

[MUSIC PLAYING] Dr. King was here, right here at this very church. He asked the question, who will go with me on the last leg of this movement? Who will go with me?

Dogs bit people. Lives were lost. A lot of folk went to jail.

I feel that my generation was a chosen generation.

After the Civil Rights era, people did kind of go to sleep. And you've awakened and say, hey, wait a minute. This thing is not fixed. It's not just in Birmingham, Alabama. We're dealing with something in America.

Neighborhoods ravaged by drugs. Young people getting killed. Mass incarceration. Tearing apart of the black family.

I'm just going to be honest with you. I'm angry.

The monster is the same.

We have our ideology. We have our hopes. We have our dreams.

And we have the future that we want to see. And what do we use to get it? Anything and everything.

The younger people think they know it all, and then you've got the older people who think they know it all.

Yup.

But just imagine what an impact that would make if you put those two know-it-alls together.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

We're sitting in 16th Street Baptist Church, the site of many Mass meetings. It is probably best remembered, regrettably, for the bombing that took place on September 15, '63. Four girls were killed in the bombing.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

It's sometimes very emotional for me. Brings back a lot of memories. It makes me remember how important the movement was, and is, and why we can't forget what it took to get where we are. Even though we haven't arrived.

How did we let this happen? How did these mass movements such as the Civil Rights Movement become OK, we're good now?

There's all these barriers that you fought so hard for us not to deal with them, but we still have to overcome them.

We're angry. As youth, we're angry. We are now dealing with cops who have no problem taking us out. And even if it's on Facebook, they're still going to get away with it.

Winning the right to vote. Pushing past Jim Crow laws and integrating public places and schools. I think that the mechanism that we were fighting against also evolved. Instead of overt racism, you have institutionalized racism-- a much more sneaky, pervasive racism.

To me, Black History Month is a joke. You don't teach history of a certain group of people one time a year, OK? The Civil Rights Movement wasn't just for black people. It was for civil rights for everyone.

Unfortunately, the dominant society, which is the white supremacist institution that governs most of these states and schools, doesn't like to acknowledge just how bad things were, and is, here.

How do you fight an institution like that?

Take their law and use their laws against them.

That hasn't worked. We've been doing that. That hasn't worked. We need to be simultaneously disrupting that system while we're making sure that the system that we're creating works, so by the time that this one crumbles, we already have one that works.

I agree with that.

I'm no longer interested in operating within the system that was not made to serve us. So if you're not listening, so we shut down your freeway. Oh, you're inconvenienced. I'm sorry you're inconvenienced. My life is inconvenienced because I was born in a black body.

I understand your frustration. And you can see that I have similar frustration. We just handle it differently.

We believed in what we stood for. Today, it's so hard for me to figure out what our young people are standing for. When we had tragedies, we didn't use weapons. We didn't go out and throw fire bombs into the stores. With all of this that you see today, as a young person, my question to you-- do you think that we're going about this, or they're going about this, in a positive way?

Many people, including myself, believe in being prepared. Because these days, if you're going to take me out, I'm not going to make it easy for you. I want to have kids and live for them and tell this story. So many martyrs from your movement did not get to live their story or tell it.

It's not fair that for half of a century, nonviolence has been the response to violent, terrible, destructive acts.

I still believe that nonviolence is the way. I believe that. I lived that. I still live that.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Reverend James Bevel, who was a member of Dr. King's cabinet, went to Dr. King and put this suggestion on the table. Dr. King had a fit. Not the children!

No, no, I'm not hearing it. We're not going to put those children lives on the line. Well, Meatball, and James Bevel, and a few others, Hosea Williams out of Atlanta, went back to the drawing table. And the first thing that they thought about-- well, the policemen and the KKKs probably wouldn't kill our children as fast as they would an adult.

So with my generation, now we're dealing with a police state that doesn't have a problem killing children. Adopting nonviolence, and something were to happen to us, and we don't have any type of way to not necessarily retaliate, but be prepared to protect ourselves-- I don't want to have that way. And I can only imagine what the leaders of your movement felt when activists or other volunteers died

on your watch. So I don't know what to do with that. How do you implement that, knowing-- or is it just not being afraid to die?

[MUSIC PLAYING]

I guess another thing that we had in the 60s-- we could identify with a leader, someone who was setting the course. I don't see that, I'm not aware of that, with the millennials. Who's in charge?

I think that leadership-- to be honest with you, it does beg room for improvement with our generation. But also, can we, in this day and age, operate with a leader in the forefront? Tupac-- he was a leader.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a leader. Malcolm X was a leader. But where are they all now?

They're dead.

They're dead. And many of them that are named were assassinated. So is it safe to have a leader that's in the forefront?

It's not safe.

And I believe that a lot of millennial organizers feel the same. So finding a way to practice leadership without holding that in the public eye position.

It feels like our generation-- and there are people that are rising up that think like me, that can carry your torch and be where you all were mentally, which is, y'all were untouchable. Y'all were out there getting hosed, and y'all were unfazed. Y'all were singing in the paddy wagon on the way to jail. I know people that would be crying in front of the paddy wagon--

They thought we were crazy!

I know.

And you know what, though? That's just like, Mother used to tell us, you treat people with kindness-- it'll hurt them more than if you can beat them with 10 sticks.

Mm-hm.

And I know it's hard. And believe me, when I turn on the TV, or Facebook, and see all that happen-- honey, I have to just turn it off, because it does something to me, too. But now, you have to ask yourself, what are we going to do?

Instead of trying to get in, we're trying to get out and moving back toward this abolitionist type of feel of knocking down systems. Do we push for policy against the electoral college? Or do we organize a political party? There are so many different ways to deal with something now that we're in.

We're in the system. We have our right. We can register.

But now, we're dealing with apathy. We need to have as many people that were at those Mass meetings today, filling the chambers, being in city council meetings, paying attention. We need that.

There are going to be a variety of obstacles and walls to overcome. But coming together and sharing beliefs, interests, and values-- that's the first step. And the Civil Rights Movement has shown us that even the most marginalized, oppressed people can do this.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Not a Mass meeting ended without us singing, "We Shall Overcome." And the chain link bonding meant so much. That meant we held onto each other to protect each other, and we were not going to let each other go.

Thank you.

You want to sing that one?

Sure. But I don't know it.

(SINGING) We shall over--

Oh, yes, I do. I'm sorry.

Everybody know that. They know that in China.

[LAUGHING]

(SINGING) We shall overcome. We shall overcome. We shall overcome someday.

My generation says "today."

Today. All right.

(SINGING) But deep in my heart, I do believe we shall overcome today.

[MUSIC PLAYING]