

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:14,180

2

00:00:14,180 --> 00:00:18,080

Dr. Bass, when we broke you
were talking about Montgomery.

3

00:00:18,080 --> 00:00:19,670

Would you like to
tell us a little bit

4

00:00:19,670 --> 00:00:21,305

about your impressions?

5

00:00:21,305 --> 00:00:22,780

Yes.

6

00:00:22,780 --> 00:00:24,770

This came at a time
in my life when

7

00:00:24,770 --> 00:00:30,410

I was teaching the young people
and feeling very despondent

8

00:00:30,410 --> 00:00:34,080

about things that were
happening in the society.

9

00:00:34,080 --> 00:00:38,890

But then the incident in
Montgomery hit the newspapers.

10

00:00:38,890 --> 00:00:43,910

It seems as though Rosa Parks,
a seamstress, sat down on a bus

11

00:00:43,910 --> 00:00:46,310

in a spot where she
was not supposed to sit

12

00:00:46,310 --> 00:00:47,870
and was asked to move.

13
00:00:47,870 --> 00:00:50,810
And she refused to do so,
and they arrested her.

14
00:00:50,810 --> 00:00:53,900
This wonderful
God-fearing woman was

15
00:00:53,900 --> 00:00:58,430
arrested because she
refused to give up her seat.

16
00:00:58,430 --> 00:01:03,520
And of course,
when this happened,

17
00:01:03,520 --> 00:01:05,530
the news spread all
over town, especially

18
00:01:05,530 --> 00:01:07,180
in the Black community.

19
00:01:07,180 --> 00:01:10,390
They just couldn't believe this,
and they had reached a point.

20
00:01:10,390 --> 00:01:11,860
I guess it was a breaking point.

21
00:01:11,860 --> 00:01:15,850
And so they all rallied
together at the church,

22
00:01:15,850 --> 00:01:18,640
which was the focal
point for most activities

23
00:01:18,640 --> 00:01:20,420
in the Black community.

24
00:01:20,420 --> 00:01:23,150
And so they met at the church
and planned this strategy,

25
00:01:23,150 --> 00:01:25,067
what they were going to
do because they're not

26
00:01:25,067 --> 00:01:28,610
going to take this anymore.

27
00:01:28,610 --> 00:01:31,240
And they finally
came to a conclusion

28
00:01:31,240 --> 00:01:32,890
that they would boycott.

29
00:01:32,890 --> 00:01:34,300
If they couldn't
ride in dignity,

30
00:01:34,300 --> 00:01:35,420
they wouldn't ride at all.

31
00:01:35,420 --> 00:01:36,820
And so they walked.

32
00:01:36,820 --> 00:01:41,170
They walk for 11
months, 11 months.

33
00:01:41,170 --> 00:01:43,660
No one rode the buses,
and it created a havoc

34
00:01:43,660 --> 00:01:45,370
with the economic community.

35
00:01:45,370 --> 00:01:47,960
And people were beginning to

say, let's settle this thing,

36

00:01:47,960 --> 00:01:48,460

you see.

37

00:01:48,460 --> 00:01:52,270

And of course, the Supreme
Court took it under advisement,

38

00:01:52,270 --> 00:01:55,010

and finally they acted and
said that it was illegal,

39

00:01:55,010 --> 00:01:57,400

it was unconstitutional,
that they could not do

40

00:01:57,400 --> 00:01:59,800

this on public transportation.

41

00:01:59,800 --> 00:02:03,820

And so the bus line
was integrated.

42

00:02:03,820 --> 00:02:08,560

But out of all of this came
that charismatic figure

43

00:02:08,560 --> 00:02:11,290

called Martin Luther King.

44

00:02:11,290 --> 00:02:13,810

He came to the forefront.

45

00:02:13,810 --> 00:02:15,070

He was most articulate.

46

00:02:15,070 --> 00:02:17,860

He could state the
case clearly, and he

47

00:02:17,860 --> 00:02:21,130

came with a new
philosophy which astounded

48
00:02:21,130 --> 00:02:25,630
so many of us in which
he said to the people

49
00:02:25,630 --> 00:02:29,690
that we will wear them down
with our capacity for love.

50
00:02:29,690 --> 00:02:32,050
And I thought that guy
was a weirdo, really.

51
00:02:32,050 --> 00:02:34,613
I said, how can you talk
about loving these people when

52
00:02:34,613 --> 00:02:37,030
they're going to beat you, and
curse you, and spit on you,

53
00:02:37,030 --> 00:02:38,320
and all this sort of thing?

54
00:02:38,320 --> 00:02:39,730
I couldn't understand this.

55
00:02:39,730 --> 00:02:42,280
It took me a little
while to become educated.

56
00:02:42,280 --> 00:02:45,610
But he mobilized
those people in a way

57
00:02:45,610 --> 00:02:48,520
that they'd never
been mobilized before,

58
00:02:48,520 --> 00:02:50,650
and he offered, I felt,

for the first time,

59

00:02:50,650 --> 00:02:55,330
a program to the larger society
which, if they would embrace,

60

00:02:55,330 --> 00:02:58,480
would have been really
a salvation to many

61

00:02:58,480 --> 00:02:59,440
of our problems today.

62

00:02:59,440 --> 00:03:02,500
But unfortunately, they didn't
embrace it, not to the degree

63

00:03:02,500 --> 00:03:03,850
that they should have.

64

00:03:03,850 --> 00:03:06,700
But nevertheless, it gave
hope to a lot of people,

65

00:03:06,700 --> 00:03:08,050
and I was one of them.

66

00:03:08,050 --> 00:03:10,980
And he came to Philadelphia
one day in the 30s.

67

00:03:10,980 --> 00:03:12,020
I'll never forget that.

68

00:03:12,020 --> 00:03:14,590
I took my children from
school to the playground

69

00:03:14,590 --> 00:03:17,770
where he was going to speak.

70

00:03:17,770 --> 00:03:21,070

And I always thought of
him as the giant, you see,

71
00:03:21,070 --> 00:03:23,170
and yet when I saw him,
he was a short man.

72
00:03:23,170 --> 00:03:26,590
His stature was really small.

73
00:03:26,590 --> 00:03:29,440
But then he opened his
mouth, and when he spoke

74
00:03:29,440 --> 00:03:31,960
I realized that
he was the giant.

75
00:03:31,960 --> 00:03:34,780
And I remember
distinctly to this day--

76
00:03:34,780 --> 00:03:36,880
and I always quote it--

77
00:03:36,880 --> 00:03:38,380
what he said to
the young people,

78
00:03:38,380 --> 00:03:40,900
and he talked to
them about hope.

79
00:03:40,900 --> 00:03:43,150
He talked to them
about excellence,

80
00:03:43,150 --> 00:03:45,040
about being the best.

81
00:03:45,040 --> 00:03:48,165
And he said, if you can't be
the pine on the top of the hill,

82
00:03:48,165 --> 00:03:49,540
be the scrub in
the valley below,

83
00:03:49,540 --> 00:03:53,320
but be the best that you can be.

84
00:03:53,320 --> 00:03:54,940
And this is so
important, I think.

85
00:03:54,940 --> 00:03:56,860
And he told them,
all of you will not

86
00:03:56,860 --> 00:04:02,260
become doctors, and lawyers,
and engineers, and teachers.

87
00:04:02,260 --> 00:04:05,650
It may fall to some of
you to sweep the streets.

88
00:04:05,650 --> 00:04:07,880
And he said, but if
you sweep the streets,

89
00:04:07,880 --> 00:04:12,070
I want you to sweep the streets
like Beethoven wrote his music.

90
00:04:12,070 --> 00:04:15,550
Sweep the streets like
Shakespeare wrote his poetry.

91
00:04:15,550 --> 00:04:17,350
Sweep the streets
like Michelangelo

92
00:04:17,350 --> 00:04:19,315
painted his pictures.

93

00:04:19,315 --> 00:04:21,190

I was mesmerized.

94

00:04:21,190 --> 00:04:23,560

I just sat there,
and he's talking

95

00:04:23,560 --> 00:04:25,570

to these youngsters about hope.

96

00:04:25,570 --> 00:04:30,040

And I went away from there
with a new feeling of, somehow,

97

00:04:30,040 --> 00:04:32,050

we're going to overcome this.

98

00:04:32,050 --> 00:04:33,650

This is going to change.

99

00:04:33,650 --> 00:04:37,630

And so I did, in my small
way, those things that I could

100

00:04:37,630 --> 00:04:40,570

do to try to
effectuate the change,

101

00:04:40,570 --> 00:04:47,080

and I finally became a principal
of an elementary school,

102

00:04:47,080 --> 00:04:48,570

all Black.

103

00:04:48,570 --> 00:04:53,820

And I had a wonderful experience
there, very provincial-type

104

00:04:53,820 --> 00:04:57,517

school, people
carrying a great deal,

105
00:04:57,517 --> 00:04:59,100
something similar
to the school that I

106
00:04:59,100 --> 00:05:01,240
attended when I was young.

107
00:05:01,240 --> 00:05:03,420
But then they sent me
to an all-white school

108
00:05:03,420 --> 00:05:07,740
for integration
purposes, and of course,

109
00:05:07,740 --> 00:05:11,850
with certain apprehension and
trepidation, I went there.

110
00:05:11,850 --> 00:05:16,770
But we both discovered,
after being placed together,

111
00:05:16,770 --> 00:05:20,500
that we had a lot in common,
and that is a love of kids.

112
00:05:20,500 --> 00:05:22,410
And it became a love affair.

113
00:05:22,410 --> 00:05:25,110
I really enjoyed that experience
for another almost two

114
00:05:25,110 --> 00:05:26,800
and half, three years.

115
00:05:26,800 --> 00:05:33,990
And during that time I was
there, I went to Houston, Texas

116

00:05:33,990 --> 00:05:38,610
on a convention, elementary
school principals convention.

117
00:05:38,610 --> 00:05:40,800
And in the evening,
for relaxation, I

118
00:05:40,800 --> 00:05:43,770
went to the Astrodome,
and I was sitting there,

119
00:05:43,770 --> 00:05:46,830
watching a ball game when the
news flashed on the marquee.

120
00:05:46,830 --> 00:05:50,090
Dr. King was shot.

121
00:05:50,090 --> 00:05:53,720
And behind me some
of the local people

122
00:05:53,720 --> 00:05:58,838
began to clap their hands and
say, we got him, we got him.

123
00:05:58,838 --> 00:06:00,380
And then about two
minutes later they

124
00:06:00,380 --> 00:06:06,410
flashed up that he was dead,
and they stood up and cheered.

125
00:06:06,410 --> 00:06:10,050
And I got up and walked out.

126
00:06:10,050 --> 00:06:15,110
And of course, when I got back
to my motel, feeling very down,

127
00:06:15,110 --> 00:06:20,610

as I guess most Americans
did at that point,

128
00:06:20,610 --> 00:06:22,010
I began to look
at the television

129
00:06:22,010 --> 00:06:24,920
and saw the rioting,
and the fires,

130
00:06:24,920 --> 00:06:28,430
and the hostility, which was so
diametrically opposite to what

131
00:06:28,430 --> 00:06:29,360
his philosophy was.

132
00:06:29,360 --> 00:06:32,060
And here this was happening
because, as a leader,

133
00:06:32,060 --> 00:06:34,580
he was no longer with us.

134
00:06:34,580 --> 00:06:38,940
And I began to be fearful.

135
00:06:38,940 --> 00:06:45,800
But I came back to my school,
and I took his picture

136
00:06:45,800 --> 00:06:49,080
and hung it up in my office.

137
00:06:49,080 --> 00:06:53,660
And believe it or not, the
district superintendent

138
00:06:53,660 --> 00:06:56,930
of the school system
had word that I

139

00:06:56,930 --> 00:07:00,310

had this picture up and then
asked me to take it down.

140

00:07:00,310 --> 00:07:03,470

141

00:07:03,470 --> 00:07:08,997

And I tried to explain,
but she would not hear it.

142

00:07:08,997 --> 00:07:11,330

I guess she was worried about
what the reaction would be

143

00:07:11,330 --> 00:07:14,040

from people who might see it.

144

00:07:14,040 --> 00:07:15,870

I'm a Black principal
in office, and I

145

00:07:15,870 --> 00:07:19,380

have a picture of Dr. Martin
Luther King next to my desk.

146

00:07:19,380 --> 00:07:25,260

Well, I took the picture
down with great feelings

147

00:07:25,260 --> 00:07:28,530

of hostility and resentment.

148

00:07:28,530 --> 00:07:34,200

And that was before
I went to Houston,

149

00:07:34,200 --> 00:07:38,255

but when I came back from
Houston, it didn't hesitate.

150

00:07:38,255 --> 00:07:39,630

I went in, and
took that picture,

151
00:07:39,630 --> 00:07:42,890
and put it back up on the wall.

152
00:07:42,890 --> 00:07:46,730
I rue the day that I capitulated
early on, but at least

153
00:07:46,730 --> 00:07:48,480
I did come back, and
I put the picture up.

154
00:07:48,480 --> 00:07:49,522
And I said, I don't care.

155
00:07:49,522 --> 00:07:51,690
Come hell or high
water, it stays up.

156
00:07:51,690 --> 00:07:57,210
And nobody said a word
to me about removing it.

157
00:07:57,210 --> 00:07:59,190
People in the school
were very understanding.

158
00:07:59,190 --> 00:08:01,910

159
00:08:01,910 --> 00:08:03,860
We talked a great deal about it.

160
00:08:03,860 --> 00:08:06,470
There was a great communication
going on among the staff

161
00:08:06,470 --> 00:08:08,390
and the principal.

162

00:08:08,390 --> 00:08:13,580
And then in 1968,
I was asked if I

163
00:08:13,580 --> 00:08:15,920
would take over the
leadership as principal

164
00:08:15,920 --> 00:08:18,230
of a senior high school.

165
00:08:18,230 --> 00:08:20,300
It was the Benjamin
Franklin High School,

166
00:08:20,300 --> 00:08:22,010
and it was for all boys.

167
00:08:22,010 --> 00:08:23,990
And it was in Center City.

168
00:08:23,990 --> 00:08:28,490
It was an urban high school,
populated with predominantly

169
00:08:28,490 --> 00:08:31,760
Black and Hispanic youngsters.

170
00:08:31,760 --> 00:08:35,360
These youngsters had been in
the forefront of a demonstration

171
00:08:35,360 --> 00:08:39,542
down at the Parkway where the
Board of Education is located.

172
00:08:39,542 --> 00:08:41,750
They had been demonstrating
against what they thought

173
00:08:41,750 --> 00:08:45,080
was a second-rate
education, and they

174
00:08:45,080 --> 00:08:48,688
didn't want to get the
short shrift anymore.

175
00:08:48,688 --> 00:08:50,480
They wanted some changes,
and they ended up

176
00:08:50,480 --> 00:08:54,590
in a violent kind
of demonstration.

177
00:08:54,590 --> 00:08:59,130
And it was into this kind
of situation I was to go,

178
00:08:59,130 --> 00:09:02,030
and I remember going down there.

179
00:09:02,030 --> 00:09:03,315
I didn't go right away.

180
00:09:03,315 --> 00:09:05,690
I thought that I had a school
to run where I was located,

181
00:09:05,690 --> 00:09:06,920
so I would go down later on.

182
00:09:06,920 --> 00:09:07,960
And I got a call.

183
00:09:07,960 --> 00:09:10,320
Leon, I want you down
there right away.

184
00:09:10,320 --> 00:09:13,050
But I wasn't officially point
principal until September.

185
00:09:13,050 --> 00:09:14,000

This was in June.

186
00:09:14,000 --> 00:09:16,520
I said, why are they
sending me down so soon?

187
00:09:16,520 --> 00:09:18,920
I was soon to find out.

188
00:09:18,920 --> 00:09:21,410
I came into the school
through the back door just

189
00:09:21,410 --> 00:09:26,060
to see how it was,
and boy, the students

190
00:09:26,060 --> 00:09:27,840
were all over the place.

191
00:09:27,840 --> 00:09:34,610
Nobody seemed to be going to
class, a lot of milling around.

192
00:09:34,610 --> 00:09:37,710
And when I came in, someone
spotted me and said,

193
00:09:37,710 --> 00:09:40,070
are you going to be
the new principal here?

194
00:09:40,070 --> 00:09:43,040
And I said, that's
what they tell me.

195
00:09:43,040 --> 00:09:45,275
And so he called all the
rest of the fellows over,

196
00:09:45,275 --> 00:09:46,400
says, come on over, fellas.

197

00:09:46,400 --> 00:09:49,370

Look, this dude is going
to be our new principal.

198

00:09:49,370 --> 00:09:53,480

And they proceeded to ask me
questions about my program,

199

00:09:53,480 --> 00:09:55,000

what was I going to do.

200

00:09:55,000 --> 00:09:57,020

And I said, well,
right now I don't know.

201

00:09:57,020 --> 00:09:58,010

I'm just getting here.

202

00:09:58,010 --> 00:09:59,480

I'm trying to find out from you.

203

00:09:59,480 --> 00:10:01,280

Maybe together we
might do some things.

204

00:10:01,280 --> 00:10:04,730

And they said, let me tell
you, if you don't do something,

205

00:10:04,730 --> 00:10:07,760

we're going to burn
this place down.

206

00:10:07,760 --> 00:10:11,690

And I knew that this
fellow was real.

207

00:10:11,690 --> 00:10:13,340

He wasn't joking.

208

00:10:13,340 --> 00:10:15,380

And so I proceeded to

try to get to know what

209

00:10:15,380 --> 00:10:18,740
was needed in this school, and
I walked around that building,

210

00:10:18,740 --> 00:10:20,630
and talked to so many
different people,

211

00:10:20,630 --> 00:10:23,645
and wrote down their
problems and concerns.

212

00:10:23,645 --> 00:10:26,730

213

00:10:26,730 --> 00:10:29,930
And one day I came
to a classroom,

214

00:10:29,930 --> 00:10:32,540
and in that classroom
there was a lady.

215

00:10:32,540 --> 00:10:34,670
And she was trying to
talk to the young men, who

216

00:10:34,670 --> 00:10:37,310
were not listening to her.

217

00:10:37,310 --> 00:10:39,740
They were doing
everything but listening.

218

00:10:39,740 --> 00:10:41,240
And I stood at the
door, and I began

219

00:10:41,240 --> 00:10:43,997
to realize that
she was a survivor,

220
00:10:43,997 --> 00:10:45,830
and she had survived
one of the worst camps.

221
00:10:45,830 --> 00:10:49,100
She had survived
Auschwitz, and she was here

222
00:10:49,100 --> 00:10:52,320
on this particular day to
share her experience, her pain,

223
00:10:52,320 --> 00:10:53,310
if you will.

224
00:10:53,310 --> 00:10:56,120
And these young men
were not listening.

225
00:10:56,120 --> 00:10:58,010
They had their own
pain, you know,

226
00:10:58,010 --> 00:11:00,500
and I understood that,
the pain of rejection,

227
00:11:00,500 --> 00:11:04,040
the pain of not being given
the kind of recognition you

228
00:11:04,040 --> 00:11:04,618
deserve.

229
00:11:04,618 --> 00:11:05,660
I understood all of that.

230
00:11:05,660 --> 00:11:09,440
I had been through there,
and I knew their pain.

231

00:11:09,440 --> 00:11:12,170
But I also knew her pain.

232
00:11:12,170 --> 00:11:14,220
And so I had to say to
them, hold it, fellas.

233
00:11:14,220 --> 00:11:15,420
Cool it.

234
00:11:15,420 --> 00:11:17,090
Listen.

235
00:11:17,090 --> 00:11:18,440
What she says is true.

236
00:11:18,440 --> 00:11:20,360
I was there.

237
00:11:20,360 --> 00:11:23,210
And so they got
quiet for a while.

238
00:11:23,210 --> 00:11:26,960
And once she started
telling her account of what

239
00:11:26,960 --> 00:11:31,340
happened at Auschwitz,
they really listened.

240
00:11:31,340 --> 00:11:35,240
And she told them how she lost
her grandmother, grandfather,

241
00:11:35,240 --> 00:11:38,230
her parents, brothers,
sisters, cousins,

242
00:11:38,230 --> 00:11:40,820
all those near and dear who
had come into that camp.

243

00:11:40,820 --> 00:11:43,570

All of them had gone
to the gas chambers

244

00:11:43,570 --> 00:11:45,730

and ended up in the ovens.

245

00:11:45,730 --> 00:11:48,700

And of her family,
she was the only one

246

00:11:48,700 --> 00:11:51,760

that came out of there.

247

00:11:51,760 --> 00:11:53,750

And they listened.

248

00:11:53,750 --> 00:11:56,502

She shared with him so much.

249

00:11:56,502 --> 00:11:57,960

And they asked her
questions, which

250

00:11:57,960 --> 00:12:02,720

made me know that
she had reached them.

251

00:12:02,720 --> 00:12:05,220

They came up, and looked at the
numbers tattooed on her arm,

252

00:12:05,220 --> 00:12:09,360

and they thanked her.

253

00:12:09,360 --> 00:12:10,970

And they did
something that hadn't

254

00:12:10,970 --> 00:12:12,053

been done in a long while.

255

00:12:12,053 --> 00:12:14,790

They left that room in silence.

256

00:12:14,790 --> 00:12:17,100

And of course, she turned
to me, and of course, tears

257

00:12:17,100 --> 00:12:18,270

were coming down her face.

258

00:12:18,270 --> 00:12:20,580

And she thanked me
for my intervention

259

00:12:20,580 --> 00:12:28,370

and wanted to know more about
my experience at Buchenwald,

260

00:12:28,370 --> 00:12:31,503

and I began to remember.

261

00:12:31,503 --> 00:12:33,920

Is this is the first time you
had talked publicly to any--

262

00:12:33,920 --> 00:12:36,470

First time I hadn't
told anyone that I

263

00:12:36,470 --> 00:12:38,780

had been at Buchenwald,
not my mother, not

264

00:12:38,780 --> 00:12:40,940

my family, my children.

265

00:12:40,940 --> 00:12:44,420

No one knew that
I had been there,

266

00:12:44,420 --> 00:12:50,300

and I had no reason to bring

it back, I felt until this day,

267

00:12:50,300 --> 00:12:52,700

when she pushed the button.

268

00:12:52,700 --> 00:12:54,470

She was a catalyst, I guess.

269

00:12:54,470 --> 00:12:58,130

And I said I had seen it,
the first time I acknowledged

270

00:12:58,130 --> 00:12:59,523

that I had seen it.

271

00:12:59,523 --> 00:13:01,190

And then when she
started talking to me,

272

00:13:01,190 --> 00:13:02,148

I could recount it all.

273

00:13:02,148 --> 00:13:05,657

She said, now, would you
share that with others?

274

00:13:05,657 --> 00:13:07,490

And I didn't realize
that we had a Holocaust

275

00:13:07,490 --> 00:13:11,930

counsel in the city, so she had
me come down and talk to them.

276

00:13:11,930 --> 00:13:14,630

And they had me on a
program one evening

277

00:13:14,630 --> 00:13:16,700

with Rabbi Schacter in Brooklyn.

278

00:13:16,700 --> 00:13:18,020

I remember him.

279

00:13:18,020 --> 00:13:21,560

He, too, was a
Liberator of Buchenwald.

280

00:13:21,560 --> 00:13:23,360

And the two of us set
up there, and then we

281

00:13:23,360 --> 00:13:28,010

recounted to the public what
we had seen on that day.

282

00:13:28,010 --> 00:13:35,380

And after that, I've been
talking about it ever since.

283

00:13:35,380 --> 00:13:38,260

It's why I come out
to places and share.

284

00:13:38,260 --> 00:13:39,770

I've been sharing
since, I guess--

285

00:13:39,770 --> 00:13:44,560

1970 this must have been
that I went to the council,

286

00:13:44,560 --> 00:13:47,830

and I've been all
over the country,

287

00:13:47,830 --> 00:13:52,330

from Canada to Boston, Mass,
everywhere, universities,

288

00:13:52,330 --> 00:13:53,195

high schools.

289

00:13:53,195 --> 00:13:54,820

Anyone that will

listen and invites me,

290

00:13:54,820 --> 00:13:58,330

I'll go, and talk, and
tell them because there

291

00:13:58,330 --> 00:14:00,970

are people out there who
are saying it didn't happen,

292

00:14:00,970 --> 00:14:04,030

the revisionists who,
for their own purposes,

293

00:14:04,030 --> 00:14:09,340

are trying to say, look, this
was not as bad as it was.

294

00:14:09,340 --> 00:14:14,140

And I find it hard to
fathom their thinking,

295

00:14:14,140 --> 00:14:17,780

but I know it did happen.

296

00:14:17,780 --> 00:14:20,560

And so I don't want them
to push it under the rug

297

00:14:20,560 --> 00:14:23,590

like they did slavery.

298

00:14:23,590 --> 00:14:25,630

And slavery-- I went
all through school

299

00:14:25,630 --> 00:14:28,570

and knew nothing about that
institution and its horrors

300

00:14:28,570 --> 00:14:31,450

until I became an adult
at the graduate school,

301
00:14:31,450 --> 00:14:34,060
that I found out all the
things about slavery that

302
00:14:34,060 --> 00:14:38,740
made me most aware of the
horrors of that institution

303
00:14:38,740 --> 00:14:41,320
that pulled out 40 million
souls for free labor

304
00:14:41,320 --> 00:14:43,480
all over the world.

305
00:14:43,480 --> 00:14:45,910
We had our 40 million
here in this country.

306
00:14:45,910 --> 00:14:48,010
And look what it did to us.

307
00:14:48,010 --> 00:14:50,080
Racism had just about
split us so many

308
00:14:50,080 --> 00:14:52,120
different ways until we
can't live in harmony

309
00:14:52,120 --> 00:14:54,780
with one another, suspicious.

310
00:14:54,780 --> 00:14:59,758
All of this I
discovered as an adult,

311
00:14:59,758 --> 00:15:01,300
and I didn't get it
when I was young,

312

00:15:01,300 --> 00:15:02,967
when I should have
had it because people

313
00:15:02,967 --> 00:15:04,133
didn't want to deal with it.

314
00:15:04,133 --> 00:15:05,680
It was an ugly side
of our history,

315
00:15:05,680 --> 00:15:07,670
and ugly things we want
to push under the rug.

316
00:15:07,670 --> 00:15:08,920
We don't want to deal with it.

317
00:15:08,920 --> 00:15:13,090
And I'm saying to people
today, you must face it.

318
00:15:13,090 --> 00:15:15,490
You can't laundry and
sanitize our history.

319
00:15:15,490 --> 00:15:17,410
You must take history
with its beauty,

320
00:15:17,410 --> 00:15:19,270
and you must take it
with its degradation.

321
00:15:19,270 --> 00:15:22,900
You've got to deal with it for
us to be whole human beings

322
00:15:22,900 --> 00:15:24,910
and to make a difference,
and this is especially

323
00:15:24,910 --> 00:15:26,390

true with young people.

324
00:15:26,390 --> 00:15:28,960
And so I go around
telling my story.

325
00:15:28,960 --> 00:15:32,170
And of course, I get
the people saying, Leon,

326
00:15:32,170 --> 00:15:33,700
what are you dealing with this?

327
00:15:33,700 --> 00:15:35,180
This is not a Black problem.

328
00:15:35,180 --> 00:15:37,330
I said, hey, it's
not a Black problem.

329
00:15:37,330 --> 00:15:38,440
It's not a white problem.

330
00:15:38,440 --> 00:15:42,970
It's a human problem,
and we've got to face it.

331
00:15:42,970 --> 00:15:48,580
And as Dr. King says, injustice
anywhere is a loss of justice

332
00:15:48,580 --> 00:15:51,250
everywhere, you see,
words to that effect.

333
00:15:51,250 --> 00:15:51,940
And it's true.

334
00:15:51,940 --> 00:15:53,590
What affects you affects me.

335
00:15:53,590 --> 00:15:56,620

Your pain has to be my pain,
and my pain has to be your pain.

336
00:15:56,620 --> 00:15:59,800
And I must somehow convey
that the young people

337
00:15:59,800 --> 00:16:00,970
that I come to.

338
00:16:00,970 --> 00:16:02,890
It's my commitment.

339
00:16:02,890 --> 00:16:06,420
And somebody says, why are
you dealing with that mess?

340
00:16:06,420 --> 00:16:08,140
I said, I'm sorry.

341
00:16:08,140 --> 00:16:10,460
I know it's been
40-something years,

342
00:16:10,460 --> 00:16:13,150
but that doesn't
make it go away.

343
00:16:13,150 --> 00:16:15,340
It only makes us
become more aware

344
00:16:15,340 --> 00:16:17,590
that we, today,
have to do something

345
00:16:17,590 --> 00:16:22,690
to stop that which created
the Final Solution,

346
00:16:22,690 --> 00:16:26,290
and that something is racism.

347

00:16:26,290 --> 00:16:29,140

Really, racism is at
the root of all of this.

348

00:16:29,140 --> 00:16:31,390

Under that umbrella comes
bigotry, and prejudice,

349

00:16:31,390 --> 00:16:33,770

and discrimination,
unemployment.

350

00:16:33,770 --> 00:16:35,230

People who are
unemployable-- there

351

00:16:35,230 --> 00:16:37,150

are large institutions
filled with those

352

00:16:37,150 --> 00:16:39,550

who are drug addicts and
those who are criminals, all

353

00:16:39,550 --> 00:16:42,220

because somehow we haven't come
to grips with that institution

354

00:16:42,220 --> 00:16:44,110

called racism.

355

00:16:44,110 --> 00:16:47,260

And we have to because we see
the ultimate of racism, which

356

00:16:47,260 --> 00:16:49,660

was what I saw at Buchenwald.

357

00:16:49,660 --> 00:16:50,860

And so what do we do?

358

00:16:50,860 --> 00:16:55,150

Do we, as educators-- and I
use it in the broadest sense

359
00:16:55,150 --> 00:16:57,610
because we are all
teachers of the young.

360
00:16:57,610 --> 00:17:02,830
In our way of life,
do we convey to them

361
00:17:02,830 --> 00:17:06,880
the best that we can
be, or do we give them

362
00:17:06,880 --> 00:17:09,069
the worst side that we have?

363
00:17:09,069 --> 00:17:13,660
Do we promote racism
through our apathy?

364
00:17:13,660 --> 00:17:17,293
When we hear and see
things, we say nothing

365
00:17:17,293 --> 00:17:19,210
because we don't want
to jeopardize that which

366
00:17:19,210 --> 00:17:21,970
is important to us, our
investment in a job,

367
00:17:21,970 --> 00:17:23,867
our investment among friends.

368
00:17:23,867 --> 00:17:25,450
We don't want to
disturb our families,

369
00:17:25,450 --> 00:17:29,680
so no matter what people say

or do, just leave it alone.

370
00:17:29,680 --> 00:17:32,960
Sweep it under the rug,
and somehow it'll go away.

371
00:17:32,960 --> 00:17:34,450
But the skinheads are with us.

372
00:17:34,450 --> 00:17:35,560
The Klan is with us.

373
00:17:35,560 --> 00:17:37,435
They may be dressed in
a Brooks Brothers suit

374
00:17:37,435 --> 00:17:38,420
with attache cases.

375
00:17:38,420 --> 00:17:40,547
They may be doctors.

376
00:17:40,547 --> 00:17:41,380
They may be lawyers.

377
00:17:41,380 --> 00:17:43,930
They may be the guy
who drives the bus.

378
00:17:43,930 --> 00:17:45,550
But they are still with us.

379
00:17:45,550 --> 00:17:50,050
Some may not say anything, but
somehow, those of us are aware.

380
00:17:50,050 --> 00:17:53,860
And when we see and hear
the evil that comes out

381
00:17:53,860 --> 00:17:56,050
that would make us less

than what we should be,

382

00:17:56,050 --> 00:17:58,690

then we have to dare
to be that Daniel.

383

00:17:58,690 --> 00:18:01,810

We have to stand up and face it.

384

00:18:01,810 --> 00:18:07,475

And somehow, you
got to pay a price.

385

00:18:07,475 --> 00:18:08,350

It's not easily done.

386

00:18:08,350 --> 00:18:10,850

Somebody said, Leon, you come
here with these pronouncements

387

00:18:10,850 --> 00:18:13,150

and platitudes about racism.

388

00:18:13,150 --> 00:18:14,500

That's tough.

389

00:18:14,500 --> 00:18:17,440

I said, look, I didn't come
to give you a rose garden.

390

00:18:17,440 --> 00:18:18,370

I'm planting one.

391

00:18:18,370 --> 00:18:20,290

I come here to give you
the unvarnished truth.

392

00:18:20,290 --> 00:18:24,160

If you dared to go to your
synagogue, and to your church,

393

00:18:24,160 --> 00:18:26,710

and to your mosque, or
wherever you go, and then

394

00:18:26,710 --> 00:18:28,810

you learn all about your
Judeo-Christian ethics,

395

00:18:28,810 --> 00:18:31,342

the Sermon on the Mount, or the
Ten Commandments, the Torah,

396

00:18:31,342 --> 00:18:33,550

whatever, and you take all
of these wonderful tenets,

397

00:18:33,550 --> 00:18:36,008

and you come back to your job,
or your school, or wherever,

398

00:18:36,008 --> 00:18:37,780

and you tend to
practice them, you

399

00:18:37,780 --> 00:18:43,250

want to put them into operation,
hey, you become vulnerable.

400

00:18:43,250 --> 00:18:43,970

You can be had.

401

00:18:43,970 --> 00:18:46,315

You're going to get your lumps.

402

00:18:46,315 --> 00:18:48,370

But there's no other way.

403

00:18:48,370 --> 00:18:50,330

We have to be courageous enough.

404

00:18:50,330 --> 00:18:52,660

We must have something deep
down inside us and say,

405

00:18:52,660 --> 00:18:54,790

this I believe, and
this is where I stand,

406

00:18:54,790 --> 00:18:56,050

and I will do it.

407

00:18:56,050 --> 00:18:58,330

And we answer that question
by looking in the mirror,

408

00:18:58,330 --> 00:19:01,720

not at each other, but
in the mirror and say,

409

00:19:01,720 --> 00:19:05,260

is the price too high?

410

00:19:05,260 --> 00:19:06,880

I think not.

411

00:19:06,880 --> 00:19:08,520

I think the price
is not too high.

412

00:19:08,520 --> 00:19:11,760

And I always tell the people--
when I close my talk to them,

413

00:19:11,760 --> 00:19:16,920

I always close it with the words
of James Baldwin, who said,

414

00:19:16,920 --> 00:19:21,610

either we love one another,
either we hold one another,

415

00:19:21,610 --> 00:19:25,070

or that sea will engulf us,
and the light will go out.

416

00:19:25,070 --> 00:19:28,790

417

00:19:28,790 --> 00:19:33,320

I can only say this, Leon.

418

00:19:33,320 --> 00:19:37,920

There is a Hebrew word,
chazak, which means, be strong.

419

00:19:37,920 --> 00:19:40,690

I hope you continue to be
strong and do what you're doing.

420

00:19:40,690 --> 00:19:42,830

And I'll keep the
faith, whatever that is.

421

00:19:42,830 --> 00:19:43,820

Thank you very much.

422

00:19:43,820 --> 00:19:45,570

Plain English-- thank
you very, very much.

423

00:19:45,570 --> 00:19:47,530

My pleasure, gentlemen.

424

00:19:47,530 --> 00:20:18,284