

Plenary - Bob Moses
SNCC 50th Anniversary Conference
Shaw University, Raleigh NC, April 2010
Transcript Video Recording #37
(Raw, unedited, no annotation)

Speaker 1 (00:17):

Let me tell you what we're doing this morning. Um, first of all, uh, we will start, uh, with, um, uh, Reverend battle doing the, the, uh, invocation. And then after that, I'll give you the kind of program set up. Reverend battle. May we bow forward of prayer,

Speaker 1 (00:40):

Eternal God, our creator. We are so thankful for the gift of life and for all of the things that you have created to sustain our lives for the earth that yields our food for the water that we drink and for the air that we breathe, God, we're thankful for the gifts of community and we're thankful God for freedom, and we're thankful God for the convictions of our spirits to fight for justice. And so we say to you that you are welcome in this place, Lord, that you will be in everything that we do here today, as you have been in everything that has happened this week and your Match's name, we pray.

Speaker 2 (01:18):

Amen.

Speaker 1 (01:21):

Thank you, Reverend battle. Um, what we will have next is Mr. Trotter in the house is Mr. No. Okay. We're doing that later. Okay. Um, I understand that that, uh, Bob Zelner has some kind of announcement to make his he in the house. Okay. So what we will in fact do then is, um, just go Rick to your program. There has been a change, this being SNIC, of course, um, and intrus Nick style, which is being about change. And, uh, there's a change in the program. So from now until, um, you have an hour and a half from now until about 10 15, Bob and Dave and Albert Sykes are going to do a little different thing than what's on the program and they're gonna come up and I tell you what they're gonna do.

Speaker 1 (02:23):

Good morning. Good morning. Uh, my name is Dave Dennis, and I'm president work with the algebra project in Bob Moses work. Uh, first of all, I'd like to, uh, bring to you greetings Rudy lumbar, who could not be here. He had death in the family, but he wanted be to extent all of you, his love, and he wished that he could be here. This has been a great occasion so far, we are excited. This is one of the first times this has happened. This will probably be the last time, uh, back in, uh, 2008. I was with a good friend of mine, Jimmy Travis, and he in college. And I did a workshop for the algebra project and that was a picture taken. And if I only knew at that time, that that would be the last time that I would be with my good friend, Jimmy, Travis.

Speaker 1 (03:14):

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So as we leave here, let's make sure that we safe and look at each other because if we try to do it again, men of our faces just might not be here. First of all, we're gonna do a date, introduce an idea that we have coming from the algebra project and the young people's project, uh, around this issue of education. In 2000, there was a meeting held in new Orleans with Bob Moses, Danny Glover, Curtis Muhammad, and some other people to address an issue concerning quality education as a constitutional right. It's interesting that this was held in new Orleans cause five months later, hurricane Katrina hit new Orleans, which changed the lives of people there, which now happens to be affecting and impacting the education system in this entire country. At the time of Katrina, there was 120 public schools in new Orleans at the present time coming into this new school year. We'd be lucky if we have 30, all are going charter and what we call the beginning of improvisation of education in this country. If you recall, in the last debate between, uh, uh, uh, Obama And what's his name

Speaker 2 (04:46):
<laugh>

Speaker 1 (04:49):

Is that he said, what's his name said That the model for education in his country is what's going on in new Orleans. At that time, he thought he would be president of the United States of so we wanna address that issue today and to let you know what that's about is and ask that you join us in this idea that we have and what we pushing around the country and trying to get a national conversation around this issue. So with that without further introduction event, cause that's the best introduction I can make with my best friend Moses.

Speaker 1 (05:42):

So Jimmy Travis, um, caught that bullet in the, was in February of 1963, uh, snake converged on Greenwood. And, uh, we got hundreds of sharecroppers to go down to register. Some of us were arrested. And if you remember, the lineup was Bobby Kennedy was the attorney general or Marshall, the assistant attorney general for civil rights. And John doer, who's sitting here with us, uh, was in the field. So our cases were moved to the federal district, courting Greenville, and I was on the witness stand. Uh, John doer was standing in front of me. He was our lawyer and judge Clayton, uh, turned over and asked me, why are you taking illiterate down to register the vote? So sheer crop education, she literacy was the subtext of the right to vote. So if you go back, um, there's a book that was written by Nicholas lemon, it's called redemption.

Speaker 1 (06:58):

Uh, and if you take a look at it, uh, he's talking about 1875 and what happened in Mississippi, uh, around this issue that led to Sherra illiteracy. So, um, in the 50th amendment was pass in 1870 and then in Mississippi, a Aimes was elected governor by the majority Negro population under federal arms. In

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other words, the army was down there and the blacks were allowed to vote and they elected a Aimes as governor, miss Mississippi. Then in 1875, uh, the backlash came and began actually in Louisiana, in Cofax Louisiana and spread to Mississippi and white Democrats took over the Mississippi state legislature, William Alice, Sandra Percy came into the legislature, speaker of the house with one purpose in mind. He wanted to oversee the articles of impeachment against Adelberg Aimes. And the, the main article he was interested in was the article, which said that the money that had been allocated for the education of the free slaves should be used to build the railroads in the Delta that set up the infrastructure for the share cropping situation while 1875 was also the year that president grant in his address to the, the Congress, the state of the union addressed asked the country to have a constitutional amendment guarantee and education for all the children in the country.

Speaker 1 (08:53):

So we didn't get that. What we got was shared about their education. And that was point the judge was asking about in 1963. So if we think about the movement and what we were able to do, um, coming out of the civil war, we were a citizen, but as more used to say, we were second class citizens and the Jim Crow system, we were able to get it outta public accommodations. We were able get out of political assets in terms of vote. And we were even able to get it out of the national democratic party with the Mississippi freedom democratic issue. We didn't get it out of education. So that's a piece of the work that's left to do. And what we are going to ask you to do today is to, uh, think at your table, uh, around that award. So I'm gonna have, uh, Albert sex, uh, come up and speak to you about, um, his entry into this work. Um, And then I'll talk to you about what we're gonna ask you to do. Uh, first, all I'd like to thank everybody in state, uh, for having us to be in this space and share this, uh, time with you guys. And I've learned a lot this weekend, uh, as well as the young people that are here with me. And, um, I'm very appreciative of people sharing their stories and their experiences and giving us some, uh, some to lean on. And so for at least the last 15 years. And so I met my as a sixth grader in Jackson, Mississippi, uh,

Speaker 1 (11:19):

In the classroom with son to son, was working with us in the classroom. And, um, we started to, to get a different feel from the type of work that algebra project brought to us. And so the classroom felt different and looked different. And the biggest difference was that for the first time I, the education, our personal history, we were told that we could be resources to each other. And so this was the first classroom that allowed us to help each other with our C classwork, the first classroom that allowed us to be leaders and to stand up and explain things that our peers didn't understand and also craft activities to help our peers understand some of the things about mathematics that they didn't understand. And so, um, I know that mistake and that, um, many of you, um, it brought us to a place where we had the right, had the right to eat what we wanted eat, use the bathroom. We wanted to use the bathroom and drink water. We wanted to drink water. And so we saw the work that was advertis is able to gain access

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to all education, go to college. And I have to take media math and be able to help other people go to college. I have to take and also able to make mathematical. And so, um, out that project was on young people's project. And so young people project, um, was trying to, and middle school student Davis and who right here seated in front of me and, um,

Speaker 1 (13:15):

From each other, and now we're ready to move to the next, which is lead and organizing. And so, um, we understand, So we definitely understand the importance of the demand. And we also detective, and, and we understand build this type movement and build this type of,

Speaker 2 (13:56):

And

Speaker 1 (13:56):

We also understand that we need somebody with the wisdom and humble Moses, All young people. And so

Speaker 2 (14:21):

We also

Speaker 1 (14:22):

That we, so we need young people to, to take over what's happening now. So we transitioned from February 1st, 1960 to the founder city from the city movement to now we began the stand up movement. And so we understand that young people from Jackson, Mississippi have to stand up young people from Chicago and Illinois have to stand up young. People from Mississippi have to stand up Young people from. And, And so what we need is we feel like we need, so we need to the need the stories. We need, the experiences we need, the support we need, the, we need the Baton, we need to torch, and we need the space together and window by ourselves to jump people, to stand up and build. And we three block by block and break by, and we also need the strongest.

Speaker 3 (16:34):

And

Speaker 1 (16:34):

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So this, um, this, this part, we be launching a we people tour. And so we, the people is we, the people and Bob pointed out the other day, the pre constitution, doesn't say we citizens, we include rights or UN
Speaker 1 (17:14):

Be quality education. I'm in Mississippi. We're struggling to fight, to try to get into the school system and having the kids who have a demand and who are expressive demand to do the work that we're doing. So we in the community that education starts in the community to the school and trickles up into the city government, state government, international government. And so we're trying to build ground movement and young people all around the country right now that are ready and that are already moving. And so, uh, one example is the people, the young people that have Hamilton college that are set up a YP site, uh, other examples are young people that are marginalized around the country for the dream bank day by day and month by month. Um, and so we continue to move. And so what we need from your guys is to be resources.

Speaker 1 (18:06):

We need you to be intellectual capital. We need you to be financial capital. We need you to be venue capital. Like we need everybody to bring out the resources that allow us the space and the freedom to be able to build this demand and to be able to have this national conversation that we need to have, to get people on the same page about what we have to go and the importance of education. I know that these who believe in freedom should not listen to the car. Well, most of the freedom resides in the mind, and we understand that educating our young people is freedom lock the body, but you can't trap the mind. And so with that, I just want to ask everybody that as you see us moving and you see the young people around, uh, think of what you can do to help us as get ready to start on this tour and think of what you been doing to help us as we get ready to build this. And then we want you to step back and look at the that's in front of us. Step to the side. Let us,

Speaker 1 (19:26):

Can you come to the podium?

Speaker 2 (19:51):

You

Speaker 1 (20:00):

Hi, good morning, everybody. Good morning. So what we wanted to do was to get some time here in this place to, to give the conversation and to have a us begin to think about, uh, this idea of working together to create a constitutional amendment for equality education for all children in the country. So at your table, you have a she of paper that has three questions on it. And so since we don't have a lot of time, we thought we ask you to choose. We have a half hour. So we, we thought we ask you to choose

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one question, but if you do end up getting into, um, more than one, that's fine. We also have some slips of paper

Speaker 1 (21:13):

Where we're asking you to put your contact information and to check off any of the areas that you might be interested in getting involved in you. And at the end, we'll come around and collect those. So we'll give 25 minutes or so to the discussion. And then a few minutes at the end for maybe one or two tables to report back to the rest of the group. The final thing is that there's also some blank, uh, paper, just writing paper at your table. And so we like to ask, uh, to identify somebody in your group to take notes and any of the interesting points of comments that you feel come out of the conversation. Uh, and we'd like to collect those. Thank you. Okay. Raise your hand. If you do not have the,

Speaker 4 (22:27):

The first question is what defines a quality education defines I to put you on the spot? You that's the I

Speaker 1 (28:51):

As a junior Phil and we discussed question number one, quality education

Speaker 1 (29:01):

Of having women would help education decrease the standards. And for the students, parents who are involved in children's lives, teachers should find out what the students is great at and help them build on, build on them, allow them to keep a foot in the door to ensure that they will give, understand the work of education. <affirmative> stop putting of blame on the teachers, teachers and parents should instill the young instill in the young that education important. There should be programs and help parents who are suffering from things at home to allow the children to get a better education. And they should be enforced. Parents should not allow the children to watch so much TV and important emphasis on education stop and not education. That's what we have. I think we have 100 group y'all ready.

Speaker 1 (30:36):

All right. My name is O Monte and, um, I'm representing my group. I'm also the interim executive director of the national voting rights museum in Selma, Alabama. Um, our group discussed about, um, to have a fear in quality education. Um, the school system has to learn to listen to students. We have to develop an atmosphere for shared learning. We have to read and understand what is being read. Critical thinking is missing in school system. Um, we have to have a transformation of learning theory where we're teaching, where we're reteaching the teachers and retraining the teachers. Um, um, we have to have develop more, um, better curriculums and develop, um, ways of, of teaching the youth through poetry films, um, using discourse. Um, we want to develop a quick quality edge education for all, not

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based on tracking and, and miseducation. Make sure that there are equal amounts of resources spent on each child.

Speaker 1 (31:30):

Um, each child should have an opportunity to learn about people's struggles and participate in remaking history, making black history, um, in the school. Something that, that that is, uh, um, for everybody have have smaller institutions and the school should not be isolated from the community. There should be a standard curriculum for all children, meaning that all children should receive, um, college preparatory classes. It should be best on spatial needs. It should be best on who's gifted and who's now et cetera. Um, giving everybody equal education education, the education system should not be based on placement tracking or sort sorting, and all children should relieve. I already said that. And I just wanna say one thing in Selma, Alabama, in 1991, we had a movement called Selma movement against racial tracking, and we vocalized young people all across the country. We, we, I personally organized a walkout at my middle school. We had to sit in for five nights and four days. We organized young people from all across the south, bust them in it. It was so huge that the national guard had to come and stop our in, through that, in that Able to this education and track on level. So just wanted to,

Speaker 1 (32:58):

My name is, um, crystal Madison, and I'm representing the children's defense fund freedom schools program. Um, we answer question number one, what defines quality education? And we made some bullet points, um, equal opportunities and resources and literacy. There has to be room for diversity. The curriculum must represent the people that it serve, but it also has to be holistic so that they get exposure to other communities and other people. Um, it must not be driven by mandated assessments.

Um, it must be artistically enhanced to enrich extracurricular activities, and it must be an extension of the community. Uh, more like a partnership. Thank you. Good morning, everyone. My name is Scott Muhammad and I'm coming. Uh, I came down To document this event with the national voting rights rule and education is something. Uh, last year I lost a student.

Speaker 1 (34:05):

Thank you. Last year I lost a student, uh, Devi Albert in Chicago. Many of you may have seen him murder, uh, on national news. A little girl was holding the camera. You know, these, these were some of my students. I was artists of residents at figure high school. I was teaching documentaries and we were actually doing documentaries on, uh, murder, you know, and that happened, um, when we were talking about quality education that, uh, my particular table, um, one of the things that really is, uh, struck me was, uh, mean, it's like, you gotta realize who you are as SCC. You know, the question is like, what would our country look like if no one taught about the America revolution? You know, who, who would our students be? Who would our leaders and our politicians? Who would they be? You know, the thing that

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kind of distinguishes American citizens around the country from other citizens, when you go abroad, is that like everybody knows that American citizens will get up and do stuff.

Speaker 1 (35:13):

A lot of people talk, but American citizens really will get up and do. And that's the tradition of the American revolution. So then in Chicago, we, we are averaging 40 high school murders each year. That's 40 students murdered on the way to school and school on the way home. But all that is, is a access of a nonviolent threat. That's all it is. All it is, is the, the non transference of the knowledge of you because you were the last American revolution. SCC was SCL. What you all did. I mean, you can't understand, and you have to really become aware. Cause some of you guys, you taught your own children, but you didn't teach me.

Speaker 1 (36:04):

I learned from red and be, that's what you taught me, the who I haven't heard much of in this conference. I just decided to say that, you know, the knowledge of you all and in your co is one of the things that will allow us to truly have. What's known as a quality education cause quality education is that what speaks to the needs of the students, the students have needs. If your boys don't have jobs, then quality education should teach how to be economically independent. If your, if your citizens are under attack where we are not even citizens anymore, which is like <inaudible>, then quality education has to teach them how to be institutionally sovereign. These are the discussions that we should have. I mean, it's cool to celebrate and commemorate, but there's a great need on the floor. I mean, where I am, I, I can't get on to celebration real hard.

Speaker 1 (37:07):

When I know that this year I'm have 40 dead high schoolers, that don't count the elementary students of which we average about 20. That don't count the infants under one. And we average about 12 seven of which are black female. And you gotta note in Chicago, we act, we have almost many black females murdered as Mexican males, and there's a serious gang problem among Mexican males. So, you know, we, you know, when we have this discussion, keep these things in mind. You have the key with the knowledge of SNCC. So I want to, um, let everybody like, think about that. And this year, the voting rights present, we're going to be making SNCC a focus. We have old SNCC building. We're going to honor you, you know, we want you to come and let's do this again. Let's not be strangers. Thank you very much. Sorry. We not gonna have time for any more report outs. Uh, but we do ask people to leave your notes on the table and, uh, also take detective.

Speaker 2 (38:25):

Okay.

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Speaker 1 (38:26):

Okay. So we can do two more, Two shorts. Okay. One short, One favorite short who has a voice citizen. We'll bring up one of the young people, let them get some of this.

Speaker 1 (38:45):

My name is the Watson. Um, I'm with S B Y Southern rural black women initiative. And I'm from Albany, Georgia. And, um, one of the things I wanna discuss that with the advisor quality education and quality education is winning. What's being taught is also learned is when teachers are qualified to teach, it's when they're going into these classes, they know what they're teaching and not just giving students bookwork, speaking to learn on their own, but they're actually teaching them and all in. I know going, cause I'm a student I'm giving you this from a student's perspective perspective. We don't homework. Sometimes teachers just give us bookwork and expect us to learn on our own. That's not a quality education. Some students don't know how to read when they, some students don't know how to read when they hit high school, that's not a quality education. We have no books. Sometimes we have new math that we don't even know. You think about, just give us books and expect us to learn on our own. <affirmative> like I said, and um, they give standardized tests on stuff that we don't even know anything about. And standard standard diet tests should reflect on what the students have learned and they should be able to read and comprehend what they've learned. And that's all I have to say.

Speaker 1 (40:04):

Last one

Speaker 2 (40:05):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (40:08):

Grid's house. My name is birth of Winston pay and native Ghana resident of Raleigh. Uh, our table discussed, uh, quality education, Art table discussed quality education. And an idea came up in the context that the constitution gives, takes rights to determine, uh, education in each state, but then a federal court decision did not guarantee no did not guarantee American citizens quality education within the contest of, uh, a one philosopher, a nation without meaning. Intellectuals is like a head, a body without a head that in fact, new intellectuals are the ones that move society forward. You, your doctors, you need your engineers, you need your teachers. So within the context of any nation planning, Quality education must reflect. These profess are skills or intellectual ideas. Now, another educator said the youth must recognize their historical mission and either consciously fulfill it or betray it with all the youth in this house. I challenge you to read front France, phenomenal Richard of the earth.

Speaker 2 (41:47):

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Thank you.

Speaker 1 (41:52):

Okay. So finally, we want to ask everybody to please leave your notes on the table, take the time to fill out the, the interest form. And then I want bring back Bob Moses to close us out. So, um, One way to think about this is that the constitution, We are constitutional people in this country. And the question that we are raising is can we take the constitution and use it as an instrument for the people of the country?

Speaker 1 (42:45):

And so, as you go out, you'll have to have in your mind, um, a framework that can all the people in the country and the tool I think for doing that is the preamble to the constitution. That is, this has to be a, we, the people movement has to be something that you can take to every person in the country. So what I would like us to do is to say that preamble together, um, I will say it and, um, then ask you to repeat after me. Now, some people have, you know, they of issues with the preamble because the people who did it were white men with property. But one way to think about the evolution of the country is that over the century is we've managed to extend the, the, the reach of who are the constitutional people in the country. So between the founding in 1787 and the civil war, we had constant institutional property people who the constitution said could be bought and sold. And then from the civil war down to the movement in 19, uh, sixties, we had, uh, constitutional, uh, second class constitutional people. So we have never had an idea of a constitution where the people will also every child in the country that had a constitutional right as a constitutional person to a quality public school education. And so that's what we are asking to, uh, spread around the country, a discussion, the evolution of who the constitutional people are. So let's just say it, and then we'll close. We, the people of the United States,

Speaker 2 (45:22):

We, the

Speaker 1 (45:25):

In order to form a more perfect union, Establish justice,

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Speaker 2 (45:35): Establish
justice,

Speaker 1 (45:37): Ensure
domestic tranquility

Speaker 2 (45:40): Ensure
domestic tranquility

Speaker 1 (45:42): Protect, provide for
the common defense,

Speaker 2 (45:46):
Provide for the content defense,

Speaker 1 (45:49): Promote the
general welfare

Speaker 2 (45:52):
Promote

Speaker 1 (45:54):
And secure the blessings of Liberty,

Speaker 2 (45:58): The
blessings of Liberty

Speaker 1 (46:00): To ourselves
and our prosperity

Speaker 2 (46:04):
Ourselves and our prosperity.

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Speaker 1 (46:06): Do

Orain and establish

Speaker 2 (46:09):

To Orain

Page

Speaker 1 (46:11):

This constitution For the United States of America

Speaker 2 (46:17):

For United States of America.

Speaker 1 (46:19):

It does not say we, the president

Speaker 2 (46:22):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (46:27):

It does not say we the Congress. And it does not say we, the Supreme court and as Alba it pointed out, it does not say we the citizens. And it certainly does not say we, the states, we, the people,

Speaker 2 (46:57):

Okay.

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