RAW TRANSCRIPT

SHOWING UP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

ANNE BRADEN, WOMEN'S LIBERATION, MUTUAL INTEREST AND THE LESSONS FOR TODAY'S STRUGGLES

MARCH 9, 2017

7:00 P.M. CENTRAL

Captioning Provided by:

Caption First, Inc.

P.O. Box 3066

Monument, CO 80132

www.captionfirst.com

US & Canada: (800) 825‑5234

\* \* \*

This text is being provided in a rough draft format. Communication access realtime translation (CART) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.

\* \* \*

(Music).

>> Hello, everybody! Welcome to this call Showing Up for Racial Justice to talk about some of the lessons from white southern civil rights leader Anne Braden's work to make the connections between the struggle against racism and the work for women's liberation.

I'm Carla Wallace in Louisville, Kentucky, and I go by she and her, and I'm just really excited to have this conversation with all of you tonight.

You know, for me, I met Anne when I was a child, actually, here in Louisville, Kentucky, and even as a child, I could sense, as she talked about what she felt were really the evils of racism and segregation. I could feel that passion and commitment from her and as I grew up, as a teenager and later as an adult, my path was very much influenced by her work and her commitment as a white person to challenge racism and to do the work to connect white people with the struggle against racism.

You know, in this ‑‑ kind of in the wake of the deep misogyny of the Trump campaign and the administration, there are so many white women in motion, from the women's march and ever since. And Anne Braden's work has important lessons for us today. The work of SURJ is to bring white people into the struggle for racial justice and there are a lot of people out there in motion. Where that connection with racial justice is not necessarily being made.

An Anne's linking of white wix in particular to challenges racism ask a critical message for us to understand to grow out the basic white folks engaging in racial justice. I just wanted to share, really quick before I introduce our main presenter, one of the ‑‑ of my favorite quotes of Anne Braden's is this one, she says "the battle is and always has been for the hearts and minds of white people in this country. The fight against racism is our issue. It's not something that we're called on to help people of color with. We need to become involved with it, as if our lives depended on it, because really, in truth, they do." And Anne's work about helping those of us who are white understand that our liberation is connected to ending racism has been pivotal in the lives of so many, and my guess is that there are folks on this phone who have either been influenced by Anne's work and her life or perhaps knew Anne and we're excited that part of the call will be us getting to talk to each other and a time for questions and share out after this part of the program.

So I'm really excited to have Anne's biographer and a coconspirator here in Racial Justice work for me, in Louisville, Cate Fosl who is the director of the Anne Braden Institute at the university of Louisville.

And after Cate speaks, we are hoping to have some reflections of Jamie Lori of the Flobox who did a song about Anne and what her impact has been on the young people and the movement. I know that Jamie was traveling. So we are hoping Jamie going to be able to join us.

Appreciations, we could not be doing these calls without our amazing SURJ tech team which includes Elliott and Tia and Ameory and Meredith.

And I also want to do a shout out on the phone, but not speaking tonight is our amazing SURJ codirector, Erin Heany who takes care and intention with all things in this work.

I want to do ‑‑ oh, Jamie Lori is on the call. I'm so excited. Wonderful!

I want to do a quick accessibility check. We will do our best to speak slowly and clearly and to avoid using any jargon language or abbreviations. If there's any additional accessibility needs you have to be able to fully participate in the call, please hit one now.

If there are any ways that we can make it more accessible for you to participate in this call, please hit one now.

Okay. So I am pleased now to ‑‑ it's just an honor to introduce my dear friend and comrade sister in the work for racial justice, Cate Fosl who is going to talk about Anne and some lessons from her life and her work. Go ahead, Cate.

>> CATE FOSL: Thank you so much, Carla. I'm so proud to be with all of you on this call tonight, and I want to thank everybody, echoing what Carla has said. Thanks to all the tech team and thanks, really to Carla and to Erin, who were the ‑‑ you know, the braintrusts that sort of gave rise to this call. And as Carla said, I'm Cate Fosl, I'm here also in Louisville, Kentucky. Originally from Atlanta, Georgia. So I'm a southerner through and through. I have ‑‑ I also use she/her pronouns by the way. I had the honor of being Anne Braden's biographer, having interviewed her over a period of years at the close of the 20th century and gotten to know her very well. And in the final years of her life, gotten to call her a friend.

I'm now a professor at the university of Louisville, as Carla said and was cofounder of an institute in honor of ‑‑ named after Anne. So I spent more than ten years now working to preserve her legacy and support work that's consistent with her tradition of organizing and her very strong, unyielding vision for racial justice in the United States and especially here in the US south.

And, you know, it's funny because I had jotted down some notes and I had that same quote or part of it, what you said, Carla. So let me reiterate that because I think it bears repeating, that the battle here is and always has been as Anne used to like to say, for the hearts and the minds of white people.

And I also know that some of you knew or knew of Anne and some of you may have known her well over a period of time, while others may have only, you know, a vague idea of who she was or know very little about her at all. If you got a chance to read the letters to white Southern women that we sent around in this call or if you watched the Angela Davis video clip that we sent, you know a little something about her.

But for anyone here who might not be really familiar with Anne Braden, I hope the rest of you will bear with me as I give a short bio on her.

I have given probably hundreds of talks about Anne in the years that I was working on that biography and in the years since then. I think she's important for many reasons, for those of us who ‑‑ especially for those of us who are white and especially for those would are white and involved in the struggle for racial justice.

One of the main reasons is that she worked so relentlessly for so long, almost 50 years, from age 23 to her death at age 81 and through some very fierce time, probably the fiercest we are in right now, when she was ostracized and marginalized and all but lynched on occasion herself. But she kept coming back and she never backed down. And she never lost her basic optimistic faith in the goodness of human beings and the redeemability of white people and white Southerners on this very, very tortured subject of racism.

Anne was born in 1924. She was a native of right here in Louisville, Kentucky. She didn't grow up here. Mostly she grew up in Anniston, Alabama, in other parts of the deeper South, in the years of the great depression. Her family was mostly middle class. They were firmly entrenched in the existing Southern racial order of Jim Crow segregation. She went to women's colleges in the South, in Virginia, actually, during the exact years of World War II. So her history goes as far back ‑‑ she was a talented writer and she began her career as a newspaper reporter back in Alabama and eventually back here in Louisville, at the age of 23. It was here in Louisville where she met people that would cause her to go through a process which she called turning herself inside out and upside down to more or less renounce her ambition to become a great newspaper reporter. And instead made the decision to join the post‑World War II labor and the civil rights movements that she had discovered around her here in the late '40s. 1947, 1948, which was a big turning point in American history.

A big part of her transformation was needing and falling in love and marrying a socialist labor journalist, named Carl Braden, getting to know African‑Americans as people, really as equals for the first time. And together, Anne and Carl Braden plunged into the civil rights movement that was bursting out all around them in the '40s and early '50s. She became controversial figures here in Louisville, in those years after he had helped an African‑American family buy a house in an all‑white suburb here and that created a huge controversy and, frankly, it's a great story, but it's one that I'm not going to tell her in full because it would take up all of our time. I recommend reading more and watching more. There's a great video about Anne, but I'm not going to tell the story of the ‑‑ the way ‑‑ the house case because it's so complicated and it would take us away from sort of where I think we need to go here tonight.

But Anne's view turned into an antiracist and it was an antiracist and the view in the 1970s when she wrote that letter to Southern White Women that some of you read and indeed to the end of her life, ending racism was white people's business because it was white people who benefited from racial hierarchy and white people's whose souls it corrupted to live like that.

It was never about helping people. It was about helping herself and having a fuller life by virtue of coming into a life for justice. So it maybe a first step to any type of positive social change, for women, for workers, for ending war, for ‑‑ she saw all of those issues as interlinked but racism was the key that would unlock those other doors. And she always maintained a works class perspective that saw some of the systems investment in upholding racism. She saw some of that was about keeping black and white working people apart because they had so many mutual interests, and it was racism that kept them from uniting around those interests.

And also believed strongly in black leadership and in building bridges to ‑‑ to end the divide between whites and people of color. She did that work, no matter how enormous the tasks seemed or no matter how hard it got and in that sense, I ‑‑ Carla and I were talking about her incredible resiliency. She kept working against white supremacy and she kept coming back being even when it got very hard. I think Anne acknowledged that she was resilient and she rooted that resiliency in what she called the other America. And the other America, I think, is something we could all, you know, feel better about being a part of, that community of people we find when we get involved in social justice movement building.

Now, that brings me to the part of her story that Angela Davis talked about, if you've got a chance to watch that video clip and I highly recommend it, if you didn't. As Carla mentioned, we are at an historic moment, when so many white women are coming into the movement for racial justice. Mostly in response to the poisonous threat of Donald Trump, some in response to the defeat of Hillary Clinton.

That is an opportunity Anne Braden would have absolutely relished, because she was down with the SURJ value of calling in. A long time before there was a value that was stated that way, because for Anne, no one was ever too hopeless. There was no one too moderate, no one too set in their ways to be brought into the other America and to begin working for racial justice.

Like that letter to Southern White Women indicates, she always had a special interest in working with and recruiting women into social justice movement, not only white women, but especially white women.

That letter was written in 1972, right when the women's liberation movement was sort of gearing up in its early years. And if you read the letter, could you see that her message was that the struggle against race has got to take into account this incredibly painful and ongoing tradition of white women being protected and black men being targeted and being disproportionately, you know, accused of rape and in the case of Thomas Wansley, the guy that the letter was specifically relating to.

Anne was intersectional, before there was such a thing. The other thing I want to say about Anne is that she was ‑‑ she strongly believed that you had to choose sides, that this was really no being neutral, that she used to like to say, I want to be the right side of history, and she was determined to be on the right side of history, even though in the '40s, '50s and '60s even, in the communities that she was working in, she was often in a tiny minority and really was taking a lot of heat.

So I guess I talked earlier about one of the lessons that I think is important in her life, and I ‑‑ you know, for those of us who do this work, who start to feel overwhelmed or burned out, it's just really great to read some of her writing, I would have to say. She too wrote a book called "The Wall Between" which I would recommend getting ahold of and keeping on your book shelf.

And also the second lesson I just want to mention it before we get to the conversation is that, you know, a lot of white people, especially in the era that Anne changed her life and began working and all through the '60s, in fact, when there was a lot of social movement going on, a lot of white people who got converted, white Southerners, buried themselves in people of color communities, but Anne always kept accountable to black leadership. She was a huge believer in black leadership and she was always in close communication with civil rights and racial justice and trade union leaders who were African‑American, but she always made it her business to talk to other whites.

So she would have been very excited to see a phenomenon like SURJ, which she had already passed when that took shape. So I guess ‑‑ I often think of her, like, sitting on my shoulder, spurring me on and just the work that I do here in Louisville and at the university and regionally, and she is kind of a beacon of hope for us, that, you know, I'm really excited for the opportunity to talk about her tonight, and I think I will stop there and hope that we have some conversation.

Thank you.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Great. Thank you so much, Cate. We appreciate that. Thank you so much! And now I hope we can hear some words of reflection and kind of maybe, Jamie, how Anne's story impacted you and the music that the group ended up doing. I think it's so important with, you know, figures like Anne that can be seen, as oh, that's something in the past history, but that history comes alive when it impacts those of us who are active today and especially the impact her life has had on young people in this work. So Jamie, thrilled to have you, Jamie Flory from the Flobots.

>> Can you hear me already.

>> This is Jamie, I go by he and him. It's an honor to go on this call and I especially appreciate, given the focus on women and I appreciate you making a little space for me in the conversation. I wanted to just ‑‑ for folks who don't know, we are part of a band called Flobots and we just started in 2005 performing, but one of the things we did, we did a hip hop‑themed church service at the church we went to during black history month. I learned about ‑‑ we had all learned about Anne Braden, known by Vincent Harding who wrote the beyond Vietnam speech, which the anniversary is coming up pretty soon. Vincent hearing, there were interviews with regular folks and some of the figure heads but, folks who were involved in the Southern freedom movements and other movements and the emphasis was on everyday folks to step up and join the movement. So for the service, we actually picked four figures and told their story through song, and in doing that, that we wrote the song about Anne Braden.

And then went on to include that song in our album and we traded an album. But I had taken a class in 2000 from Dr. Harding and learned about a lot of these folks Ruby Sales and Anne Braden and I think what it was about her, in particular, I think learning about anybody through their ‑‑ through the sorry of their life and all the specific journeys that someone has had to navigate is far more compelling that just kind of batting about ideology.

And in her life, seeing what she really had to grapple with, she had to grapple with the truth of the love of her family and neighbors and what was true in her heart was the side of history and refusing to take any easy out. I think that was something that ‑‑ you know, that spoke to me, and that felt like, well, you don't ‑‑ you don't get to just find an ideology and stop grappling. The grappling and the maneuvering between these truths is what makes each of our lives meaningful.

And so the fact that she could do things like recognize, oh, we're being used as an excuse to kill black men because we are white women and we have the opportunity to say you are using us as an excuse and to call that out. We have an opportunity to say, we are White Southern women and we are not outsiders and don't try to say that we are. I think ‑‑ I got the sense even ‑‑ I never got to meet her but even just from hearing her story, as it was told on video, through this oral history series, that she just stayed intimately in touch with the reality and kind of had her moral bearings throughout her life in a way that just ‑‑ I don't know, it draws you to her and I think that's why we wanted to write a song about her.

And when we wrote the album, we didn't put all four figures on the album. We had a sense that our listeners would particularly identify with her and, in mar, the image of the other America that she held a vision and so she could move towards this vision of the beloved community, the other America, of the America that could be and that sort of vision is empowering. I apologize. Maybe I will leave it there. I think I was supposed to keep it at three minutes.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Thank you, Jamie.

Thank you both Cate and Jamie.

Now we will have a chance to talk to each other in small groups for about ten minutes and then we will come back together for a chunk of time, where folks can make some comments, reflections, ask some questions, but first, we're going to go to the small breakouts and what we would love folks to talk about is, you know, what's something that you heard in these ‑‑ this presentation ‑‑ these presentations tonight, that could apply to your SURJ work?

Are there some thoughts that help you think about how you are working to bring other white people in to the work for racial justice?

You know, what would make ‑‑ what are you hearing that could apply to your efforts? So we will go in for about ten minutes.

(Breaking up in small groups).

>> CARLA WALLACE: This is Carla. Is anybody in my group?

>> Hi, this is Bridget. Can you hear me? Hi, this is Bridget. Carla?

I think we are good. Carla? Hello?

>> Hi, this is ‑‑ hi, this is Bree.

>> Because we have this other song that's in some ways ‑‑ you know, I was just sort of talking about where you have the ideal logical, our new song is around ‑‑

>> Hi, Bree.

>> Hi!

>> This is Bridget from ‑‑ I'm in Raleigh, North Carolina.

>> Oh, hey, I'm in Kentucky, right outside of Louisville.

>> Oh, great. And it's just the two of us?

>> Hi, this is Rebecca.

>> Hi, Rebecca.

>> Rebecca, where are you?

>> I'm in Newport, Pennsylvania.

>> Can anyone hear me?

>> Yeah. I got on the call, because I met Anne Braden once.

>> Okay. I'm just ‑‑ I'm ‑‑ tech, I'm just trying to make sure that you can hear each other and ‑‑

>> I think so. I think we have Bree, Bridget, and Rebecca.

>> So Rebecca, you were saying you met Anne Braden?

>> Yeah, a real long time ago as part of the Peoples Institute national meeting. And just her work ‑‑ I think her work about working with white people is really, really important. I know in my own work, it takes a while to get this in working against racism. But I think in the past few years, I know that's where my work is, and I'm in a mace that's very white and considered pretty racist. So I know I'm right where I'm not supposed to be.

How about you all?

>> Yeah, so, you know, it takes a while to get there with wanting to work with white people, and I definitely can relate to that. I think I first started feeling and hearing the call to really focus on white people several years ago and since then, you know, I have ‑‑ it's just been, you know, a journey, and one that I have to keep checking in with others, like on this call tonight to just keep the energy to keep doing that, because it's ‑‑ yeah, for me, it can be really challenging, especially people in my immediate community, my family, to figure out a way to engage them and call them, but also be clear in my values about what I believe in, and what I'm seeing in the world. So, yeah, it's something that really stuck out to me and then just talking about Anne's vision was the idea of the other America, and how that is something we are working for but it's something that we are working in, where we are organizing and engaging, that there is another America that we get to be a part of now.

And finding hope in, that you know, even when it feels like drudgery, sometimes. But finding hope in the other America that we get to be a part of now.

>> Yes, this is Bridget. That really resonated. It feels like the Triangle SURJ group is my movement home right now and I just really appreciate that. You know, it's ‑‑ one way I've been trying to step and hold on to the call‑in piece is by engaging with really conservative friends from Memphis, Tennessee, where I grew up. And these are high school friends and we're friends on Facebook. Most them grew up blue collar, like I did and many of them are either in the police or in military, and it's just ‑‑ it's hard, you know ‑‑ those who play by the kind of let's just name call and be respectful to each other and really try to learn, you know, sometimes there's snarky crappiness. I'm trying really hard.

But I realize how much it's hurtful to some friends of color who watch me be nice in those dialogues and a couple of times people have even weighed in, like, no, that wasn't mostly civil, that was horribly Islamaphobic and so on, and I have been grappling with that. I keep wanting to give up ‑‑ you know, they would never change my mind on Facebook? So what are the chances? I don't know.

So I'm kind of grappling in that way.

And then it's heavy on my heart about some critiques we get from some multiracial groups that just frankly hate SURJ and think that a predominantly white formation is dangerous and that makes me sad, but there's extraordinary work going on around here. So I ‑‑ I don't mean to dis it all.

Thanks for listening.

>> Yeah. I hear you. When even within our, you know, activist movements and the people we really admire so much have critiques of SURJ or just like this work of organizing white people, it can be really hard and I really struggled with knowing when to ‑‑ like, not just shutting down in the face of any critique but just trying to understand it and also keep moving forward.

I read a piece by Alisha Garza today that was written in response to so much of the pushback that was happening. The pushback from women of color about not participating. And Alisha Garza is one of the founders of Black Lives Matter and her piece was just about, you know where do we want to be and how are we going to get there? And, you know, staying in coalition with people that we might not necessarily have everything in common with or share, you know ‑‑ have a fully shared vision. And that was really encouraging to me.

>> Yeah.

>> Yes, I think it's always tricky when white people get together. (Chuckles).

You know, it's like what are we going to do? Bunt I know in some of the work I was part of over the years, I would say, the last 20, 25 years, we would try to have some ‑‑ a person of color be in the room with us as white people, as a witness, never to speak, only to report back to the part of our group that was people of color. And then to give us guidance and that was pretty cool when you had a multiracial group. It's an interesting mod Tolle think about. Even if a person of color was not at our meeting, we would make a report and report back. So setting up that accountability.

I'm in a mace where there are very, very few people of color, but I'm about 20 miles away from where there are more people of color and there's a Black Lives Matter group and I have a friend that is connected there. So I think with our SURJ group, excuse me, you know, we can connect and maybe, you know, take direction, or, you know, be connected to an agenda. I think that's a challenge in rural, white, predominantly white America. You know, we don't necessarily have people of color here because they are truly not welcome.

>> I just wanted to say, hi, I'm on this call too. I'm Laura. And I'm kind of lurking, because I'm really new and sort of just found out about SURJ and joined this call and just trying to figure out how to engage in the right way. So thanks for sharing all of your thoughts. I'm, like, really ‑‑ I'm experiencing a lot of same things you talked about and wondering ‑‑ having the same questions. So thank you for sharing.

>> Where are you, Laura?

>> I'm in Northern Virginia, in Alexandria.

>> Great. Thank you.

>> All right. Okay. Hello, everybody! Welcome back! Hopefully there was some good conversation in your breakout groups. And now we have a little bit of time to hear some of your reflections, questions, and have some conversation together.

So if you would hike to ask a question, or share out, please press one and one of our wonderful tech people will ‑‑ will let me know that you want to speak. So press one if you would hike to share out or ask a question. Press one if you have a comment and want to share out or have a question.

Phyllis? Okay, Phyllis.

>> The first one, wow! Excellent. Welcome!

>> Thank you. Thank you. That was a good stab at my name too. You may give it a good try.

So my question is ‑‑ this is something that ‑‑ so I'm in a business, we have a nonprofit. It's the race story rewrite. My husband and I are white and my partner in DC is black. So we work together as a team. And we work with mixed groups and then every so often, we split up and our partner will work with black participants and we will work with the white.

One of the questions that's been coming up so much for us lately, is about how white people need to really fix their own stuff before they go about forming relationships with black folks, in they don't have relationships already. You know, that they are doing less damage so that they are not rewounding people, and so that they have got some sense of their ‑‑ of what whiteness means and how they are bringing their whiteness into the relationship that they are trying to build.

And the counterpoint to that, that continually comes up for us as well, is that for us as white people, would try to even understand our privilege or our whiteness in a vacuum, is almost impossible. It seems like it really only becomes driven home when you are in relationship with people who aren't white. And then, of course, the caveat is that you are ‑‑ that you are, you know, frequently stupid and doing things that are hurting people.

I just wanted to hear if anybody had any input about that question.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Sure. Thank you, Phyllis. This is Carla. Thank you so much for your question. You know, it's certainly one, that you know, a lot of folks, especially white people getting involved in racial justice struggle with, and what SURJ heard ‑‑ when SURJ was formed, what a lot of us heard very clearly from people of color was a call for us to move beyond the learning that we'll be doing and must be doing all of our lives into action to stand with and challenge oppression.

So often, for many of us who are white, we ‑‑ we get in this place of being scared that we are going to mess up, and we are going to mess up. And what ‑‑

>> Right exactly.

>> CARLA WALLACE: And what people of color say, we know you will mess up. We need you to learn from it and keep going, and keep coming out. For me, I know I will be dismantling the racism that I have been caught in this culture until the day I die. I don't get to wait until that day before I show up for racial justice.

>> That's awesome.

>> CARLA WALLACE: In our accountability relationships with people of color, they are saying ‑‑ they are saying, you know, you get to do this work. You don't get to do it right, or you don't get to do it perfectly, and you need to learn from that, but that this is a moment where we actually need to be out there, in our imperfection. That doesn't mean flail around about it. We want to prepare people, et cetera, but it is a time to move into action with people before we are perfect, because the perfect part is never going to come.

Does that make sense? Right. Right. Absolutely. That's a great ‑‑ I really like that. That's a really great way to frame it.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Thanks so much for your question, because that's a really, really important one. Yeah.

>> I want to just really quickly chime in that I think also in any space, I guess I look at it like you are learning ‑‑ the things you notice that might be around race or gender dynamics are also things that make you a better person. So if I'm ‑‑ as a ‑‑ as a man in this space, it might be an all‑white space but I can still notice how I take up space, notice how I may resay things that other people have said and so I think those are lessons I can take and then I can say, oh, listening is something I want to do more. Humility is something I want to do more of, because I think those are transferable skills that ‑‑ yeah.

>> Mm‑hmm.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Absolutely. That's great, Jamie.

All right, anyone else with a question or a comment?

>> Sarah P. Next up, we have Sarah P.

>> Oh, hello! Hold on. Hi.

>> Hi.

>> Hi.

>> Am I there?

>> Oh, hi. Sorry. So I'm a graduate student looking to do a project on whiteness study and so I guess my question is mostly for Cate. I did appreciate the Flobot's album back in the day. I did appreciate that one. Cate, do you have any courses that you would recommend. For example, what would be your favorite book? I read that "Letter to Southern White Women" this afternoon and it felt a lot like a ‑‑ a manifesto of sorts.

Do you have anything else that you go to, to look for inspiration?

>> CATE FOSL: Well, there's a lot of things. I highly recommend Anne Braden's memoir, which was done by a University of Tennessee grad. I like items like that. Memoir of a race trader by Mab Seacrest, I would highly recommend. I'm into those kind of narratives. There's a few really good anthologies that I'm just sort of blanking on the name of them. They are more like sociological books that I think is also valuable is by a woman named Becky Thompson called "a promise and a way of life." Anne is also featured in that book.

I mean, it's sociological, but it's readable, can say? I'm not trying to ‑‑ yeah, it's a very readable account. I mean, those are just a few things that come to mind.

I have not taught a course on whiteness, per se. So there's this whole field of whiteness studies that I'm familiar with, in a general way, but like I'm an historian and that's the main thing I do.

There are other good biographies, though. Another good biography, I might suggest is by Bob Zellner ‑‑ not many years, two or three, the only white staffperson in SNIC, the student nonviolent coordinating committee, it's called "The Wrong Side of Murder Creek." That's another book that I think is good.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Great. Thank you. All right. Next person is Cynthia Coles.

>> Hi. I'm in a breakout group and it's been really good and I have been listening to the conversation and I outed myself that I'm a black Native American and I always felt like I'm an outsider, because I'm an integration baby born in 1962. And I have been born as a Bernite. I would suggest joining integrated progressive group like democratic socialists of America which is actually Bernie's party.

Or one of the other independent parties because a lot of them have a lot of diversity, and if you don't have black friends or you haven't been in ‑‑ you know, you haven't been involved with any people of color, those are good environments for preordained points of view.

Here in Atlanta, the remaining original Black Panthers make presentations, BLM has made presentations. Trying to jump in feet first is difficult, but I would suggest joining a group that is integrated and just, you know, listen and ‑‑ and be involved. That's all I had.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Thank you so much.

You know, this issue about, like, as white people not putting the burden of our own education on the people of color. So it's so important what you just said about listening and seeking out those opportunities to ‑‑ to listen to, you know, the books that are out, there the conversations, the presentations that happen in the community to ‑‑ to learn from and hear voices of color around the struggle is really critical part of our education without, you know, saying that people of color have the burden of educating us. It's like we have to take on our own education.

Any comments from Cate or Jamie around that?

>> CATE FOSL: Well, the only thing I would add is just that ‑‑ look, I get it that we are going to be imperfect and we are going to make mistakes. But what you are saying is a really good way to you know, get up to speed if you ‑‑ especially if you are living in a virtually all‑white community or all white world or immediate surroundings and you want to move out of that.

It's good to do some reading. It's good to attend some programs and just begin to ‑‑ just get more insight into the ordinary lives of people of color if you have been, again, in an all white environment might help to prepare you to make that change. I mean, I'm from Atlanta too, and I ‑‑ you know, I never was in such a homogenous environment, but here in Kentucky, it's a much wider state outside of Louisville. And a lot of people do have that, I think especially a lot of my young students, they really want to break out of this kind of white life, but they are afraid of ‑‑ you know, of, like, doing more damage and so they don't do ‑‑ you know, they don't make that step.

We've got to make that step, but your solution, Carla is just getting more informed before you do, or as you do.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Mm‑hmm. I think it's a process. It's the being in it. Go ahead, Jamie.

>> Two thoughts. One, just a ‑‑ I think this can be a danger that ‑‑ that ‑‑ in talking about how there can be never ‑‑ there can be a danger? Acting like these things are unknowable. When I'm around women, I can never do any right.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Right.

>> What makes me more human and a better person and I have the gift of someone else actually saying, like, hey, when you did this, that was actually ‑‑ that was dehumanizing in these ways. When I get that information, it's good information. But ‑‑ I don't know if I said that well. But to not think about it as if it's not accessible or not ‑‑ so we can also figure it out, because this can be a ‑‑ a hunger for validation from people of color, that that's the only way we can access this information. That's incredible ‑‑ that's a huge gift when that happens and the information comes to us in those ways.

But I think also taking responsibility for ‑‑ for doing that constantly. And then the other piece, it strikes me how we are very hungry for community in general and there's not as many people involved in churches or groups of any kind. And I think when looking for community, and it's ‑‑ I have ‑‑ think it's also valuable to find community that is not politicized community, isn't necessarily organized around getting everything right but might be organized around ‑‑ you know, I have the karaoke group that is very important to me because it's a Spanish‑English karaoke group and everyone is there for a conversation group and karaoke group. We are different documentation status and different backgrounds. It's not a political space but it's a place where we build community and the ties sore strong that I feel that we could have almost any conversation and we could have trust.

I just think keeping an eye out for places of community, in general, will help to lay the ground work for the relationships that will then help bring about sort of these transformations.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Yeah. Yeah, this is Carla. I have just had a birthday and gathering that we had, I don't know, probably 80 or 100 people there, and, you know, it was ‑‑ it was ‑‑ it's community. It's my family, and it's my SURJ accountability partners, my SURJ base leadership, my folks from the union group, the folks from the feminist group, all of that together and, you know, one of the things that ‑‑ that I always found real powerful but also I think it's painful for some people around her is, you know, Anne always said the people that she was closest to were the people that she had ‑‑ she said the people that I'm closest to are the people I went to jail with.

And she definitely saw that as community and the importance of community. It was connected to the work but it was definitely lifting up this idea of our common humanity and being there for each other. So ‑‑ so I think maybe ‑‑ we only have a couple more minutes. Do we want to say something about taking action but what were you going to say?

>> I was just going to ask if you wanted to do one more question. I'm sorry.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Yeah, I think we could do one more. Let's take one more question and then we'll close out with a little bit of a call to action. So who is up? Hello?

Do we have anyone else?

>> We do have people. Our tech support ‑‑ our primary tech support just got bumped.

>> Oh, no!

>> I can call off names, but I'm not sure if they are the names who have already spoken. So down if Bridget already spoke?

>> No. No.

>> All right so Bridget.

>> We'll take one more. I will put your mic on public.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Awesome. Brigette.

>> Hi. I'm Bridget. I'm in Raleigh, North Carolina, and this is a little bit of ‑‑

>> Hi.

>> This is a little bit of on the other hand, something I ‑‑ something I have struggled with a little bit is having been in racial justice work for a minute now, for about 15 years in the Raleigh area, that I not uncommonly get public kudos that can be kind of problematic, actually.

And because it's clear that, you know, mostly from white folks ‑‑ like oh, so great. You are so courageous, and, you know, what great work. And, you know, on Facebook or in meetings or called out and sometimes from people of color. And people of color who have been doing this for decades and decades, you don't see that kind of kudos and props as often, and it's a problematic dynamic. So there's two things. One, that so much work from so many people of color and even the shoulders that we stand on being rendered invisible as sort of white action is privileged and honored.

And then too, there is a dynamic that people who have been in movement work a long time have this criticism of kind of the hero dynamic or the ‑‑ you know, the ‑‑ the one who publishes the book getting all of these props and then people who have been on the ground doing work, regular folk, not lifted up, being rendered invisible in some ways too.

So I find myself needing help, talking ‑‑ you know, thinking through, responding to, and both of those things and we might have time just to talk about one. I just wanted to hear from the wisdom of the folks here about that.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Mm‑hmm. Anybody else want to take that?

>> Have efforts to shine that light on to other folks doing the work, have you tried that? Have you found things that would successfully shift it. I appreciate the recognition and that person has been doing it for this many years and you should talk to them?

>> Yeah, I think ‑‑ I think that's a great tip, every time saying thank you, that makes me feel good and here's why that dynamic can be a little ‑‑ can be a little ‑‑ I appreciate that.

>> CARLA WALLACE: And I think you have named just a very real dynamic in what gets attention, you know, in this particular system and what doesn't, and it's interesting, because one of my accountability partners, he's in his 80s now, Bob Cunningham, he was part of the black workers movement here in Louisville. And what he says to those in SURJ, I need you out there.

I need you visible because I want white people to see that there's another way to be white.

And so he's actually saying, I want the light shined on what all are doing. So it's a kind of a complicated thing because we do have to be breaking the white silence and we know that if we get attention for breaking white si lens as white people, that's part of dynamic to. But the point is to ‑‑ how do we move strategic work together and part of that does mean that white people need to see other white people out there and struggling for racial justice.

And at the same time, that can give us the space as Jamie just said, to say, and people of color have been leading this work, you know, forever and from the founding of this country.

I always say in SURJ, we do incredible work. We do really good work and the reason there are so many white people waking up in this country, is because people of color are on the white front lines waging these battles. So I think we do ‑‑ we do always have to be pointing out who has been leading this work always. It's a matter of we need to get more white people to join and some of it will get some attention and hopefully that will wake up some other white folk.

Anyway, but I really appreciate your question. Go ahead, Cate. Oh, we're at time.

>> CATE FOSL: Oh, we are. I can hold. That's fine.

>> CARLA WALLACE: No, finish your thought.

>> CATE FOSL: I really liked what Jamie said about strategies to share the limelight. This is part of a larger dynamic that's so prevalent in the culture of, like, the single hero.

>> CARLA WALLACE: Exactly, the white savior kind of thing, yeah.

>> CARLA WALLACE: The white savior, you know, the ‑‑

>> CARLA WALLACE: So just to close out, I want to thank everybody for being on this call, Cate, Jamie, thank you for joining us. Our amazing tech crew, thank you all so much for this call, and appreciate everybody being on the call. If there are folks on this call who are not part of a SURJ chapter yet, please find one, or if you are interested in starting one, which is what we are being asked to do, to organize white folks, let us know and we're happy to support you to start a chapter.

Think about holding a house party and having a conversation like this, maybe based on something that Anne said or an example out of her work and, you know, what can that mean for us in our efforts to bring more white people in.

And finally contribution making a donation to SURJ and we ask whenever you make a donation to SURJ, you make an equal donation to another organization of color.

We hope you have a great night. Thank you. Love you all, bye.

>> Thanks, bye.

(End of meeting 8:02 Central Time)