

Closing Program - Bernice Johnson Reagon
SNCC 50th Anniversary Conference
Shaw University, Raleigh NC, April 2010
Transcript Video Recording #38
(Raw, unedited, no annotation)

Speaker 1 (00:00:17):

Um, what we're going to have now is, uh, Reverend battle who is from the Shong university chapel will come back and, uh, lead us in the devotion.

Speaker 2 (00:00:28):

Sorry.

Speaker 1 (00:00:30):

Oh, you can hear. Oh, I'm so sorry. Uh, what we're going to do now is Reverend battle from the Shaw university. Chapel will now lead us in a devotion.

Speaker 1 (00:00:43):

I give D homage to my closest confidant and closest friend, the almighty guy, my creator, my father, and my mother. And I also give her homage to all of my elders who have tracked before me, who have given me this opportunity, um, to stand in this day, I give homage to my contemporaries and to any students and young people who are in this place. This is normally the worship time, um, at the show chapel. And so we will do a brief, a brief devotion, um, that will help to bring a theological perspective to a lot of these conversations. Genesis chapter two verse seven tells us that we were formed from the dust of the earth and that God breathed into us the breath of life and that we became living beings. But with every breath that we breathe, it, it has a deeper connotation, a deeper connection than we may think with every breath that we take.

Speaker 1 (00:01:44):

God calls us into something deeper into something more God calls us to be who we were intended to be. God calls us to live and to be free. The air that we breathe contains what we know as oxygen and 63% of the elemental property of our body is oxygen. Yet 25% of the oxygen that we take in goes directly to our brain, which is only 2% of our body weight. So immediately we see a, a strong and clear connection to the air that we breathe and to the intellectual capacity of our person spoken word, artist, amorous has written a poem called oxygen and she properly and rightly uses oxygen as a metaphor for freedom. Freedom does not freedom. Start in our minds, be therefore transformed by the renewing of your mind. Those who train elephants in the circus start when they are babies. And they tie them up with a small role war, a small chain, and no matter how hard these baby elephants try to pull away from that steak, they can't until eventually they completely stop.

Speaker 1 (00:03:05):

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Eventually they grow and they get larger and they become strong enough to break that chain. But because they do not believe they are capable, they do not try. And so they can use the same small steak and the same small chain to keep a huge elephant bound. We have laid in the se infested streets of slavery. We have fought to stand to walk and yes, to fly in the blue skies of freedom, the at freedom ring, but do all of us still recognize the sound of freedom, had the opportunity to travel up north. And I met and spoke with a young woman who was, um, in her teenage years. And she was a part of a congregation. It was a Haitian American congregation, but she was two and three generations removed from Haiti. So she had always been in America. And what struck me the most about this young lady was her clear, beautiful Ebony skin. And I remember throughout the service, my eyes kept going back to her. And after the service, I went up to her and I said, I just want you to know how beautiful are, how beautiful your skin is. And she drew back and she looked at me with a pain expression and she says, my skin is too dark to be beautiful. She did not know the sound, a freedom. If our young people are not free, we are not free.

Speaker 1 (00:04:49):

What is the sound of freedom? The sound of freedom is truth for just as oxygen is necessary for the brain, because we can only go four to five, have minutes without our brain losing sail, being comatose or even dying, just like oxygen is necessary for the brain. Truth is necessary for the mind for God is truth. Jesus says, I am the way the truth and the life, but you see to seek God to walk with God, seek truth, takes courage. I can't tell you how many young people I have met, who refuse to be tested for HIV aids simply because they'd rather not know the truth for better or for worse. You see the bridge, the gap between the past, the present and the future. We have to be courageous because it requires an assessment of who we are and of who we are not.

Speaker 1 (00:05:50):

And the discoveries may not be what we would like to find. You see, there are some of us who do not wish to find out the truth about the history of hip hop culture, because we may not be able to believe what we've always believed about it. Some of us are afraid to sit down with our elders and listen to the wisdom that they have to impart to us because rightly so, it would call us to accountability. Some of us are afraid to hear the stories of the young girl on the street corner, because we might discover as a pediatrician did, when he did research that many of the young girls in our, in certain socioeconomic environments were beginning to mature physically before their time, six and seven, eight year old girls coming into puberty. Why? Because he discovered that the external stresses that they were enduring and how they internalized them, their minds began to think there's no way a child can be enduring this. And so their bodies tried to catch up with the stress that they were encountering.

Speaker 1 (00:07:04):

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What is the sound of freedom? When do we continue to find the courage to act on and to discover the truth? Finally, oxygen, the breath that we breathe, this created breath that God has given us, gives us an intimacy with all of creation, the same air that we breathe passes over the backs of cows. It lifts the pedals of a flower on the side of the street. It is the same air that you and I share. Air that travels throughout our bodies. It's a very intimate thing. This is why people often get sick when they travel on planes. Why? Because the air is recycled. This is how one person in a home can cause everybody in the house to get the same virus, because there's a intimacy in how we breathe and what comes in and out of our bodies in the same way, one leader of a household can perpetuate the bondage or the freedom of the entire family.

Speaker 1 (00:08:10):

Why? Because it's in how we think and how we believe in how we teach our children to think and believe. But more so. And this is very important. It's whether or not we have the courage to listen to our children, to hear their experiences in this world. Yes. Which in many ways are grossly different from our own, but are just as valid. You see, God has woven into the existence of who we are, a call to community, a call to truth and a call to freedom. And he's granted us the access to obtain freedom for our communities through seeking truth, through acting on it and through seeking him if we failed to do so, then we walk on dangerous ground because as Dr. King once wrote, there is nothing more dangerous in this world than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity name of the father and the name of the son, the name of the blessed holy ghost. Amen.

Speaker 3 (00:09:30):

Thank you, Reverend battle. Uh, what we will have next. Oh, is the wonderful St. Augustine go college. Did I say that right? Saint Augustine. I said that, right, right. Saint August, Saint Augustine. I knew I was gonna do it wrong. Okay. St. Augustine, the wonderful St. Augustine college drama program and they will come up next.

Speaker 4 (00:09:52):

My name is Celest assistant theater and film at St. Augustine's college today, my students and I will present some poetry written by African American writers. I will let the students introduce themselves and please be patient with us. We be performing without of micro.

Speaker 5 (00:10:19):

Good morning. My name is Jessica Bright. I am a freshman attending St. Augustine college, and my major is music and theater. Good morning. My name, my name is Jasmine Bryce. I am a sister to Jessica Bryce. I also attend St. Augustine college. I'm a history major and I'm also a freshman. Hi, my name is

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Courtney Smith and, Um, I'm a sophomore at St. Augustine's college with a major in sociology and a minor in social work.

Speaker 6 (00:11:06):

Everybody how y'all doing <laugh> every Sunday. My name is Eric barster. I'm a senior over at St. Augustine's college and, uh, in the theater film program.

Speaker 7 (00:11:18):

Hey, my name is Anthony. I go to Saint. Hello. My name is Anthony. I go to college and I'm a leader

Speaker 4 (00:11:55):

Is not doing well.

Speaker 6 (00:12:14):

Who can be born black And not say the wonder of it, the joy, the challenge

Speaker 5 (00:12:27):

Coming together. Why what the fires of pure knowing

Speaker 4 (00:12:33):

Read with power ringing with the sound above sound above sound,

Speaker 5 (00:12:39):

To explode. And the majesty of our oneness are coming together in a coming togetherness

Speaker 6 (00:12:47):

Who can be born black and not exhaust

Speaker 2 (00:13:15):

The

Speaker 5 (00:13:37):

Who can be born black and not up. We lost rejo can take pride who we are and who our ancestors were and who they feel are spirit. We continue to stand on there, true strong shoulders and backs. They lived us high, high enough to reach the opportunities. They would never see

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Speaker 6 (00:14:03):

Our ancestors had us in mind while they built the bridge to our future.

Speaker 5 (00:14:11):

So they suffered middle passage. They drive you from your, they, you and they, you, and they told you gentle. They, They grinded you. They made your women greeter. They swelled your numbers with Baptist. They taught you a religion. They disgrace, But not all slaves made it to the new world. Some died due to the poor conditions of the slaves. Others were so heartbroken. They refused to eat. I still others gave themselves back to God. Yes, ladies. I'll

Speaker 4 (00:15:16):

My

Speaker 6 (00:15:19):

So very calmly

Speaker 5 (00:15:21):

With courage. I am right.

Speaker 6 (00:15:25):

They left into the arms of a waiting ocean.

Speaker 5 (00:15:29):

I slave and go home. Do the slave who survived the middle passes to America, faced difficult times.

Speaker 6 (00:15:53):

However, however, their sufferings and their deaths were not in game. We knew

Speaker 5 (00:16:03):

You were coming. Those who came for us mat through the reconstruction, fought for the cause. During the modern civil rights

Speaker 4 (00:16:16):

Movement, they let nothing stop them from

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Speaker 5 (00:16:19):

Moving the race forward.

Speaker 6 (00:16:22):

Really as dreaming of moving forward, Working

Speaker 5 (00:16:27):

And

Speaker 2 (00:16:28):

Towards moving. Moving is moving forward

Speaker 6 (00:16:42):

For freedom.

Speaker 5 (00:16:44):

We who believe in freedom cannot right? Ella baker, social justice flow from her vein. She graduated VALIC Victorian in 1927 from this great institution. Shaw university years later, due to her strong desire to help student activists, coordinate lunch, counter sit-ins and other civil rights activities. Baker return to have a love and Shaw university to help a group of coed the student nonviolent coordinating committee. We who freedom cannot rest with our

Speaker 6 (00:17:24): Eyes on

the prize. We will not

Speaker 5 (00:17:28):

Deep in our heart. He believe that he shall overcome that. And that we'll, if we refuse to allow to around Your name, because you sacrificed everything, we speak your name because you refuse to leave the lunch count.

Speaker 2 (00:18:19):

We speak

Speaker 5 (00:18:21):

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Your name because you a veteran of the civils. We, your, we speak. You

Speaker 2 (00:18:50):

Keep coming. They keep coming. They keep coming. Keep going, keep coming, keep coming, keep coming, keep, keep coming. Keep coming. Keep, keep.

Speaker 4 (00:20:29):

I would just like to say that's a bit of a review for an upcoming show that our theater department will be producing. We open Thursday, April 22nd, and we close on Friday, April 23rd, seven 30 at St. Augustine's college.

Speaker 1 (00:20:46):

Please join us. Thank you.

Speaker 3 (00:20:59):

You did you want you, you wanna give some flyers? Uh, yeah. Um, Is there any, is there table back there cuz the you, yeah. Why don't you leave him up here? That's fine. Okay. First of all, could we just give another hand to the wonderful that I'll tell you? I think all of us understand the incredible amount of that went into that presentation. Yeah. Thank you. Um, what we will now go into another wonderful part of the program. Um, That was really very good. You guys. It really was. Yeah. <laugh> um, okay. Many know Bernice Reagan as the founder of sweet honey. Hello. Hello.

Speaker 3 (00:21:52):

As the founder of sweet honey in the rock as the recipient of the MacArthur genius grant, as the producer of the great series weighed in the water, the wonderful 26 hour national public radio series, an African American gospel and as the composer of school, hello, that's a wonderful door. Okay. And as the, as the composer of scores for numerous documentaries as the author of numerous books, but before she became a SNCC freedom singer, she was a leader at Albany state college in Albany, Georgia. And even before, oh, is Albany in the house. Oh, hello. All right. Thank you. And even before she is tapped by SNIC field, secretary's Cordell, Regan, and Charles Sherad. She is already a student leader. So what you hear in Bernie's work and in her songs is the essence of struggle. Bernie's truly represents SNCC and all we stood for Bernie's Reagan.

Speaker 1 (00:24:01):

Um,

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Speaker 2 (00:24:04): <affirmative>

Speaker 1 (00:24:05):

When I heard about this gathering, I registered, I thought I might not be alive, You know, in April, But it would, it would be really interesting to be alive and then be present

Speaker 2 (00:24:34):

<laugh>.

Speaker 1 (00:24:36):

And, um, I was very serious about that. I really do feel that it is not a given To live the next minute of your life. And when you think about 50 years of something, You go And they, it was a few months before you go, well, gosh, you know, April is a long ways away if I'm gonna be dead, But just in case I registered

Speaker 2 (00:25:14):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:25:18):

And, um, George Ladner called me and said, you were the first one to register for the conference. <laugh> Among the many things I've done in my life is producing. And I actually Have a sense Of what went into, to planning what we've been through. It was no light effort. And I just want the people who stepped out of their lives To, to do this, To just know that some of us who are still organizers Can probably imagine What They went through to provide us with this structure to be together. I don't take it for granted. I want to also say that I was really surprised To hear That we got this campus as host For no money. Then I looked at the interim president And I said, she sure does look familiar. Well, she was just at Johnson, C Smith, Rescuing Johnson, C Smith. And when she got ready to retire, she said, I really wanted British Johnson Reagan to come before I left. And then we were talking about what she was going to do after she stepped out of the work she had done at Johnson C Smith. It was not becoming the interim president of Shaw.

Speaker 1 (00:28:04):

And I actually have witnessed several of these steps, Including genetical being called to go to Bennett because we couldn't lose Bennett. And I'm taking the time to say this because I absolutely want Shaw to find, actually hear from the people in this room. Shaw college is in difficulty. They understand their role

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in supporting our being able to come together. But in the 21st century, We can participate in whether or not this school survived. They opened their doors and could do it because were a private black school. And so I really want you to figure out in this recession, how you can squeeze some dollars and send it to Shaw university,

Speaker 2 (00:29:34):

Be taken here.

Speaker 1 (00:29:38):

No, you got to do it on your own. Yes. You got to do it on your own. You have to send it. You gotta find out where you sent it at Shaw. If you take up a collection, you'll be wanting to know what happened to it. It's gotta be individual. And Shaw's got to look up and say, where did this little check come from? And you just put Nick 50 years reunion, go ahead or something in the, in the notes. You know what I mean? <laugh> I don't know how my mother walked to her trouble down. I don't know why my father stood his ground. I don't know how my people survive slavery. I do remember. That's why I believe, I don't know why the rivers overflow their banks. And I don't know why this snowfalls and covers the ground. I dunno why the hurricane sweeps through the land every now and then standing in a rainstorm. I believe, I don't know. Angels woke me up this morning soon, and I dunno how the blood still runs through my vein. I dunno how I, another day I am still running. I believe My God calls to me in the morning do

Speaker 1 (00:31:34):

Power of the universe, knows my name gave me a song sing and sent me on my way. I raise my voice for justice. I believe There's a difference between knowledge and memory. And there's a difference between knowledge and memory and believing And that negative. I don't know how Is acknowledging that I stand on ground Clouded by people before I came into being. And I wouldn't try To suggest I know What it was like for them, But I have worked to study And I have worked To test whether I know anything. And at my age Memory is a funny thing. You can think, you know something

Speaker 2 (00:33:19): <affirmative>

Speaker 1 (00:33:21):

And you don't know what you know, until you start to try to say it. And the older you get that lady was talking about air, going to your brain a minute ago. <laugh> the older you get. You start to get computer glitches, your brain And something you think, you know, nobody will know it because when you get ready to say it, you, it won't come up. Some of you are too young to even know what I just said. <laugh> 50 years is important. It's a half of a century. And It's wonderful to be able to sit in the company of people who operated in a particular in this country In a certain section of that half of a century. It's a

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rare thing. And I am very, very glad. So many of us understood how important it was to stop time to be in this phase. At Belmont college, I was asked To Make a presentation to a course on black church history. And she said, I want you to do the spirituals. So I came in of course is 50 minutes. So I came in with six songs And I started There is, And again,

Speaker 1 (00:35:27):

To make the wound To so, And I said, I was gonna go on with it. And then something said something in my head and I stopped. And I said, how many people ever heard that song I'm asking in, in this room? How many people have never heard that song before in their lives? Well, in that classroom, When I say, how many people have know that song, two people raised their hand. And then I knew I wasn't gonna do no six songs.

Speaker 2 (00:36:35):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:36:37):

We're talking about Spelman. And we're talking about Spelman a few years ago, and we are talking about a room full of black people who have taken every black course. They could get in high school and college. And they had never heard bomb and gild before in their lives. And that is not Up to them. You don't put people down for what they have never heard, But somebody ought to be raising some questions. And the people ought to be raising questions who raise their hands. And they knew the song in this room and could sing it in harmony. You have to say, when I die will be it. It's another thing. One thing to know the song is another one to know what the song is about. That is a question in scripture that says, is there no bomb in gild? This song answers the question And declares. There is a bomb, Black people talk back to the scriptures in the spirituals. We talk back. We analyze. Now, if you were doing a

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Bible verse In school or church, you could not get away. What saying anything other than is there no bombing Gilt? Cause you so to know what is behind that.

Speaker 1 (00:38:45):

But you go to the spiritual and you got a conversation With the stuff black people find in the text. These are slaves declaring that there is a healing In a place where there is no answer solution or healing for what's happening to them. At that time, It is a projection beyond the moment into the future. SNCC is a part of the healing That's launched in this spiritual. And when you are young, you really think That you thought it up and you halfway pissed off that your parents didn't take care of this before you did. And in some way, young people tend to really not be very connected with the ground they're standing on. They just think That is some cement or something. And I'm trying to suggest That there was a mother lobe launched culturally from the time we were slaves in this country that continues to be thrown forward into the future. Beyond the life of the people who created The declaration, that there is a healing in this place. Howard Zen says This country was founded, Was a very progressive concept. And you could, you can, you can be sure. Uh, Bob Moses is reaching in there a rake up something that we could use. I didn't expect to hear the declaration this morning, but I said, I said, okay,

Speaker 1 (00:41:25):

This thing of doing something while you alive Saying something while you alive, whether you witnessed the radiation of it or not is very important. The next song I did that morning was didn't my Lord deliver Daniel, deliver damn your deliver. Then my Lord deliver down your life. Why not every man? Well, I was, I was together. Then I said, how many people have ever heard that song? Two people raise their hand the same two who had heard Bobby Gilley, Or you, you getting a picture of this classroom. And Daniel is a very complicated thing to grab hold to, but very quickly, The song jacks, God, up The song said you delivered Daniel from the lion. Then Jonah, from the belly of the whale, the Hebrew children. I said, you know the Hebrew children, the two same two said, shut back. Me shack can Bendigo. So I had to tell all of the story, which will not tell you this morning because I have to be finished shortly. But You lay out before God, you did this, you did this, you did this, you did this. You gonna have to come here And you set up a re this is a, it is not a, a pleading thing. It is a declaration, black people in slavery made it very clear. And the songs created what we expected

Speaker 1 (00:43:34):

And is one thing to know the songs as music. It's another to have equipment in your life that allows you to do the same intense questioning and declaration with anything. Anybody runs by you. If you are, You can take a cue from this sacred Body of text that our people expected us to think, Expected us to find a way to project ourselves out of the situation. We were in. Take that bomb in gild. I always imagine I'm a mother and they, uh, have sold my child and it child is going the next day. I know that's gonna kill me.

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I'm confident. I will not be able to survive that. I am so surprised the next morning my child's gone and I am not dead. And I am not out of my mind. I was hoping if I wasn't dead, at least I would be insane. Yes, but I get up and I know my name and I know everybody else around me. I also know my schedule.

Speaker 2 (00:45:21):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:45:24):

What you going to do.

Speaker 1 (00:45:30):

Sometimes I feel you discouraged and say my works and thank, but then the holy spirit Revis my soul. There is a bomb. B a L M not B O M B. Don't take it for granted. If you never heard it before, I do not sound ending consonants. Cause I'm a black American. There's no reason you are going to listen to me, say bomb and know whether I am saying B a L M or B O M B. I have to spell it. There is. You're not supposed to be weaker than me. I'm one voice there to hear. So what do you do when you actually find that you are not dead and you have to actually get through an intolerable situation that you really thought you would not make it through. The song says

Speaker 1 (00:47:28):

There is a source beyond your physical. That is internal to you. You don't have to go outside of yourself. My mother said to us well, and we were children that we had a physical body and it would die, but we had a soul and it would never die. Now it took me a long time to put that together because she also suggested that we were in charge of the condition of the soul. I mean, if you are temporal and you've got an unending soul who would trust your temporal, uh, behavior to take care of something that is unending. However, this song says, if you get in a situation, you cannot do anything about it. You do have a inside of you that you can hold onto until, and you have to understand that is why the spirituals leaped into service in jail cells. During the civil rights move, we weren't singing them every day. We learn them in school. Some of us perform them as concert spirituals, but this is the fifties and the sixties. And a lot of us are doing gospel and rhythm and blues and all of us sudden, and the singing in the civil rights movement, these songs, swamp, everything come and go with me to that land, come and go with me to that land. Come and go with me to that land where

Speaker 1 (00:49:36):

Come and go with me with me, go with it is not of the land you are living in. It is a projection of the land that is to come. And you are actually positioning yourself to destroy the land you are in to make room for the one that has to be How Zen said there was some positive things in the conceptualization of this

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country, they are matched or over matched by the evil that is in the creation of the country. People came here articulating something for themselves. At the same time, they were wiping out the people they found here. At the same time, they were scooping people from another land to in fact, help them bring into being this thing they were trying to do for themselves. Zen talks about it as if it's in the D a, Which means You're not going to it generationally. You are not going to have SCC go to battle. And then when you get in the 21st century, it is done because we went to battle. Every generation, Every generation has to take on As responsible people in this land, That there are some progressive concepts In this land. And there is evil in this.

Speaker 1 (00:51:50):

And the evil has to always be answered. The evil has to be faced, and you have to face it with your very life and every resource you had. And so people come to you 50 years later and say, what do you think about where things have come and where things are at this time. And it's almost a suggestion. Aren't you disappointed that after all you did back there that you come here and you still have to find this stuff. And some of it looks worse than it was. And I tell you, I had a crisis. When I looked up about 20 years after and found young white skinhead, They weren't 40. I'm going, where did they come from? They weren't even in the south. They were, they were pulling stuff from Germany and world war II.

Speaker 2 (00:53:05): And

Speaker 1 (00:53:05): I'm saying,
what the world is

Speaker 2 (00:53:06):

This.

Speaker 1 (00:53:09):

And this thing said, yes, Do not think you are going to live in a world where you don't have to face down that, which will destroy what you believe in. If your children are to have a chance, you have to meet the challenges of your time. And we have to raise children who actually understand that their purpose is not to just go for everything. They can get it for themselves, but they actually have to change the structure of the society they are in so that there is something different about what is there. I am, who I am because of the civil rights movement, but it was not a promise. I could be dead just as easily as I could be alive. It's not a promise. If you step outta line, you're going to survive it. That's not the point. If you are alive, your breath needs to be used out of a kind of a principle And goodness, something might happen. And 50 years later, you sitting up here looking at a bunch of other white had people who also

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stepped out and they are also still alive to share something of the story. And it's really not about nostalgia, although I'm sure it sounds like it cause it's so old sounding.

Speaker 1 (00:55:09):

When we learned these songs from our people, they were old sounding songs. I was born in the forties. I grew up in a country church that did a 19th century repertoire. I am standing here in the 21st century. Do you think? I don't know that I sound very old.

Speaker 2 (00:55:36):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (00:55:38):

I carry 150 year cultural load. And it's intentional since I'm not dead that I place it here in this space. And it really has to do with something about knowing who you are. If you think what I'm singing about are some old songs by some old people who are dead and it just needs to go get the latest thing half you're actually missing an incredible Wealth Of being this that you actually need to get through your life. You will not know how to get through your life. If you dismiss the ground you're standing on. And it does not mean It did not mean what I thought about my teaching or what I thought about the lady. It means do you have the data That said, when we moved past slavery, we were not empty. We were not Beaten. We had in immense intention, built into us And we had nothing material to build on. And you have to read John hope. Franklin. When he says by the turn of the century, there were In tire black education systems where these poor schools were training teachers, replacing the people who had come down sometimes from the north to set up the schools. There was an intention that we would build new space that's inside of the segregation society. And they taught us culturally, how to go for broke inside of the segregation society. And it was up to us to blank, to break rank with formula

Speaker 1 (00:58:06):

To say, thank you very much. I got it. I know you want me to do well. I know you want me not to go to jail no matter what and do not do anything that will put me any place close to a police. Get my lesson work as hard as I can. I know that's the formula I, that I'm supposed to be in a better place than you are. That is the formula I got from my teachers and my parents. We said, we will not follow that recipe, right? We were not being disrespectful, but we were dismissing the formula. Every generation has to define a way to identify something that's happening in your life. That is crippling. And even though your mama mean has showed you how you can maybe survive it. You gotta figure out a way to say, thank you very much mother. And excuse me. And you know, the old people blocked for us. We did not, they did not come up with what we were gonna do all the time. And this is very important when people start to look at me and, and they're younger than me and they ask me what they supposed to be doing about

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what they're facing in their lives. And I say, as soon as you work out something you want to try, let me know, uh, where you want me to stand to block for you.

Speaker 1 (00:59:51):

Is anybody listening to what I'm saying? It's in the DNA, it's in the DNA, you in your life, this is young people. What you're facing in your life is as intense As anybody has faced in their lives at your age. It is really rough. There is not, is not a good thing. And you can talk about, well, SNCC didn't do didn't fix it. We sure didn't. We fixed what we fixed. That's

Speaker 2 (01:00:24):

Right. That's right.

Speaker 1 (01:00:25):

And we just waiting. We are waiting. And I think you will find, you know, some of us were good blockers. I loved being in a church meeting and seeing some gray head people there. And for me at that point, the people who were in that thirties with gray haired equivalence, That's how, you know, that's how bad snake was.

Speaker 2 (01:00:47):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (01:00:50):

You know, if you were 36, 37, you know, and you were in the meeting, it meant you, you thought we had a little sense. We appreciated your presence. You carried a little weight And I'm putting pressure on the next generation. I want to talk just briefly about the importance of culture And paying attention to the fact that black people generate Commodity For selling culture. And they have decided already for this century that the freedom songs are going to be commercial commodity. And the interesting thing about the few projects I've run into is they tend to feature commercially released recordings By artists who will move by the movement and wrote out of that move, being moved. And when I talked to these people About it, and I said, you know, the, the, the, the music in the movement was on the street in the mass meeting, in jail, and usually not solo. And I'm not having a problem with solo is, But I have a problem. If you give me 10, uh, songs and all of 'em are solo songs, and you telling me it is the Mo music of the movement.

Speaker 1 (01:02:36):

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It is equivalent to going to a program at the Smithsonian about the, uh, the sixties as a protest, American protest music. And I'm going there. And it's all about the war, the struggle against the Vietnam war. And I'm sitting there and ain't nobody up there on the stage. Ain't nobody, all the people on the stage are the anti-war fierce warriors, fierce warriors, right? I'm going, how in the hell have you turned the sixties into the, the, the, the anti, how did you do that? They said, well, the, the civil rights move is sort of a fifties thing.

Speaker 2 (01:03:22):

<laugh>

Speaker 1 (01:03:28):

And I'm saying, where was Greensboro? Where was Nashville? What are you talking about? It is a dangerous thing when your radicals need to put you under the porch. And it is an absolute strand. I see. And if you don't know better, you'll buy it because the folklorists the anthropologists, the ethno musicologist, the cultural historians talked about spirituals. And they said spirituals were about us singing and praying and hoping that we would go to heaven, went, we died. And they were not protest songs. Then a certain group of them from this state got together and took some lyrics of spirituals with some lyrics of white camp. Me eating songs, picked the little words that were similar and used it as proof that the spirituals had come from the camp meeting songs. And when a black scholar, William Willis, Mar James took some white songs and said, they came from spirituals. He could not get published until after he died. And he went to a very progressive, uh, publisher in New York who said it was two black chauvinistic. And I'm saying, as we move forward in the future, there is a very important work to be done about our cultural history, because it actually holds

Speaker 1 (01:05:45):

The analytical analysis of our people for our survival. If you are in a situation you can't

Speaker 8 (01:05:56):

Change and you run sound from your body, you actually can get to the next day. I told that to a group of high school students. They were from new year, Ohio, Chicago, two schools in California. And when I talked about that scenario of living a life in a place where you can't change where you are right now, the, the under railroad is not running today. As a, when you hear Barbara million, that is the source and the use and the function of that zone. I looked in the eyes of those students. And I was looking at students

Speaker 1 (01:06:51):

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Who create in a terrorized reality. They do not know when they leave their house. If they go get the school, they don't know when they get up in the class to go to the bathroom, if it's gonna be okay. They understood so much of what I was saying. When I talked about the song, it is very important to understand freedom songs because of us didn't understand the freedom songs as resistance song until they locked us up in jail. And those were the songs that we sang flipping only a word here and there to make it totally contemporary and especially not realigning the structure of the song. And the statement was contemporary. It was the same system. It was the same urgency. It was actually serving a new situation. And people say they sang all the time. Well, if you begin to make movies about it, and you begin to, to tell the story of the so rights movement, and you turn it into a story of the leaders and the soundtrack is a solo voice with a band behind it, you actually are not passing the material we need in the future. To the next time,

Speaker 1 (01:08:27):

There was a very important experience I had when I was trying to decide what kind of historian I was going to be. And I heard a song written by Pete Seeger. Um, and it wasn't big muddy, which was the famous one he did on Vietnam. It was another one, and it was a history lesson. And it went king Henry wrote out with a sword in his hands. Two and horseman were at his command and a fortnight. The rivers ran red through the land. The year 1,520 the year. It is now 1965. It's easier boys to stay half alive. Just keep your mouth shut while zoom and dive. 10,000 miles over the ocean.

Speaker 1 (01:09:24):

Simon was drafted in 63, 1 year later, he went overseas last month. This letter he sent to me, he said, you won't like what I'm saying? It's my own troops. I have to look out for. He said, I asleep with a pistol under my head. He wrote this last month, last week he was dead and Simon came home and a cascade it each day, a new headline screams at my bluff on TV. Some general says you must be tough in my dreams. I share at this family. I love all splatted and gutted. When nap Palm <affirmative>. I mind my own business and watch my TV complain about taxes pay anyway, in a civilized matter. My forefathers betrayed who long ago, struggle for freedom. King Henry wrote out with a sword in his hand, 2000 horseman were at his command in a fortnight. The rivers ran red through the land, the year 1,520. And for a historian, I was just amazed. Cause he was saying, war is not going to solve anything. It didn't solve it in 1,520. It didn't solve it in Vietnam. It didn't it. Isn't going to solve it now.

Speaker 9 (01:11:53):

Amen.

Speaker 1 (01:11:55):

Thank you.

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Speaker 3 (01:12:02):

Getting ready? The mayor's getting ready. All right. Shaw university, Institutional advancement, Shaw university and institutional advancement. 1, 1 8 1 18 east south street. That's roll 2 7, 6 0 1. I'm gonna repeat that one quick. Shaw university institutional advancement one 18 east south street, Rollie, North Carolina. Um, now I'm gonna turn the, oh, what's I'm sorry. One more time. All right, here we go. I'm sorry. Say again. Oh, I'm sorry. I thought I said that. Sorry about that. Do you want, okay. Show how university institutional advancement one 18 east south street, Rollie North Carolina, zip 2 7 6 0 1 2 7 6 0 1. Okay. Before I turn the mic over to Courtland and Karen, I know they're gonna introduce other people on the program committee on the planning committee, but I have to say personally, the lynchpins of this conference have been Karen and cord Lynn, and let's give it up

Speaker 10 (01:14:03):

Now, you know, if any of you SCC folks out in the audience know anything, you know that an effort like this is not an undertaking of one or two individuals, it may be the hard work of three individuals. And I wanna bring Charlene Krantz up. So because she is definitely the third person in this cog of a machines that we have gone, Charlene Krantz, who handle all the of your questions shouting. Now let's get down to the real bras tags here. You know that this is the student nonviolent coordinating Cole MIDT. And the Cole MIDT was the one who put this conference to, they started a year ago. And I wanna ask all of the committee members to just come forward, cuz I know I'll forget some names. Come on Joyce. Come on, Julian. Charlie Cobb, Larry Rubin, Chuck McDo our chair for the conference. Just come on up so everybody can see you. Don Harris Come on forward. Okay? Okay. And, um, can y'all squeeze on down.

Come on down. Come on down. Come on down. Dory. Dory, Ladner, Connie, Connie, come on, Connie. There are about 24 of us all together. I believe you. Charles Sheard, Hollis Watkins.

Speaker 11 (01:15:35):

Don Harris,

Speaker 10 (01:15:36):

Maria, Val Harris. I called Tim Tim Jenkins. Come on down so everybody can see you. Please y'all squeeze down so everybody can get in. Go down a little bit more Dory. Can you, can you see y'all of us? Come on in, come on in. Let's get this photo up.

Speaker 12 (01:15:54):

He left.

Speaker 10 (01:15:56):

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Yes. Some of us have already, uh, gone for the evening. Uh, Maria, come on in. I want everybody to be seen in this because this was not an effort of, I mean, we worked hard as hell. I can't, I can't tell you that, but this was a committee effort and these other people, uh, all together work to make this humongous effort a success now. Um, let me, yeah, let's give all of them. Let's give all of us. <laugh> Give us our props.

Speaker 10 (01:16:35):

Okay. I'm sure I forgot somebody, but y'all know who you are now. Um, let me tell you a little story when sea Cox and I came down in March to try to begin the preparations, the logistical preparations for the conference. We had a lot of fear in our hearts because we didn't know who we were gonna work with, how it on work and whether or not the community of Raleigh would embrace us the way we hoped they would. But it was the courage, conviction and leadership of Reverend David Forbes and the host committee from Raleigh, North Carolina that really made this conference work. I'd like the host committee people to please come on down. Angela Dunston Irv joiner, Reverend Cooper, all of you, please come and, and, and take your place. Jocelyn Williams, Wallace green major major worker for us please come down so people can see you.

Speaker 10 (01:17:29):

Christina Jones. These are our brothers and sisters from Raleigh community. Now we came over to Shaw after we met the host committee, we said, my gosh, how are we gonna put all this together? They got buildings all over the place. We don't know where we going to go. How do we make this happen? And there was a one single person on the Shaw university campus who was himself, a veteran of SNCC who was here when we first met here in 1960 and single handedly. I'm gonna say, cuz I know he pulled the whole campus structure together and made this effort work for us. And I'd like for Dean max soul to please come forward, come on Mac, come on up Mac, come on in here, Mac. I had to hog time to get him to come in here, but you've seen him running all over the campus, making this work

Speaker 13 (01:18:21):

For

Speaker 14 (01:18:22):

<laugh> come on in.

Speaker 10 (01:18:25):

And uh, And what I'd like God Dean sold to know. And he doesn't know this, you know, uh, Bernice made the announcement earlier that, uh, this, this campus, uh, all of the property, all of the work that we did at Shaw was the donated. Now it's time for us to make a donation. And on behalf of the planning

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committee, I'd like to announce for those of you who are making noise in the back. I'd like to announce that this conference is going to give a contribution of \$5,000 to the Shaw community In the name of Dean max. So who is retiring this year?

Speaker 13 (01:19:12):

Anything

Speaker 15 (01:19:13):

Right?

Speaker 16 (01:19:13):

Thank you.

Speaker 17 (01:19:16):

On behalf of the chair of our board, Dr. Willy, Gary, and certainly on behalf of our entering president, Dr. Dorothy Kaza Yi, we certainly accept your generosity and we thank you for being on our campus. And we hope you've had a memorable experience. We've had a wonderful time working with Karen and Koland and the rest of the committee to make this event happen at Shaw university. Thank you again.

Speaker 10 (01:19:42):

Cool. Now, um, you know, Bernie is, is, is our, one of our jewels and, uh, Chuck NELI is another and Ruth Harris is somewhere back there in the back. We're supposed to end with us song. So can we call upon the here come check? Where is Ruth Ruth? Betty. Betty May let's bring the freedom singers up one more time.

Speaker 3 (01:20:05):

And while they're coming, can I just say, cuz this will prey on my heart. If I did not say this, how I could have forgotten Charlene, whom I talked with every single day is beyond me. So I just got to say this publicly. All right. You got

Speaker 7 (01:20:17):

It. Bernice, we, you gonna come up to the mic. Chuck, where are you, Mr? Right? She's all right. Y'all do it's <laugh> to the people. Is this what we got?

Speaker 1 (01:20:48):

Ain't going, nobody

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Speaker 18 (01:20:59):

Going. I'm going keep, keep, March it up to freedom land.

Speaker 1 (01:21:14):

Ain't going.

Speaker 18 (01:21:32):

People are talking marching up to feed

Speaker 1 (01:21:36):

On And going hatred.

Speaker 18 (01:21:54):

I'm Nobody

Speaker 7 (01:22:41):

Is. Hold on. <laugh>

Speaker 18 (01:23:05):

Paul silence found in jail had no money to go there. The prize, Your eyes on the prize, the old train that a man can stand is that train the eyes on, hold on, hold on your, on the prize. You know, the little thing that we do right was the day we decided to fight. So keep your on the as, come on, come on your eyes on the I'm trying to get, do this light of mind, Huh? Okay. Okay. While we going up to come together, your right hand over your left. We Lord. I know we are not afraid. We, We, I know that I.