

Transcripts from *Looking Back & Moving Forward, Together*
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Keynote Address: **Reverend William J. Barber, II**

Carolyn Mugar: Farm Aid felt very, very strongly that we needed Reverend Barber at this event today. He has taken the work of so many people here today and built upon it and lifted it up and fused it with new life. He embodies the spirit of working across boundaries and working in deeper and newer ways and of doing that work right now. When we tried to contact Reverend Barber, Shirley Sherrod was on the committee, and she offered to make contacts and Reverend Barber told me when Shirley Sherrod called, he said, "That was it, of course. You cannot say no to Shirley Sherrod". So I want to invite Shirley up here to introduce Reverend Barber. (Applause)

Shirley Sherrod: Good morning. You know, I feel so honored to introduce Reverend Barber this morning. He, many of us, before I even knew him I heard so much about him. And I'm just so proud of the things he has been able to do. I feel I am sitting at his feet today. You know, Reverend Barber is a minister. He is Reverend Barber, the second, and he has the third standing over there by him, his son. He's led Moral Mondays and we've heard about that, and he has organized that. They say 'North Carolina' when you read about it, but that spread - his name and the work he is doing and the model he has developed - is spreading all over the country so they need to take that North Carolina label off. You know, one writer said, he named him the most important progressive political leader. They said, North Carolina, but I just said 'they need to make that: in this country in generations.' The writer went on to say that he built a statewide interracial fusion, political coalition that has not been seriously attempted since 1900. That's really something. So, I know we have been waiting for this, Reverend Barber, come forward. (Long Applause).

Reverend Barber: Welcome, welcome to North Carolina. Good to be here. When Shirley was talking, two things came to mind. One is about the guy who entered his old mule that he had on the farm in the Kentucky Derby, and the guy said, “Man, why are you putting that mule in the Kentucky Derby with these thoroughbreds? Don’t you understand he can’t win? He might not even get out of the gate.” And the guy said, “I know that.” “So why would you waste the entry fee?” He said, “Well, I know he can’t win, but I thought if he hung out with these thoroughbreds, the exposure might do him some good.” So that is the first thought. I’m glad that Shirley thought the exposure might do me, old country boy, some good.

The second thought is, you know, I’m a preacher, but I got a few sins in my life that I still wrestle with. I know most of you all are perfect, but one or two of us, and I always, I got certain people, Al McSurley is one of them, Bob is one, Shirley’s now, that just in case when I get to the gate I got trouble getting me in, I’m gonna have them introduce me. And maybe the Lord will feel a little bit better about letting me in.

It’s good to be here. And in the spirit of the Forward Together Moral Movement that’s been actually organizing now for more than 8 years, I want to say to you something, ask you to say, we say “Forward Together, (audience: “not one step back!”) Forward Together, (audience: “not one step back!”). That’s a mantra that we use here in our movement. There are so many people around this room, I am going to make a mistake, but I am going to ask you to trust me anyway. When I look out across and we see Sister Sherrod and her dear husband, and we thank them for inviting us to come, Al McSurley, Bob Zellner, Gary Grant who actually worked with my father and William’s grandfather years ago, Mike Sayer who’s kind of coordinating today with the workshops and Susan Skinner. Also, these two young ladies, where are they at? Ms. Yoder and Ms. Mugar. Is that right? They came down to the church. Where are you all? Please stand up. These are the hollern’ess white women I have ever seen in my life. (applause) They came to Greenleaf, Shirley, and just got happy. I looked up, and they were waving their hands and carrying on and took over the service, but we are so glad that they were able, and then Brother Baldemar. Where is Brother Baldemar? There he is. Thank God for him on today.

I want to try to just talk with you for a moment about a farmer’s dream for America’s destiny. A farmer’s dream for America’s destiny. You know, God had this special place in his heart for farmers. I am not just patronizing you, because I happen to be among those who care about farming. It’s just true. In the Old Testament, Book of Amos, Chapter 7, the bible says, “Then Amaziah, who was a bad king, said to Amos, “Get out of here you prophet. Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there. Do your prophesying there. Don’t you come up here and prophesy any more at Bethel, because this is the King’s sanctuary and the Temple of the Kingdom.” Amos answered Amaziah and said, “Listen, I was neither a

prophet nor the son of a prophet. I was a shepherd, and a farmer of sycamore trees. But the Lord called me from tending the flock and said, “Go prophesy to Israel.” One commentary says that Amos, the prophet, was undaunted by Amaziah’s threats. He was an unjust king, trampling on the rights of the poor. And in simple language, Amos let him know I am not here prophesying as a profession, I am actually a farmer. But I am here out of obedience to God, because I can see what damage you are doing the nation.

You know in ancient Israel, prophets were not just men, they were women and men. In fact, the scriptures tell us there are 23 names of prophets in the bible who prophesy listed in the scriptures. Now, the prophets always arose when the politicians and the priests weren’t doing their jobs. They always arose when the politicians had begun to engage in the politics of fear or in the politics of domination and when the priest had decided that their role was to be a Chaplin to the state rather than the critic of the state, it is in that context that the prophets would rise. Now Amos makes it clear, he was not self-commissioned nor trained by any human institution. He says, “I am a herdsman.” The Hebrew word is I am a bogar, a cow herder. And he says, ‘I am a gatherer of sycamore fruit. I’m one who plants and tends and cares for and watches the seasons for the development of the sycamore tree.’”

What got Amos so frustrated? What got this farmer so bothered? What caused this farmer both to have a denouncement of ancient Israel, as well as a fresh dream for ancient Israel? Well, in the fifth chapter of Amos, the prophet lays out the public policy concerns. He says, listen, “I know how many are your offences and how great your sins. This is what’s wrong with Israel: Your leaders oppress the innocent. They take bribes. They deprive the poor of justice in the courts. Therefore, the prudent keep quiet in such times like this, because they are afraid for the times of evil. What you need to do” says Amos the farmer, “is seek good and not evil, that the nation might live and then perhaps the Lord God Almighty will be with you. Hate evil. Love good. Maintain justice.” And then Amos strikes at the core and crux of the matter. He challenges those who claim to represent moral focus who have lost their focus or who have, in fact, decided to simply play with morality. You know, tinker around the edges by just doing religious things like putting your right hand on the bible and raising your left hand to God and praying, then after the p-r-a-y-i-n-g you then go into session in your Senate or your House chambers and you are p-r-e-y-i-n-g on people. So Amos says, “I hate.” And he is speaking on behalf of God Almighty. “I hate and I despise your religious festivals. I’m bothered by your attempt to just find a way to worship without doing right.” Then he says, “I know what cow manure smells like, because I’m a shepherd.” He says, “I know what sheep manure smells like because I’m a shepherd and your assemblies smell like that.” “And God says ‘even though you bring burn offerings and grain, even though you go through the ritual of religiosity, God has no regard for them. You have developed great singing but God says, “I won’t listen to it until you let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”’ Now that’s

a farmer talking. That is a farmer talking to the nation, daring to say to the king and even to the religious cultures that's not fighting for justice, everything you do smells like cow manure...until justice rolls down like waters. Amos said "I ain't running for office. I'm not trying to be a politician. I don't need your land; I got my own. I grow my own food. I'm free. And I am free enough to tell the nation, you're on the wrong track." God called this farmer because the nation was in a time of crisis.

Now I grew up on a farm in North Carolina. Because I was brought back here by my father who was recruited back to rural eastern North Carolina to help desegregated schools. You've never seen it written up in the great Civil Rights anthems and books. Most of you might not even know about Washington County, North Carolina. Way down the east, a little town called Roper, that was settled by a former Union general, right off of the Roanoke River. My father was in Indianapolis, Indiana, Shirley, 1963. I was born August 30, 1963. My mother and father were there. They were both very educated. He was in the Christian Church Disciples of Christ, predominantly white moving up the ladder. In 1963, had two Masters Degrees working on his doctorate. My mother was up in government. He had grown up on the farms in eastern North Carolina, and had left and got away. He got a call from the homeland saying, "Schools in 1964, ten years after Brown had still not been desegregated at all in many parts of North Carolina. And Evy Wilkins said, "I need you to come home. I need you to leave the city and come back to the farmland. Come back to rural eastern North Carolina and help us." And he made that decision. The decision was that they would take his only son and enter me into segregated kindergarten. I was headed for integrated kindergarten, but my parents decided they would sacrifice and come back to the South, before the Voting Rights Act was passed, before the Civil Rights Act was passed, and enter their only son into segregated public schools so that they could take their place beside teachers in rural communities, teaching rural students and many of them farmers and integrating schools in the South.

I was raised on a farm. My whole family comes from farming communities. I often tease folks and say, when I come to the podium, I am not black, I am actually African-American, Tuscaroran (?) and White. My community, my family comes from a free community called Free Union. It's a farm community. Even to this day, all of the land I have is heired land. You all know heired land? Yeah. Somebody passed it down. And I grew up priming tobacco and chopping peanut rows and suckering tobacco and topping tobacco by hand. By hand. My grandmother was the Great Egg Lady, they called her. We grew up when you bought biddies from the, you know what biddies are, right? Am I in the right room? (Audience: yes!) You'd buy those little biddies and you'd go down to the hardware store at that time, the farm store, and you'd buy 100, 200 at that time, and you put a real hot light in a little pen. In my grandmother's house she set them on the plaza. That is called the back porch. That is where the wood stove was. You put them out there because it would keep the little bidders warm and you grow them up,

and you'd better not hurt them because that was not, they were not for eating. They were for producing eggs. I remember when you cooked slop for hogs. You all remember that? You cooked it. You did not, all the scraps off the table, you had to cook it. And you put it in a big pot, and you cook it up, and then you served it to the hogs or gave it to them, slopped it to them as we called it.

And as a farm boy, I believe we live in a time when we need some down home common farm boy moral decency applied to our state of public policy in America. I just believe that. (Applause) We need Amos and Amos's sisters to rise one more time. Let me share some examples that suggest to me that we are in a time of moral crisis. A time of moral crisis, and we need to recover it of moral voice, moral dialogue, moral language. The language of left and right ain't going to get it. It's too limited. We need something deeper.

First of all, we got this reality of the Tea Party Koch agenda, and it's rooted in the politics of fear. I tried to boil down what they believe in, and this is what I got, you all help me with this. Because you know farm boys just want to get it, just give it to me. Here's their basic agenda. If you want a great America. First of all, lie to people when you are running for office. I mean, really lie, all parties may lie a little bit, but really lie. And tell them you're really just about smaller government. But then once you get in office, deny access to public education, deny health care, deny earned income tax credit, deny unemployment benefits, deny living wages, deny minimum wages, deny immigrant rights, deny labor rights, deny LGBTQ rights, deny women's rights. And then, criticize the president, not where he needs to be criticized, but on anything. Even if his wife wants the children to eat vegetables, criticize him on that. Then, refer to him as a thug, weak, a thief, out of order. And then, after you've done all of that and you think people might vote against you, deny the right to vote, do everything you can to suppress it, engage in actions that we haven't seen since Jim Crow. After you've done all of this and created all of this anger and division, then do the final thing that will make America great. And that is: make sure everybody can get a gun easier than they can vote.

That's their whole agenda. And that's a sign to me that we are in a moral crisis. When you can have that kind of agenda and still get 50 percent of the vote in some places, we're in a moral crisis. (Applause). We're in a moral crisis. I know we're in a moral crisis when much of the nation, Democrats and Republicans, still say that what makes you a great President is how you perform when it comes to war and blood. We're in a moral crisis. You can give folks health care, but that doesn't make you great. Even though it is partial health care for what most of us wanted. You can deny immigrants' rights in an immigrant made nation, and then be pushed to engage in war and your poll numbers go up. It's a moral crisis. We're in a moral crisis when you take something like a farm bill, that is not enough in terms of money and true commitment, particularly for the family farms. But in that same farm bill, you're so

cynical that you pit farmers against poor people. You say, “okay, farmers we are going to give you something, but in order for you to support this bill, you got to support us, deny food stamps and other things that go to poor people.” And you pit two vulnerable communities against one another. That’s a moral crisis. It’s a moral crisis when we see southern state after southern state reengaged in what I call ‘modern day interposition and nullification.’ What Dr. King talked about in 1963, two days before my birth, we see it again. He said ‘Down in Alabama a governor whose lips are dripping with the words of interposition and nullification,’ when we see McCorry in North Carolina or Scott in Florida or what’s his name in Georgia, what’s his name, the governor? Neil. Deal! You all got a deal. But when you see these governors and these state legislators, and you see ALEC and the Tea Party coming to the state, and you see all of this interposition and nullification. You get a federal right to Medicaid expansion, but then at the state level it gets blocked. That’s a modern form of interposition and nullification. That’s all that is.

Let me give you an example. Here in North Carolina, when this guy is running for senate named Tom Tillis he made sure that our governor could not even accept Medicaid if he wanted to. They passed it in our general assembly, he was ALEC’s number one legislator a few years ago. He is a Tea Party darling. And they made it that the governor couldn’t go around them as John Kasik had a moment, just a moment of religious epiphany, just a moment, but it happens. They said even if our governor woke up, he can’t do it without coming back through the house. And what did they do? Our state constitution actually says in North Carolina, you can’t engage in laws that contradict the federal or deny people access to those things which the federal law has provided. And yet, we’re fighting it right now. They denied Medicaid expansion in a state where there are 10 to 15 counties in rural North Carolina, east of 95, down where Gary lives on the other side of 95, where the poverty rate has been almost 30 percent for the last 30 years. Not just black people, just 30 percent. It is higher than that for blacks, but just among all people. And in this state, they denied Medicaid expansion for 500,000 people, 2800 people will die this year, 2800. Monday I was in Cleveland County, another rural county in North Carolina, a farming community and in that county alone, there are three ultra-conservatives - we call them ‘extremists who happen to be Republican’ - but down there who voted to deny Medicaid expansion and denied 23,000 of their citizens’ access to Medicaid expansion. And most of ‘em in Cleveland County are white! And they voted for these guys, because they ran telling them they were for prayer in the school and anti-abortion and anti-homosexuality. And they sold them that, but then afterwards, they end up voting in a way that is actually hurting the very people that they support. 1.7 million people in North Carolina that are poor; 700,000 children. Many rural farmers and farm hands need this Medicaid expansion.

Not only that, we are in a moral crisis when politicians will make decisions like this that will close hospitals in rural farming communities. Bob just got off a 276-mile walk with a white conservative

Republican mayor who called us, that's a miracle, who called us to bring the Forward Together movement to Belhaven, AI is the lawyer helping out. Because in Belhaven, that is a rural fishing community, Beaufort County, High County. That's all they do down there. They denied Medicaid expansion has closed a hospital that has been open 60 years. Sixty years. Hurricanes couldn't close it. Floods couldn't close it. Tornados have come all around it and couldn't close it. And yet, the decision, the immoral decision, to deny Medicaid expansion has closed it. And the first person to die when that hospital closed, we gonna get it back open, but the first one to die was a white 38-year-old mother who was 7 minutes from that hospital, but because it closed had to sit in the hospital parking lot in the back of an ambulance for an hour and 45 minutes and died. These decisions prove to me that when this is going on particularly all in the south, the native home of poverty and uninsured, we're in a moral crisis.

We're in a moral crisis when we see the cuts to the public education, particularly in rural communities and farming communities that are already underfunded. In our state alone a billion dollars was cut, 5000 teachers. Where do most of these teachers come from that are being fired? In rural communities. When we see politicians pass laws that will mess up the environment, we are in a moral, moral, crisis. We know where fracking is going to happen. It's going to happen among poor people. It is going to happen near farming communities. We know in our state, for instance, where they put coal ash ponds. They put it in farming communities. They put it near the river, where the rivers help to bring water to the land that grows produce. We've even seen, and we see these same politicians, they run on one agenda, they don't tell people they are going to do all this. They do this after they get in.

In one situation, we went on a poverty tour. You remember AI, went on that poverty tour? And we were down in Duplin County. Anybody know where Duplin County is in North Carolina? Duplin County, you know that's farming right? So down there a group of these politicians, they ran again on prayer in the school, they ran against abortion, they ran against entitlements. And there's a reason I'm saying it because I want to make a point in a minute. And then down in Duplin County, they got in cahoots with this group that said they were producing green energy by burning chicken manure. So they went to the farmers and said, "Listen, we're going to help you. We are going to take all of your chicken manure, we are going to burn it, it's going to make money, you sell it to them, da da da da da. And, we're going to put the plant, though, in the black community." Watch the trickery. "Gonna put the plant in the black community." So, they got some of the white farmers and others to agree. Well, we did a little study. Got with an environmentalist group. Found out that if you take fire and put it to chicken manure, you get airborne arsenic. Airborne arsenic. So, we go down, NAACP, our movement, and some of the farmers, white farmers, at first got real perturbed. You know, here come the NAACP down here disturbing our community. Why don't you stay where you are? This is not a race issue. So, I asked one of them one

night, I said, "I would like to have a conversation with you." "Well, you know, we don't like the NAACP because you all are for this and for this and for this, and you don't believe in this. I assure you that one of those preachers that they are not against homosexuality." I said, "Let's talk about the chicken manure and the fire, not that other stuff." I said now, have you ever thought about this? They put the plant over in the black community near the black farmers, but they're going to build 100-foot smoke stack. And when they light that chicken manure up, the smoke is going up the smoke stack, and it's going to come out the top of the smoke stack, and I don't think there's anything up there 100-feet that is going to keep the smoke over the black community. And the wind is going to catch that arsenic, and it's going to float over. I said, "Now don't you all sell sweet potatoes to Gerber?" "Don't you sell cabbage to Gerber to make baby food?" Yeah, what that got to do with anything? "So, well. What do you think is going to happen when Gerber finds out that your sweet taters, as my grandmother used to call them, are underneath and what is falling on your sweet potatoes is airborne arsenic. "Well, Reverend Barber I think we need to join the NAACP. I think we need to!" My point is we began to have a different conversation. And so you should have seen me riding on the back of a tractor, with a known conservative farmer, who normally we wouldn't be together, but suddenly understood that while a certain group was playing the race card saying they were putting something over here, they were actually engaging in immoral political activity that was going to hurt the whole community.

And then the final thing we know in the moral crisis is this attack on voting rights. I want everybody in here, and I am kind of being prophesory this morning. I want everybody in here to get a copy if you can online of our suit against the State of North Carolina on voting rights, because you need to see what is coming your way. We are the first case after Shelby. While some people thought it was just going after African Americans, inside of our suit, we can prove women, white women, people in rural communities, students. The level at which these folks, the law that they have filed in North Carolina is the worse attack on voting rights and it is the model that they want to use around the country. And North Carolina is the test case for it.

Now, the reason I mentioned those issues, and you said, 'but I thought he was going to come here and talk about land and farming.' I am. Because this is what you do. Do the study, and you will find something interesting. The same people that often pass the policies that support big agribusiness over family farmers are the same people that are voting against public education and health care and living wages and environmental protection and voting suppression and LGBT rights. And what we simply learned here in North Carolina is that if they are foolish enough to vote together, we ought to be smart enough to come together. (Applause).

What we've got to learn, my brothers and sisters, is the intersectionality of these issues and not let people play us against each other OR we must understand the weakness of fighting for isolated issues and operating in your own silo. That might work with corn and peanuts, you put them in their separate silo, but it doesn't work with public policy. You must find allies, and you must find ways to come together.

I was up in Mitchell County, Shirley. Mitchell County is 99% white, 89% Republican. We had had 13 Moral Mondays and we were on our way to Asheville, and I got a call to come to Mitchell County. They wanted me to come up there. They said, "Will you come to Mitchell County?" I said, "Hell no" and hung up the phone." I'm not going up there. Sure wasn't. Mitchell County in 1920 ran every black person out of there because of an alleged rape. Then Vernon Tyson who is the father of Tim Tyson, old man, called me and said "Barber, this movement has got to be bigger than your friends. You've got to go and test and see if the moral language you're using can trans, can, can cut through the divisions of normal politics." So I called Bob, because I know he don't mind dying. (Laughing) And because he knows how to talk to folks that have been in the "class." I did not know we'd meet anybody. I said, I got Al you know, but Al will fight, you know. His house has been bombed. I got two singers. I got my one security guard, he has a little pistol with a rusty bullet; it won't kill you but it will give you gangrene. (Laughter)

I got up that morning, I kissed my wife for about 5 to 10 minutes. I thought I'd get a better laugh. Ain't you'll never had a 10-minute kiss? Sorry. (Laughter) I went to church that morning, I preached because in the rural community if you're a good preacher, this is how you know it: After you are dead, they put a black shawl over the back seat of the pastor's chair. Now if you're no good, they are just going to put it up there over the weekend. So I preached real good, because you at least want it up there 2 weeks; that's the goal. Then you know, well, I was a pretty good preacher. We drove up the mountain, one road in, and got there about 6 o'clock. Came out and the guy said, "Hey Reverend Barber, we're glad you are here. So, now we ain't going to be talking this Republican-Democrat stuff, we just want to hear about the movement." So I said, "fine." He said, "Now first we are going to sing this song, "Blest Be the Tie that Binds." He said, "You know that?" I said, "I know it". He said, "We're going to read the scripture." I said, "What scripture is that?" He said, "About Jesus overturning the tables in the Temple." He said, "Do you know that scripture?" I said, "Yeah, that was the first Moral Monday." Because that happened Monday of Holy Week. And then we proceeded. Bob made a statement, Doc Tyson had gone with us. He made a statement. I talked for about 1 hour and 15 minutes talking about the intersectionality of these issues of economics and education and healthcare and criminal justice and voting. And after about 1 hour and a half, the guy said, "Let me tell you why we're with you. We're Republicans, but we're Lincoln Republicans. We're Eisenhower, we're Teddy Roosevelt-type republicans. We're not extremists. We need education up here in these mountains. We need environmental protections 'cause up here in

these mountains, our water is so important to us, and if you touch our water, they call it 'poking the bear.' I mean, you have really got on their last nerve. We need unemployment because all the textile mills have gone, the railroads are gone, and the companies have gone. We need healthcare Medicaid because a lot of people up here are poor, and they don't have access to healthcare." He said, "Now the reason we invited you up here is, see that guy over there? That's the former chair of the Republican Party. He just resigned in opposition to the extremism. Now, he hasn't become a Democrat, but he has resigned in the direction. We are going to deal with the Tea Party legislator we sent down to Raleigh".

Then they said, "Can we start a chapter in NAACP?" I said, "What in the world are they drinking up here?" What kind of Mountain Dew is up here?" I said, "yeah." They said, "Now this is going to be the most diverse NAACP." I said, "Yeah." Inside of 6 months, they had almost 200 members, and they are radical, I mean more than some of the branches that have been around 50 years. Then about 9:47 that night, they asked this question, and I knew we had a breakthrough. They said, "Reverend Barber, will you lead us on a march?" I said, "Where?" They said, "We are going to march tonight on the house of the Tea Party legislator, as Republicans standing with you and the Moral Monday movement because we have been coming to Moral Monday, and you did not know, we came down there incognito, because we wanted to know if this was truly a moral movement or just another tool of the Democratic Party. And when you criticized both parties, we said, 'we're with that' because we must have a movement that is independent of any party." I said, "Well, we're not going on any march tonight. Because I got to tell you all something. You white folk need to hold up a minute. I know you excited, but black folk don't march at night. Somebody else started that marching at night stuff, and they didn't look like us. I said, but, but if you march in the daytime, will come back. Because when we march, we call everybody; FBI, SBI, we want the cameras there because we done seen too much happen." But if you call us tomorrow, call us back, but tomorrow I'm going to be in Asheville come down. They said, "We'll be there." And the next day, 10,000 people showed up in Asheville. 10,000 people. (Audience applause). Now, you've got to understand, I'm talking about a miracle. You've got the great big blue and gold NAACP signs up there in front of the podium and 10,000 people show up in a city that is less than 2 to 3% black. In western North Carolina where we have never had any branches. But a movement, a Moral Movement that calls people together, not based on what's left and what's right, not based on what is republican and what is democrat, but based on what's right. That talks about what is constitutionally consistent historically, constitutionally consistent, morally defensible, historically accurate and economically sane. Lifting issues and framing them in that way and helping people to understand our interconnectedness is a way in which we have to move.

So I believe deep within our being, there is a longing for the recovery of our moral compass. There is a longing for us to break free of this limited moral discourse in the public square that only says, that only talks about morals when you talk about abortion and homosexuality and LGBT issues, excuse me, prayer in the schools. Some of us know that the cries of our sisters and brothers, like the cry of justice, the acts of caring for the vulnerable and embracing the stranger and healing the sick and protecting workers and farmers and welcoming and being fair to all members of the human family, and educating every child should never be relegated to the margins of our social consciousness. These are not just policy issues. They are not just issues for the left/right debate. These are the centerpieces of our deepest tradition of faith, our values and our sense of morality. And it is time for us to dust off our Constitution and bring forth the deepest values of our faith, not just in the church in some private place, but it's time for Amos to arise and preach in the public square! (Audience applause) And if the farmer clerics will not do it, then let the farm boys and the farm girls do it who say, "I'm not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I know what's right and wrong!" (Applause)

It's time. I believe there is an unction in the earth. I believe there is a calling of the spirit. I believe that there are those of you who fought great battles in the past and the spirit is asking you to suit up one more time. And I believe that those of us who are the beneficiaries of the battles you fought are being called to suit up for the first time! And if all of us will suit up together, we can begin to shift the center of political gravity in this country!

We cannot forget the dream of Dr. King that he never got to realize, not just the dream of 1963, but that dream of that poor people's march. That dream that he was working on 46 years ago when he was organizing farmers and mountain folk and the urban poor, and the Latino community and helping people to understand. Remember that last sermon when he said, "America, if you don't deal with the poor, you're going to hell!" That was not Jeremiah Wright, that was Dr. King! March 18, 1968. Using the parable of Lazarus and Dives and declaring that to ignore the poor means that one day the whole system will collapse and implode. As the words of Coretta Scott King once asked, "What do you think about violence since your husband was killed?" And Coretta said, "You have to expand the conversation about violence. Violence is not just a gun shot, violence is when you lock people in ghettos. Violence is when you don't allow people healthcare, and you take public education and you don't give them a living wage. Violence is when you just take land and steal people's land". And then she said, "And then there is one more form of violence. That is when you're too apathetic to stand up and fight against the violence that you see occurring". (Audience applause).

Even in the halls of academia, I had a moment to study at MIT. They said that is the place where smart folks go. I don't know. They just allowed me as a country boy. But it was interesting that one day I

heard Otto Scharmer come into our class, and he said, “There’s a blind spot in America’s economic policy today, and it’s called conscience.” He said “And everyday we commit ‘attention violence’ against the poor.” Now at MIT, I said, “Dr. Scharmer, you sound like Isaiah.” He said, “Well you know, we don’t talk about that religious stuff.” I said, “You just talked about religion.” You said, “Attention violence.” I said, “Let me tell you what Isaiah said. Isaiah 10 said, “Whoa unto those who pass unjust law and rob the poor of their right and make children and women their prey.” That’s attention violence. We must have a recovery of that language. The greatest myth of our time is the myth of extremism. That is, you can pass a few policies, and you can hurt a certain subset group of people and not hurt us all. And we cannot allow that myth to exist and parade around as the truth.

And so, we have to create a new debate. It calls people to go deeper. We’ve got to have not only a critique of the night, but we’ve got to have a point toward today. And we believe here, finally, it’s called fusion. It’s not even called populism. Because populism in the south can have some interesting dynamics. There was a populism that was pro-segregation. There was a populism that would hang you and then turn around and take pictures of it. There’s a populism that doesn’t deal with the issue of race. As people would say, is it race or class? And AI McSurely and I always say, “It is.” It is. Is it race or class? It is. That’s the answer. It’s both. But fusion movement that grows particularly out of the south. You know, we can’t forget that between 1868 and around 1880 something, the first Reconstruction, black and whites in the rural south came together. We don’t talk about that a lot. That is the model. Not just the Civil Rights. Black and white. Rural folks. Many farmers. Came together and said, “How do we leave the ugly vestiges of slavery?” They said, “well, we have to have first of all common language.” First thing they did in 1868 North Carolina and other places, 10 southern states, they rewrote the Constitutions, and they started with fusion language. Listen, this is the language of 1868 that black and whites put together. Black and white, 1868, 146 years ago.

“We hold it to be self-evident that all the persons are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights among which are life, liberty and the enjoyment of the fruit of your own labor,” because any enjoyment of labor and any labor without the enjoyment of the fruit of it is slavery “and the pursuit of happiness.” Section 2, “all political power is vested in and derived from the people. All governmental rights originate from the people and is founded upon their will only and is instituted is solely for the good of the whole.” And, what did they work on black and white in 1868? They said if you are going to change America, you have to start with the south. What did they work on? Voting Rights. Right to education. You know, most of the southern Constitutions had after 1868 a constitutional right to public education? Farmers and rural folk and black folk did that. Labor rights, they worked on. Fair criminal justice. And tax reform. In 1868, they were saying, we have to have, not tax reform that

lessens taxes, but tax reform that is fair to insure that the government has the kind of money it needs in order to do the things that need to be done by those who have been dispossessed and disenfranchised. But within 4 years, a group rose up called the Tea, sorry I'm in the wrong century, called the Redemption Movement, not the Tea Party, Redemption Movement. And what did the Redemption Movement say? We must redeem America from the influence of fusion. We cannot have all these black and white folks working together, particularly in the south. How did they set that course? The first thing they attacked was voting rights. Second thing they attacked was the courts. They were quietly, they quietly began to change the court at the Federal level particularly. Then they attacked public education. They attacked fair tax policy. The first conversations about "We need to cut taxes and government is too big" came from the Redemption Party that was trying to undermine the first Reconstruction. And then they attacked the leadership, black and white. By 1898, the Reconstruction Movement was over. *Plessy vs Ferguson* was the law of the land.

But then we had another one; the Civil Rights Movement. You know? And never forget. Emmett Till was killed in 1955, some of you all were there. Just a few months after the Brown decision. Emmett Till's mamma decides to be a prophet. I don't know if she was the son of a preacher or a daughter of a preacher, but she decided to be a prophet. Because prophets understand that you cannot let things go unseen. You must expose the ugliness. So she tells the undertaker, "Don't close the casket. Don't put too much powder on my boy. Let them see! Let the world see what racism and ugliness will do if it is not checked!!!" Rosa Parks in one book says she saw that, and she said, "I've gotta do something." When his killers, the killers of Emmett Till were acquitted in September and let off, it was less than two months, October, November, first of December that Rosa Parks sits down and remembers of Till who died on August 28th in defiance begins to change Jim Crow. Eight years later, August 28th on the anniversary of Emmett Till's death, you have the March on Washington. That date was chosen for that reason. Black and white people coming together, not just singing Kumbaya, but talking about jobs, justice and freedom. You have the modern civil rights, but I won't go through all of that history, but you have blacks, and Latinos and whites and women and Catholics and Jews and Muslims all coming together, and it creates this fusion. Well what stops it? The white southern strategy. What do they say? "Well, we can't talk race out in the open. We've got to find code words for race. So let's come up with some code words." Oh yeah, 'forced busing,' 'state's rights,' 'entitlement programs,' 'cutting taxes.' Lee Atwater goes on in 1981, I think it was, in the 80's and does an interview, and it's on Google now. What he actually says, how they plan the strategy because they saw too much of this intersection. And what was the language of that movement? It wasn't democrat, it forced even Presidents to use the language of morality. When Johnson talked about the Civil Rights Act, he had to use the language of morality. Kennedy had to use it. Forced a

new language. Forced a new discussion. But it was undermined by the white southern strategy and the killing and the kind of depression that people suffer post-traumatic syndrome when your leaders are shot.

But now we're in the possibility, I believe, of a third Reconstruction. It's gotta happen. It's got to be - finish the job. It can't be done without the Amoses. Can't be done without the farm boys and farm girls who know something about right and wrong. Can't be done without us having a pro-labor, antipoverty, economic sustainability agenda. Can't happen without us having an education equality agenda and a healthcare agenda and a fairness in the criminal justice agenda and a protecting and expanding voting rights and women's rights and LGBT rights and immigrant rights agenda. And we have to have it together. And that's what we have tried to do here. That's why more than 1000 people went to jail over the last year. And they were made up of all - I saw doctors go to jail with the uninsured. I saw multimillionaires hold hands with the unemployed. I saw Republicans join hands with Democrats. I saw people be able to become human again. I saw white women on the day that Trayvon's killer was acquitted, stand at a Moral Monday rally and grab black women and hug each other and say, "We stand together." When that happens, we create a new narrative. We put a face on the pain of extremism and we point to a higher ground and a better way.

So we've come up with 12 things we believe have to happen:

1. We need to engage an indigenously led grassroots organizing across the state and nation, particularly in the South. I say this with no arrogance, but there's no one leader that's going to come in and stay there. Nobody is going to be able to fly in from Washington and save Georgia. If we are going to build this movement, it's got to be built from the bottom up. It's got to be grassroots indigenous leadership. (Applause). That is why when I go around, people invite me to come teach them the principals of the Forward Together Movement, the first thing I say is: we're not, I'm not here to lead anything because the prophets are here in this land. In fact, prophets are regional. I had a friend of mine call me from Texas. He says, 'Barber, we going come to help you.' I said, "How many members you got in your church?" He said, "5000." I said, "Stay in Texas. You got enough problems right there". We got North Carolina. You need to rise up from Texas.
2. We must use moral language to frame and critique public policy. We cannot be so shell shocked by the religious right that is so wrong, that we throw away the baby with the bath water.
3. We must demonstrate a commitment to civil disobedience. I believe we have to bring civil disobedience back into our movement to snatch away the microphone from the extremists and force a new kind of conversation.

4. We have to build stages to lift the voices of everyday people that are affected by immoral and extremist policies. Not a stage for partisan politics. In Moral Monday, if you're an elected politician, you can't get on our stage, even if you're our friend. I'm actually violating the principal of Moral Monday right now, because normally on Moral Monday, you never stand on a stage by yourself. There's always four people on that stage when we deal with an issue. A cleric to bring a moral critique, a scholar, a person impacted and an activist that's engaged. Always at the podium together.
5. We must build a coalition of moral and religious leaders of faith and we cannot just dismiss all of them. There are still many people who understand and are ready to preach in the public square.
6. We must intentionally diversify the movement with the goal of winning unlikely allies.
7. We must build transformative long-term coalition. One of the things about the Forward Together Movement is, it's not just a bunch of people on a piece of paper, and they're just there until they win their issue. In fact, one day we went into a voting rights piece, and quick and I'm through. There's an 80-year-old lady from Georgia. She's white, a good friend of mine. We were in the legislature. They were talking about voting rights. She leaned over and said, "Barber, let's mess with them today." I said, "What do you mean?" She says, "I'm going up there and talk about black folks. You go up there and talk about white women." I said, "We got you." She said 'because this coalition even if they don't hurt us, we are going to stay here and fight because if it's hurting you, it's hurting us.' So she went to the mike and she says, "I want you all to know, I'm from Georgia." And she pointed. I know exactly what you're doing. I used to hear the same conversation sitting around my granddaddy's table, and you're just wrong. It ain't nothing but racist. So the chairman said, "Ma'am, Ma'am, um, what issue are you speaking to?" She said, "I am speaking to the issue of what you all are doing to black folk. Don't you understand?" And he just looked bewildered because this is an old 80-year-old, white woman. When I went to the mike I said, "Sir, while I am the president of the NAACP, I'm here today to talk about how these new voting laws are hurting white women and black women and women in general." One of the legislators said, "Reverend Barber, are you going to say anything about the race thing?" I said, "My sister already took care of that." But the point is, we have got to force some kind of conversation other than what we see as the talking heads on MSNBC and CNN. We've got to say there's a different coalition that's rising now.
8. We must make serious commitment to academic and empirical analysis of policy. Because as my daddy said, "The worst thing you can do is be loud and wrong." (Applause)
9. We must use social media coordination in all of its forms.
10. We must engage in voter registration and voter education.

11. We must raise up a cadre of moral legal advocates, because we must be of a strong legal strategy that accompanies our moral strategy in the street.
12. We must resist a “one moment” mentality. These folks are not scared of us having one rally. They will actually have a picnic while you having a rally. You have one great big rally; they have a picnic sit right there. And when you leave, they’ll go right back inside and pass whatever bills they want to. But if we come together in a fusion movement, I believe we can reshape the political landscape and shift the center of political gravity. Somebody say Together. (Together) That’s the power together when our protests and our legal arguments and our movements look like this room, in all of this beauty and all of this diversity and when farmers are standing with teachers and teachers are standing with farmers and environmentalists are standing with healthcare advocates and healthcare advocates are standing with LGBT community and LGBT community is standing with the Civil Rights community, and the Civil Rights community is standing with the immigrant community and the anti-war folks are standing with those who are anti-unjust tax policy, when we ALL get together, that’s when we win. That is when we change America. Not just change one election, but we change the very consciousness of this country. And isn’t that how you all do it? Isn’t that how you farmers do it? One plows, one plants, one waters, but when you get it all together, then God gives the increase.

So, thank you. But like farmers, we must help this world, this country recover the dream. Farmers are dreamers. Am I right? I know you’re dreamers because I picked up this book, The Courage to Hope. That’s a dream. That’s what farmers do. You have to have faith. Farmers, you plant in expectation. You pray in expectation. You put stuff in dirt and cover it up, and then have enough faith that a little teeny seed is going to push its way up out of the dirt and become something. Huh? Bury it in dirt with a dream that the dirt is not going to kill it or suffocate it. But in fact, the dirt is going to become a place of its greatest manifestation. Amos was a farmer and a dreamer even in the midst of great injustice. Couldn’t help himself. He was a famer. And every now and then the sons of farmers, like on my father’s side, and every now and then I dream too.

I want to share with you something I wrote. One day I was out on my land that my grandmother passed down to me. My grandmother wouldn’t allow my daddy to pick cotton. She picks extra cotton so he could stay in school and eventually get his degree from Elizabeth City State University. One day I was out on that land thinking about that old lady and how she farmed and how my uncles did. I had a little dream. I want to share it with you. I believe it’s a dream for our times.

It says this. “What is life? Is it to be dreamed about, to be lived? Perhaps both. Maybe our dreaming determines our living to some degree and yet so much tries to kill our dreams, snatch our dreams, take away our dreams, cover our dreams, defer our dreams and keep our dreams from reality.

Maybe then, we must fight for and pray for and ask God to grant us the gift of dreaming afresh and anew. Maybe we must learn once again how to dream God's dreams. Dreaming, hoping and delighting in the things of God, freshly poured out upon our hearts and the minds like the morning dew. How we need it so in our world and in our nation. And if we dream right, perhaps then we will live right and then we will know the answer to the inquirer's question, What is life? Is it to be lived or dreamed about or both? The spirit of God brings the gift of dreaming into the new. What God has hoped becomes even at first just in our thoughts a new reality. We begin to see and dream in the now what God has always wanted since the beginning. God's dream becomes our desire when the spirit is at work. So spirit blow. Men may never understand, women may never understand, but this is what happened deep in the soul place of Amos and Isaiah and Holda and Esther and Sojourner and Mary and Martin and Mega and Malcom and Harriet and Fanny Lou and Mandela. What moved them and so many others? God's dream! By the spirit come take a look at God's dream. The cow laying down with the bear. Children playing over the hole of a snake. Lions and lamb frolicking together. God's dream. Humanity redeemed. Grace imparted. Pain pushed away. Tears wiped. Death vanquished. The hungry fed. The hurting healed. Justice ruling. Righteousness prevailing. Deliverance completed. Satan snagged. God's dream what a wonder, what a look. Our lives are transformed when we dream God's dream. We can never stop dreaming. No longer mere Monday Movement, away with despair, life without a purpose. We rise, now captivated and controlled by God's dream. And so it seems, our dreams determine our living and we live because of our dreams. O' spirit of the living God, just as you did with Amos, just as you did with the farm hand, and you caused him to dream a dream of justice and fight for it even in the midst of injustice. Invade, invade, invade, invade us once again, invade the nightmarish corners of our mind. Loose the prophetic floor into the depths of our being with God's dreams, so that we might live anew, we might live afresh, and we might change the world." (Long applause)