

**Intro remarks on current “Movement Moment” – 6/14/20 - TORIE OSBORN**

Well, we are in unprecedented times. A neo-fascist president. A killer virus he ignores. 40 million unemployed. A widespread national uprising in response to the police murder of George Floyd --in the streets of big cities and small towns – now going on 22 days -- EVERYWHERE! – unprecedented since the 60s I’m reminded that change can happen very quickly when it’s time. And it’s time!

I’ve never not attended a protest - but I’m staying away from crowds – due to age and health issues – But I have been moved to hear something I haven’t heard since the 60s civil rights movement: “I’m willing to risk my life to protest.” There were many of us whose lives were changed by those words in the 60s, and to hear them again is unbelievably moving.

That level of determination is unstoppable.

You guys are gonna talk about specific actions -- I plan to learn from you – so I want to use my timeHERE to give 3 lessons from my 50+ years of social justice activism that are highlighted by this moment.

1. THIS IS “A ONCE IN A GENERATION” OPPORTUNITY FOR DEEP CHANGE:

One of my mentors, Bernice Johnson Reagon, once said to me (I treasure that email!): “The next great movement will make the 60s seem like a picnic.” She knew of what she spoke. One of the “Freedom Singers” who traveled with Dr. King, then founder and the Rock of SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK for many years, she was a sage on justice like no other.

And, If you haven’t seen it, each of you should find 15 minutes and watch Billy Porter’s “Message to America” on YouTube, from June 5. It says it all.

A once in a generation time for real change.

2. We MUST do both PROTEST and POLITICS. Bayard Rustin, the gay man who was Dr. King's right hand and organized the 1963 March on Washington – in 6 weeks with no internet or even fax machines! -- Rustin often despaired of my generation's distrust and detachment from ELECTORAL POLITICS. We placed our faith in people, in social movements, in grassroots protest. Arguably this is my generation's greatest – near lethal – political error – it allowed for the organized rightwing backlash to our progress on justice to take over the Republican party and take POLITICAL POWER – for the past 40 years. We went for persuasion; they went for power. We won hearts and minds, but they took political power without honoring the will of the majority – which we had organized to our side through our progressive social movements. WE NEED PROTEST – AND -- we need those PROTESTERS TO VOTE AND HELP BUILD THE BLUE VOTE when the “movement moment” recedes.

3. FINALLY -- BEWARE the TENDENCIES of this “movement moment” to fragment as it dies down. Beware infighting (it's been called the luxury of the powerless!). Beware provocateurs – especially those Russian bots. Beware OUR OWN POLITICAL PURISM – OPPRESSION SICKNESS – where we attack each other if we slightly disagree with the most radical point of view – this has diminished the power of every progressive movement I've been part of. Hold space with love for learning and difference of opinion.

IT'S A LONG TIME TILL NOVEMBER. Stay focused. Keep organizing. We MUST WIN POLITICAL POWER IN NOVEMBER! Keep your eyes on the prize! I end with my favorite quote – from June 6, 1966, Capetown, by Robert F. Kennedy Jr, in a speech to South Africa's UNION OF STUDENTS – a radical act back then.... It is from the numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is

shaped. Each time one stands up for an ideal or ..... strikes out against injustice, she or he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring these ripples build a current than can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression.”

Onward!