:22:14):

This is a very serious topic we have here about the impact of SNCC and the movement in American history. And I want to try to throw out some provocative ideas in my brief time and sit down, but I'm not trying to be polite. I want to, I want to, in a way, try to say the shocking thing is the enormous gap between the empirical effect of SNCC and the movement on American society since then, and the perception in popular culture. And even in academic, as Charles said, culture about what it was. And I submit that that is a terrible crisis for this country. And to some degree, a crisis for those of us in our room, because if we were, if SNCC people were responsible for get this, the idea, the idea is that SNCC people assume the responsibility for correcting the injustices against them.

Speaker 6 (00:23:09):

That's right now that's an enormous responsibility. Surely that kind of reaching out for responsibility would make it equivalent today to say it is our job to fix the distorted history of that time. A time that we were at the root of think of it, the terror that was in my dad's and the going to those ball games is gone. SNCC ended terrorism. It went where the terror was worst and ended a terrorism, a very salient topic in modern America in a whole region of this country. It's an enormous thing. A room like this in 1960, every one of our palms would be sweaty. And we'd be worried about what the heck was gonna happen to everybody's family who was in here. That is an everyday reality that that comes and goes with every breath that was changed. And people take it for granted more generally, SNCC engendered a broad democratization of not only American politics, but American culture.

Speaker 6 (00:24:16):

Um, democratization is really important. A lot of things we take for granted. If you have a daughter, you may take it for granted that it is open to her to go even to west point things that were unimaginable until SNCC started forcing this country to struggle with what equals citizenship really means. And it did engender all these other movements as Charles was talking about. I don't think even the most visionary gay, uh, um, SNCC person in the 1960s thought that we would be debating gay marriage today. Nobody thought that you couldn't even talk about it then. And so, to some degree, that's the gap in American politics today that conservatives who are frightened of the movement, right? Or resent the fact that the dominant idea in American politics, since SNCC has been that government and politics are bad and yet, and they win elections and liberal is a dirty word and conservative as ascendant. And yet here they are debating a political agenda with gay marriage, right on the forefront. You know, the empirical world that SNCC created dominates the world, but not our public discussion. How is that? That's enormous. Part of it is culture. SNCC had an impact, not just on politics, but also on culture.

Speaker 6 (00:25:35):

I mentioned the notion of citizenship versus consumer. Now we have a notion that politics is like a consumer. You make complaints and you get mad. If somebody doesn't come and serve you a better McDonald's okay. That's politics, that's talk. Radio politics. SNS notion is that a consumer is res a citizen is responsible for the country. Even if the country says you can't vote, you still have to do it. Never will forget. One year I told Diane Nash, I was asking about something the, uh, FBI had done to her and, and to the movement, some nasty thing. And she says, oh, that's just Hoover. And I said, well, that's very generous. Even she says, no, Hoover is our fault. We left him in a secret office of power for 50 years. You have to read, you know, page one of the Federalist papers, understand we got just what we bargained for.

Speaker 6 (00:26:24):

So that, that kind of citizenship, that kind of responsibility is an amazing example, uh, from that period that SNCC put high emotion and together with deep thought, always asking questions. What do we do? Act as citizens solve these problems, don't participate in your own oppression. This is a great seminar going to the depths of religion and politics and democratic theory, the gap between the impact of SNCC and the public discussion of SNCC exactly matches the gap between American democracy's promise. And our civics. Civics is not even taught in America. We take all of, of, of, of, of democracy for granted. It is a very profound thing. SNCC shows that, and we ought to remind America that democracy is still a great experiment. Two minutes,

Speaker 6 (00:27:29):

America has amnesia about history. It is not new. I grew up being taught. The civil war had nothing to do with slavery. I grew up being taught that the people who, who, who, who, who restored white supremacy were called redeemers, that's a religious term in history. Okay, well, it's happening again. People wanna remember what's convenient for them. That is consumer politics, not consumer history, not, not citizenship history. So now we're being taught all these terrible things, uh, about it. We have to fix that Dr. King go read the, the substantive part of Dr.

King's speech at the, when he got to Montgomery he's he had C van Woodward in the audience, and he says, we have to guarantee and guard that we will not, again, distort the meaning of the great democratization now that we can feel a movement entering in history, but it happened before. And it can happen again. We're responsible for the history because the time is so short. I want to say I a, I believe that some of us are too caught up in inside baseball about who did what,

Speaker 2 (00:28:43):

Hey,

Speaker 6 (00:28:43):

Hey, to get involved with the larger question of how do we engage and how do we correct this shocking distortion of history, this disconnect to do that. We've got to connect with people at a very, very broad level. And I, and to some degree, we have got to emphasize the benefits that flowed to all of society that made the south rich, that made white women be able to become doctors and lawyers and go to Yale, which they couldn't do all of those things. And to some degree, I think within the movement, there's a reluctance to do that because it dilutes two things. It dilutes the racial core of the movement's purpose and it dilutes, or people fear that it will dilute the, the capacity to address the remaining questions of racial injustice in this country. If you start emphasizing these others. But I think the movement itself shows that you gain when you give you gain, when you think.

Speaker 6 (00:29:40):

And the last thing I want to say in one minute is that part of the, of the lack of historical perspective in the movement itself that may contribute to the larger and more shocking disparity between SNS impact and its place in popular culture. And history is this. We don't talk about religion to the degree that we did during the movement. The movement went to the bottom of what religion offered. Even if you were a non-religious person, you knew what it meant to struggle with the meaning of the word equal souls that our souls are equal. And what does that mean? And where does it connect with the bottom of, of democracy, which is what does it mean to be an equal citizen? And those are very profound struggles and where it came out often is in nonviolence. And I want to tell you that this conference does not discuss nonviolence anywhere near to the degree that it animated the most productive years of SNCC.

Speaker 6 (00:30:38):

And I also lastly, want to confess that a lot of people that I talk to in SNCC are embarrassed by nonviolence today. Uh, don't want to talk about even deny that they were non vial. Um, we can, we can struggle some other time with the reasons for that, but you can't, you can't repair history. Um, if, if, if you're tucking your toes about the larger meanings of history, because that's, what's really important, you can't expect people today to care about the small things that we care about. You gotta, you gotta reconnect to the big ones.

Speaker 5 (00:31:14):

Thank you.

Speaker 7 (00:31:29):

I am Clayborn Carson Jr. And I'm really pleased to be here. Uh, I, I think that just to be on this panel with M two, hear, um, Vincent and, uh, uh, Taylor, particularly, I, I just wanna publicly thank you for your work over a career and Vincent's work over a career. It has been a wonderful, uh, to, uh, simply be part of that, um, learning process that you have helped us along with when I say Clayborne Carson, Jr. That means there was a Clayborne Carson, and he came from Alabama along with his father as part of that great migration to come to the urban north, to come to Detroit, uh, where he, uh, worked along with his father in the auto industry Ford motor company, and then went to the military, came back to Alabama to train, to be an officer in world war II,

fought in Europe, came back to the United States and, uh, took his family labor in Carson, senior to a small town in New Mexico called Los Alamos, where he became a security inspector.

Speaker 7 (00:32:50):

And that's where I grew up. And this, uh, process of coming to Los Alamos that came to understand that he came not because he wanted to live, particularly in the middle of New Mexico, where there were no black people, but, uh, because my parents thought that this would be good for the family, that this would be a good place for them to raise their kids. So I was raised, there got tired of living in a small town, wanted to more than anything to not spend the rest of my life there. And, um, one of the opportunities to get away was to when I went to college and started going off to student meetings, I went to the national student association meeting in 1963, a few days before the March on Washington. And there, I met a young student from Howard university Stokley Carmichael, who, um, we had a number of discussions at, at that conference about SNCC and the work that he was doing. He was still a student at that, at that point at Howard. But when I told him I wanted to go to the March on Washington and kind of expected him to applaud this decision, instead, he said, why would you wanna go to that picnic?

Speaker 7 (00:34:14):

And it brought me to an awareness that for SNCC people, there was something else going on other than the March and that colored my perception of the March. And I remember being there and thinking that the most important thing that happened was John Lewis's speech. And I think that after that, my life of course turned in a different course. I don't think I would be where I am today. Editing the papers of Martin Luther king, if not for that decision to go to the March on Washington. And I certainly wouldn't be at Stanford university. There were no black professors in 1963 at Stanford university. Uh, this would've been like thinking you might live on Mars. It was about that probable. And one of the things that I've had the privilege of doing is looking at SNCC and looking at Martin Luther king to entities that are often seen as the opposite ends of the spectrum. And one thing that I've learned over the course of time is that Martin Luther king, and I think SNCC came to very similar conclusions through different routes. When you look at the end of Martin Luther King's life, what was he doing? He was struggling for the rights of people at the bottom of the economic system, struggling to end poverty. He was in Memphis. He was also broadening the struggle to look at it in a global context.

Speaker 7 (00:35:55):

What was <affirmative>, what was SNCC doing? One of the things that I see it doing, and the real significance is that it went to the heart of what I think is the problem of the 20th century. While other civil rights organizations were trying to improve the conditions under segregation. You know, think of what the Montgomery bus boycott was. It was not even a struggle at first to desegregate the buses. It was a struggle to get better treatment under segregation. It gradually moved beyond that. And I think SNCC took the movement into the heart of what my grandfather moved away from. That is the great struggle of the 20th century. And I think the greatest freedom struggle was the struggle to transform peasants. And that word is not used very much, but that was 150 years ago. The vast majority of people on the face of the earth.

Speaker 7 (00:36:58):

And I look around this room, how many generations are each of us away from peasantry, that's a measure of something. And that transformation of peasants into citizens as Taylor would put it into equal citizens was a tremendous process. If you think about something like the right to vote 150 years ago, maybe 15% of the population on the earth had the right to vote. No woman had the right to vote and only a minority of males had the right to vote. Most of us were under various systems of oppression, colonization, other forms of racial oppression and the movement to in those systems of oppression was something that emerged out of the oppressed themselves, the movement to liberate themselves. So I would argue what SNCC did is it brought us in touch with that movement. The movement was there before SNCC was born. The movement was in the

Delta of Mississippi and central Alabama and Southwest Georgia. It was there. What SNCC did is it discovered that move and then began to connect the sons and daughters of peasants and the grandsons and grandsons of peasants with that movement that was already in existence. And the way I look at it is that those individuals who were peasants

Speaker 7 (00:38:49):

And sent off their kids to have a better life than they had

Speaker 2 (00:38:52):

Mm-hmm <affirmative>

Speaker 7 (00:38:54):

Knowing that someday that would come back and that there would be this grand struggle to bring about basic citizenship rights. And we won that struggle. I mean, imagine having a generation in which you can say at the end of that generation, there was once a thing called the Jim Crow system in the south. Now, if I want to tell my students about that system, I say, go and look at a history book. There was something called colonization and the British empire and the French empire. And now if my students wanna learn about colonization, I say, go to a history book or apartheid the same thing, go to a history book, imagine that, and that happened in the lifetime of some of us here, that those struggles reach their culmination and SNCC was in the Vanguard of that, of bringing us that realization that the majority of humanity was still enslaved. And one of the things that I think Vincent has helped me understand is that only as that struggle reached its culmination, have we actually seen anything approximating democracy, democracy is a concept that goes back a long ways, but actually looking at something, a society that even approximates democracy, it's only in the last 50 years or so that we've seen the approximation of that.

Speaker 7 (00:40:42):

So when we think about democracy, it is this experiment and we're still in the early years of it. So one of the things that I I see with SNCC is that it was the beginning or the end of a beginning, that is this long struggle to make equal citizens out of peasants, but it was also the beginning of a new period of struggle. One thing that I think also brings, and I'll just end on this, um, Martin Luther king and SNCC together

Speaker 7 (00:41:23):

Is that <affirmative> is that they were under both under no illusion, that the struggle ended in 1965 with a passage of the voting rights act. One thing that I think would be very evident, and you can see this at this conference and of Martin Luther king were here. He would certainly agree with it is that all that happened is that we reached a new stage of struggle. And that that's where I would hope that all of the young people here understand is that you could look back on this glorious period when systems of oppression that many people felt would never end were brought to an end, and you can be inspired by that, but never become complacent because of that. So I, I would hope that this, this conference is, uh, an inspiration to those of you who are young and gonna experience most of the 21st century. I think I'll get a little ways into it and understand that the greatest freedom struggles are yet to come and that SNCC will serve as a model for how we might approach those freedom struggles for that vast number of people who in so many ways are still oppressed and enslaved today. Thank oppressed and slave today. Thank you.

Speaker 8 (00:43:04):

Oh, my, I, uh, I was asked to comment on the, uh, SNS effect on the national movements of the 1960s. My name is, uh, Tom Hayden and I was there the simplest explanation I can give. What's your middle name? Emmett. And then my mommy used to say, uh, she didn't know who Thomas Emmett was. He was the founder of the Irish freedom struggle in America. So, uh, through assimilation, I lost my heritage. <laugh> the, uh, the analogy I would make, uh, would be that

the, um, effect. Where did you spend your child? I'm going to get into that. Oh, me, excuse me, sir.

Speaker 8 (00:43:51):

The, the, uh, the analogy I would make is with the, uh, big bang theory of the universe. Now, unlike the, uh, big bang theory, there were precursors, there was history. Um, but, but it was a kind of, um, uh, explosion, just an explosion that, uh, in which the, uh, uh, somehow the, um, a critical mass had been built up by previous generations. Uh, the students who sat in, uh, in this state in February, 1960, had heard the term sit in from their elders, of course. And when somebody's saying we shall overcome, it echoed the factory sit-ins of the 1930s, the spirituals that fortified the movement were centuries old. Uh, I was the, uh, editor of the Michigan daily in Ann Arbor. I'd grown up in an all white town called Royal Oak. When I saw the first sit-ins in photographs, uh, uh, a graduate student named Al Haber, who is here, um, was organizing students for democratic society, uh, at the time immediately as if out of nowhere, um, there were picket lines at the local Kresge's and Woolworth's, and among the students, picketing was, uh, Martha Prescott later, Norman who's also here today.

Speaker 8 (00:45:18):

Um, and, uh, that summer, uh, uh, typical of, uh, my generation, I hitchhiked to Berkeley to report on this new student movement, students in Berkeley were picketing Woolworth's as well. And they were beginning to apply direct action against segregated hotels in San Francisco. I went from there to the democratic convention in Los Angeles, and I interviewed Dr. King on a picket line. I was beginning to wonder if it was enough to just write about these things, uh, and consider instead that maybe I should do something as well. It was at this point that I met the SNCC delegation at the national student association conference in, um, in, uh, Minnesota. And I was challenged by and drawn towards their example. There were people there like Charles McDo who's, uh, here, uh, again today, and it was one of those activists. We didn't call ourselves activists at the time.

Speaker 8 (00:46:19):

Uh, we called ourselves organizers. It was one of those activists, um, uh, Sandra Cason who, uh, uh, drew me, uh, through love, uh, to the south to SNCC. Uh, it was to a young love and to a marriage and in time, uh, the marriage would not last, uh, nor did many of the forms of those times, but this was a brief golden moment of blessed community, and it really radiated. So I went south with Casey as a field secretary for SDS. That's what we called it. Then field secretaries, not the language, uh, and my purpose was to mobilize Northern students through action, um, and through writing and speaking. And so on looking back, I guess I was a branch of SNCC pointing north. Uh, I was an Albany, uh, freedom writer on my 22nd birthday. And I wrote a letter from the Albany jail to the SDS network up north the letter proposed that the SDS launch itself with a new organizational manifesto based on cc's example, and address to students all over America.

Speaker 8 (00:47:38):

So I think we can say for sure that the idea of a national student movement SDS dedicated to direct action and participatory democracy was born, uh, in that jail cell that was SNS influence. Uh, SNCC organizers also participated in shaping the SDS and the port hearing statement through a workshop that was held here in North Carolina and by their presence in port Huron itself, which is a retreat center that was owned by the United auto workers on the lakes of, on the shores of lake Huron. That was June 62 in 1964. Nexts influence again was totally apparent in causing many of us who are SDS organizers to leave our campuses and take up community organizing projects in 13 cities, from Chicago to Newark, where I was based to coal mining country in hazard Kentucky, the project was intended to parallel SNS, Mississippi summer project, and build what we called at the time.

Speaker 8 (00:48:50):

We in SDS an interracial movement of the poor, without a doubt, uh, the experience of the Mississippi project also led to the Berkeley free speech movement in fall of 1964, an uprising that sparked a decade long movement, uh, which the port hearing statement only envisioned without a doubt, the rejection by the democratic party of the freedom democratic challenge in August 64, opened the gates to a different politics. The politics of the black Panther, uh, uh, party, the black power movement arising in Lowes county and in Meredith March was taken up, uh, by the Panthers in Oakland, a direct Northern outgrowth of SNCC, without a doubt as well. The early understanding that Vietnam was an invasion of our own hopes and dreams came from SNCC on day, SNCC buried Chaney Goodman and Scher. The us was bombing north Vietnam for the first time. SNCC was the first to stand against the war and the draft SNCC organizers were in the front lines of the first Vietnam marches.

Speaker 8 (00:50:03):

SNCC shaped our understanding that when it came to issues like war, we were all unrepresented people. Also out of the SNCC experience came some of the earliest writings about women's rights by a small group that included Casey and Mary King. Who's also here today out of the SNCC experience came people like Carl Whitman, who joined the struggle in Cambridge, Maryland with the late Gloria Richardson, then became an organizer with me in Newark. Then a leader of the gay liberation movement born in the Stonewall riots of 1969. It began like a wave and it ended like a wave crashing. These organizations of ours were catalytic rather than bureaucratic. They served a purpose. They broke apart. It wasn't only Vietnam veterans who suffered post traumatic stress syndrome as a result. What did it mean? Could it have been otherwise I have three quick comments to make the first is that history needs to recognize how close we came to achieving our goals in the sixties.

Speaker 8 (00:51:14):

It's often described as explosions resulting in nothingness, but things would've been much different if political realignment had begun in 1964 with the resting of power, from the Southern racist who dominated Congress and the democratic party. Things would've been much different if Vietnam had not been chosen. And the war on poverty, the, the war at home had been, uh, the focus which we wanted it to be, uh, in 19 64, 19 65, uh, our dreams were deferred, uh, but we're here today as evidence that the dreams are not over. Uh, one of the reasons that we, uh, were stopped on the brink of possible success, uh, is, is a heavy reason that is often not discussed in the context of social movements. We have to dwell not for long, but we do have to dwell on the meaning of assassinations in blocking forward progress. Um, the murders, uh, that we experienced, uh, were not the doing of isolated and deranged individuals, but the result at least of a feverish climate of backlash that inevitably led to lethal force. And that bring, brings me to a final comment about our president Barack Obama.

Speaker 8 (00:52:51):

He reminds me if you will, of the early days of SNCC, when we thought that Kennedy was a cold and technical and unemotional and distant president who had to be hammered and pressured to do anything, uh, when we look back on John Kennedy, the Kennedy that we remember from 63, uh, we look back more favorably because of an experience he had been through. He had been lied to it by his own advisors, and he found that the civil rights advocates were telling the truth. Uh, and I, I think the, uh, the chemical interaction of the pressure, the moral pressure and the organizing in relationship to the Obama presidency, which came out of a new youth movement, a new militancy, a new, uh, uh, organization everywhere in our, in our country, uh, can be, uh, uh, an analogy to what happened with Kennedy. If we keep the pressure on, uh, I don't think, uh, there's much more to say, except for me. Um, the lesson of, um, SNCC down through the years is this, that we have to stand with the demonized until the demonizing ends.

Speaker 8 (00:54:25):

If you want to know what that means in practical terms, then it was to go to the worst places of Mississippi and Alabama and the deep south, what it would mean that at the time, that was thought to be madness, uh, impractical and, uh, dangerous. I was told by the justice department to please ask my friends in SNCC to leave because the justice department could not protect them in Mississippi in 1961. So today, uh, it may sound impractical. Uh, it may sound mad, but standing with the demonized until the demonizing ends is what we have to consider for me. That means the millions of young people in our prisons. Okay. The millions of immigrants in this country and the persecuted Muslim community that is demonized for the war on terror.

Speaker 1 (00:55:54):

Well, we've been offered a rich array of materials for us to ponder, to discuss a bit here and to decide how we will act as a result of what we've heard panel. Thank you very, very much before I ask for your questions or comments, I <affirmative>, I'd like to add a couple of things that have not been quite specifically mentioned about my younger brothers and sisters in SN and what they mean and meant SNCC was powerful on this matter of the symbols of what we are doing. And so at a time, when, especially in the black middle class community, from which many of them came, especially when it was considered the exact right thing to do to have as many Brooks brothers suits, as you could stuff into the closet, SNCC said, as it stood by the side of the peasants, we will dress as much like peasants as we can.

Speaker 2 (00:58:14):

Um,

Speaker 1 (00:58:15):

We will wear the clothes of the people around us, and that it seems to me was a great contribution that they made to our thinking about how we give sign and symbol to what we are believing in, on the other hand, they also had to deal with Ella baker

Speaker 1 (00:58:53):

Who said to them, alright, that is wonderful. What you've done in terms of sign and symbol of wearing the clothes of those that you are working among, uh, in the south. But when you get on these black middle class campuses, you've gotta dress like those black middle class folks, because they won't listen to you. If you come there in your jeans suits. I love the fact that always with SNCC, they helped us to remember that life is much more complicated than we would like it to be sometimes. And I would call us simply to remember how well SNCC learned to move with complication, with contradictions, with totally unexpected developments. It seems to me that that's something that they left for us as legacy in many ways. And we see it being acted out right here in this gathering. SNCC is doing the thing of just moving as the spirit say, move. And as the crowd necessitates, and it is just beautiful to see them moving in that jazz style as a way of organizing the other things I want to say about SN and what it seems to me to have meant and still mean is that SNCC

Speaker 1 (01:00:43):

Found its deepest life. In many ways in the community of Snickers, they <affirmative>, they found their strength, their capacity as young people to do seemingly impossible things, because they had formed themselves as a family, as a community that would not be moved, working, organizing for change out of the base of a deep sense of community. Very, very important. They sent that message to us and they sent also the message that that kind of community does not come cheaply because they had to go through some very hard struggles to maintain the community, to explain the community and to find new ways of expressing the community when new times came and new needs came,

Speaker 1 (01:02:12):

This is not just a sit in movement as has been said here. These are, as a of mine says these are deep folks. And they encourage us to recognize that building a new society as our brothers have all pointed us to is the work for deep folks and how to keep getting deeper is one of the tasks that we must give ourselves to. And clearly part of that task is how do we help each other to hear each other, to understand each other, to struggle with each other so little time for that now, but we take the time that we have, and it is open to you now to ask what you'd like to ask. I'd like you to start with the mutuality that is necessary for democracy. These folks told you their names, where they spent their childhood, and what if any kind of contact they had with SNCC for you and your questions, you cannot be anonymous. You must share the same thing as quickly as you can quickly as possible. Come on, let's go. You got the mic

Speaker 9 (01:03:35):

Vicki Malone. I'm a teacher in Macomb, Mississippi, and I teach a high school class to, um, we sort of inner city kids. Uh, we have an academy system in Mississippi. And so we have about a 95% African American school district of lots of kids who have great poverty. And when you were speaking, um, Mr. Branch about the peasantry, uh, it was very eloquent about how we have developed from, from, um, the peasants to where we are and how and how we got, what was

Speaker 10 (01:04:08):

Clayburn Carson. Thank you. That was talking about the PE

Speaker 9 (01:04:11):

You thank you, how we got from there to where we are now. Um, and it reminded me a lot of the conversations that I've had before about liberation theology and how we have, uh, liberated, but the kids that I see, uh, if we have, if we, if we've risen from the peasantry, who are these kids today who are so apathetic that, uh, don't know who they are as a people who don't care about learning a lot of things who are 19 in the 10th grade, who are these people and how do we, how do we turn this tide around?

Speaker 1 (01:04:52):

They're all around. Thank you, Vicky. A

Speaker 7 (01:04:54):

Response to that. Um, very quickly. One of the points I I'd make is that we're not that removed from peasantry. All that's happened is that the peasants of now are in towns and cities and, and the problems are the same. You know, the, the biggest change is that now they have basic citizenship rights, but that doesn't change the economic conditions. It doesn't change the Gulf between the Gulf between rich and poor has become worse. Sure. So these are the things that I think we have to, that we have to deal with and you have to deal with it in the classroom. And, uh, I think, well, we can get into a discussion about how to do that, but that would be another discussion.

Speaker 1 (01:05:36):

Would anybody else on the panel like to respond to that question?

Speaker 11 (01:05:40):

So my name is justice Benjamin. I'm from Chicago, Illinois. Yes. I attend, um, university of Chicago Woodline high school, and I am 15 in the ninth grade. Great. You speak of these students who are 19 in the 10th grade. And I really don't see that in my community. Um, we, we are unifying now and we're starting to get the, the values that are needed to build a successful, um, nation and to survive and achieve greatness in my community and throughout the Chicago area.

Speaker 1 (01:06:12):

Thank you. Thank you very much. Wonderful challenge to figure out how all these wonderful people are going to get a chance to ask their wonderful questions.

Speaker 3 (01:06:23):

<laugh>

Speaker 10 (01:06:24):

Call on somebody

Speaker 1 (01:06:25):

Be before <laugh>. I know you had to have an answer Bob, but before we go there, there's another person on the Chan on the panel who wants to respond to the question to our sister race.

Speaker 3 (01:06:39):

So I'll be very brief. I just wanna say that that language bothered me and it bothered other people in the audience. I'm sure you have. We have to be careful about reducing how people react to oppressive and alienating circumstances with who they are. Right. I mean, if we could have stood there in 1960, and you're talking about the average black youth, I could have painted another picture of disconnection and apathy in another lender. We just have to be careful about re reducing them to how they respond to schools that are boring, alienating, disconnected, and fragmented, right? That's not who the, the kids are. That's all,

Speaker 1 (01:07:17):

That's not who. Okay. Let's, let's assume that all of these conversations are going to be continued all through the next couple of days as you meet each other. Don't hesitate to hold on to brother Charles, to get whoever you want to to make sure the conversation goes on. Bob Zelner is right there at the mic for a long time, and then we'll go elsewhere.

Speaker 10 (01:07:48):

Uh, thank you, Vincent I'm Bob Zelner. I was raised in LA lower Alabama. Uh,

Speaker 10 (01:07:56):

Vincent has invited us to struggle together. And one of the great struggles that have preceded this meeting is addressing what clay Carson, uh, challenged us with. I think in the third edition of his book, SNCC in struggle, and that is, uh, identity politics, identity politics in a narrow view of women's rights and women women's rights. Only. This is a black struggle. How always has been a black struggle. It's not together. We need to address that. And what I would like to ask some of the distinguished panelists is how do we address that? That is still coming back. It's been an argument in SNCC for at least for 40 years. It's a, an, an entry point for co Intel pro. It was a rip and tear tactic inside of SNCC. Many of us have not answered Clayburn Carson's question. When SNCC adopted a black power, when a position, when SNCC became all black in the middle to late sixties, they gave up the weapons that had gotten them a long way. Interracial work grassots community organizing non-violent direct action. And probably one more that he could mention his question was, what did the identity politics has afflicted us in the last 25 years, keeping us all fragmented for one another, not having a United front and having each of our issues privately and so forth and not insisting as some people. Yes, Bob. Oh,

Speaker 1 (01:09:36):

I didn't mean care. I'm gonna

Speaker 10 (01:09:38):

Ask you. Okay. I'm asking how do we address the ending of identity politics and getting into a United front work? Thank you. Forget. Oh, and Gloria Richardson is still alive by the way. And healthy,

Speaker 12 (01:09:51):

Wow. Sorry.

Speaker 1 (01:09:53):

Panel. Would anybody like to speak to that?

Speaker 7 (01:09:59):

Well, I, you know, I think everyone would have a different, um, view about identity politics. I mean, one of the good things about it is that you need to have a, an identity politics in order to understand the sources of your own oppression. That's not something that there's a generalization about oppression, but you have to have some sense of what oppresses you as a person, the struggle against it. I would agree with Bob, um, that you need to understand that struggling against oppression is something that you have to understand the broader significance of that oppression. And that leads to this kind of United front that, that we wanna have now, how do you have them both? I think there, there is a time when any group needs to go within itself in order to understand how to come together in a broader coalition. Um, I think Bob Moses, um, at one point I remember him, uh, talking at the, uh, birthday for Ella Baker and, uh, problematizing that, that title that King used, uh, where do we go from here? And he said, the problem is that before you get to the, where do we go? You have to get to who we are. And some of us are still at that question of where we, who we are before you get to the broader question of how do we get from here to there.

Speaker 1 (01:11:34):

Thank you very much. Were you then Taylor, were you using the, the

Speaker 6 (01:11:38):

Minor? Yes. I, I would only say that there's not necessarily the indissoluble conflict between any, any particularizing politics and something general. What hurts is when you don't have the underlying overarching general thing, you could perhaps reconcile black power and nonviolence, but not if you're not talking about nonviolence, you can, you can reconcile identity politics with a religious mission that underlies our, our, our, our determination to risk our lives. But not if you're not talking about the, so we've lost the overarching things. And so we need to broaden, uh, I think we need to broaden that and bring back a balance. You know, there's nothing wrong with the term balance. If you're talking about profound things at the root, I mean, I know that balance sounds like compromise and wishy washy, but if you're trying balancing things is, is valuable. I even think on the, in the, in the question of larger historical perspective, that's there too.

Speaker 6 (01:12:41):

We always talk about the, uh, Atlantic City convention and the impact it had on the democratic, uh, party and, and on the movement, the Republicans expelled the black and tan rep, uh, Republicans of a hundred years at a convention a month before and laid the basis for essentially a, a Republican party rising out of the south to duplicate what the old Democrats used to be. Now, what we have, what we have is the Republicans fulfill the function of the white supremacy party, but we have a democratic party. That's trying to be something different and that's new. And that's a broader view of the, the movement affected the structural politics of all of American politics, but not necessarily in a bad way. So we need to, we need the larger view cuz that's what brought us together.

Speaker 1 (01:13:30):

Turn Illa. Charles wanted to say something before we move again to the

Speaker 3 (01:13:34):

Question. And again, I'll try to be very brief, Bob and I have argued this before, so this is not new. I mean I too, don't like the idea of microphone. I'm sorry. Uh, I, I don't like the idea of

treating this as an anchor for one thing. I think you have to consider, not everybody in the movement had the same purposes, right? And that for some people being able to assert one's identity was in fact the purpose, right? Or a significant part of the purpose, which is entirely legitimate, right? It goes sour. When you lose that, undercoding of the, the undergirding of mutuality that Vincent has kept keeping to, but there's nothing wrong with identity politics in and of itself. One, two, I was one, I was, I learned an awful lot from Taylor's overall comments and awful lot. I was disturbed by the way. He, he, he, his comment that the best period of SNCC, the most productive period I think was the language, was the early period.

Speaker 3 (01:14:27):

I even non-violent period. I simply want to underscore that. I believe there was a tendency in American culture to try to emphasize that part of, of the movement that most powerful Americans are most comfortable with, which now is the early part. And therefore, to, to, to discount the power of the black power movement, right? If you want to see an empirical treatment of this, look at Herbert Haynes on the black radical flank effects. I think mm-hmm, <affirmative>, that's close enough, right? <laugh> Herbert Haynes. Right? One of the points he makes is if you look at when American colleges opened themselves up to, to students of color, it is immediately and, and, and the wake of the riots after Dr. King's death, they did not open those institutions up to poor people and black people because of nonviolence. And he goes on to, to demonstrate that the black power movement led immediately to concrete advances for people. So I don't want that either or between the nice people and black power. I think that's not the word.

Speaker 1 (01:15:27):

Okay. Friends. We have a, a young friend down here who'd like to enter into the part conversation.

Speaker 11 (01:15:37):

My name is Michael Randall. Great. I'm a student of university of Chicago charter school, um, Mount <affirmative> Malcolm X believed that if you were being attacked and weren't being helped by the government, that you had a right to defend yourself. And, um, and a statement purpose of this book on page 23 was, which was drafted by Jim Lawson, as it says, it, uh, says nonviolence, as it grows from Judaic, Christian tradition seeks a social order of justice per minute. By love. My question is, um, just exactly like what was the message? What was the message that SNCC was trying to, you know, put out into the movement? What was like a deeper, what was the deeper message that SNCC was trying to get out to the people?

Speaker 1 (01:16:32):

Okay. Thank you. Tell us your first name again.

Speaker 11 (01:16:34):

Michael. Michael.

Speaker 1 (01:16:36):

Okay. Thank you. Anybody in the panel? Wanna speak to that?

Speaker 7 (01:16:42):

Yeah, I, I think that one of the things I would lead you to is just look at at Frederick Douglas's statement about struggle, basically. He's he said it many years ago. Quite clearly, you, you, the important thing is resistance that a lot of people talk about violence as a way of justifying lack of resistance. If you're willing to use violence, I'm not gonna stop you. And you probably aren't going to be talking about it in public. So most of the people, including Malcolm X, by the way, Malcolm X never came and to the south and used nonviolence or even the rhetoric of, of violence of when he was talking to Bo Connor. Okay. So I, I think that you always need to make that distinction of how do you resist and in this case, the most powerful nation on the face of the

earth, and to do that, you have to use a variety of means. And what happened in the sixties, that to me, was that people under the worst form of oppression found a way of resisting it. And that's what you have to respect.

Speaker 6 (01:18:06):

I would, I would just say that the movement was the movement in part, because you had the example of Jim Lawson as, as, as a framework and you also had Malcolm X right side by side. And part of the things that drew people in was trying to figure out how you hold those two ideas in your head at the same time and what they mean. There, isn't a simple answer to it. That's what struggle is

Speaker 1 (01:18:30):

Friends. Could I add something here to just keep us in context, we doing on time after almost 400 years of this nation's life,

Speaker 1 (01:18:48):

We have been dealing with the issue of how do you create a truly democratic, multiracial multi-religious multi just multi-class society for less than a half a century. We are where democracy is concerned, a developing nation mm-hmm <affirmative>. And so this don't be impatient with this kind of conversation. Mm-hmm <affirmative>, we are still learning what it means to be all the things that people said we are. And therefore we can bomb other people to make them what we are. No, we are still children in the area of developing a true human society. And so this conversation is absolutely necessary. And a question like Michaels is a crucial part of this kind of a conversation. So, Michael, thank you. Someone at the mic. There's someone at the mic back there. I'm come back up here soon. Okay.

Speaker 13 (01:19:59):

Thank you. I'm Perry Crutchfield junior from Raleigh, North Carolina. Good. My training is as an attorney. I'm currently a divinity student here. My initial contact with, with SNCC was as a high school student at John w li high school in Raleigh. We were an all black school. Uh, we, we, we dealt with excellence yet. There was a great degree of confusion in my life and some of my cos students life, because we tried to understand the various FA fragments of the movement and how they interrelated as it related to getting to the same common end. My question today is prospective. However, I believe that we could debate the fragments and, and the Unitarianism of what SNCC was as it relates to the other organizations and even inter SNCC business. But I don't think that's the important piece here, but I think the important piece here today is the opportunity that lies for force.

Speaker 13 (01:20:54):

And so my question is perspective, and it comes on the heels of a comment that was made by, uh, brother Payne. And my brother Carson, the words are transitional language of activism, cross-generational discussion, and the greatest freedom struggles are yet to come. We often say that our greatest assets are our youth yet in the presence of our youth. We don't give them the materials that they ask for and need to move forward. We often belie who they are as youth. We often say that what they want to hold onto is insignificant in the society. Yet we give them nothing to hold onto. And the, in the words of a young lady yesterday in the chapel, through the tears, she begged to be taught what to do. She begged to be taught what to do about her father, about her child who had an absent father. She begged to be taught about what to do in the instance, in which she felt discriminated against,

Speaker 1 (01:21:55):

But the per I'm gonna ask you to please.

Speaker 13 (01:21:57):

My, my question is simply this, what does this transitional discussion look like? How can you as a board and as a panel and as such an August, body of activists teach our youth and move us to a different place and a different conversation that is prospective.

Speaker 1 (01:22:17):

Okay. Thank you. Panel. Anybody want to speak to that, Tom? You haven't been heard from, so why don't you come in,

Speaker 8 (01:22:26):

Been busy listening? Uh, I, I just wanna elaborate. The last point I made, what SNCC did was send organizers into communities that were dismissed and demonized. They were dismissed by other organizations as irrelevant. They were demonized by the sheriffs and by the Klan and by the white community. But there was something about, uh, standing wi with the totally dispossessed that, uh, ignited, uh, a storm that the segregationist system could not contain. Uh, and, and the justice of which nobody could deny. What were you gonna do? Say leave them down there. You could not say that. Uh, so today, uh, it seems to me, the transition has been from civil rights on the power structure level to the war on crime and the war on gangs. And you have 2 million people in prison in the United States, far more than China, uh, far more than any country in the world.

Speaker 8 (01:23:38):

China's second. That's why I mentioned China, uh, much higher percentage per 100,000 than any other country on the planet. Uh, and, and, uh, the vast majority of these young people are black and brown and the vast majority of them are identified as gang members or super predators. All right. So standing with them means very concretely, uh, trying to get, uh, uh, political and legal and, and civil liberties attention to their condition. Because as long as, uh, the prison system becomes the dumping ground for the unemployed, uh, for whom the corporations have no interest and the state has no interest, it it's, it's just impossible, uh, for the younger generation to move forward, uh, by leaving them behind, uh, you know, the percent it's impossible. So I think the same thing could be argued about immigrants, uh, who are the leading scapegoat. And I mentioned Muslims because, uh, uh, uh, this, this idea of a, of a, a, a war mentality or a long war against, uh, against gangs, they say against crime, against drugs and against terrorists includes virtually the whole Muslim community in the United States and the world.

Speaker 8 (01:25:02):

And if you're afraid to touch those untouchables, if you're afraid to stand with them, you play into the machinery that locks them up and demonizes them and scares the middle class into giving up their tax money that's to spend on police and armies that never seem to win any of these wars. How long do these wars go on? So I think locating yourself, uh, in relationship to those constituencies, those people, those demonized is exactly the same as SNCC deciding to go into McComb, Mississippi, where I was, and others were, uh, in 1960, it was, that was the location it's like real estate organizing is all about location, location, location. Once you see that if you're in high school, you're working on dropouts, preventing dropouts. If they drop out, you're working on getting them out of prison, getting them a lawyer and so on and so on and so on. That's to me, the transition that would be worth considering,

Speaker 1 (01:26:05):

Thank you, Tom.

Speaker 1 (01:26:12):

And may I just add this for brother Perry? Who's raising that question. One of the things that I always remember from SNCC and its south wide activities is the way that Jim foreman, who was executive director, whatever that meant, uh, of SNCC. Jim would say that his major job was to go from community to community and tell the folks in this community, what the folks in that

community are doing about the situation, and then go to another community, tell them what's going on elsewhere. The question that is often raised in the way that brother Perry was raising, it sounds as if nobody is doing anything with young people. And the fact is that I know that all over this country, people like Charles are gathering young people in a variety of ways to pass on the story. One of the most important answers then to that question is to find out where people are doing this.

Speaker 12 (01:27:38):

Yeah,

Speaker 1 (01:27:39):

Check it out. We've got lots of ways of checking today that we didn't have 50 years ago. Tell the story, tell the story, recognize that there are people working. And that, that story itself is a source of inspiration for us to go and tell some more. I had promised my young sister down front that she would be next on our list of questioners.

Speaker 14 (01:28:06):

My name is Dian Johnson. Yes. There you go. Um, I attend the university of Chicago with line campus. Uh, I wanted to push back on the comment. I think your name is Vicky mm-hmm <affirmative> uh, you said students in general were lazy and you didn't. Can you repeat what you said? Please?

Speaker 12 (01:28:24):

Go ahead. Thank you. Point.

Speaker 14 (01:28:27):

Well, whoever said, I wanted to let you know that we're not lazy. There are different stages of it. Sometimes we're lazy because we stay up so late trying to do homework. And then sometimes we're lazy because we're not challenged and things aren't difficult then like students in general. And when I attend the university and my counselor, Mr. Curtis Nash, when I do feel lazy, he puts in the effort to give me something that's challenging. So I have something to work at so that I'm not lazy. So I think that when we keep ourself occupied, but not over occupied, you'll get tired. And then that's when you do become lazy. But in general, we are not lazy. We are not just sitting there not doing anything. Our school is a great school. Malcolm X, when he was young, he did things taught himself to read the dictionary, Martin Luther king, same thing. So, and then the youth did SNI. That's nowhere near lazy. That was a lot of work for them to do that. And especially for people to put their hands on them and them to not fight back physically, they fall back mentally and verbally. So we are not lazy. Just letting y'all know. Thank

Speaker 1 (01:29:29):

You. Thank you there. Thank you. In loving concern, I must ask you not to make a major speech, but to please raise the question that you'd like to raise, uh, with the panel.

Speaker 15 (01:29:46):

Uh, yeah. Strater is true myself. Also, my name is Arkansas, which should say about where I came from and what happened when I got outta jail. I worked in the black belt of Alabama, many counties. So with SNCC and also with SCLC, when I got outta jail and went back home, my own church tried to Lynch me. Um, and so I'm, I'm carrying some of the wounds from that. And the last time I was in jail, I was drafted out of the movement. A lot of people were, and that was in 1965 and I refused to go, which was the occasion of my being in jail for that period of time. And just to jump 45 years to the present, Ella baker talked about the spare point of organizing, and she said, empower the local people to deal with their issues. All right. But like you said about Jim foreman, there might be an issue if you issue over next door, how do you pull these things together?

Speaker 15 (01:30:48):

And Martin Luther king articulate, he didn't come from the grassroots, but he articulated, he sprained from the grassroots and he articulated the local to the constitutional and the present to the history, to the future and the church to society. And this is the kind of SP point we have to building be building now as to foster groups, fighting for justice on whatever their issue is and find a way to coalesce them and have the vision of the future, where we can March together in unison carrying our diverse issues. But, uh, but respecting one another and changing society for democracy. So if anyone could address

Speaker 1 (01:31:32):

That, thank you very much. And we'll give time to the folks before we close to, to respond to that, try start, try to,

Speaker 16 (01:31:40):

And, uh, when I was with the Congress of racial equality, I met Ralph Featherstone and a lot of people in DC and had this terrific experience. So my question is, uh, my statement and quick is that I think identity politics has been liberating for women for gay people, for black people. It doesn't make sense when there's enormous explosion of identity comes forward because it means people are self understanding their own oppression. There's been great history done on that. And the second thing is that my own organization, we're working with a hundred young people with a slogan, Hey, school board on pre-law on pre-med are not pre prison. And we're trying to organize young people before they get into prison. Yes, because it they're being tracked from the prison, from the high schools into the prison.

Speaker 1 (01:32:29):

Thank you very much. Thank you very at the mic now.

Speaker 17 (01:32:37):

Yeah. Thanks. My name is Wally Roberts. Um, I grew up in Bronxville, New York, which was, uh, all white, very wealthy, and it had deed restrictions. It couldn't people in the town could not sell their houses to black, or, um, I, uh, came to SNCC, uh, as a volunteer in the summer of, of 64. Uh, I was the freedom school coordinator in show on Mississippi came. I just wanted to pick up on one thing that Taylor said about nonviolence, uh, and connect it back with a paper that Bob Moses wrote two or three years ago. That was his testimony to the Senate judiciary committee on the anniversary of the 59 58 civil rights act. Um, and that was Bob picked up on the Colfax massacre of 1873. I think it was whereby, uh, the whites in the town of Colfax challenge shot massacred the blacks who were trying to uphold an Rin victory. And from that point forward, the, the, the whites in the south used essentially state sanctioned terrorism to repress the black vote and SNS. One of SNS greatest achievements was to defeat state sanctioned terrorism with nonviolence all.

Speaker 1 (01:34:04):

Thank you. That's a very important element to return us to the focus of our gathering in terms of SNS contributions. Uh, this was a movement that struggled in the midst of terrorism and did not overcome terrorism by becoming more terroristic than the terrorists, but found another way. I think that was one of the great contributions that SNCC made. Chuck as an old teacher is over there conferring with some young people who wanted to speak. And so who is next from that conference group there?

Speaker 14 (01:35:00):

Um, am I speaking loud enough?

Speaker 1 (01:35:02):

No.

Speaker 14 (01:35:05):

Hello. My name is Balan Tyler from, from the university of Chicago Woodline charter high school, as my colleague said, um, um, my question is beside the fight to get equal rights for all people, what was, what was the significance for six for SNCC?

Speaker 1 (01:35:22):

Say it some more

Speaker 14 (01:35:24):

Besides the, the fight to get equal rights for all people. What was the significance for SNCC?

Speaker 1 (01:35:30):

In other words, what was SNCC doing besides that?

Speaker 14 (01:35:33):

Yes, sir.

Speaker 1 (01:35:34):

Okay. Panel

Speaker 18 (01:35:40):

There's a lot of partying I, that you hear about <laugh>

Speaker 7 (01:35:47):

My, my response is isn't that enough? Uh, you know, we haven't, we haven't finished that job yet. <laugh> but, you know, I, I, I think there is the, the, the notion of, of freedom is a constant struggle is, is something that I think all of us need to understand that there, the notion of equal citizenship, we haven't got it. You know, anyone who thinks that, that George Bush would not have been president. If we had equal citizenship,

Speaker 7 (01:36:24):

We would not even be in the situation we're in today. So I think that we, we, we still have a long struggle to go there, but, you know, SNCC, I think also, and this gets back to this question of black power while SNCC was in the middle of a battle against terrorism there, they had discussions going on within the group that were very, very important. That's what I wrote in snuggle to recount is that in the midst of this great struggle, they were trying to discuss the great issues of democracy sometimes for days on end. So, uh, so I think that one of the things that that happened within SN was the greatest educational project that you could possibly imagine. It was the greatest school that you could possibly imagine. And to me, the, the process of struggling for freedom is, is education. That is the essence of it.

Speaker 1 (01:37:30):

My young man, tell me your name again, Galen, Tyler, Galen. I'd like to add just one thing to this matter of what else was SN about. We've already mentioned some things, Galen. One thing was stink was about helping people to figure out how to face terror.

Speaker 1 (01:37:53):

Another thing related to that, that SNCC was about was helping people to figure out how, even when you are afraid, you keep going on to do what you believe is right. That was one of the important things that SNCC was doing for. So, so I would just mention those two things just to keep in mind that SNCC was not just about laws or things like that. SNCC was about helping people to develop themselves, to become better people and to become more human people and to become people stronger so that they could work. So that Galen would be able to go to a university of Chicago charter school. That's what SI was about. SI was about you. Okay, good.

My mind. Let's go back to the mic. And of course you all realize that it is almost 1130 and the powers that be have told us that they will whip us UN mercifully if we don't stop at 1130. So where was the chance? Bring it up. Go ahead, sweetheart.

Speaker 19 (01:39:11):

Okay, I'll make this, I'll make this very quick. My name, my name is Tracy Garrison Feinberg, and I'm an educator in Brooklyn, New York with deep roots in the south. I am a child of the movement. My mother was in Lowes county in 1965 in Hainesville that summer. So, uh, it's an honor and a privilege to be in the room with so many people who inspired my mother and me and continue and inspire me. My question has actually been addressed. A couple of, a lot of us, I think are thinking about what Mr. Payne said about telling the story of SNCC in a way that makes it even more relevant to today. So my question as an educator is always about the teachable moment. This conference is full of teachable moments. How are we practically as the educators and participants and veterans in this room going to connect to the good work that is currently going on.

Speaker 19 (01:40:08):

As several of you have said, Mr Sharad and Georgia is doing amazing things. The activism continues. Everybody else, probably in this room, who's a veteran of the movement is doing amazing things. How do we use social networking? How do we use Twitter? The tea partiers are organized. SNCC taught folks how to be organized. How do we continue to teach our young people today and are not so young people anymore, how to continue that organization so that instead of all of the, the network news covering the tea party rally in Boston this week, they would be covering this.

Speaker 1 (01:40:42):

Okay, good.

Speaker 19 (01:40:44):

But MSNBC and CNN and all of those. So we need to get better.

Speaker 1 (01:40:48):

<laugh> thank you, sister. What is your first name again?

Speaker 19 (01:40:52):

My first name is Tracy

Speaker 1 (01:40:53):

Tracy sister, Tracy.

Speaker 1 (01:40:56):

I'm going to ask the panel if they want to speak to your question. And if not, I, I want to make sure that you sister Tracy know that there are the SNCC planning committee all around this area. One of them was just at my shoulder here, Charles MACDU clearly one of the things that our responsibility is, is to put forward our own ideas about how SNCC can move from here. Just with the information of who is here and what can be done with who is here. So sister Tracy find every SNIC snicker that you can snicker. That means that they are brown with nuts inside and tell them what it is that you think needs to be done on this matter. We have one last I'm afraid. I have to say last. I'm glad I'm saying last with a young sister from high school, but I'm sorry that I have to say last to all you wonderful folks who are still wanting to raise your questions. Please listen, listen to all young sister, and then we can make some suggestions about what to do concerning the fact that it is now by my watch, 1131,

Speaker 18 (01:42:37):

We're finished. Let

Speaker 20 (01:42:39):

Their questions all together. And then at least hear the questions. All these people been standing for a half an

Speaker 18 (01:42:46):

Hour, right on. Good idea. Wait,

Speaker 1 (01:42:48):

Wait, wait. Let's start with our young sister here.

Speaker 21 (01:42:52):

My name is TA Phelps. Um, I attend a university of Chicago charter school and I'm in ninth grade. And my questions directed toward Dr. Paint out of the main three, um, movements and organizations core S SCLC and SNCC. Which one do you think honestly, took people through a great process of introspection.

Speaker 18 (01:43:14):

That's all. <laugh>.

Speaker 1 (01:43:17):

I'm gonna let me ask the questions. Okay, good. We are gonna in wonderful SNCC way. Work this out with what has to be a compromise in which we care for each other's needs. We need at least to hear the questions that are still on the minds of those who are standing at the mic since you all have been standing a long time, and we appreciate your willingness to stand, but we can't, we can't do anything more than that right now. And you can't do anything more than ask questions. Okay, let's go. So please, let's just hear your question. And then we are going to have to leave this place feeling very glad that we've been together.

Speaker 22 (01:44:21):

My name is IRA grouper. My question concerns something that none your childhood. I grew up at a city housing project in New York city. One step up on the socioeconomic scale from where I had lived before. Um, nobody on the panel has addressed the issue of anti-communism and red baiting as tools to destroy the civil rights movement. It was not just at the time of SNCC. When I was involved. It was before it was in the 1940s. The federal government used red baiting and witch hunting to destroy the Southern conference for human welfare to destroy the Southern. Okay. My question is why, why, why did this happen and how did SN deal with all the red bedding and breaking the back of McCarthyism? Cuz that's what the civil rights movement did. Good. We broke the back of

Speaker 1 (01:45:11):

McCarthyism. Good. Thank you, IRA. Yeah, I know question.

Speaker 11 (01:45:16):

Uh, my name's Chris Goodman from the Baltimore algebra project. I've been a member since I was 13. I'm 21. And um, thanks. Uh, I have a complicated question, but I'm just say the question and I'm talking talk to y'all later about it. Um, so right now we're at a glass ceiling in Baltimore city. We've done the courts, we've done the protests, all that. And I feel as though we need to step it up another level because, uh, March in the sixties is not the same as a March in 2010. And um, we need to do things that raises the risk level, RA risking arrest and risk in our lives. And do y'all agree or what do y'all think about that? Raising things that risk raises the danger. So,

Speaker 1 (01:45:57):

Okay Chris, thank you very much, Chris, let an old teacher just remind you cuz I know, you know, better that when we're talking about the sixties, we weren't just talking about marches,

okay. Folks were digging deep into the community. And so now the question is how do we dig deep in the communities where we are? And I hear your question. How do we take it to another level? Thank you very much, Chris.

Speaker 23 (01:46:30):

This is a deep one. My name is Robert Allen Haber. I grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I lived in New York, Washington, Germany, and I'm still a kid. And uh, yes and I, and I was an organizer for the students for democratic society. I met SNCC here 50 years ago. I met SNCC in Ann Arbor in two weeks when they came up to the national conference on human rights at SDS organized. And my deep question is, and it refers to some of the comments about the end of colonialism, the end of apartheid, that the most apartheid colonial country in the world right now is Israel. The issue of Israel and its treatment of the Palestinians is a divisive question in every community where the movement tries to organize the internationalism of SNCC, dealing with the war in Vietnam of SDS was a very important development. And how now does a local movement deal with the force of Zionist organization to block any kind of address of human rights on a global scale. That is a problem that help, that hurts every local organization and you all know it. And how do, how do we deal with this? Because Israel and Palestine is really the question of human rights. That is forefront in the world of racism. And until we can deal globally, we have a lot of trouble organizing locally.

Speaker 1 (01:48:03):

Thank you Al. Thank you. Yes, sister.

Speaker 19 (01:48:09):

My name is Udu OCO. I'm a graduating senior at the university of Chicago, a native of Brooklyn, New York.

Speaker 1 (01:48:14):

Wait, wait your name again please.

Speaker 19 (01:48:18):

My name is Udu. OCO

Speaker 1 (01:48:20):

UDA.

Speaker 19 (01:48:21):

OCO I'm a senior at the university of Chicago. I am a native of Brooklyn, New York. I have no connection to SNCC above and beyond what I read many years ago in high school. Uh, but my question is specifically, um, about finding a collective consciousness about moral humanity, aside from your religious beliefs. I, what I've been hearing is that SNCC has been founded and SNCC has been entrenched in some type of religious understanding and religious belief. And I personally consider myself spiritual and religious, but I am wondering how to collectively unify those who are not, and those who do not believe and do not have some type of religious or spiritual or higher understanding of what it means to be a human being and how can we as individuals and as young people kind of collectively get together, those who do not share those beliefs, because once you do not believe you have no kind of necessity and no feeling in your body to kind of come together. And that's something that I have not heard get an answer to since I've been here.

Speaker 1 (01:49:25):

All right, sister, thank you very much for that. Before, before the next question, my sister, please understand that there are many people in SNCC with no conventional religious connections. So it's, it's a false idea that SNCC was based on some kind of religion. As we understand religion,

many, many people were based on deep, deep, spiritual grounds that they would not call religion, but they were moving by the spirit. Then we can go on from there. Okay,

Speaker 24 (01:50:08):

Good morning. My name is Carmen Perez. I live in Santa Cruz, California, and I am here as a representative of the gathering for justice, which is an intergenerational multicultural movement rooted in history, spirituality. And non-violence direct action. We call ourselves SNCC 2.0. And so I welcome you. All of you. We have so many young people that are excited about SNCC and excited about the civil rights movement. And I would love to talk to many of you who would like to be connected. My question is just

Speaker 1 (01:50:38):

To comment before the question, where did you spend your childhood

Speaker 24 (01:50:42):

In Oxnard, California? That's in Southern Cali. Thank you. Straight representing. That's right. Um, so my question is that I know previously, um, during the civil rights movement, a lot of people were being incarcerated and currently we are trying to stop the criminalization of young people, specifically young people of color, black and brown. And so how is it that we could continue to use the tools that were being, um, used in the past, but how do we apply it to the 21st century when we're trying to get people of color out of jails? Thanks.

Speaker 1 (01:51:18):

So that's okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Carmen, and thank you for the work that you folks are doing too. Yes, please.

Speaker 25 (01:51:30):

Uh, my name is Rosa Aveda. I'm a graduating senior here at haw university. Good. I'm originally from, uh, Chi south America. And I grew up in, uh, in an all white area in Illinois, uh, where I was not allowed to speak Spanish outside of my home. And then I moved to an almost all white North Carolina where I was not allowed to speak Spanish <laugh> outside of my home. Uh, but luckily I there's a lot more Latinos here now, but my, my, I want to say thank you very much to the SNCC members who are here and, um, and a great inspiration for the work that I know that is still ahead for the Latino community. And as you've been all been talking, my wheels have been turning. And so thank you for that. Um, but I want to suggest, I heard people say about the equal citizenship, but I want to suggest there's a condition of unequal existence ship here for, uh, the Latino community. And, uh, you know, even we have no many people as Latinos do not have access to many things. And the first thing that they don't have access to is the, um, uh, the recognition of them as human beings. Yeah. Uh, in the equal sense as everybody else, because there's a political attachment to their status. And everybody from Latinos to blacks to whites seems to be because of the nationalism that exists and the rights of citizens seems to be forgetting that we're first humans. So I wanna thank you again.

Speaker 1 (01:53:04):

Thank you sister Rosa. Very much.

Speaker 26 (01:53:10):

Uh, hi, my name is Brian. I'm from

Speaker 1 (01:53:13):

Brian. I'd like to hear your full name as loudly as you can say it.

Speaker 26 (01:53:17):

My name is Brian Hernandez. I'm from California, Los Angeles. And, um, my question would be like, what about those? Um, the immigrants who don't have papers, you could be the smartest

person in the world, and yet you wouldn't have papers. You wouldn't be able to go to college or universities and you'd be left behind and your life would be horrible. You'd you diet and Penns. I mean like most for me, I'm a Chicano and most of the Chicanos I've seen my friends. They're highly intelligent, very smart, but some of them don't have papers. I'm saying maybe that's one of the reasons people use the steroid type that Chicanos to only do the, is the stereotype that you cannot only do the hard manual labor, but it's only because we don't have papers. We're as smart as every Asian, every white person and every African American. So,

Speaker 1 (01:54:09):

Yeah. Brian, thank you very much. Before you leave two things, remember that you are with me co-conspirators who are indicted for not stopping at 1130. Second thing. One of our panel members wants to indict us even more by saying a few final words. Charles would like to be heard before you leave.

Speaker 3 (01:54:48):

No, this is

Speaker 3 (01:54:49):

No. All I wanted. I wanted to speak to, to the many people who have raised issues about contemporary youth activism. And I want to encourage you to go to, oh, I'm sorry. I wanna encourage you to look at some websites of contemporary, uh, youth activist groups. The Baltimore algebra project is one of my very, very favorites brothers and sisters United of the Bronx is just wonderful. The Philadelphia students, union and Chicago, we have voices of youth in Chicago education. Uh, and, and if you want to talk to somebody who, uh, is a part of, uh, the education liberation network, which, which connects many of these groups, tower Mac is on the side. Would you raise your hand and wave, right? But, but, but all of those groups are worth looking at for models of what youth are doing right now in, in the SNCC tradition. Thank you.

Speaker 1 (01:55:39):

Hello. Last announcement. My statement about SNCC and my own experiences with SNCC are being held up by a young man right here on the right. If you want to pick up a copy from the of those he's right here to pass him out to you.