

RAD TALK:  
THE RADICAL SOLIDARITY OF DOLORES HUERTA  
AND HARRY BELAFONTE

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*“Too often it is assumed that change comes from above. Those of us who have been working against structural state violence, against over-incarceration, against police racism, know that these institutions do not budge—unless we push with greater and greater force and with ever-larger numbers of people. It is movements that lead to change.”*

—Angela Y. Davis\*

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INTRODUCTION

The policing, caging and public slaughter of Black and Brown bodies in the United States continues to provide the world with coliseum-styled American carnage through the lens of a cell phone camera. The racial

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\* Angela Y. Davis, *Keynote Address at Columbia University and UCLA via Skype*, Beyond the Bars Conference (Mar. 4, 2016), <https://livestream.com/CenterforJusticeatCU/BTB2016FridayKickOff> (last visited June 22, 2017). Legal research assistance provided by Ian Stringham.

dimension of this pervasive violence is inescapable. As illuminated by the words of one poet, probable cause is probably cause you're not Caucasian. The weekly news coverage of public executions is focused overwhelmingly on the murder of young men and boys of color. Yet for centuries these acts of terror have also been directed against the Black and Brown women leading movements for social justice. They are among the countless overlooked voices who have never ceased demanding that this nation live up to its democratic promise, a promise from a war won by a motley crew of self-described "revolutionaries" who the British intended to hang for treason had their counterinsurgency prevailed back in 1783.

The irony of the insurgent regime adopting the tactics of its predecessor cannot be overlooked. In 1892, Ida B. Wells-Barnett documented the public lynching of a Negro every 36 hours.<sup>1</sup> In 2013 the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement<sup>2</sup> reported the extrajudicial killing of a Black person by law enforcement and security officials every 28 hours.<sup>3</sup> Despite the lack of any national database documenting killings by police officers, in 2015 legal scholars at UCLA's Critical Race Studies conference estimated these numbers exceeded 1000 killings for the previous year. With the latest totals reaching as high as three murders per day, the majority of those slain have unsurprisingly been Black and Brown men and women.<sup>4</sup> Is the system broken? Did the American justice system fail Trayvon Martin? Rekia Boyd? Tamir Rice? Ayana Jones? Eric Garner? Oscar Grant? Eleanor Bumpers?<sup>5</sup> Or did it work exactly as it was designed to and protect white life, liberty, property and privilege—at the expense of Black and Brown bodies, descended from captives, taken by brute force and regarded ever since as subhuman? Indeed, the high court has since its inception consistently allowed one's complexion to serve as "probable

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<sup>1</sup> IDA B. WELLS BARNETT, *THE RED RECORD* (1895), available at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14977/14977-h/14977-h.htm> (last visited June 22, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement is a community-based organization in New York City. MALCOLM X GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT, [HTTPS://MXGM.ORG/](https://mxgm.org/) (last visited June 6, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> MALCOLM X GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT, *OPERATION GHETTO STORM: 2012 ANN. REP. ON THE EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLING OF 313 BLACK PEOPLE BY POLICE, SECURITY GUARDS AND VIGILANTES 15* (2012).

<sup>4</sup> 8th Annual Critical Race Studies Symposium, *Race and Resistance: Against Police Violence*, (Oct. 16–17, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> These names represent just a few of the Black women, men, and children who have been murdered by law enforcement and security officials. As of June 22, 112 Black Americans had been killed by police in 2017 alone. *Police Shootings 2017 Database*, WASH. POST, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings-2017/> (last visited June 22, 2017).

cause” to search, seize, arrest, incarcerate, and end the lives of those who are, as the Poet’s lyric reminds us: “not Caucasian.”<sup>6</sup>

This is the justice system Dolores Huerta and Harry Belafonte have spent their lives working against, with more than a century of movement building between them. They are battle-tested activists who are now calling on the generations following them to, “look where (we) haven’t looked” and embrace more radical visions of change.<sup>7</sup> Today, just months from her 87<sup>th</sup> birthday, Dolores Huerta is recognized as among the most important activists in American history. Born in New Mexico and raised in Stockton, California, Huerta began her life of leadership and organizing as a student activist in 1955.<sup>8</sup> By 1962, Huerta was organizing with Cesar Chavez.<sup>9</sup> Although his contributions have unfairly overshadowed hers in some accounts, they worked together as equal partners to found the United Farm Workers.<sup>10</sup> In 1965, she spearheaded and organized a national boycott during the Delano grape strike, leading to the organization of a worldwide boycott that forced growers to agree to some of the country’s first farm worker contracts.<sup>11</sup> By 1970, this groundbreaking work resulted in the California grape industry signing a three-year collective bargaining agreement with the UFW.<sup>12</sup> Her impact as a labor leader and activist was honored by the Presidential Medal of Freedom after decades of sacrifice.<sup>13</sup> A proud mother of eleven, Huerta courageously faced teamsters on picket lines, and survived being beaten nearly to death by the

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<sup>6</sup> What wisdom has the Supreme Court offered law enforcement to determine how to ‘serve and protect’ those abundantly endowed with melanin? “Articulating precisely what ‘reasonable suspicion’ and ‘probable cause’ mean is not possible. They are commonsense, non-technical conceptions that deal with the factual and practical considerations of everyday life on which reasonable and prudent men, not legal technicians, act. As such, the standards are not readily, or even usefully, reduced to a neat set of legal rules.” *Ornelas v. United States*, 517 U.S. 690, 695 (1996).

<sup>7</sup> See *infra* Interview with Dolores Huerta and Harry Belafonte.

<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Garcia, *Dolores Huerta: Woman, Organizer, and Symbol*, 72 CAL. HIST. 57, 65 (1993).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 57.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Rose, *Traditional and Nontraditional Patterns of Female Activism in the United Farm Workers of America*, 11 FRONTIERS: A J. OF WOMEN STUD. 26 (1990).

<sup>12</sup> Inga Kim, *The 1965–1970 Delano Grape Strike and Boycott*, <http://ufw.org/1965-1970-delano-grape-strike-boycott/> (last visited June 22, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Matt Compton, *President Obama Awards the Medal of Freedom*, WHITE HOUSE (May 29, 2012, 6:22 PM), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2012/05/29/president-obama-awards-medal-freedom>.

San Francisco police.<sup>14</sup> The originator of the iconic movement call “Si Se Puede!”—admittedly stolen by President Obama for his campaign slogan, “Yes We Can!”<sup>15</sup>—very few possess the insight and vast experience of a life as committed to justice as that of Dolores Huerta.<sup>16</sup>

One Harlem-born artist, activist and son of immigrants from Jamaica is among the extraordinary, organic intellectuals<sup>17</sup> who can claim a seat alongside her as a colleague. On the verge of turning 90 years old this spring, Harry Belafonte continues to serve as a force behind liberation movements including the fight to end mass incarceration in the U.S.<sup>18</sup> His lifelong commitment began at 26 years old when he was asked by an even younger Martin Luther King, Jr. for assistance in developing the civil rights movement.<sup>19</sup> One of the world’s leading Black actors of era, Belafonte was also the first singer in the world to sell more than one million records—with his 1956 “Calypso” album’s legendary “Day-O” lyric.<sup>20</sup> Belafonte leveraged his worldwide notoriety to activate an army of influential artists including Marlon Brando, Sammy Davis Jr., and Tony Bennet to rally support for groundbreaking civil rights legislation.<sup>21</sup> Years later, he brought Miriam Makeba to the world stage while urging divestment from South Africa to end apartheid, joined forces with Quincy Jones to launch “We Are the World,” and responded to Dr. King’s call for resources to sustain a movement on the verge of bankruptcy.<sup>22</sup> With a mettle tested during his World War II military service, Belafonte once recruited his friend and chief competitor Sidney Portier to help him deliver a suitcase of cash to southern organizers facing death threats from the Klu Klux Klan.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Dan Morian, *Police Batons Blamed as UFW Official is Badly Hurt During Bush S.F. Protest*, L.A. TIMES (Sept. 16, 1988), [http://articles.latimes.com/1988-09-16/news/mn-2389\\_1\\_police-chief](http://articles.latimes.com/1988-09-16/news/mn-2389_1_police-chief).

<sup>15</sup> Katie Mettler, *Obama’s ‘Yes We Can’ Almost Didn’t Happen. You Can Thank Michelle for Saving It.*, WASH. POST (Jan. 11, 2017), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/01/11/obamas-yes-we-can-thank-michelle-for-that/?utm\\_term=.a39e53521354](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/01/11/obamas-yes-we-can-thank-michelle-for-that/?utm_term=.a39e53521354).

<sup>16</sup> DOLORES (PBS Presents 2017).

<sup>17</sup> REGINA BERNARD-CARREÑO, *NUYORGANICS: ORGANIC INTELLECTUALISM, THE SEARCH FOR RACIAL IDENTITY, AND NUYORICAN THOUGHT 19* (2010) (“Gramsci believed that Black Americans were absorbers of American culture as opposed to specific contributors to the overall cultural development of the United States. Due to their intellectual capacity, Gramsci believed that these ‘[Organic] Intellectuals’ should return to Africa and in turn, teach Africans.”).

<sup>18</sup> SING YOUR SONG (S2BN Films 2011).

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> See HARRY BELAFONTE & MICHAEL SHNAYERSON, *MY SONG: A MEMOIR OF ART, RACE, AND*

These veteran activists remind us that organizers of movement coalitions have a choice: see ourselves as working to repair and sustain broken systems, or envision and fight for a fundamental transformation of structures that maintain the intersecting oppressions of marginalized communities. Rather than resurrecting the dead language of diversity politics, those historically oppressed and increasingly marginalized must reclaim and reimagine “solidarity” by forging relationships and building community through creative means empowered by the arts, culture, new media and technology. Witnessing the formation of today’s movements, Huerta and Belafonte speak as radical visionary activists who urge us to imagine new strategies. Looking beyond empty approaches to “diversity” and “philanthropy” that merely provide marketing tools for foundations and other institutions advocating *reform*, they urge us to imagine and demand *radical change* that uproots white supremacist, capitalist, and patriarchal systems and institutions. As two of the world’s most respected movement activists and visionaries fighting for human rights and social justice, Dolores Huerta and Harry Belafonte<sup>24</sup> have inspired millions around the world to critical reflection and direct action. After being invited to an inspiring conversation with them, I was able to more fully grasp their call for a radical vision of social justice, and to understand how the work of social movement builders requires critical examination by advocates, academics, students and scholars who understand, as Angela Davis maintains, “It is movements that lead to change.”

This article will look at different perspectives on what solidarity is, drawn from current scholarship, from the grassroots, and from activists working outside the United States. It will then identify some of the lessons to be drawn from these views and argue the need for multiracial solidarity, particularly in the wake of the rise of Donald Trump. In

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DEFIANCE 4–10 (2012).

<sup>24</sup> Analyzing the trajectory of global standards established by human rights law, Samuel Moyn observes:

“The integration of human rights . . . especially in the American case . . . documents the relevance of social movements to legal priorities. Recovering from a long period of cultish admiration for elite judges, especially Earl Warren’s Supreme Court, observers of American constitutional politics have learned to praise the indispensable role of social movements in reshaping the national legal agenda. Now, it is far less tempting to celebrate the heroics of the higher judiciary alone without acknowledging that they have depended on the power of social activism surging from below to do their work.”

SAMUEL MOYN, *THE LAST UTOPIA: HUMAN RIGHTS IN HISTORY* 179 (2012).

conclusion, an edited interview with Dolores Huerta and Harry Belafonte is included in which they give their thoughts on solidarity and radical activism.

## I. WHAT IS SOLIDARITY?: DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

What does a radical vision of solidarity between diverse, multiracial groups look like? How does “radical solidarity” differ substantially from more moderate, reformative approaches to coalition building? The range of perspectives on the subject is as abundant as the contributors to this conversation. While this discussion highlights the wealth of available insight, it is by no means an exhaustive review. It is, nonetheless, illustrative of the diversity of viewpoints that inform and continue to shape this discourse.

### A. *Lessons from the Grassroots*

One of the most useful critical studies of solidarity between African American and Mexican American communities is in the work of Gaye Theresa Johnson. Her work challenges the popular misconception that cross-racial collaborations have historically been fatally saddled by infighting and doomed to defeat. In her Los Angeles analysis, Johnson frames her critique by recalling an old saying from Black church congregations:

... a lie can travel halfway around the world before the truth has even put on its shoes. Contemporary conservative news sources have been a relentless source of characterizations that depict the relationship between Black and Brown communities as little more than eternally tense, inherently competitive, and sometimes mutually violent. At times this has been the only audible discourse in discussions about the futures of these communities, and it has been more lie than truth. While in the record of Black-Brown interactions there have been devastating examples of intergroup tension, there are far more examples of mutually meaningful Black-Brown antiracism struggles and radical creative affiliations.<sup>25</sup>

As evidence of these radical “affiliations,” Johnson paints a more nuanced picture of solidarity between several leading movement organizations of the 1960s and the 1970s.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> GAYE THERESA JOHNSON, SPACES OF CONFLICT, SOUNDS OF SOLIDARITY: MUSIC, RACE, AND SPATIAL ENTITLEMENT IN LOS ANGELES xiii (2013).

<sup>26</sup> See *Id.* at 87–117.

Meeting to pledge support for the San Joaquin Valley's largest farm labor strike in four decades, members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and African-American churches gathered together in 1969.<sup>27</sup>

The traveling "lie" told of insurmountable racial divisions is exposed by this counter-narrative. The lie cannot persist beyond accounts bearing witness that the Mexican-American community, as one East L.A. journalist reported, "learned a lesson from the Black community . . . Chicanos are organizing and the display of coordination involved in our demonstrations at five high schools . . . is an impressive example."<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the Brown Berets' manifesto, "El Plan del Barrio," reflected their support by advocating on behalf of African Americans and identifying the injustices Blacks faced with their own, and working toward abolishing inequities that both face.<sup>29</sup>

Demographic shifts in increasingly diverse areas like Los Angeles foreshadow changes the rest of the country will soon face.<sup>30</sup> From housing and education to criminal justice and voting rights, lessons being learned in California may offer insight into interracial coalition building possibilities throughout the U.S. Central among these lessons is the need to transcend the traditional "civil rights" practice of framing social justice issues within the "Black/White paradigm."<sup>31</sup> Instead, this 20th century framework must be reimagined to include Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American communities. It is far from inevitable, however, that these communities will be able to build interracial coalitions. Kevin R. Johnson suggests that failed efforts at solidarity in cities like Los Angeles could very well be replicated nationwide.<sup>32</sup>

### B. *Lessons from the Global*

Despite the geographic distance between those exploited by the neo-colonial consolidation of global economies, Trinidadian historian C.L.R. James praised the organizers of radical post-war movements as, "ordinary people with extraordinary histories of injury," who as Johnson

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<sup>27</sup> *Id.* at 104.

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> DAVID MONTEJANO, *CHICANO POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY* 114 (1998).

<sup>30</sup> Kevin R. Johnson, *Law and Politics in Post-Modern California: Coalition or Conflict Between African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina/os?*, 4 *ETHNICITIES* 381, 382 (2004).

<sup>31</sup> *Id.* at 384.

<sup>32</sup> *Id.* at 395.

recounts, were in fact reviving traditions, centuries in the making, by recognizing, “both interconnected forms of inequality and strategies of resistance.”<sup>33</sup> James further lauded the work of freedom fighters within these oppressed communities for having, “rejected dominant perspectives of individual freedom and democracy;” this rejection, he mused, was “taking forms that were cultural and religious rather than explicitly political.”<sup>34</sup> Huerta and Belafonte offer perspectives consistent with James’ ultimate argument that grassroots political organizations formed in the United States urban communities were not merely a, “diversion from the class struggle but a revolutionary force”<sup>35</sup> in part because of their rejection of piecemeal, liberal reforms as a pathway towards the transformations necessary to achieve social justice.

Beyond the borders of the United States, there is no shortage of movements calling for solidarity with dire urgency throughout the underdeveloped world. Indigenous Activist Berta Cáceres, for example, was one of over 100 activists killed since the 2009 in Honduras.<sup>36</sup> A world-renowned indigenous environmentalist, Cáceres was assassinated in her own home in Intibucá, Honduras.<sup>37</sup> U.S. military and aid budgets reportedly fund death squads, displacement and destruction in her country, while organizations like the World Bank and USAID provide resources to projects that displace communities like her own.<sup>38</sup> As Hondurans build a movement demanding justice from their government, activists call on United States citizens for support and solidarity in order to stop tax dollars from funding bloodshed in service of corporate and military interests.<sup>39</sup>

Belafonte’s work as an artist with global influence for nearly six decades begs an inquiry into the role of the imagination in building radical solidarity. In the production and the prevention of social harms, diverse ways of imagining can sensitize or desensitize us, create or sever bonds and relations at the core of solidarity. How we imagine plays a central role in facilitating justice or injustice, revealing or distorting, exposing or

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<sup>33</sup> See GAYE THERESA JOHNSON, SPACES OF CONFLICT, *supra* note 25, at 87.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> C.L.R. JAMES, A HISTORY OF PAN-AFRICAN REVOLT 18 (1995).

<sup>36</sup> RADICAL SOLIDARITY: FROM ST. LOUIS TO HONDURAS, [HTTPS://STL2HONDURAS.WORDPRESS.COM/](https://stl2honduras.wordpress.com/) (last visited Jan. 1, 2017).

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

excusing human suffering and oppression. Resistant approaches to imagination contest stigmatization, using the realm of aesthetics to enable us to sense suffering more fully and to be inspired to challenge it root and branch. To develop more pluralistic, democratic sensibilities, José Medina suggests movements cultivate a “resistant imagination” that is “experimentalist,” “polyphonic” and grounded in a “kaleidoscopic” social imagination.<sup>40</sup> Medina points to the “women’s movement” as a model for greater pluralization and developing this kaleidoscopic social sensibility.<sup>41</sup> While not the movement Huerta was initially associated with early in her career, she has publicly described herself as a “born-again feminist.”<sup>42</sup>

The meaning of solidarity has been an issue at the heart of social movements across the globe. Exactly what is meant by “solidarity” varies considerably, but there is a tendency for the term to be used to describe an ideal code of conduct that is, to some extent, non-individualistic, non-competitive, and non-exclusive. One approach to understanding how this is envisioned and engaged by movements is to distinguish between a “moderate solidarity” limited to advocacy of reform, respect and freedom for all, and a “radical solidarity” that demands the fundamental, transformative change of systemic and structural inequities. The dialectical analysis of German political philosopher Ulrich Steinworth offers a compelling perspective on this score. Drawing on his body of work reaching from Europe and Asia to the United States, Steinworth describes the concept of moderate solidarity as:

... a tool for referring to a minimum level of concern for others that must be shown to satisfy justice claims. Instead of calling it moderate solidarity, we might as well call it formal or even fake solidarity ... too low a threshold for today’s political situations.<sup>43</sup>

Distinguishing between divergent approaches to solidarity in this manner sheds light on why a radical vision resonates with Huerta and Belafonte. The scholarly discourse on solidarity draws several additional

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<sup>40</sup> See JOSÉ MEDINA, *Resistant Imaginations and Radical Solidarity*, in *THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF RESISTANCE: GENDER AND RACIAL OPPRESSION, EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE, AND THE SOCIAL IMAGINATION* 250–308 (2013).

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> *Still an Activist at 82, Dolores Huerta Calls Herself a ‘Born Again Feminist,’* PBS (May 30, 2012), [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/social\\_issues-jan-june12-doloreshuerta\\_05-30/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/social_issues-jan-june12-doloreshuerta_05-30/).

<sup>43</sup> Ulrich Steinworth, *The Concept and Possibilities of Solidarity*, in *SOLIDARITY: PHIL. STUD. IN CONTEMP. CULTURE* 29–30 (Kurt Bayertz ed., 1999).

distinctions, and considering some of these will more effectively illuminate the forthcoming insights of our chief interlocutors.

C. *Lessons from the Discourse*

*Inequality Demands Solidarity.* In 2000, William Julius Wilson argued that racial antagonism has distracted and divided Americans in the face of rising income inequality, and an organized, national, multiracial political constituency is needed to reverse this trend.<sup>44</sup> Wilson suggests solidarity is “facilitated by a number of factors that relate to some of the general principles about perceived interdependence” and “represent structural conditions conducive to interracial cooperation.”<sup>45</sup> Specifically, key factors he points to as effectively facilitating grassroots multiracial coalitions and sustaining solidarity include: 1) emphasizing a shared commitment to particular (e.g. faith-based) principles to establish a common identity; 2) working on issues that emerge from a local consensus; and 3) leaders from different racial groups retaining autonomy in other organizations serving specific objectives.<sup>46</sup>

*Trauma Demands Solidarity.* It is a familiar phenomenon to see groups building coalitions and engaging in solidarity in the wake of, “crime, natural disasters and other mass tragedies.”<sup>47</sup> Groups often bring coalition building activities to a close, especially if those activities were launched in response to a tragedy.<sup>48</sup> However, those activities that do persist may prove valuable to the community by “sustaining solidarity.”<sup>49</sup> In a 2011 study researching community trauma after a mass tragedy, Ryan and Hawdon argued that “general parochial relations,” activities such as attending local organizing meetings or supporting local businesses, are important for sustaining community solidarity.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, their analysis of data taken in the aftermath of Virginia Tech’s 2007 shooting led them

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<sup>44</sup> William Julius Wilson, *Rising Inequality and the Case for Coalition Politics*, 568 ANNALS AM. ACAD. POL. & SOC. SCI. 78, 79–80 (2000).

<sup>45</sup> *Id.* at 95.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.* at 91–95.

<sup>47</sup> James Hawdon & John Ryan, *Social Relations that Generate and Sustain Solidarity After a Mass Tragedy*, 89 SOC. FORCES 1363, 1363 (June 2011).

<sup>48</sup> *Id.* at 1369 (“[E]ngaging in event-specific public activities and event-specific parochial relations will be positively related to solidarity approximately 5 months after the tragedy; however, these activities will be unrelated to solidarity 9 months and 13 months after the tragedy.”).

<sup>49</sup> *Id.*

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

to observe: “These relations, as common and mundane as they may seem, create bonds that endure because they are reinforced frequently.”<sup>51</sup>

*Solidarity on Campus.* Considering coalition building strategies on campus, Patricia Literte’s 2011 study highlights noteworthy obstacles and opportunities for solidarity.<sup>52</sup> In her study of Black and Brown students who comprise over 70 percent of the student body at a public university, Literte acknowledges tensions in the surrounding community emerging on campus and resulting in next to no coalition building.<sup>53</sup> Despite sharing common educational and socioeconomic obstacles, Black and Brown students not only compete for scarce resources, but also stereotype each other in ways that perpetuate a culture of mistrust and tension.<sup>54</sup> Institutions like universities, however, have the capacity to counter these tensions by building relationships with community-based coalitions, consistently offering conflict resolution initiatives and expanding curriculum to include intersectional social, cultural, political, economic and historical experiences of communities of color.<sup>55</sup>

*Solidarity Among Workers* The framing of workplace disputes in terms of “individual discrimination,” and the legal regime that has developed around Title VII<sup>56</sup>, have created an environment that is not conducive to solidarity among workers.<sup>57</sup> Ahmed White, for example, describes how Title VII served to enhance “employers’ authoritarian control of the workplace,” as it simultaneously eroded the ability of workers to stand together.<sup>58</sup> White argues this is part of a postwar liberalist shift toward dislodging an urgently needed focus on class.<sup>59</sup> He argues further that, “Title VII’s program undermines the foundations of worker solidarity

<sup>51</sup> *Id.* at 1369.

<sup>52</sup> Patricia E. Literte, *Competition, Conflict, and Coalitions: Black-Latino/a Relations within Institutions of Higher Education*, 80 THE J. OF NEGRO EDUC. 480, 477–90 (2011).

<sup>53</sup> *Id.* at 480 (“There is little documentation of specific and clear cases of coalition building between Blacks and Latino/as in higher education, or any level of education for that matter, with the exception of a coalition built between historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic serving institutions to assist one another with accessing federal resources . . .”).

<sup>54</sup> *Id.* at 479.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.* at 487.

<sup>56</sup> Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination by covered employers on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. See 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2.

<sup>57</sup> Ahmed A. White, *My Coworker, My Enemy: Solidarity, Workplace Control, and the Class Politics of Title VII*, 63 BUFF. L. REV. 1061, 1061–1140 (2015).

<sup>58</sup> *Id.* at 1063.

<sup>59</sup> *Id.* at 1064.

by directly legitimating and promoting the “the most pernicious forms of employer control.”<sup>60</sup> Worker solidarity is undermined because Title VII constructs a workplace dynamic in which employers are, “benefactors and guardians of workers” while workers are incentivized to see each other as adversaries.<sup>61</sup>

*Solidarity Within Feminism.* A significant change in scholarly discourse worth noting is the shift from universalizing conceptions of common interests to the celebration of diversity. A critical lesson from the study of feminist coalitions is that solidarity cannot be assumed based on a “false homogeneity.”<sup>62</sup> Recognizing the political benefits that incentivize women to act as a unified group, we are reminded that tensions based on differences of culture, class, religion, nationality etc. can only be ignored at the expense of the long-term objectives of movement solidarity.

However, recognition of these differences does not mean rejecting the idea of solidarity among women. Jodie Michelle Lawston notes that critiques of appeals to ‘sisterhood’ are often leveled at white feminists who insist on the “universality and overriding importance of patriarchy” while diminishing or disregarding the range of experiences that come with a diversity of race and class.<sup>63</sup> While Lawston supports these critiques, she argues they have led scholars to dismiss the use of “sisterhood as a legitimate claim to solidarity.”<sup>64</sup> While insufficient to end persistent structural inequities in feminist organizations, Lawston believes that the concept of ‘sisterhood,’ nevertheless, can be beneficial to feminist organizations in creating and sustaining solidarity.<sup>65</sup> This is evidenced in her study of a feminist, antiracist organization that uses the language of ‘sisterhood’ in its work with incarcerated women. The organization itself is largely “white, middle-class,” while they work with a community that is largely poor women of color.<sup>66</sup> Jill Steans also urges us to see that intergroup conflict can inspire critical reflection and facilitate understanding,<sup>67</sup> while a more radical vision of solidarity would suggest this

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<sup>60</sup> *Id.*

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

<sup>62</sup> Jill Steans, *Negotiating the Politics of Difference in the Project of Feminist Solidarity*, 33 REV. OF INT’L. STUD. 729, 735 (2007).

<sup>63</sup> Jodie Michelle Lawston, *We’re All Sisters: Bridging and Legitimacy in the Women’s Anti-prison Movement*, 23 GENDER AND SOC’Y 639, 639 (2009).

<sup>64</sup> *Id.* at 640.

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

<sup>66</sup> *Id.*

<sup>67</sup> Steans, *supra* note 62, at 736.

dialectic is essential for locating and building on common ground within multiracial coalitions. In fact, the absence of any struggle in the shaping of collective agendas may reflect the silencing or further marginalization of perspectives within such a group.

The challenges of feminist organizing across the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, and class cannot be ignored. As would be expected, a study by Susan Ostrander have demonstrated a tendency towards the subordination of women and people of color within social movement organizations, even ones that identify as “pro-feminist, progressive, mixed race, mixed gender” organizations.<sup>68</sup> However Ostrander noticed that there was also a well-established tendency of actively challenging gender and racial subordination.<sup>69</sup> Ostrander argues that this tension is inevitable, and solidarity in a mixed-gender, mixed-race organization is “perhaps best described as an ongoing and unstable project.”<sup>70</sup>

*Challenges to Solidarity.* In 2003, Richard Delgado’s analysis of such coalition building efforts highlighted significant challenges to interracial solidarity.<sup>71</sup> Among these challenges, Delgado points to the emergence of hierarchies, unresolved historical grievances, and the task of aligning divergent interests.<sup>72</sup> Delgado further hypothesizes that marginalized groups within a coalition tend to abandon allies when offered a concession by a majority group.<sup>73</sup> Put bluntly: he argues communities of color sell each other out when the white power structure offers them crumbs to do so. Given these difficulties, and failed past attempts at multiracial solidarity, he argues “collective action” may be inefficient or ineffective:

“Although it is true that justice includes a social dimension, it does not follow that the best way to achieve justice is through a collective approach. A collective approach may fail because of unarticulated differences in objective, motivation, or point of view . . . Solidarity may break down when one group abandons the alliance . . .”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Susan A. Ostrander, *Gender and Race in a Pro-Feminist, Progressive, Mixed-Gender, Mixed-Race Organization*, 13 GENDER & SOC’Y 628, 629 (1999).

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* at 641.

<sup>71</sup> See Richard Delgado, *Linking Arms: Recent Books on Interracial Coalition as and Avenue of Social Reform*, 88 CORNELL L. REV. 855, 873–80 (2003).

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

<sup>73</sup> *Id.* at 868.

<sup>74</sup> *Id.* at 884.

## II. WHY SOLIDARITY NOW?

This note reflects on the dire need for building multiracial solidarity in a time of crisis, drawing on the insights of Huerta and Belafonte. Their extraordinary dialogue is informed by decades of collaborative work linking Black and Brown communities, and their analysis rejects the overused and empty invocations of ‘diversity’ that are so often market-driven and marketing-directed. In the face of a resurgence of overtly racist attacks from the right, and misguided methods for redistributing resources by the non-profit industrial complex on the left, they call for the reimagining of solidarity in the ways necessary to build effective movements for social justice and human rights.

The ascension of Donald John Trump to the White House on November 9, 2016 brings into focus this unforgettable conversation with these civil rights pioneers of the past century. The 21<sup>st</sup> century election of a president publicly celebrated by representatives of the Klu Klux Klan urges us to reexamine issues we might otherwise take for granted. How is the alarming resurgence of white supremacist organizing consistent with “philanthropies” that “come from institutions with a history of economic manipulations and oppression”?<sup>75</sup> Given the recent explosion of unapologetic intolerance towards immigrants and communities of color, what is the meaning and value of diversity in the United States today? How should the inclusion of a wide range of experiences and perspectives be regarded in a nation where the commander-in-chief promises to deport millions whose ancestors lived on this land long before his own? What happens when the man entering the most powerful office in the world publicly declares the right to sexually violate women without consequence? Is the solution to the nationwide surge in reports of anti-immigrant violence and police killings of unarmed citizens to deport millions and bring back the “stop and frisk” tactics of the drug war? While engaging with each of these topics is beyond the scope of this essay, the interview that follows lays the foundation for exploring the untapped potential of radical solidarity and movement building to answer these noteworthy questions far more effectively.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> See *infra* Interview with Dolores Huerta and Harry Belafonte.

<sup>76</sup> See Pastor Thomas Robb, “Make America Great Again”, THE CRUSADER (Nov. 15, 2016) (“53% say they feel like a stranger in their own country. And while they feel like strangers the reality is that it is strangers which have invaded our land and now dictate to us policies which are foreign to our traditions, our spirit, and our faith.”). Robb expresses the mangled,

A central theme in my discussion with Huerta and Belafonte was their agreement that a resurrection of radical thought and action is urgently needed. In alignment with the movements to which they have committed their lives, these activists regard gradual reform and incremental change as inadequate long-term solutions. Symbolic reform, in their view, is no substitute for changing structures of oppression, or shifting the consciousness necessary to transform systems of oppression. In this era when reactionary politics is on the rise, they argue more diverse approaches and more radical methods are necessary to bring about not only reforms, but more transformative change. Belafonte remembers Dr. King as his confidant, and radical visionary, who called on him for support at a critical time. At odds with his account is a popular narrative co-opting King to present him as a more accommodating, moderate figure. Reduced to the non-threatening sound bites of a national holiday, and characterized as in opposition to the radical vision of organizations like the Black Panthers, the Brown Berets or the Young Lords Party, Dr. King is repackaged as a more palatable figure whose effectiveness is due mainly to his willingness to “work within the system.” Conservative remixes of King ignore the increasingly anti-capitalist and anti-war evolution of his later years, the breaking of his silence regarding the

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distorted worldview one would expect from a member of the KKK in his characterization of “strangers who have invaded our land.” *Id.* While the otherized “stranger” Robb depicts is a blunt amalgam of various targets of his hatred, undocumented immigrants clearly figure prominently among this “invading force.” *Id.* More than against any other group Trump capitalized on depicting undocumented immigrants as a profound and existential threat to our country, rhetoric that originated with white supremacists such as Robb. They define American identity in a way to exclude various groups, including undocumented immigrants, and then seek to “Make America Great Again” by expelling these non-Americans. While this is unsurprising from a white supremacist publication and candidate, Huerta notes a fundamental hypocrisy and absurdity in describing undocumented immigrants as “invading” America and “dictating” policy to Americans:

When we talk about the immigrants’ rights issues, nobody talks about NAFTA.

Why did all these 11 million people all of a sudden show up in the United States? Because of our free trade agreements, right? Allowing American corporations to go to Mexico and Central America, and take over their economy . . . All of those millions of corn farmers: they can’t compete with agribusiness in the U.S. . . . So now they’re here in the US because they’re not going to starve.

*infra* Interview with Dolores Huerta and Harry Belafonte. Indeed, if anyone can claim to feel like a stranger in their own country it is the undocumented Americans who contribute to the U.S. society and economy, who have built lives, families and businesses in the U.S., but are dehumanized and face deportation and death threats by “fellow Americans.”

“madness of Vietnam,” and his invocation of the black bard Langston Hughes: “O, yes, /I say it plain, /America never was America to me . . . ”<sup>77</sup>

In this way, the gains of the civil rights movement are instead recast as somehow inevitable, and fundamentally in alignment with American traditions and the nation’s imagined ethos of all-inclusive “diversity.” A more nuanced analysis of King’s ultimate vision of Civil Rights reaffirms the need for radical thought, critical dialogue, and direct action. Such a need is clearly evident during this period of increasingly visible police killings, anti-immigrant violence, public support for mass deportation, anti-Black and Brown mobilization veiled as salutes to “law and order,” a reinvestment in the racialized mass incarceration of the prison industrial complex, and the white supremacist retaliation to #BlackLivesMatter (BLM), the Dreamers, and the Water Protectors of Standing Rock.

The perspectives of Huerta and Belafonte bear witness to the challenges and triumphs of these movements spanning more than half a century. Among the critical themes that emerged in their commentary, three are particularly worthy of consideration here:

#### A. *Systemic Over Symbolic Change*

First and foremost, marginalized communities need power—far more than the symbolic victories and cosmetic marketing of “diversity” which benefits those invested in the status quo. Effective social justice movement building calls for solidarity between communities demanding self-determination emerging from an analysis of the power relations of not only individuals, but institutions, communities and the coalitions they forge. Time and again, moderate reforms wrapped in market-driven rhetoric have proven, at best, inadequate. One noteworthy example of this during the last decade is the Obama administration’s regulatory overhaul plan—launched with the deeply problematic presumption that reckless banks and other corporate giants are “too big to fail.”<sup>78</sup> While President Obama’s election was undeniably a symbol of progress towards greater diversity and inclusivity, the claims of a “post-racial” America it inspired notoriously failed to account for how the number of Black and Brown bodies incarcerated or under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Criminal Justice

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<sup>77</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., *Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence* (Apr. 4, 1967), available at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm>.

<sup>78</sup> See Edmund L. Andrews, *Obama’s Speech: ‘Too Big to Fail’ Gets Bigger*, N.Y. TIMES (Sept. 14, 2009), <https://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/09/14/obamas-speech-too-big-to-fail-gets-bigger/?mcubz=0>.

system exceeded any in recorded human history throughout his historic presidency.<sup>79</sup>

### B. *Transform More Than Reform*

Secondly, the diverse, multiracial coalitions we build must call for more than merely reformative change (or narrowly conceived restorative justice), but must strategize to bring about *transformative* change of structural inequities facilitated by longstanding systems of oppression. If “radical” means to go to the root, as noted at the outset of the interview that follows, uprooting or abolishing systemic oppression and state violence must be prioritized. Neither civilian review boards without sanctioning power, nor body cameras on cops, are enough to undo the practices of racist police killings and terror—customs rooted in the slave catching traditions that evolved from southern plantations of the colonial era into the modern American policing of Black and Brown communities.<sup>80</sup>

### C. *The Unbroken Theory*

Finally, what Huerta and Belafonte suggest is both a radical vision for social justice movements and solidarity between those willing to put radical theory into practice. The starting point for both is a rejection of any assumption that the institutions and structures in need of change are broken. While radical solidarity includes a range of theoretical and

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<sup>79</sup> See generally, MICHELLE ALEXANDER, *THE NEW JIM CROW* (2010). In the fall of 2016, in response to a chemistry teacher’s claim that “BLM is the new KKK,” parents collectively proposed that a Los Angeles high school administration more than simply fire the educator for his online attacks on human rights activists, and working and poor Blacks who he claimed in a Facebook post were “lazy.” Concerned parents Robin D.G. Kelley and Lisa Gay Hamilton suggested the school:

[M]ove beyond a diversity model and adopt an anti-racist framework to discuss these matters. . . . The problem with the language of diversity and multiculturalism is that it divides the world into the West and the rest of us, tends to fetishize “difference” but at the expense of ignoring power, or how “difference” is produced. Therefore, all so-called “races” are on an equal footing—if Black people are concerned about racism and organize together to fight it, they are no different from the Klan. If we can have a Black president it means all barriers to upward mobility for Black people have disappeared. This logic is not exceptional, it is the prevailing wisdom and “diversity” alone does not help us dismantle it.

Email from Robin D.G. Kelley and Lisa Gay Hamilton to Luthern Williams, Headmaster, New Roads Sch. (November 11, 2016 at 6:24:22 AM) (on file with author).

<sup>80</sup> K.B. Turner et al., *Ignoring the Past: Coverage of Slavery and Slave Patrols in Criminal Justice Texts*, 17 J. OF CRIM. JUST. EDUC. 181, 186 (2006).

practical perspectives and frameworks, our focus here is on one shared understanding: the systems maintaining the subjugation and oppression of communities of color are not operating in this manner by chance or by fault of their ineffectiveness. On the contrary, they function much as intended. From the racially discriminatory practices of law enforcement to the inequitable resources made available to public schools, these institutions are generally operating as designed. If radical solidarity is a process of building collective work and responsibility between marginalized groups with shared interests despite our separate agendas, it must be rooted in the lessons of movements past revealing that the systems of domination in our midst are not broken and need more than minor repair.

### CONCLUSION

In her one-woman show “Diasporican Dementia,” Mariposa<sup>81</sup> Fernandez describes being institutionalized as a young girl. Fernandez compares her experience being forcibly injected with psychotropic drugs to a story of scientists studying a group of monkeys “somewhere in Africa.” These scientists dubbed a subset of these primates “paranoid monkeys” because they would nervously twitch and patrol the perimeter of their community. The scientists caught these monkeys and trucked them off to a laboratory miles away. Despite their best efforts, including administration of the same sort of psychotropic drugs given to Fernandez, they could not discern any biological reason for the monkeys’ deviant, “paranoid” demeanor. Months later, when they attempted to return the captive monkeys, much to their surprise they discovered the rest of the monkey community was either dead or gone. Those “paranoid monkeys” they had kidnapped were actually the lookouts. When they were removed, robbed of their ability to serve their function for their community, it was just a matter of time before the monkey community saw its demise.

Who in our society has been dehumanized as “deviant” because of their inclination to see things differently? Who are the “paranoid” lookouts in our midst attune to the threats to the survival of our communities? How valuable is the vision of those written off as “radical” because it fundamentally challenges the way the rest of us see things?

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<sup>81</sup> The word “Mariposa” is a powerful symbol of transformation, meaning “butterfly” in Spanish, and a fitting moniker for this AfroLatinx—Black and Brown—Puerto Rican poet from New York City.

Johnson makes the important observation that women often serve this role as lookouts in our community, writing, “To properly understand the varying forms of radical activism in aggrieved communities, we must look beyond official histories . . . women often took the lead in revealing contradictions in U.S. immigration policy, racial restrictions, and official democracy.”<sup>82</sup> While both Belafonte and Huerta have made invaluable contributions, we are reminded of the particular significance of the latter as the urgency of anti-sexist work to challenge the patriarchy continues to be undeniable.

The historic conversation that follows calls on social justice movement builders to embrace a radical vision of solidarity between not only Black and Brown communities, but between all communities oppressed or under attack: women, immigrants, Muslims, LGBTQ folks, and those currently or formerly incarcerated, to name a few of the most recently targeted. Huerta and Belafonte critique strategies dependent on the moderate support of philanthropy or the reformative measures backed by leadership within the non-profit industrial complex.<sup>83</sup> As we witness a conservative neo-fascist regime rise to the highest office in the land, we are reminded that it is movements that bring change. Dolores Huerta and Harry Belafonte’s unparalleled movement building experience, like their vision of transformative change and social justice, is needed now more than ever.

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<sup>82</sup> GAYE THERESA JOHNSON, *supra* note 25, at 37–8.

<sup>83</sup> For an excellent introduction to the concept of the non-profit industrial complex, see *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NON-PROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX* (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence ed., 2007).

## APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW WITH DOLORES HUERTA AND HARRY BELAFONTE

Interviewer: Bryonn Bain

**Bryonn:** . . . The Cuban poet and revolutionary Jose Marti said, “To be genuine is to go to the roots; and to go to the roots is to be radical. It is my great pleasure and honor to be here today to go to the roots and to sit with two of the tallest trees in our forest.

So I want to start off by jumping right into it and talking first and foremost about the power of now, the power of the moment that we are in right now. A lot of the conversation today is focused on the civil rights context, and the kinds of changes happening in the civil rights context. I want to get a sense from you: what do you think are the power and challenges of this current moment?

**Dolores Huerta:** Well, I really believe that we have a very extraordinary and a very great opportunity right now. Because what has happened with the Trevor Martin case . . . a movie . . . called “Fruitvale Station” . . .

**Bryonn:** The Oscar Grant movie.

**Ms. Huerta:** . . . that talks about a young man in Oakland killed by a transit policeman . . . shown all over the countries . . . great reviews. So I think we got right now for this particular moment, we do have the attention of the nation, that is now focusing for, I don’t know how long, but it’s focusing on the fact that we have so many of our young black men, and I want to also say Latinos, that are being killed by law enforcement. So I think that we have this moment right now that we can build on. And as you said “The New Jim Crow,” but also the new lynching, you might say, of the young African American men and young Latinos.

**Harry Belafonte:** I agree with Ms. Huerta. Let me first of all express my appreciation to the Ford Foundation for pulling this gathering together. And to you, Bryonn, for your art and for the work that you do. And of course, the extreme pleasure and joy to once again be sitting with Dolores Huertes. We’ve been on the trail for a long time and I got to know her in the best of worlds, along with Cesar Chavez and the development of farm workers in California; and the immense contributions that they made to the civil rights movement. And here we are some 50 years later, looking at the plantation and trying to assess what has the harvest really been or has

there been a harvest. And this gathering gives us a chance to give a very swift overview of what we think on many of the issues that are unique to our time. I say unique not because struggle is any, essentially, any different. It's always the same rules, the same masters, the same themes, the same economic. Goals are set and people pursue them, much to the destruction of fellow beings, often in the name of a Democracy living freely and living to the best of our ambitions as a species.

What makes this unique is because there is Barack Obama. He is a bit different than what've had before. He gave us cause for hope, cause for opportunity and possibilities and we, I think, endowed that moment with more than the moment was willing to yield. I don't think Barack Obama sees his governance in the way in which we would like him to see it. And I think the one essential ingredient missing through Obama's machine of a thought is that he has suffocated radical thinking. But he sits in harmony with many other forces that have power and possibilities that have also resisted radical thinking, resisted giving radical thought an opportunity to express itself openly and freely and to be discussed among honorable thinkers, as to what we can extract from one another and change the paradigm, change the environment that we find ourselves in.

I think philanthropy is a big part of the problem. I think what it does, and all the contribution made by remarkable young men and women who fill that culture and that space, still miss the mark because what we do not hear in America, what we do not find funded, what we do not find being given the platform to reveal itself is what really other change thinkers are up to. What can the real change makers expect and whether they have to go once we fail to give them the resources, to give them the empowerment that they need.

I'm fascinated at the little titles we get: "post-racial" period. I don't know who makes these things up. And I spend a lot of time trying to apply it to something that I am familiar with and I find that I always fall short. There is no "post-racial" period in America. America has always been a racial period, from the very beginning, from its inception. When the European conquerors landed here, they found people of color. And they found people of color that

they did not embrace, and did not give love, and they did not give opportunity to them. But they took the opportunity for their own fulfillment and their own mandate. And they crucified people in the pursuit of that sense of new history, and when they overran that population and genocided that culture they went and got people from Africa. I cannot remember a time when America had an issue without being deeply rooted in race.

Race was not the only driving factor; it was mostly economical. Of course, we all know this. And in that economic context, we made racial definitions. Issues that face us are not just exclusively identified in race. It's mostly also caught up in a lot of the class issues. And class issue is where we have great distance in any debate and dialogue. Even the titles of most of the philanthropies, Ford and Rockefeller and Kellogg, come from institutions that have had a great history of economic manipulation and oppression and rule-making that has not been always to the best interest of the human species. But in their names we now have philanthropy, and whether you draw the lines between what we are not permitted to say to them in the field of battle, but we are now given the opportunities to say through the generosity and their benevolence, and constantly hunting for our way.

**Bryonn:** I would like to hear from both of you on that particular point, that contradiction. We talked earlier about this idea that “the revolution will not be funded”—some of challenges that come with organizing community work, grassroots work, and linking with foundations. As we sit here in this space, I think that it's an important conversation for us to have. When we look at the movement today, what is the state of the movement? Particularly with the voting rights, the decision that just came down, and continued voter suppression around the country. Are we fighting some of the same fights, because of all these challenges despite Barack Obama's position in the White House? Are we fighting some of the same fights? Or are we in some ways moving backwards because of the challenges we're seeing the contradictions we're facing?

**Ms. Huerta:** Well . . . the thing is you cannot have movement without organization. When we talk about the civil rights movement and when we talk about the Montgomery bus boycott, that didn't happen spontaneously. That was planned years in advance, before it

ever happened. And in the Farm Worker's Movement, the farm workers just didn't go on a strike. There were a lot of organizations; Cesar and I organized for three years before that strike. I met with farm workers at their homes to make them understand that they have power, and that they can make changes and that nobody would make those changes for them, that they had to make those changes, right?

And we were able to organize farm workers and pass a lot of laws to help farm workers in California. By the way, lots of those laws are not in the New York State. 40 years later you don't have those same laws to protect farm workers here that we have in California. But that took a lot of base building, empowering people. Often times, what happens with the philanthropy or foundation [is that] they'll fund a program but: A) you need to build a base first before you fund the program. But they will not do that . . . and when the program is gone, everything is gone.

And that's what I think the foundations need to do. They need to fund organizing, just basic organizing; civic engagement so people can vote, so people can understand why they have to vote, why they have to stay on the top of their legislators once they get elected. And this is a very basic step. I remember back in the 70s, Sargent Shriver actually funded community organizations all over the country from the government. This helped build the civil rights movement, and this is what we need.

You know, we can make Texas a progressive state in a year, or two years, really. You can do it. (Applause.) But we need people on the ground that would go out there and organize those folks out there and let them know that they have power, and that they have to vote. And if we don't do that, you know, I'm going to quote Hugo Chavez on this one. He said when he took over . . . "This is going to be an electoral revolution." And this is what we need in the United States of America. We need an electoral revolution. Because so much of the racism that we have is institutionalized. I mean it's in the law enforcement.

. . . and we haven't talked about education. I mean, my organization is working with the foundations right now. We are fighting on expulsions and suspensions of African American kids and Latino kids. And it's like the crib to the prison pipeline. As Marian Wright

Edelman has said many, many times. Kids are suspended and are truant and they go into the criminal justice system. This is very institutionalized, what's happening with our young people of color.

And this is where we have to start. We can address those issues there on the institutionalized side by taking power in terms of people that we elect to office. And then of course the other issue that we've talked about: how do we get Americans to understand that racism still exists in our everyday lives? When we talk about the immigrant rights issues, nobody talks about NAFTA. Why did all these 11 million people all of a sudden show up in the United States? Because of our free trade agreements, right? Allowing American corporations to go to Mexico and Central America, and take over their economy.

Mexico now imports more corn from the U.S., then it goes to Mexico where the corn is originally from. All of those millions of corn farmers: they can't compete with agri-business in the U.S. So now they're here in the U.S. because they're not going to starve. So we got to start looking at the big issues that really create the problems. A lot of this is strictly political. They don't want these eleven million people to become citizens because they're not going to like the way they're going to vote, right?

I mean the same thing with voter suppression. They're trying to make sure that African Americans and Latinos and young people don't vote for the same reason. They're attacking women for the same issues . . . Let's keep everybody distracted on women's wombs . . . and the right to choose because we don't want people to look at the economic issues. What's happening over here when you got the one percent that got all of the money of the United States of America? . . . we talk about the Gay rights movements . . . The marriage equality movement. Why has this movement been so successful? Because they've been out there organizing. Why have the Dreamers been successful? Because they have been out there organizing. We need money for organization. The people are out there that want

**Bryonn:** Ms. Huerta, you mentioned the placement of our elected officials into office, using the vote. At the same time, we also have a history of elected officials not acting in a way that is accountable to the communities who put them in positions of power, right? The simple answer for that is organize and get them out of office? Mr.

B, what are your thoughts? How the progress you fought for, over the last half century, now has folks actively organizing on the other side to peel that back?

**Mr. Belafonte:** The question is very complicated. And there is no way to answer that will sufficiently explain. We can't fully explore the concept as we would like in these forums. More often we really get a chance to really zero-in on conclusions and ideas and thoughts. And I would recommend that we get off the soundbite culture, and find a way in which we sit down and seriously talk at length about the things that bedevil us. But within the space that I'm given, more often than not, at this time in my life, I spend most of it among the young, and I spend most of it among the young who are in prison, and I spend most of that time among the young who are not only in prison, but who are in the pipeline to prison.

In the communities and children and with remarkable people like Marian Wright Edelman and Connie Rice from California who are out there trying to stir it up. And what I think I find myself doing more, not I think, but what I know I find myself doing more, is encouraging young people to be more rebellious, to be more angry, to be more aggressive and making those who are comfortable with our oppression uncomfortable. King once said that our greatest mission with our movement is to take those who are indifferent to our calls, and to make them feel responsible to our goals and our choices. And he did that.

One of the reasons that was able to mature into the kind of movement we have was because we had these disparate voices, different voices, willingly merged with a vibrant energy about their cause. The American Indian Movement, AIM and what they did out of a group at Wounded Knee. All of these movements had one thing in common; they had great radical thinkers at the forefront. And we have muted that seriously. And I go around America, North and South and say: where are the radical thinkers? Let's have dinner. Let's just have an exchange on this to see if we even exist. And if we exist, what can we do to feel them, or to fully give them the platform to say things that the nation needs to hear.

When I grew up in the Civil Right Movement, I was an elder at 26. I was an elder at 28 really. I met Dr. King when I was 24, but all the people around me, all the people in the movement John

Lewis, Julian Bond, Diane Nash, go on and on and on, were in their 20s or younger. Julian Bond was 18 years old, Jesse Jackson was 20. John Lewis was 19. I looked at all these young men and these young women and the one thing that bonded us together was that we had radical spirit, and nothing stood in our way. We didn't need a press conference to state what our issues were; we were the issue and the press was required to come 'cause that's where the news was. (Applause).

When I say to young people, I say you got to seize the moment, you got to make it inconvenient for those who find convenience in our oppression. And I think to a great degree philanthropy falls in that same cultural zone. We do great work and let me not have anybody here feel dismissed or put upon because the goodness that you bring to the table is not being recognized. It's not about that; it's about the application of that goodness. . . . How radical is your commitment to hear voices that can really make change?

Any economy that requires cheap markets for that economy to thrive is already fully flawed. It tells you the story; that's what America thrives on. And the greatest hurdle for us is our loss of moral vision. We have no moral barometer. We surrendered to greed. We surrendered to our hedonist joys. We destroyed the Civil Rights Movements and look at the great harvest of achievements; we had all the young men and women of our communities run off to the feasts of Wall Street and big business and opportunity.

And in that distraction, they left the field fallow. And our young people grew up in the midst of that. I'm amazed by how many young people I've talked who I've made great assumptions that they knew exactly what their history was, they knew exactly what went on. And how they opted not to deal with that information. But that is not true, they didn't have that option. There was a calculated effort to redesign the way in which people thought, and what the news media tells them, the headlines we put, the talent shows we put on, the talk shows, all of it is headed towards a vast barren field of greed and indulgences.

I don't know how else to put it. I think the only thing that can change that is to make getting to work for a lot of people that work at Wall Street a little more inconvenient. The movement made a social upheaval, and you couldn't go anywhere without bumping

into us, and what happened is that we have become a shadow of need, rather than a vision of power, forcing you to look, or forcing others to look at what we need to do.

And the world has given us an opportunity, because it's not just about America. And the last half of the 20th century when I went off to the Second World War, filled with the joy of democracy and defeating white supremacy and getting rid of Deutschland. . . . and beating the fascist on the battlefield, being led to this sense of a new future. When the victory was achieved, we came back and we found the very things we were fighting for were the possessions of the "free world."

The "free world" was very busy with its colonizing of Africa, with its oppression, with its racism and its laws in America. And we came back, we had no choice. Either yield to the status quo and go on with business as usual; or rebel, because that's what a lot of us who came out of WWII chose to do. And parallel to our thinking here was also parallel to the thinking of the people on the continent of Africa who are also experiencing oppression and racial violence. And in Asia, hence Vietnam and Cambodia, there's great global upheaval around these class issues, and we are upon a time where we are forced to change. Good change.

I get too carried away. (Laughter). But we were given the opportunities to look very carefully at the world we were shaping. But the more they threw money at our leaders, the more we gave them electoral power, the more we gave them Black Caucuses and Progressive Caucuses, they'd go sit in these tiny rooms and dance to their own melody. They completely lost sight of what's going on down below in the communities. And I had a gathering not too long ago where I brought Sarah Kahn, Reverend Jessie Jackson, and all the Progressive Caucuses, Black Caucuses, Charlie Rangel. It was adult leadership. The voice. And we sat in the room talking about child incarceration, about the fact that our children were being put through this prison system, this new slavery.

And this little girl I just saw from St. Petersburg, Florida—five years old, in the classroom, being thrown across the desk and handcuffed by three White police officers. And to look into that five year old child's face, and to see the horror. What bothered me was not just the image and the morality of all of that but, it was how

this could be going on at such a furious pace. And to be so cleverly manipulated into our social fabric that the police have worked into our classrooms to settle questions that have to do with the fact that we have abandoned our responsibility to our children, to our learning process, and to throw all that into the hands of elected officials we have anointed with the responsibilities and solutions.

So we got into this discussion. We haven't even come to page one until that radical thinking and giving this an opportunity. I was not too sure I wanted to come here because, you know, I'm here begging these people all the time . . . writing proposals, and recommending to others what proposals to write. But I am tired of begging. I'm tired of saying the same things. I'm tired of giving proposals, being sent back to read new criteria. You meet up in your boardrooms, telling the street how to shape our language so it will appeal to you, for your meager generosity. (Applause). At some point, some way, somebody had to find out where are you relevant and why are you irrelevant . . . talk about where do we find radical thought.

. . . I think lot of young men, great number of young women, are emerging. People in the community would say where are the young? The young have always been there. They have a voice. They have geniuses. They are better than SNCC, better than CORE, better than SCLC in our heyday. But they haven't been heard because there has been an option by the poli-elite to make sure those voices are never heard. They should be heard; and we play into that. We give them all the approvals that they need to think that they are doing good and they're not.

**Bryonn:** I want to throw in a concrete example of that with your son, Ricky Chavez, who is an artist, who is a MC, who is a Hip Hop artist. The kind of content that he talks about in his work, and we've talked about this: everything from the pollutants to misogyny . . . These are not topics that are embraced by the corporate mainstream machine that's cranking out a lot of our culture to us and to the country at large. So I want to think about the next generation of leadership, and link that to how you see arts and culture. Arts and culture obviously have been a part of every significant social movement going back as far as we can remember. What do you see as sort of the role of young leaders using arts and culture to advance social movement in the next generation? I know, Mr. Belafonte, you

mentioned Jamie Foxx, you've been in conversation with him. And you and Jay-Z have beef now I hear about "social responsibility" . . . (Laughter) Ms. Huerta, what have been Ricky's challenges in getting these message out, given the way that the structures work to get our culture deployed around the country and around the world?

**Ms. Huerta:** Well, he really couldn't because he wouldn't do gangster rap, and he really can't get out to the major public. And I think that's one the problems that we have: so much of the music for young people is around gangster rap. Of course, everybody embraces it, but the positive messages don't get out. Earlier, we were talking also just about messaging. How do we get to the hearts and the minds of the community that needs to hear it? We know Hip Hop— young people pick it up, but the old people can't even understand the words, right? So you know I think that's a big challenge that we have: how do we get these messages out to that community over there? Besides, being able to go and sit down with them and explain to them all of these things we've been hearing about today. The statistics and what happens to young black people and brown people when they get accosted by the police you know, and how do we get those messages out to them so that they can understand what is going on. I think we have a little, you know, an empty space in there that needs to be filled.

And the things that Harry's talking about too. You know, I do a lot of lectures all over the country and sometimes when I talk to people, talking about the economies of the U.S., which I think is a big part, maybe one of the reasons that they want to put many people in prison is because they don't have jobs. . . . They don't have jobs for everybody so if you keep a couple million people in prison, then you don't have to provide jobs for them. And again, that's one of the questions about the economy we don't really bring up, when we look at other countries, you know like places like Cuba for instance—which is a small, socialist country—and they're able to provide free education for everybody in that country, right? And free medical care to everybody in that country. And I think these are the questions that we in the U.S. people don't even think about.

And another issue, talking about radical thinking, is that we are the only developed country in the world that does not own our natural resources. We don't even tax them, right? We don't even tax

oil companies that should be taxed. General Electric doesn't pay tax, etc. In fact, we subsidize a lot of our energy companies, and yet we don't have money for education, you know, not even for K-12. Tuition rates have gone up so high. All of these young people are being incarcerated. Then they can't go to school afterwards. They have not even been in school. These are like the big major questions that I think as long as they are attacking undocumented people and attacking women's right to choose, then people don't really focus on the big issues, which are issues of the one percent and the issues of, okay, what kind of country do we have? . . . We don't really have enough money to educate our own population? We haven't even talked about the homelessness, right? That issue hasn't come up. What is the proportion of African Americans in terms of the homeless population? It's gotta be huge, you know, because we can see this visibly through all of our streets in the United States of America. And so these are like the really hard issues that we're sort of skirting around, and people kind of turn their backs on and don't even think about them.

**Bryonn:** So what is the disconnect between the conversation we're having around this sort of civil rights strategy that you, for the last half century, have been promoting through organizing, through work, through using art and culture? And between the civil rights generation and sort of the Hip Hop generation, which is sort of caught up in this greed that you talk about, caught up in this sort of consumerism you're talking about, but at same times has activists who are doing work, organizers doing work, but haven't been sort of able to rise to the level that they certainly should be able to—given their potential and the level of commitment of some of these folks who are out here doing the work, in the prison, in the public schools, in the communities?

**Mr. Belafonte:** From the point of view of culture, I think that the Hip Hop movement and its infancy, in its birthing, was really rooted in radical thought. It's really rooted in young people, caught up in violence, in pain and anguish and depravation, and rather than use the traditional courses for resolve to feelings and emotions they got into this place of poetry and art and finding other ways in which to express themselves and to shape course. And in that moment, we had the greatest revelation of America's future from a cultural

perspective. They spoke to issues that were political, that were racial, that were gendered, as well as generationally important.

And the more they did this under their own aegis, under their own titles, under their own momentum, the more they demonstrated the willingness by a large segment of the American population to be attracted to that voice and what it was saying. When Wall Street heard the jingle, then the merchants stepped in and began to adorn this culture with all the distractions that ultimately took the culture over. And instead of speaking to issues that were important and passionate among people who are suffering, they began to turn their attention to this rather destructive set of instructions being given in the verse being sung.

So one day we walk up to the nobility of change, watching our politicians as the vocal discourse would have us hear it and then all of a sudden, we woke up and instead of hearing that, we're hearing bitches, hoes, and niggers and all the other things that have filled up our air waves. We gave into it, we paid for it, we adorned it, we gave it a platform, we gave it an opportunity to celebrate itself in huge festivals under the banner of first amendment right to speech, right to a point of view. Under the guise of all these rights, we continue to crush humanity. I say, well, let's stop a moment and reexamine where we've been in a cultural perspective.

The NAACP Legal and Defense Fund calculated it, you know, and offered me an award. And when I was invited to come participate in this award ceremony, I understood what I was. I was a centerpiece. I was another hook for the evening to get guests and entertain and delighted while they spoke to their regal selves. And I got people to continue to support the NAACP Legal and Defense Fund. This was the first time that this particular award was celebrated in a cultural space. The image awards, and that's usually about art, and about theatre and movies.

And I walked in and watched everybody dressed to the nines, ready for the high moment, and looking for the after party. I walked in with my moment and just said I didn't mean to piss on your parade, but I don't get it. All this power in this room, and all this money, all this celebrity, all this opportunity to hum eight bars and make a difference, and you all are just giving it away and sitting here and behaving as victims. Somehow behave as people who are

on the right trajectory here for change. But it's all about nothing, and you have betrayed the cause, you've betrayed the People. The rest of America is discussing guns about the rights of citizens to own one, while nobody, especially the victims discusses the racial carnage in the wake of what's going on with guns and I said to them in that space, "Where is your voice?"

What are you doing in speaking to the blood that flows in the streets of America in the name of the right to own a gun? Where is Black America? Where is the Black Caucus? Where is our legislative power? Where are those who sit at the head of the big corporation? Whether it's American Express or Time Warner and all these big Black folks sitting at the top of the heap. Where is the noise? It ain't in our block, but we need to hear that. So when I go out and talk to these guys I said: Do me a favor, let's talk about using your platform to put a light on. What would happen when you put on a light on farmworkers? The needy of America? When we made a great cultural renaissance and emerged and we could sing the songs of Pete Seger. The world was ready for us.

**Bryonn:** Right?

**Mr. Belafonte:** Let's take it back. Culture, you own this. Why are you giving it to Wall Street and giving it to the Top 10 manipulators?

**Bryonn:** It's gonna be a plantation again.

**Mr. Belafonte:** We are a plantation. I said let's get off the plantation. And all of a sudden, much to my amazement, up comes Jamie Foxx. He's my new best friend in there. (Laughter) Then Kerry Washington. Then up comes Chuck D and then up comes Mos Def and everybody and sixty of us are living in New York and we began. And they go, "Okay, Mr. Belafonte, what's the agenda?" I say, "I'll tell you the truth, Man, the agenda for us is to find the agenda, because there's been a million agendas out here, most of them are startlingly well-anointed, well-displayed, but you all have missed that. So let's get back to the table. Find how we reconnect. Not reconnect to just your past history, but how do you reconnect to struggle? You have left struggle, and your voice is needed."

And as a consequence, I think the young men gave us twenty songs, twenty stories of the most brutalized of the children, some committed suicide, some are waiting for their terms to become adults so they can be tried in an adult culture. And I said, let's talk

about that, let's think about that, let's talk about the kids. So these rappers are each taking the song writing to the story of that song. I mean I have 20 of them. We are looking around the country and saying, "Where are the most powerful centers? Where are the most powerful stadiums? Use your collective celebrity power, and let's give several nights. Let's reward Barrios Unidos. Let's reward those farmers. Let's reward Maria Wright Edelman. Let's find our own funding source through the powerful voices of artists.

And I must say I'm very much encouraged by these artists who stepped to the table. What are we missing? We're missing the capacity to develop the content, to develop the songs, to develop the poetry, to develop the plays. And now we're turning for the first time to philanthropic America to say can you give us a hand. All we want is a start-up.

We'll take care of the rest. Because once we open the gates to the audience of the world, because this thing is hooked up not just through black and white and poverty that we see in America. It's hooked up to Wall Street. It's hooked up to Tunisia. It's hooked up to Egypt. It's hooked up to what's going on in Syria. It's hooked up to bunch of people in South Africa. This new group, looking at what's happening with the termination of life that's in the offering in the next few days. For Nelson Mandela, there is a chaos waiting to emerge in that society where young people are desperately asking for ideas and thoughts, because the claw box on the wall have left us without fingernails. And when you listen to these voices and you see the culture and what artists are saying to one and another, when we go on down to Brazil and talk to the Brazilian artists. Chuck, Mos Def, right now in Sao Paulo. . . . We're pollinating. We're getting there.

We don't get CNN. We don't get big time hit shows. We're talking through our own design. I think that will fully erupt to be some kind of demonstration. I'm hoping it does. That stops the traffic. I say now slow down the 405 in California, let's stop the subways in New York just for a day. And let's do this. And one of our greatest parts of our campaign is to root younger people into deeper understanding in the fundamental power of non-violence. This is not no loose talk. This is no church stuff. Non-violence as a powerful weapon, as resistance to oppression, it is undefeatable.

That King proved time and time again. The Soviet Union proved using non-violence to overthrow and watch oppressive communist thoughts implode. Down in South Africa, where people are going to be in a huge explosion between white and black on race. Non-violence through Mandela's manipulations, and that of the ANC, brought people to a healing table to say, let us talk about coming together as one. Non-violence everywhere has been applied and reflected itself successfully. And we have turned our backs on all of that here, and we have relegated it to something in the past. These young people think Dr. King somehow has to do with the Pharaohs. (Laughter).

**Ms. Huerta:** I think that I've said before that we have an opportune moment right now. With everything that we learned here today, with what Harry Belafonte just said right now, we can duplicate this in every community. Because the stories of people that are being incarcerated, expelled, harassed by the police, immigrants that are being deported, families that are being split by deportation, this is in every community.

And I think that with the people that are here right now, like we started off with a song "This little light of mine," right? I think this little light that we've gotten from this conference today that we can take it out there. And make sure that it gets out to all these communities and by organizing people, then we can bring these stories to the larger community. Because once people hear these individual stories, then that is again what touches our minds and touches our hearts, right?

So we can get them on board, so we can start really attacking the issues of racism. And not be afraid to talk about and say what it is you know. I always like to say when I talk to everybody: remember, we all came from Africa, right? And we're all Africans, okay? We can say that to the KKK, the White Citizen's Council, get over it, you're Africans, all right. (Applause). Get over it.

**Bryonn:** Some of us have cultural amnesia.

**Ms. Huerta:** You have to just go out there and do the work, do the organizing. That's all it takes. It's all of us getting out there and doing the work. And it's not a U.S. issue as Harry said it's a global issue, right? Starts here, but it goes throughout the world.

**Bryonn:** I want to open it up to questions, and as we position ourselves for that, I have to agree that I think using the arts, the culture, Hip Hop, theatre, spoken word, film, all these media, I think these are among the most powerful and potentially revolutionary tools, as much as they have been co-opted by the mainstream—they're some of the most powerful tools to bridge the gaps between generations, between other groups, Black, Latino, Asian, Native, White working class, the arts is one of the powerful tools that has not been fully explored, so I'm glad to hear it's on the radar.

**Audience Question #1:** You mentioned, Mr. Belafonte, that human rights exploitation is one of the undercurrent racial issues in the U.S. and elsewhere. I just wondered, in the civil rights movement and more broadly, how corporate influence . . . over government needs to be addressed and whether that needs different strategies going forward? How do we factor in private sector impact on human rights organizing from a local level to the national level?

**Ms. Huerta:** In terms of the private sector, I mean first of all a lot of the prisons are privatized, okay? That's one of the reasons you have such an increasing number of people being incarcerated because people are making money off of the bodies of young men, basically. In terms of the private sector in the United States, I really don't think that they have stepped up. You have for instance, every time I go to a Latino event . . . National Organization de la Rasa, any of these organizations, so you have all of the big corporations that are putting money in there, the Wal-Mart's, the Chevrons and etc. but these are the same people that are giving money to make sure that the labor unions could not survive in the United States of America. So they give a little bit of token money over here, but right in there with the one percent to contribute to the oppression of our country.

In my organization, we won't take Wal-Mart money, I'm sorry we don't want your money, okay? (Applause). And I think that the private sector has not stepped up. And I think a major part of the problem would include the major corporations, and you include the banking system. They're creating the problems that we have in the United States of America. And I think they need to be held accountable also. And how do we hold them accountable? Well, way back in the day, when I was with the United Farm Workers, we had these things called boycotts, right? And guess what? They

work. They work! And I think at some point in time we got to start looking at those people there, they're not paying their taxes as I said before, they're not contributing, they're actually a part of the problem that we have in the United States of America.

**Mr. Belafonte:** There, I think, lies the point. The private sector isn't some social monolith, waiting to just spread its joy to the universe, out of deep spirituality, or religious fervor. It does because it's necessary to keep the plantation triangle. It's necessary to give a job here, give a little image there, give a little taste here, while we mount the profit machine. And I think that one of the ways to let the private sector pay attention is to let it know that it's on the file. To let us know that it cannot continue to reap its rewards and its humongous profit over the bodies of those who are languishing in the streets. We've got to hold their feet to the coals. And in the talks we've been having, this is just not directed at that sector or just at the wealthy.

One of my biggest challenges and my biggest fights is with the church. And when I speak at the Union Theological Seminary or other forums . . . to bishops from Brooklyn, I say, "You know the church is morally bankrupt. You all have become part of the oligarchy, you become part of the rule, you have become part of the game and part of the charade. You're not preaching in that pulpit every Sunday or every Saturday, at the synagogue or whatever your choices are. You're not hearing dialogue and passionate speeches about the human suffering and how to alleviate it. You're deferring all this passion, this need to some altar of abstract thought and abstract words so some God will step in and give us the way."

Well, maybe God will do that. God is a very peculiar creature. How God chooses to mete out what they say he metes out has eluded me for a long time. This doesn't mean I don't believe in Christ . . . Let's forget the myth and just hang with the science of religion . . . The church has suffocated so much and the voice of those who need to be liberated.

. . . when Dr. King said at the end of his life that "I'm afraid that with all of the struggle we've seen, we're integrating into a burning house." And I said, if you as a leader, had that vision after all this strife and struggle, if you think we're integrating into a burning house, then what would you have us do? What would you have us do in the face of that? . . . after everything we have mobilized? (inaudible)

what are we gonna have to be? And he looked at me and just said? “Well, we’re just gonna have to become firemen.”(Laughter).

**Bryonn:** We have time for one more question. I want to say a word about sacrifice. In one of the earlier panels Bryan Stevenson mentioned the Bus Boycott. Folks had to walk three miles to get to work and three miles after 10–12 hours of work to get back home so it requires us being willing to make some sacrifice. If Starbucks is using prison labor now to make Italian products, are you willing to turn back your lattes? Are you willing not to support Victoria Secret because they are now using prison labor to pay folks 10–15 cents, or 18 cents an hour? . . . not allowing folks who are incarcerated the right to unionize? We participate in our own oppression, so if we are gonna hold folks accountable we have to figure out a way to make our actions in alignment with what we are suggesting our other folks do.

**Audience Question #2:** Ms. Huerta, please invite those you see in the Latino community to build those bridges because you impacted me as a little girl growing up on the south side of Chicago. You did and Dr. Martin Luther King did . . .

**Ms. Huerta:** Actually, I have been with Harry at these conferences that he’s talking about. We were all together in Atlanta. We had a big conference and Native American women were there and many other of the Latino and Asian leaders were also at that conference. And I think that was kind of the beginning of giving people a little nudge about things that needed to be done.

You know, for my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, I had Danny Glover there and Ed Bagely from the environmental movement, Cali Santana, Zack de la Rocha, all these great people. And this is the idea of weaving movements together and I think that we’ve gotta come together. If we don’t come together we’re not gonna make it okay? Because it’s all the same struggle, and we are in different silos, but every community can bring everybody together. And if we all come together, we are a majority, right? And then we can win.

But we got to come together, and we got to take that direct and non-violent action that Harry was talking about and we can make it happen, but we just gotta get out there and make a commitment. I know it’s hard. I mean back in the day, in the civil right movement, you know rents were what? \$40 a month. Now they’re what? \$1000 a month maybe. Gasoline was what 17 cents a gallon. Now it’s \$4 or

5 a gallon. And I think this is purposeful too, because it is very hard for people without money to travel and to do this organizing work.

But we do have the social media, right? That we didn't have back in the 60s. You got the cell phones and you got the Internet. You got the Twitter. You got the Facebook. So in my ways, the Dreamers by the way use this very successfully. I mean can you imagine these young undocumented people got the President to sign an order saying you're not gonna get deported, right? And you can go to school. And how did they do that? They do that on social media. So we have tools now that we didn't have before. So we have no excuses.

And we have no excuses after staying all day today. We heard what the issues are. We heard what the problems are. We just got to get out there and start working. Let's do something else together. That means "Yes we can!" As you know, Obama used that and when I met Obama he said I stole your slogan. I actually was the author of "Si se puede." But we gotta do it all together in an organized way so let's say "Yes we can!" "Si se puede!" In Spanish okay? And we do it in organized way with an organized handclap.

**Mr. Belafonte:** I'd like to make one last observation in response to the coming together of the tribes and the cultures. I very early on understood the importance of that phenomenon, coming together of tribes to look at our common interests and understand our common struggle and make united friends in dealing with it. It was at the time of Katrina that the elders were brought together in Atlanta, where Ms. Huerta was, and everybody was there: Cornel West, Charlie Rangel, the Black Caucus, Barbara Lee and on and on. And out of that, after the two days of the retreat, I really understood that I was dealing with the wrong audience. They were mighty forces. Powerful forces that have carved out empires for themselves and positions for themselves, and goals for themselves. All of which were honorable.

But all of which somehow found their paths away from the community, away from the deeper resonance of what was going on. They became so pre-occupied with organization, with bureaucracies and with title and writing proposals and things. And I realized that when I talked to them about digging deeper, I was looking for the moral image, part of which was a strategy I learned from Dr. King. Politics without morality is tyranny. And if you have a political objective,

one of the things you have to ask yourself is: what are the moral consequences of what you are doing? What are you betraying and what are you supporting? And if your moral purpose is with great clarity, let that be part of the centerpiece.

Because one thing America suffers is its illusion of morality. It thinks of itself in relations to the greater calls of human existence. When in fact it is the great violators of the calls of human existence. You gotta hold that mirror before the audience all the time. So I looked at my peers and my group with love and affection and I got to talk to another. It's going to take longer, be a little more difficult, but it's got get to the nitty gritty. We got to get to the grassroots so we went to IBSA Alabama because that place goes Black and was part of the great charge during the civil rights movements. Got them farmers in them overalls, sucking hay string still.

And I said to the farmer, "Give us space . . . kids are coming, from gangs in LA, from the Bloods and the Crips and all over the country. And we need to have a retreat for a few days." They housed us. We didn't get it through philanthropy. We had to go. We had to thank the workers for what they gave to us, and we had an incredible three days with these young people, who started off with the premise that, although they were in gangs or shot one another, browns and blacks, they really knew nothing about each other.

Let's start from square one. You live three blocks away from each other, and you murder each other, and you never even sung each other's song, or been to one another's birthday party or visited the playgrounds in which your children play. And this group coming together, began to talk and it was mostly black. And then as we went around the room and discussed and we said you know we gotta get out of this rule, we got to get out of this pocket. And we got the Latino community in Northern California to give us complete Latin environment . . . from Tracy . . . Nane Alejandrez . . . from Barrios Unidos and all of these players show up and there were these thugs from the Bloods and the Crips.

They were glad to hear these Browns, all standing there tall and tough and tattooed. Yet they were talking to each other about their common experience. Never had such an exchange before. Then they struck a peace treaty. Then they, as a group, met and when Black people hearing what the Latinos had to say and the Latinos,

all from the same space, and they heard that for the first time. And they made another decision. There's more to this than just us, so they got . . . the Native American community to organize a huge indigenous people gathering. And the Latinos and the Blacks visited the reservation and they had to go through some strange rituals, sit in a circle, look at the peace pipe, the sweat lodge, listen to all those stuff and Black people are like, "What the hell? They did that? You getting us to do this Indian shit?"

But before it was over, they understood a new dimension to the spirituality. A new dimension to suffering. Here were the original people. Here is what they live through, and genocide . . . I remember the white group . . . the people from the mining community. I listened to what the white incarcerated youth had to say. And what they found out at the end of that year traveling to these communities and having these retreats, and some of it, I must say, was Ford Foundation money and Kellogg here . . . and we got enough gas to get us to the station for the big trip, but what happened was that they founded a loose body of people called The Gathering, which is, in part, founded in the midst of the Wall Street rebellion.

. . . in these places people say, "What do they want?" Well, they don't want a damn thing more than we wanted when we were in their space and they're doing it just well if not even better than when we did it. You're asking what do they want because you know what they want and you don't wanna give it to them because it means that you're gonna have to sacrifice something.

You'd rather deal with the absence of information than deal with the power of truth. And you play this place. What do they want? You know what they want! They want what we wanted: they want freedom, they want the right to express themselves, they want the right to have education, they'd like to have stability economically for the rest of this lives . . . trying to work on for the debts of the guys on Wall Street who holds them in suffocation. That's what they want. As though they don't use the classic socialist Marxist ways in the days that the great organizers came from the Communist Party, great organizers that came from Socialist thinking. All mixed up. It wasn't just Lenin sitting there. A lot of people didn't even know him. They were talking stuff that had to do with thinking of class issues and the like. All of this, in this space, stimulated these young

people into looking at what is . . . I got the rest of my life to catch up with you.

. . . all the young women and the people in the past two years of touring this country, I am amazed that the harvest we have in intellectual thought and passion is searching for materials, searching for something to belong to, honest search in struggle for change. And I think this room says, I think we always talk to ourselves, to just take a deeper look at what we really are doing here. A lot of time and energy and good thinkers are caught up in this space.

You know my mother used to say something to me: when I was a kid, and this is the last of it. I would lose a sock somewhere, I couldn't find the damn sock in the drawer, and I would get on the bed and move all the junk, and go look under the couch and the cushion and in a few minutes I would go back to the same drawer, same under the bed and she would watch me. And after a few minutes she said, "Harry let me ask you something. You keep looking in the same place for the sock? Is that what you're looking for?" "Yeah, Mom I'm looking for it." "Has it ever occurred to you that since you can't find it where you're looking, it may be where you're not looking?" (Laughter).

I use that little simple folk, this little casual moment, with this incredible undereducated immigrant woman, domestic worker and she said, "It's where you're not looking." All of my life has been spent wrapped around that metaphor. I've always looked where I haven't looked before. Because if I'm looking where I'm looking all the time, if I can't find the anything, it's got to be somewhere else. Let me stop paying homage to these Gods. Let me stop meeting their criteria. Let me stop doing their dance and do the dance I know I got to do.

So if I go down to you and you hear me talking about Bush as the greatest terrorist in the world, it's not that I'm looking for a platform to run my mouth. I'm looking to grab your attention, and I grabbed it. Albeit with some fallout, but at least I got some moment to talk about what's Bush really doing here with this war. What's Barack Obama done really with rights? . . . with homeland security? What is he doing with secret police? . . . where are we caught up in this bullshit politeness to not be able to say, Yo, brother, you're crossing the line! Got to hold you to it!" We like all the rest of the

stuff you do. We love your Harvard. We love you're married and we love you're part African. Yeah, but come on. Let's shake the tree.

You can't continue on this ruptured path and have us anoint you. My presence here validates you and if you want a validation, you got to pay off the price. We need to get back, and stop looking where you're looking and start looking at us in places you can't find us and listen to what we have to say, and listen to these young men and women carefully not through your filter, but through your honest open willingness to, let their voices resonate in your cranium. Maybe you'll find a catch phrase or two to put you on another path.

When Dr. King called me I was at the height of my game. He said, "I need you!" I said, "It's great to hear that doctor. I'm coming to New York . . ." I said, "May I come to hear your speech and then we can talk afterwards?" and he said yeah. And so I got to see him make his speech at the Baptist Church and when he got through . . . I knew I was forever committed to this. This cause that he represented because he put it right on the money. He told the church you're morally bankrupt. You've turned on the gifts of spirituality and what we could be doing.

Birmingham jail. You can go back to all of these places. I carry in my computer all of Dr. King's speeches and I will type them any moment on the plane, on a train, in a hotel room at night after we watched the late show whatever we do. I type it to hear Dr. King again. Not because I am familiar with the speech, but I am reminded of the time I grew up and I hear his voice and I find its relevance to today. And although I miss him I have not lost him. And that application is constant. It's a ritual and I think that all of us need to get away from the distractions that have taken our eyes off the spiritual.

The world is waiting to hear from us.