



Reverend Barber Q & A

Alicia Harvie: Okay. So what we'll do, if you have a question, say who you are and what work you do, and then we'll do the conversation. Does anyone have something they want to throw out there or throw to the discussion? Okay, sounds better? Okay, so what we'll do is raise your hand if you are interested in asking a question or throwing something out for discussion. Just say who you are and where you're from and who you work with, and we will continue the conversation. Does anyone want to start? There are a lot of not shy people in this room so someone. I know. Laughing. Are we shy? Alright.

Reverend Barber: You know, sometimes farmers come to a place where there's no more time for talking, it's time for plowing. It sounds like maybe they want to do some plowing, you know, it's time to go to work. So, are there any? I just want not to be rude if there are any, even criticisms because I think we grow when we have conversation together. All right. Yes ma'am, yes ma'am.

Rhonda Perry: My name is Rhonda Perry. I'm a farmer from Missouri and we've got a whole crew of farmers here today. We are so glad to be here. That's one of the most impressive things I think a lot of us have seen going on in a long time in North Carolina. We talk about you frequently. We're organizing the same kind of base in Missouri and we think it's absolutely fabulous. And I don't think that any of us from the Missouri contingency can offer anything but great hope for your work here and our work in Missouri. And I assume you all are passing Medicaid expansion this year and we are passing Medicaid expansion this year. We are confident.

I did have one question that I just didn't get written down, and I thought this was really important. You had 4 things you were calling for that are "historically accurate" and three things that I did not get. If you wouldn't mind laying those four things out to us again, I think that would be really helpful for us to carry forward our work in places like Missouri. Thank you so much for sharing the work you're doing here with the work that we're all doing in our states. Thank you.

Reverend Barber: Thank you so much. We are not passing Medicaid expansion. We are fighting for it because, as I said, our legislature denied it. The very guy that is running for the Senate, Thom Tillis, who wants to be a United States Senator now, has actually been against Medicaid expansion and has said that raising the minimum wage is a dangerous idea. So, we are challenging that. We are actually looking

at, and some of our lawyers are looking at the possibility of some civil suits because we actually can point to people now who are going to die this year.

In fact, there was a young lady, Crystal Price, who sat in our Speaker's office for twelve hours before she was arrested with 15 other people. She has 3 children; she works in fast food; she has cervical cancer. Because she works for some, she can't afford the paying part of the "Affordable Care Act" and because Medicaid expansion is denied, she can't receive it. She met Bob in Washington, DC, and she has committed to say that if she's got to die, she is going to leave a witness of her children of fighting for what is right. She has said that she is going to be out here. She has said to us if she dies, she hopes that our legal team will find a way to sue those who have literally caused her death by a political act. That's morbid, but that's how real it is getting. We can point to person after person that's doing that.

In language, there's a book called, "The Theology of Race" I think it is by a guy at Duke. I can't recall his last name; it will come to me in a minute. But he has a whole chapter on how language is either a tool of deliverance or a tool of oppression, a tool of liberty or a tool of domination. So one of the things we have learned in this movement is that if you don't start with the right language, you can't build a right movement. That's why we say what we need is an indigenously led, deeply moral, deeply Constitutional, anti-racist, anti-poverty, pro-justice, state-based, state government focused transformative fusion coalition. Now you say, 'that's a lot.' But we say: 'you got to have your language right because the language focuses you.' And each piece of that language means something; deeply moral, deeply Constitutional, transformative, indigenously led. You know, some people got mad with us because when we started with the Moral Movement 8 years ago, some folk, and I'm saying this carefully, some people think they're national leaders because they got a P.O. Box in Washington, DC. So, when we got the stage built, they wanted come and jump on the stage, and we said, "No." So we got called being arrogant. It wasn't about being arrogant. It was, we recognized that the people here had to jail. Because they're going to be here. Our argument is that we need to build these movements throughout the South. People always talk about the March on Washington. I wasn't there, because I was in my mother's womb. I said, the joke in my family is that I said, 'I'm going to wait until after you all March, and then I will come.' Because my mother went into labor on the 28th, but then I said, "Hold up a minute." But when you study it, people forget there were people in jail in 200 cities. And you know, sometimes people get caught up in the hoop of a preacher and miss the subject. Dr. King actually gave us the strategy.

And then Charles and David Koch stole our profit strategy. He said, go back to Alabama. Go back to Georgia. There's an article in "Time" a few weeks ago that said: The Far Right. Charles Koch did a speech in 1974. Charles Koch, the son of Freddy Koch, and he outlined a state strategy. While at the same time progressives went from building a movement, to backing Messiah candidates. And the problem

with that is, it's not that you shouldn't be politically active, but if you build your movement totally around a candidate, if the candidate wins, the infrastructure goes because then you turn it all up. But if the candidate loses, the infrastructure goes. Charles Koch said, if we build a movement, we'll produce candidates. He took, I mean, they read our stuff, and I read their stuff. I've learned. Some of our movement is built around Jesse Helms. I know you are all going to kill me for saying that. I think they may be reporting him, but that's all right. Jesse Helms told me one time, I went to his office about something. He said, "Y'all come on in here. Have some of these cookies and tea." I was up there with a bunch of clergy. He said, "You know I'm not going to vote for what you all want, but you're welcome in my office because I am your Senator." I said, this man is. So I asked him. I'm just crazy I said, "Senator Helms, why do you talk like that?" He says, "Well son, I don't need but 51%." That is what he said. And you know, I thought about that, and I said, you know a broke clock can be right twice a day. (Laughing). It is. And what he was in essence saying, if I build a coalition that can get me to 51%, I win. Now I don't mean, I'm not one who believes you leave out the other 40, but my point is that the extremists learn something. David Koch, Charles Koch said "Let's go to the states. Let's take over state capitals. We can determine who's in the Congress. We determine who is in Congress; we can stop any President. In fact, we'll give you a President. We can stop any President." So every transformative movement in this country started from Montgomery up, from Birmingham up, from Greensboro up. It did not start from here, down. So that is the first point.

Second, the language framing is this. We believe we have to critique public policy and point out where that policy is Constitutionally inconsistent, morally indefensible, historically inaccurate and economically insane. Those four, and that allows people who may not be with you in a political party room to come in. See? That's why, I don't call our state legislatures Republicans. I just refuse to do that. What we do instead is point out that they are not Republicans, by lifting up Teddy Roosevelt and Eisenhower's letter to his brother and Jackie Robinson's stance for Civil Rights and Benjamin Hook's and my granddaddy and, huh, Lincoln. Then what we say is, "They represent extremism." We point out the fact that when the legislators here cut earned income tax credit, they made Ronald Reagan look like a liberal. So rather than just call them a Republican, we reverse it and try to use it against them and say, listen, Ronald Reagan supported earned income tax credit, so now if you can't even support earned income tax credit, you make Ronald Reagan look like a liberal, you are very extreme. That's what allows us to talk to some people who otherwise wouldn't be with us. Am I making any sense?

Then the five areas... There are five areas. There's detail in there, but five areas that we believe connect us. One of the things that we argue is, I'm about tired, I told NAACP this, I go every year to the NAACP conference to figure out their agenda. I'm about sick of the blue, green and yellow dots. You go

to the meeting, and you sit there. Every year you figure out the same agenda. Nobody ever talks about a movement to get the agenda done. So I'm saying, aren't we at a point yet where we can agree on some basic things? So we said there're five areas.

1. Pro-labor, anti-poverty policies that create sustainability. I'll send this to you. By fighting for employment, living wages, the alleviation of disparate unemployment, a green economy, labor rights, affordable housing, targeted empowerment zones especially in rural and farming communities, strong safety net services for the poor, fair policies for immigrant, infrastructure development and fair tax reform.
2. Educational equality by ensuring every child receives a high quality, well-funded, constitutional, diverse public education.
3. Healthcare for all by ensuring access to the Affordable Care Act as it is, growing it, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and Environmental Protection.
4. Fairness in the criminal justice system by addressing the continuing inequalities in the system against black, brown and poor white people.
5. Protecting and expanding voting rights, women's rights, LGBT rights, immigrant's rights and the fundamental principle of equal protection under the law.

What I said before, can't we agree on that dream? Now we can work out the specific policies, but can't we at least coalesce around those five things and critique public policy based on whether they come up to those values or beneath those values and have a discussion that is not so much about, as I said, left, right, Republican and Democrat, but it's about right and wrong. I think the public is so, a lot of these are stories. I'm in Iredell County. Do you know where Iredell County is? It's up near Statesville. That's where they were so ruthless that when the Freedom Riders went through there they poured acid. Another one of those places. We talk about how it happened in Florida. But this happened in Statesville too. They poured battery acid on some Freedom Riders. Anyway, Iredell County is another one of those.

I'm going to tell you a story that happened. So we went up to have a Moral Monday. In fact, we've had 75 now since last April. We've had 125 actions, 75 straight Mondays. I just left my friends from Cleveland County where they made us have the rally facing the Confederate statue that said 'unless we forget' about 300-400 black and white people showed up this past Monday in the town where Thomas Dixon is from, who wrote The Clansman that was the script of the movie "Birth of a Nation." And yet we saw America in its finest, didn't we? On Monday night.

I went to Iredell County and I was up speaking on stage about these issues. Had just heard a black Democrat and a white Republican who are union leaders stand up there together against our Administration using this moral language. So I was speaking and in the middle of my speech - I have

never had this happen in the black church - this white lady who was standing on stage with me said, "Reverend, I've got something to say" and reached for the mike. Now that's kind of unusual, but the cameras were rolling and I couldn't tell her no. Then as she was reaching she said, "And I am a Republican." I said 'boy they done set me up here.' What could I do? An older white woman Republican reached for the mike, so I am thinking what in the world is this lady going to say? She says, "Reverend Barber, I'm a nine generation Republican. I'm sick of these Republicans." That's it, turn the mike up! She said, "You're exactly right. These folks are not Republicans. My granddaddy was a Republican. My granddaddy used to stand at that voting place to make sure black people got their right and back up the red shirts. And I am sick of them." She said, "They just wrong." She said, "I went to jail, Reverend Barber, because I don't know half the people, thousands of them." I said, "you did?" She said, "I sure did and when do you want me to go back?" She said, "'cause I can go everyday. I am retired. Because I'm sick of them." She said 'we're organizing up here too.' Then she said, "And another thing," she said "if they ever criticize you again about 'you all just want welfare,' you come get me. I'm welfare queen number one. I want all of my Social Security. I want everything." Now, you've got to imagine. The news station is freaking out. Because they have never seen anything like this. It is a stage, a black and white, and now this woman is taking over. Then she said, "Now you can finish." In Iredell County. Now imagine, the Republican Governor is right inside meeting with the Chamber of Commerce. But using this new model, and I am not euphoric about it, I know it's got problems, but in that moment.

Now something else happened that night. I'm standing on stage, finishing my sermon after she interrupted it. And all of a sudden, the people on stage moved close like real close to me. And I am like, what? When I speak I've go to, you know. But they close. So after I finished, my security guy says, "Get off stage. There's somebody out there with a gun." I said "What?" He said, "Just move, Reverend Barber." So we moved. They moved me to the car, get me in the car and later on I found out that the SBI or somebody had put a plain-clothed guy with a sniper, but didn't tell us. But here's the thing, 'cause the Governor was there and I guess. The fact that those black and white people didn't move. They heard security saying it's a gun. Instead of moving and they never met me before, in Iredell County, they came closer. In essence saying, "in order to get to him, you got to get to us." It's possible. It's possible. We've done some other things. A couple of weeks, we left a movement because we wanted to make sure it was not just about one leader. Folks said, "Reverend Barber, Moral Monday, you not going to be there?" "No, I am not going to be there." They said, "What's going to happen?" I said, "What's going to happen is our movement has depth. It has depth. And we believe as you said that this kind of, but it ain't a normal coalition, but this kind of fusion, fusion can happen all over the South. In fact, it must happen I believe. It must happen." That's too long, I'm sorry. Yes. I'm going to put this mike up. Anybody? Uh oh. Shirley, you've got to tell me when to sit down now.

Maria Calderon: Let me just tell you how much I enjoyed your speech. I wanted to ask you if the lawsuit you have going on against the voter suppression, is it going to take effect before this election or how's that going to work?

Reverend Barber: The voter suppression?

Maria Calderon: Or the lawsuit you have to stop those laws?

Reverend Barber: Well, we go back. Al, when's the week, the fourth circuit? September 25th in Charlotte. The fourth circuit is now taking up the ruling of the judge in the middle district. We believe his ruling was bad, it was bad law, a bad ruling. We're hoping that the fourth circuit will, in fact, give us an injunction. We're operating in two places. We're acting as though they may not, and we're dreaming and hoping that they will. What we're doing, we had 47 young people, 40 young people in 47 counties doing Moral Freedom Summer, modeling it after Freedom Summer. Registering voters. We have all of our chapters and coalition people engaged in voter registration. They know exactly what they are doing because North Carolina had the highest turn out, increase in turn out, the fourth highest increase in turn out in voting in the last few presidential elections. So the extremists in this community know that if the vote is high, they can't survive.

Now there's one narrative though that we are trying to defeat. And I say to my progressive friends, "You've got to, don't do 'racism light'." I don't like it when I see it, where they keep blaming how this election goes on black people. You know, the black vote turn out. The fact is North Carolina is 3 to 1 Democrats. So you're not going to hang that on black people. Now black people ought to turn out and surely 400,000 of us that voted in 2008, 2012 shouldn't sit out in 2014 like we did in 2010. But, elections in North Carolina whether they go Democratic or Republican are not because of what black people do, it is about party switching. Remember Jesse Helms survived in this state for years, not because, because people switched parties, that's what happened. So, again, our movement. Our movement has criticized even Democrats. In fact, the Forward Together Movement started when Democrats when in office. Don't ever forget that. It started in 2006. We had to battle Democrats to get same-day registration or early voting. We had to battle Democrats to get a minimum wage hike. It took ten years with Democrats in office to get this state to raise the minimum wage; ten years. Even though the Republicans had taken us to 49th in the nation, even with Democrats in the office, we were 46th in public education and we had to sue Democrats on the state law in order to win the Leandro case to make Democrats put more money in rural schools where farmers are. So, that's why we believe there has to be a Moral Movement. You know, folks are always saying, "Well, Reverend, when are you running for Governor?" Not! You know, we need to do similar to what the far right did. We need to be a movement and let the movement produce. Everybody can't go inside the belly of the beast because the belly will contaminate you. It has its

own acids. It's designed, the belly is designed to dissolve you. (Laughing) I mean, it is. If you eat anything, it has certain kinds of intestinal fluid. So somebody has to be able to operate on the belly, you know. And that's an important role.

The problem is, we sometimes have made voting the end all of everything. Like people say, "Well, Reverend Barber, if the Forward Together Movement doesn't win this fall, what good was what you did?" Are you crazy? They didn't win. You know, in the sixties, they did not change all of the people who were elected. They changed the context in which the elected folk had to operate. We went, last year when we started, the Governor was at 50%; now he is at 30% in the fall. The legislator was at 40%, and now they are at 17%. When we started, 40%, I think of North Carolina, maybe a little bit more than that, believed in Medicaid expansion. After we shifted the conversation, now 58% of the North Carolinians believe in Medicaid expansion. So there has to be a movement that changes the consciousness. It's not just about the election, but is about the kind of decisions people elect to make based on the information they have and the awakening that they have, I think.

Carolyn Mugar: Reverend Barber, I want to take a chance here, but I don't think it is a chance at all. First of all, we are extremely, extremely grateful for your, not just your presence, but for your leadership. But if I heard you right, what you're saying is that our job is that everybody has to be a leader. If there is anything that we have to do here today, it's to build up and be strong. I want you just to turn around with your back to the audience, and I want you to know that everybody is going to stand behind you, and they're going to move forward. So everybody stand up, and we are the same as those people that had come together to protect you that night.

Reverend Barber: Thank you so much. (Applause) While you're standing up, this has nothing to do, well, you all don't know how much that means because tomorrow Al and I have got to go to Bladenboro where we have had the allegation of a 17-year-old being hung. A 17-year-old African American boy was hung in Bladenboro, North Carolina. And the allegation right now is because he was in an interracial situation. We don't have all of the facts. If it's true, and it's sad that you almost don't want it to be true, that it's something else, something else happened, if it's true, it may be bigger than Ferguson. So prophetically for you to do that means more than you know. Not for me, I wanted my son, 'cause my son asked me the other day, he said, "Daddy, how do you keep from being angry?" He was in Florida 10 miles from Sanford when that happened. He just visited the death site of Mike with me in Ferguson. He said, "Daddy, how do you keep?" This is how it happens son. You find community of people who still have a sense of that humanity. And they become your inspiration, they become your protection, but they also help you. They're like buoys. They're like life preservers in the midst of the troubling waters. And so, I'm glad. She didn't know, but in that moment, you were acting prophetically.

Because, I hope, in what she just did, they did to your father, you actually see in living, breathing color how it is that you save your life and keep your mind in this crazy world. You've got to find the community that will embrace you through the good and through the bad. (Applause)

Carolyn Mugar: Would you say a blessing for the lunch?

Reverend Barber: A blessing for the lunch. I'm going to bless with the scripture from Hebrews 10:39, and ask you to say it with me. Paul said it in the midst of troubling times. It is said that Dr. King said this to E.D. Nixon when his house was burning down and he looked at Dr. King and said, "What now?" I don't know if that story is true, but it's out there in the folklore, and it simply says this. Repeat after me.

Reverend Barber and Audience Repeating: We are not of those who shrink back onto destruction, but we are those who persevere onto the saving of the soul. Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. God bless us with the courage to hope. Amen.

(Applause)