

(mumbling)

- Do you mean the jail? (mumbling) (mumbling)

- [Woman In Red Shirt] I mean, she would beat me all the way with a switch. I'd be holding my leg (mumbling) and as soon as I get around that corner, I'm going back. (laughs) And I'd be right back up in there. (laughs) (mumbling) Well, my sister was the one that was in love with the boys, I was really interested in what Bob and them was talking about. But they'd trick me up in there, I'd get the stuff, and I'd get the whipping after I get home. We laugh about it today (mumbles). (mumbles)

- Now, are you working with North Carolina Central University Law school?

Man: Yeah.

- (mumbles)

Man: Yeah.

- He was here yesterday. (mumbles)

- Yeah, we usually keep at least two full-time students we try to develop a clinic so that we can to more of our law students engaged in these issues in the future, they'll be more receptive to the issues related to civil rights and struggles for that. (mumbles)

- You wonder what I'm up to, just pick up a subscription, the work that we do is cataloged in there regularly.

- And I don't know if anybody can tolerate an hour and a half panel, which is what we're prepared to do, so there are a couple of options, we can just suspend (mumbles) we can have evaluation of the conference, or we can do a mini version of what we plan to do and hopefully engage in some discussion of what the panelists have presented, and then maybe end up with a slight evaluation, or some feedback, so what's the pleasure to folks?

Woman: I would like to hear what the people are saying.

- Option two?

Other Woman: I'd like to hear your ideas.

- Okay, so-- (crowd speaks up unintelligibly)

- Consensus, have vote, right? (crowd laughs) Yeah, I mean, I actually, it's supposed to be called, "Where do we go from here?", and I was telling my friend Howie, this morning, it should be "Where did everybody go?". (crowd laughs) But I mean, I think we knew full well that with such a long weekend, that it wasn't likely that we'd have a big participation, but I think what Charles wanted to do was to present some of the local work that's going on, and of course, even some national work as we'll see with Debbie's presentation. Not so much as a plan, or outline for where we should go, but just some things for people to think about, that we think kind of comes out of the spirit of the conference. But I wish you would indulge me for one minute, everybody got a chance tell a SNCC story this weekend, so I get to tell mine. Okay, and actually I grew up in a house behind (mumbles). Okay, he doesn't remember me, he was five years older, he ran track, he was an athlete, a pretty good runner, too. My crew came behind him, wanted to run as well, so we looked up to Ivan, who was a track star. Who went off to Michigan State, I believe it was. And we heard he joined the civil rights movement, he went to SNCC, and we never saw him again. We never saw him, really this is the first time I seen him since he went off to school, right? That many years. And so, just kind of been thinking about him all these years, his work was influential. In 1964, at Bradley University, we got arrested for sitting in traffic stop, trying to integrate a white barber shop in Pury, Illinois. In retrospect, I mean, what? Where was it, it was a barber shop that we didn't frequent, we had, we call Jack day barbers in the dormitory that cut our hair, probably 100 black students on the campus. But one student who had a pretty nice afro in 1963, worked with the NAACP, and they figured they needed to do this, and so it kind of spontaneously, we did it, we were arrested. At that moment, if SNCC hadn't been around, and somebody had said, you need to come work with us, somewhere in the South, I would have been gone, but it didn't happen. And then, I think in 1966, students at Tennessee state were robbed in a battle with the State Police. And Stokely had been in contact with someone, and we formed a friends with SNCC chapter there. And had a demonstration on West Virginia State's campus, and I remember he sent us literature of the Black Panther poster was the prominent thing that he sent, and we got it around the campus at that time. So I didn't get a chance to join SNCC, it's one of the tragedies of my life, but certainly from that point on, always influenced by the work of SNCC, and later years, had an opportunity to meet, and work with so many people that had a part of the SNCC experience. So, kinda like this weekend is like kinda bringing it all together, for me, personally. I really appreciate all the people that put it together. And that came here. So what we wanna do, it's not an agenda for struggle, but just a little look at what's going on in North Carolina, first we wanna hear from Stefan Bollins, who worked for the land loss fund, to talk a little bit about the struggle of black farmers. Primarily in North Carolina, but throughout the South. And the environmental justice movement, and we kinda think that's fitting, I mean, those of you who have that SNCC experience know how important black land owners were. During that period, bail money, having meetings, and providing even a safe-haven from the Klu klux klan, in so many places, but particularly in Mississippi, so we wanna hear about that work that's going on. And then we're gonna ask Indiza Laughinghouse from the black workers to justice, to talk about organizing workers in the South, and the importance of Unions, and I think he's gonna say a little bit about the African American, Latino alliance that we are trying to build in this area. And then finally, we're gonna hear from Debbie Bell, from Philadelphia, who's a SNCC veteran from the Atlanta campaign. Who's gonna talk about the black radical congress, as a kind of modern day expression, at least to the black movements, attempts to bring together a coalition, or united for the people, to fight on a program which many think represents the lessons that we've learned over the last 40 years, so that's what we've got, and we'll probably ask

people to speak, maybe for 10 minutes, or so, at best, and then we'll try to open it up to some discussion, 10 minutes or less, okay? So first, we'll ask Stefan Bowins. You can sit, stand, it's up to you.

- Okay, well I guess first of all, good afternoon.

Crowd: Good afternoon.

- My name is Stefan Bowins, again, and I'm an attorney and the executive director of the North Carolina association of Black lawyers, land loss prevention project, we call ourselves land loss prevention for short. And our project was founded in 1983, to try to curve systemic and wide-spread land loss throughout North Carolina, since '83, our project has worked feverishly, not only to address issues of land losses North Carolina, but to address issues of land loss throughout the Southern regions of the United States. More particularly, I was asked to talk today briefly about some of the things that are going on presently, as it relates to land loss, as it relates to civil rights, and as it relates to how we improve the state of America. And in doing that, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the black farmers. In 1920, the United States had more than a million black farmers. Today, we have less than 16,000 black farmers. And that has been through hook, crook, and pilfering of African American farmland, and of the general way in which the American system and the United States' system of laws work, in some respect, to the disadvantage of people who are sometimes land-rich and money-poor. In some real respects, what we've found is that, for example, the United States department of Agriculture has been a big impediment to retention of land in the African American community. And in looking at that, what we really have to think about is what does land mean, in America? What does land mean in America? And for many of us, we think about, "Well, how can I get my first house?" And give me one acre of land, and have a decent subdivision where I can raise my children, as the same, my family. But, as many of us know, and was previously eluded to, farmers, for the most part, had access to land, which meant they had access to capitol. Because land and capitol, in this United States, are synonymous in some very real respects. And holding of land was powerful. And in a real respect, the divestment of black farmers from that land was a divestment of an economic base, and of a social power. And so in putting, trying to put the black farmers, in some context, in the loss, from one million 80 years ago, down to 16,000, that translates to a tremendous loss of equity and state in this country. And we have been representing, most recently, a little bit over 3,000 black farmers for around the United States, about 500 in North Carolina, specifically, against the United States department of agriculture for systemic practices of discrimination. And in looking at those practices, discrimination, just to give you a typical example, in this all-too-often heard type of scenario. Farmer comes in for assistance. He's told to sit in the lobby and wait. He's the first one there in the morning. Yet, a white farmer comes in, two hours later, is given an opportunity to meet with the county supervisor immediately, and given the assistance that ultimately, when that black farmer is seen, later that day, is denied. And that's a typical scenario. And there was a huge class-action, actually led by two farmers from North Carolina. One named Tim Pickford, from the Southern portion of the state, and one named Cecil Brewings. Both Mr. Pickford and Mr. Brewings, for black farmers who were subjected to tremendous acts of discrimination that I couldn't begin to quantify to you, yet to say, not only, for example, in Mr. Pickfords case, did he lose his farm, his livelihood, his connection to the land, but the manner in which it was done was most horrifying. To find out that you go to the government for assistance, that any other American enjoys, and they deny that very assistance, and then they turn around foreclose

upon your property, and you leave in the morning, and come back home, and your doors are locked and shackled, your children and your wife are told that they can't go in to get personal items, like clothes, things of that nature, and you have the sheriff who's telling you that you have to do the best that you can based on the circumstances that have been presented to you, but if by no means, and no circumstances will you be allowed to go back into your home, and get those things that are important to you, and important to your families livelihood. And you're basically left destitute, that's the struggle of black farmers right now. They have been left destitute. You know, I think some have heard the saying, of a nation of people without a land, well this case, in the United States, black farmers are a nation of people without land. And so we're fighting and we're struggling, and we're working very closely with a number of organizations, a number of groups, for example, the Black Farmers in Agriculture Association, here, based in Tillory, North Carolina. With Gary Grant, and some other leaders from around the country, to try to get black farmers back into agriculture, back into the holding of land, because it's important to rural communities, but it's also important to urban communities, because the land base is something that can never be recreated, you know, we can make a lot of money, and we could do a lot of things, but without the land wealth, it's meaningless, because land is one thing that can't be regenerated. And the significance of that land wealth in communities can't be understated. So, the second thing I wanted to just briefly touch on, before I move away from the black farmers is the fact that right now, there are about 20,000 people who have claimed that there were problems with discrimination at USDA, of those, about 11,000 cases have already been heard. Of the 11,000 cases, almost 5,200 people have been denied claims under this consent decree. What that really translates, what was told to the farmers when they applied for this assistance, from the government, as a result of a class-action lawsuit settlement, was that if you could tie your shoe, and I'm not quoting now, lead council, that represented the farmers. If you can tie your shoe, and you were black, and you farmed in America, you will receive benefit of this agreement, and you probably will receive a cash settlement, and you were more than likely, if the land was available that was taken from you by the government, you will receive that land back. Well, I'm here to tell you today, that less than 60% of those farmers are receiving the cash settlement, much less even less than 20%, are receiving any of their land back. So it's again, a dream deferred. (man mumbles in the background) You can say that, too. (laughs) And I wouldn't argue with you. So we're working diligently with those farmers and they're working hard to try to continue to be that base for society. Because, truly, without food, and without land, you can't have a fight for struggle and for justice. Truly, people don't fight if they're hungry. The other issue that we work on as an organization is environmental justice. Some call it environmental justice, some call it environmental racism, call it what you will, what it means to me, is the unwanted sighting of types of facilities that no one else would want in their community. I'm trying to put this in very plain language. For sometime, we represented a community in the Southeastern part of North Carolina, in a county called Jones County. Near a town called Pollucksville, in a community called Goshin. Goshin is one of the oldest African American communities in North Carolina, but also in the United States. It is historically significant, had a historically significant African American graveyard, yet and still, the town of Pollucksville, in Jones County, in all of their magnanimity, all of their splendor. (laughs) Chose to place a waste water treatment facility in the community of Goshin. If you know anything about Jones County, and if you know anything about the town of Pollucksville, you know that the town of Pollucksville is 80% white. You know that the community of Goshin is 100% black. You also find that the residents of the Goshin community, this is the most interesting, and in my opinion, the most damning thing that could be said about the placement of this facility, we're never given notice and opportunity to be

heard on the placement of this facility. But more importantly, weren't even going to receive the benefit of this wonderful facility, which was bestowed upon them. In other words, we're gonna take our crap, for lack of a better word, and we're going to put it in your community, but not only are we gonna put it in your community, we're gonna spray it on fields adjacent to your land, where you grow your crops, that you feed your family with. And we're gonna tell you it's okay. Well, the Goshin community created a community action team called GREAT, Goshin Road Environmental Action Team. And this community team worked diligently, with other groups, and other organizations from around the state and around the country, to try to stop this facility. And land loss being one of them. And I have to say, this was one that we didn't win. This is one where the facility is up and running, and unfortunately, the residents of Goshin are receiving the waste treatment from the town of Pollucksville, despite the fact that the town of Pollucksville had the opportunity to place it, for example, on a 600 acre former plantation, where there was only one owner who was known in the community, despite the fact that this particular facility is being placed in the community where there were a number of people, and a number of residents who would have been impacted, this facility is up and running, and all the efforts, with the lobbying, the marching, the complaining in this instance, did work to no avail, we argued before the four circuit court of appeals in January, and it was very striking, the argument before the four circuit court of appeals for the United States was very simple. You know how sometimes they say lawyers argue about the facts when the law isn't on their side? And then they say argue about the law, when the facts are on their side. Well, in this case I had the pleasure of arguing about the facts and the law because both were on my side. In this case, whenever Justice Todd asked me a question, I could point to them, specific facts about why the council didn't send notice to this community, about where they were going to place this facility. And each instance, I could point to specific facts, about how the notice was supposed to go out, under the law, and the fact that it didn't. Yet, the one thing that I couldn't do was ensure that the law was going to be interpreted fairly, and appropriately. And in this case, it wasn't. And it's amazing to me to be able to see the mass nations that the court of appeals went through to deny this community, an opportunity to live in a safe and health community, and enjoy the benefits of society. That all of us should enjoy. Finally, I wanted to talk very briefly about the Holly Springs Landfill case, which is another environmental justice case that we became involved in. Some of you who are from Holly Springs may be aware (mumbles). Some of you who are from North Carolina may be aware of Holly Springs. Holly Springs is a growing bedroom community of Rolly. It's just about 15 minutes away from here. A little bit less than 13 miles from this very point. Holly Springs, in the early '80's was a predominantly African American community. And since then, the growth of weight carried. Has begun to spread out into Holly Springs. Well, prior to the growth coming to Holly Springs, Wayne County decided that they needed a new landfill, not only that they needed a new landfill, but they needed the largest landfill in the Southeastern United States. So they went about developing plans and receiving of approvals and obtaining permits to place this landfill in the Holly Springs community. And in 1990 they began that process, in 1992, the process was formalized and they waited until 1996 to really begin the process of developing the landfill. In 1998, the land loss prevention project was approached by a number of local groups, including the NAACP, and other community leaders to look at this issue of deciding, well what was significant about deciding in Holly Springs? The significance was that there were at least 5 other existing landfills within the community, already. The significance was that the location of the landfill was beside an old landfill that had previously been closed because it was an unlined landfill. And of course, unlined landfills have numerous health hazards associated with them. And the residence of that community were then going to be asked to bear the

burden of a new landfill, which would be the largest landfill in Southeastern United States. And certainly had the potential for taking unwanted trash from other states. With that in mind, the residents of Holly Springs got together, and challenged and petitioned, had opened, public meetings, issues related to the sidings. And when that went to no avail, and the permit was ultimately approved, we filed an action in the administrative office of Administrative hearings, and ultimately that was successful, the administrative law judge ruled in our favor, in our clients favors on every single issue raised. Now, what you might have heard most recently, if you've kept up with the newspapers, is that the Holly Springs case was appealed to the department of environment and natural resources, and that (mumbles) in fact ruled in our favor, what you may not know is that they reversed every single point that in finding of fact, that the administrative law judge made in our favor, and in our clients favor, and essentially created a mechanism, in ruling in our favor, by which they could argue that they have adhered to environmental justice because the only issue that remains, the only issue that prevented Deener from going forward with issuing the permit, two weeks ago, was simply that Wade County did not do the requisite things under environmental justice act, which provided them to do a social economics status of survey and study to determine weather or not there were issues that were related to socio-economic factors that may adversely impact the appropriateness of the siding of the facility. So, essentially, all Wade county has to do at this point, at least their argument would be, is to go back and do that study, and then rubber stamp the siding of the facility. So, in some respects, one may argue that is a victory, and we take victories, nonetheless, but in some respects, its a victory with some real serious and long-lasting ramifications. And at this point, the case is in the court. Finally, I will close by saying, it's going to superior court. Wade County is going to appeal their denial, and we're going to appeal the issues that were overturned, but finally, I'll say that the issue is not that you have litigation going, but it's that you have litigation, you have political action, it's that you have social action, going, and you have a multi-faceted approach to dealing with issues as well as having a community-based sense of encouraging and empowering you to be engaged in these issues, as they arise, and that that is going to be the key to ensuring that issues of social justice, economic justice, environmental justice are met in this society. Thank you. (crowd applause)

- Folks, there's some chairs in the front row. Okay, (mumbles), the black witness for justice?

- Yeah, first I'd like to extend to everybody, just a very warm, heartfelt greetings, really, cause this has been a very special event, some very special people, I really sort of enjoyed this very inspirational celebration, and educational opportunity. I just wanted to say that, but I would like to address, just basically three main developments here in the South, and here in North Carolina. And I wanna give you some context. You know, the main thing that we've been talking about is really been the 40 years of struggle against Jim Crow, segregation, and the role that some of these great visionaries have played in helping us lead that fight. But, as we all know, the other side of the coin in this whole struggle for democracy, one for democracy in the workplace. You know, the struggle for workers rights, the struggle for a living wage, and I want to make sure that all of us understand the legacy that has been left by right to work, by this segregation as it's continued to deny us this basic democracy in the workplace. So, in addressing those issues, I just think it's just important that we be mindful that that's the context, the struggle against a right to work, still a struggle for democracy, you know, the board of democracy, the people in the workplace. I've just been privileged to work with many folks around North Carolina, in particularly the members of black works for justice over the

last 19 years. And also had an opportunity to work with farmer to legal services and a couple of unions organizer, it's really been insightful in terms of just understanding just how monumental these struggles are, these three struggles in these three areas are. But, for like the first maybe try to address the question of the struggle around the right of public service workers to unionize, and their right to collect the bargain plans, I know way back in the 1980's, that was one of the things that the black workers for justice had attempted to do, they attempted to try to develop workplace organizations, organizing committees and unions. In the public service sector. And it's been a long fight, a very long, difficult fight, cause of the political climate, Jesse Helms climate, the confederate flag waving climate that has made it very, very difficult. But I think that the founding of UE 150, The North Carolina public service workers union has really just been a monumental event in this particular fight. And I think as part of that fight, it's an ongoing fight, this is not only to organize workers into the union, but also taking up the fight for the right for collective bargaining, which is, again, requires building a very strong labor community alliance, not just within the African American community, the white community, but particularly with the growing Latino community, again, I'm trying rush through this, cause I wanna get some feedback from many of you, which brings us back to the question of the long fight for organizing agricultural workers here in the South. Particularly here in North Carolina. I recall in 1983, when I first had an opportunity to work for farm work illegal services, I remember black works for justice attempted to start organizing in packing houses, also in poultry plants, and again, very challenging, many of you heard of the hamlet and pearl food fire, I think that represents some of the conditions and the need, and also the fear that exists amongst workers, many of you are familiar with the 25 workers that burned up in that poultry plant, out of fear of challenging their boss, and putting those locks on those fire engine doors. Again, this has been a very long, difficult fight, it's been a fight that requires a certain political climate, and I just think that we're moving in that direction, as we try to build an alliance and community to community labor alliance, that also includes the Latino brothers and sisters in the work place. I just think that that's critically important. But in particular, the fight that flocked the farm labor organizing committee, as labeled, particularly their boy-cot, how many of y'all familiar with the boy-cot of Mount Olive Pickles? Raise your hands, please give me somebody here. (crowd erupts in chatter) Well the farm labor organizer committee-- part of it is just I have a respiratory problem. Excuse me?

Man: Stand up.

- I assure you that I'm not gonna just stand up (mumbles). (crowd laughs) That's why I keep coughing, I have bronchitis. But the farm labor of organizing committee, the FLCL, and over five thousand workers in North Carolina have been fighting to gain a labor agreement that has been initiated by this boy-cot of the Mount Olive Pickle plant here in Mount Olive, North Carolina. The black works for justice has been participating in that boy-cot, trying to educate folks, and actually going to some of the grocery stores and trying to educate many of the workers as well as the consumers about this particular boy-cot, and it was initiated in March '99, and I think the main thing is is that we all have to try to support this particular boy-cot, but more important, as you know, in terms of trying to organize many of these workers is the question of many of the workers, as you know, are migrant workers, some legal, some un-legal. And as you know, that too is very divisive in terms of how the bosses use that to try to undermine their particular organizing effort. One of the things that that's really critically important for all of us is to try to understand why we must all make a call for just, general, unconditional animosity. For all undocumented workers. Cause otherwise, as we try

organize in these work places, whether a pickle plant, poultry plants, where a lot of our Latino brothers and sisters are presently working, it just makes it a lot easier for the boss to split out unity, and prevent us from organizing unions for these various workplaces. So, one of the things that comes out of these struggles is the need for solidarity, and the black workers for justice has always upheld that solidarity is a question of necessity, not one of gratitude, and not one of just doing someone a favor, you know, in order for us to win these fights, we need that type of solidarity, it's a necessity. And as a result of that perspective, the black workers for justice has initiated building an alliance of African American and Latino workers, the African American Latino workers alliance. As an effort to strengthen these two very very important fights in the public sector. Where more and more Latino workers too, are coming in to the service sector of the public sector, as well as the agricultural area. So, I'm asking all folks to support this petition drive that we have going on, I just want to share with you what this petition's about. It's a petition to president Clinton and the US congress calling for a grant of unconditional animosity for all undocumented workers and also to ratify international labor organization that addresses the fundamental rights of all workers. To number one, their right to freedom of association, their right to organize. Also their right to also recognize the collective bargain rights that all workers should have, and finally to defend the human rights of all migrant workers. Before all of you leave, I'd like you all to, more or less, either sign one of these petitions, or if it's possible to take one of these petitions, and have friends and supporters, and your coworkers sign these petitions, and wanna make sure that all of you get a chance to do that before you leave here today, and there's an address on these petitions here, where you can send them back. You can just send them back to the black workers for justice address that's on the back of the petition. The other point I just wanted to touch on, is the question of globalization. And why it's important that we try to develop a broader national perspective on what's going on with working people today. I had an opportunity over the last few years to work with United (mumbles), in some textile plants, in the Western part of the state, and it's amazing what the gulf American free-trade agreement globalization has done. To what was left of part of the state didn't really have a lot of industry, other than furniture and textiles. In order for workers to develop that sort of international conscious and understanding, the black workers for justice has seen the importance of trying to make sure that there's some sort of educational peace going on. To sort of broaden that understanding of why globalization is something that we all got to try to get a handle, in terms of understanding, in terms of how it impacts us. And why we gotta build broader international solidarity with workers abroad. So, as a result of the last couple of years, the black workers for justice has convened a international workers school, that was a phenomenal experience of brother (mumbles) of two particular schools. It was an opportunity to really learn first-hand, about sisters and brothers from Britain, Germany, Zania, South Africa, Brazil, and many of these other places where the auto industry's running, and textile plants are running. To just see the devastation that globalization is really meant for all workers in terms of lowering the standard of living for workers. I just think it's very important that folks really support these efforts here in the south, the efforts to support the right of all public service workers, to unionize, and have collective bargain rights. The right of agricultural workers to organize the agricultural sector, and also just the critically important issue of building this alliance with Latino community. In closing, I really want to really have an opportunity to hear questions and have some dialogue with you folks, on these particular questions, cause they're critically important, and I know the BWJ has been struggling, black workers for justice has been struggling with trying to answer some of the important questions of how to build the broader political climate, as you all know, all of us have a roll to play in building that broader political climate, and building support for these particular



struggles. So, in closing, I'd just like to say that it's really been an honor, and to have been apart of this development, and to have worked with some of the best organizers, really, that I've ever had an opportunity to work with, from labor organizers, community organizers, and looking forward to hearing some of your comments and questions. (crowd applause)

- I think part of our perspective on this panel, is at least, that this is a conference who comes to reflect on and honor a life and death struggle in the South, that was initiated 40 some odd years ago, that we certainly ought to look at what is the conditions in the same areas today, and that's pretty much a sense of what we tried to do, at least in hearing from the first two presenters. Our third presenter, Debbie Bell's gonna talk about some organizational developments in the black liberation movement, and I might argue, and others might too, that in many ways, it represents an extension of what it was that SNCC sought out to do many, many years ago. So, Debbie Bell.

- He took my opening line away. (laughs) But that's alright, we learned to be creative, that's part of the Elle Baker teachings. Yes, I don't think it's arguable, but to follow up on that, I also know just by sitting on this panel, and from some of the discussions that have taken place during the course of the last four days, that people are in motion, and people are trying to change their communities. But, the thing that the black radical congress is trying to address, or the issue that the black radical congress is trying to address is how do we unite, how do we coulisse all of these energies so that we're not just chipping away at our one little corner. So the issues that were just presented to you, are issues that fall within the preview of the black radical congress agenda. Let me take a step back and give you a little background. First, on the name. The black radical congress is basically in formation to try to give a vehicle for anyone who considers themselves, one, black, whether they're blond, blue-eyed, or African, or whatever, but if you self-define yourself as black, then you are eligible to participate, so it does not have a rigid definition of how many crinkles you have in your hair. That was one of the discussions, by the way. (laughter erupts) It is an attempt to bring together the full spectrum of black people on the left. So that all avenues, or spokes of radicalism, can unite with whatever the issues are, and we have tried to bring these issues under an umbrella, a working umbrella, so that your issue is not isolated from all of the issues that affect the black community. Within that umbrella, as part of this radicalism, we clearly state, in both two formal documents that we have, our principles of unity, and the freedom agenda, we state that capitalism does not work, and that it is not an alternative for the African American community, and because it is not an alternative, because of it's history of oppression, and hasn't shown that it's going to reform itself, or that it can be reformed, that this is not an option for freedom for the black community. So, with that premise, we are trying to organize to, well, we're not looking to overthrow the government yet, obviously, but there is a significant left body of thought that has never moved in the same direction. And all the times it's been antagonistic to each other, June tenth of 1998 we had an exploratory conference that was held in Chicago and that conference was to by our estimate, draw about 500 people, to begin to explore, what are the possibilities of getting this whole diaspora of thinking, left thinking together, and beginning to form an organization. Well, about 200 people showed up, I'm sorry, not 500 people showed up, 2,000 people showed up, so it far exceeded what we had expected, and it also told us that the interest and the need was out there, and that something needed to be done. The period between '98 and today has been a period of local organizing of ideological discussion and some strategy of development, in that period, there has been sort of a metamorphosis, a genesis of all these divergent left

forces of moving from a period of skepticism, looking over their shoulder, and not quite sure what the next person was going to do, and not quite sure where you wanted to go, to a period of, to a state of confidence, and beginning to trust, which means you're then in a stage where you can now move forward and build. In that light, we have planned an educational conference, which I think, having had the marvelous experience that I had this weekend, will somewhat mirror in many ways, some of the discussions we heard in terms of how SNCC was built, because the purpose of this conference, which will take place at Waynestaid on the weekend of June 25, 26, and 27, the purpose of that will be, it's called an organizing conference, to teach ourselves how we can organize the agenda that we have set for ourselves. And it will be a working congress, in order to learn the skills, and share the information that we need to go back home and hopefully start building and touching those people who feel that they want to move in a direction for change. What are some of the issues? We have, it's interesting, in discussing issues, everyone has their own pet issue, and we've gone through that. You know, this one thinks there's is the most important issues that's going to change the country, and the next one thinks there's is. But in reality, what we know is that all issues are interrelated, one way or the other. The farm question is related to the reparation question, and to the education question, to the police day question, and so forth. There's something that can, There is some strand that you can find that will connect all of these issues. And those are the main issues in which we have chosen to begin to develop a program around. For instance, almost all of what we call local organizing committees, and there are 16 local organizing committees that we have established since 1998, almost all of them are working on anti-police state issues, primarily, the case of (mumbles). The cases of (mumbles). However, we know that in New York, while they might be working on Remia, they're also working on Dialo, and that is the kind of latitude, and also the creativity that we would like to have in our LOC's, New York has two LOC's, the other LOC has chosen to work on anti-police state (mumbles), and education. And the relationship there is that if you can improve the education system, and work for quality, free, public education, and by the way, the premise here is that public education must be saved, it is one of the last bastions of democracy that we have in our country. (crowd erupts in applause) That with education, then there's the possibility of getting a job, and then the whole question of the police, not police state, but of criminal justice, and what happens to young, black men, certainly will lessen, if not, become a moot point. Because people will have a purpose in life, and it will help to collect some of the criminal activity, that people find necessary in order to survive in this country. We have LOC's that are working on criminal justice and the question of reparation, and this is for those of you who are not quite plugged into this, the question of reparation or, and it has not become part of your daily work, and daily thought, has become an increasingly important arena of struggle, and more and more literature is written, almost on a daily basis, and certainly if you go onto the internet, there are many, many avenues, and many articles, pardon me, that give clear, sys inc, and rational arguments to the question of reparation, including where the money would go, and who would be the recipient of such requisitions. And, finally, but not least, in terms of issues, this question that was so well discussed under the black workers for justice program, and that is economic justice, and this is where our distrust of capitalism takes its sharpest turn here, or connection, and that is that workers are overwhelming majority of our population, black people are overwhelmingly in the working class, the working class is anyone who has a boss and earns a wage, and is not in control of where their wages are coming from. And the exploitation, securely, people of color, in our economic system has just been stated, I don't need to repeat, but this is a question that is paramount, and it's paramount for the growing numbers of people who are only being employed in Mcdonalds-type wage jobs, and have to work

two and three jobs, in order to put bread on their table, and a roof over their head. So those are our main areas, and let me just go back, and I wanna just say that, you know, the question of a living wage, I need to include on the economic justice, because if you don't have a living wage, there is no economic justice. And this is what affects most people of color. And, by the way, in terms of workers, we include those people who are unemployed, under employ, and all of the millions of women who have been thrown off the well fare rolls and still don't have any kind of jobs, they are potential workers, and we need to look at them as potential workers. And as allies. So, this is one of the places that the racial discrimination and prejudice is most easily identifiable, is in the work place, because of the types of jobs and opportunities that are available to African Americans. I don't wanna go on too much longer, but I do wanna say that the BRFC is a membership organization, it has a sliding scale of membership to vote for those who are unemployed, to those who would like to give us a whole lot of money, is certainly welcomed, and that to date, the composition of membership is across the economic and intellectual spectrum. So we have intellectuals, such as Cornell West, we have people who are unemployed, we have students. And we are certainly eager to have everyone who's interested, join us. We have a number of websites, and the reason for this is that we have found that when the question of black radicalism, and on any given issue, and our website, by the way, one of our websites will have an issue for a given period of time.