



Introductions

Carolyn Mugar: Sometimes it's hard to know the times we're living in. To figure it out we can ground ourselves in where we are. We can look at the land we're on and see where we are. And we can look around and see who is around us.

In 1985, Willie Nelson saw the hurt and loss across America's farmlands. He acted and brought people together. From there we could begin to lift up the veil and see the reasons our farmers were forced off the land. And what we can do about it.

When Farm Aid decided to come to North Carolina this year for our annual concert and festival, we knew where we were coming...and where we are. Most simply, North Carolina sits in the southeastern United States where there is the most profound history of misuse and abuse of human beings and where there are the most moving profound and inspirational examples of the ability of human beings to rise up together to be more human, more compassionate, more courageous and more intelligent than their oppressors.

Today by exploring this place where we gather together as we honor this place, we will unavoidably connect back to different eras and different chapters of this same struggle; especially the struggle grounded very specifically in the land, and the people who work the land. And, we believe, we will come out with a newer clarity about the time we live in and where we are. And, we hope a new calling for where we are going and how we can get there and who we will work with. On behalf of all of us a Farm Aid, we want to welcome you profoundly to this gathering. Deep thanks to the people in this room who are on the committee who worked very hard to bring this together. I want to introduce Alicia Harvie with whom I work at Farm Aid. She is going to elaborate just a little bit. I thank you all so much for taking the trouble to come. We know that each and every one of you participants could be a panelist and could be and will be and are leaders. Thank you. (Applause).

Alicia Harvie: Good morning. How is everyone doing? You all look bright and chipper. That's good. Yeah, so to echo first and foremost what Carolyn said, hugely, feeling honored and humbled by the group of people in this room - those we know and those that we are going to be getting to know today. It is really an amazing opportunity to come together, and I think just to say something like Carolyn says all the time, "This is really part of Farm Aid's DNA". It is Willie's way to listen and to really absorb who is

in front of them and where he is. That is how Farm Aid started. It is in that spirit that we come here today and hope it is a spirit everyone is carrying with each other today to really take in and honor this place that we are in and learn from it and really know its history. Because I think from there we will move forward together as people who are leaders in food and farming with a different kind of clarity and probably a different sense of urgency about what we need if we are really going to reach our goals. I want to take a moment to say some thank yous.

I want to thank this amazing space, Cobblestone Hall, and the person who manages it, Donald Marler, who I believe is up there somewhere listening to us. This space is really interesting. It is in its centennial year, so it was created in 1914 in the City Market Hall area was the original farmer's market in Raleigh, and this is in the process of being refurbished and this whole area is in the middle of a renaissance and rebirth, really rooted in a huge way in farmers and in food. So, I think that is really nice, and I want to acknowledge that and the space for allowing us here today. I also want to thank Beth Early and 214 Market Street Catering who are providing our food today, and of course, thanking our planning committee who worked so hard and on so many phone calls and everyone who is a panelist. I will specifically call out people. Thank you to Cornelius Blanding from Federation of South Cooperatives, Savi Horne from Land Loss Prevention Project, Scott Marlow from the Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, Shirley Sherrod from Southwest Georgia Project, Michael Sayer from Southern Echo and other Farm Aid folks who also bore with the process, which is great.

I also want to take a moment to introduce Michael Sayer, who really will be our facilitator for the day. Michael is the Senior Organizer and Training Coordinator and the staff council for Southern Echo and is one of the cofounders of the organization, which started in 1989. He helps develop Echo's training programs and materials on community organizing, strategic planning, public education, environment racism, civic engagement, redistricting and organizational development. He also creates popular educational materials on public policy issues and participates directly in training, technical and legal assistance. So we are in very good hands today in terms of facilitating this process of really dialogue and listening, and Mike has really been an invaluable part of planning this day and seamlessly weaving his own experience with Southern Echo into what we are experiencing in food and farming. So we are very grateful to him and to his steadfastness and to his sense of humor. So, welcome Mike. (Applause).

Mike Sayer: Good morning. Good morning. That's better. So standing around this morning, walking around, I heard people engage in a lot of good conversation with each other. People from all different parts of the country doing all different kinds of work. What we'd like to do in this next segment at each of the tables is give people an opportunity to introduce themselves to each other and talk about their work. So, we'd like to suggest four questions that each person should have an opportunity during

this next 45 minutes to address. Who are you? Where are you from? What organization do you work with? How did you get involved in this work and why do you do this work?

Now that is a lot to fit into a couple of minutes, but we have a facilitator, I believe, at each table. So we are hoping the facilitator will make sure that everybody gets a chance and if there is some time left over, if the presentations are short enough that people ask each other questions and learn some more, dig a little deeper and so on. Is that okay? We ready to do that? I can't hear you. (Audience, okay.) Okay, let's do it. Thank you.