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Good morning Brothers and sisters! It's so good to be here in Tennessee at your statewide conference. I would especially like to thank my sisters Marilyn Brown and Margaret Scrivens for inviting me, and all of you for joining forces to empower our community. Together we help to transform our vision of civil rights into something real.

I think we owe it to all our constituents to look ahead and recommit ourselves to what needs to be done and then to doing the right thing.

In simple terms, that means stepping up to the plate, being bold and unapologetic about forging an agenda that stands for the advancement of the African American community, social justice and not just equality – but equity as well.

[Pause]

It also means reaching out and enlisting – not the 40 percent who are registered to vote – but the rest of the *potential* electorate, unregistered and disaffected voters. We must reach out to allies who stand for the values and ideals that we fight for every day.

African Americans in organized labor and the civil rights movement are joined at the hip. Not only are we the most reliable base of support for our community, but our fates are inseparable.

The bond is sealed with our shared destiny of being forgotten, disrespected or taken for granted. But also, of standing up for people who don't have a voice.

Last month we marked the 40th Anniversary of the March On Washington, an event that could not have been successful without the NAACP leadership and the masses of NAACP branches and members from across the country. But also, I'm proud to say that the March was ignited in the first place by one of our nation's greatest trade unionist -- A. Phillip Randolph.

He understood that freedom for black people was inseparable from the struggle of working people, and it was not solely rooted in economic empowerment, but also political mobilization.

[Pause]

I firmly believe that being a union member is not just about a fatter paycheck. It's about being part of a movement that believes in the worth and dignity of every human being.

Just as Black folks marched, bleed, were beaten, hosed down, and threatened with the dogs, unionists also died so we could have a 40-hour work week and child labor laws so our children would not be exploited. Many sacrificed their jobs so we could have a 15-minute break, a minimum wage, and the right to organize. But they did not do it alone.

Our hero A. Phillip Randolph, who helped lay the ground for those achievements, was branded one of the most dangerous men in America.

In the world of George W. Bush, A. Phillip Randolph could well be branded a terrorist.

[Pause]

These days a lot of policies are being made and money spent in the name of fighting terrorism.

Before I could really talk about that war, I decided to consult my trusty Webster dictionary to see what this word means.

Terrorism defined: *the act of terrorizing; use of force or threat to demoralize, intimidate and subjugate, especially the use of a political weapon or policy; the act to coerce or make submit by filling with fear due to the threat or act of violence.*

So, based on Webster's definition, there is a terrorist living at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. [Pause]

Brothers and sisters, it is the act of terrorism to declare a war against a country under a pretext that ends up being a big lie; placing our young men and women in harm's way, disrupting families and leaving an untold death toll of both U.S. troops and Iraqi people.

It's an act of terrorism to allocate untold billions to a battle that seems to have no end.

It's an act of terrorism to hold individuals in indefinite detention, denying them access to lawyers, or family members and not even charging them with any crime.

It's an act of terrorism to rob billions of dollars from the federal budget to give tax cuts to the rich, creating a deficit so large that our great-grandchildren will still be paying the debt.

It's an act of terrorism to divert precious resources from domestic spending that could respond to the 43 million Americans without health insurance.

It's an act of terrorism to maintain an immigration policy that gives automatic entrance to any Cuban who steps on Florida's shores and common criminal status to all Haitians trying to penetrate those same borders; separating young Haitian children from their mothers and holding them in detention camps not fit for animals.

It's an act of terrorism to perpetuate a criminal justice system that enlists more African American men in prisons and the court system than in colleges and universities.

It's an act of terrorism to push an initiative called the "Clean Skies" act that allows the oldest and dirtiest coal plants in the country to spew hundreds of thousands of tons

of toxic fumes into the air, giving them a green light to pollute the environment in the name of profit for energy producers.

Environmental justice activists say that this administration presents the greatest threat ever to our air, land and water.

They're not alone in their condemnation. I can't remember an administration that has invoked more fear and insecurity in our country and the world.

It's all a matter of record, a pattern of events that fit into a collection of factoids that I call Bushisms.

Let me share a few of them with you.

He brought an oil company, but couldn't find any oil in Texas. The company went bankrupt shortly after he sold all his stock.

With taxpayer money, he brought the Texas Rangers baseball team in a sweetheart deal. His biggest decision while at the helm of the Rangers was to trade Sammy Sosa to the Chicago Cubs.

What troubles me is not only what we know about him, but also what we don't know.

We know about at least one conviction for drunk driving in Maine, but his Texas driving record has been erased.

He went AWOL from the National Guard and deserted the military during the Viet Nam war. But he refused to talk about that period in his life.

All records of any Security and Exchange Commission investigations into his insider trading are

sealed. So are all minutes of meetings for any public corporations he served on.

With Daddy's help and no experience except running for Congress and losing, he got elected Governor of Texas.

He cut taxes and bankrupted the Texas government to the tune of billions in borrowed money. He also set the record for putting more people to death than any Governor in American history.

[Pause]

Then, he goes on to become President of the United States. We all know about the disputed election and the question of whether he should even be in the White House.

While that's a subject of debate in some circles, it's undisputed that he lost the popular vote and was put in office by Supreme Court justices appointed by his Dad.

What does he do in the White House?

He spends the surplus. Bankrupts the treasury. And creates the biggest annual deficit in history.

In addition to presiding over the biggest ever plunge in the stock market; he has scored a number of other noteworthy firsts:

George W. surpasses all presidential records for campaign fundraising trips.

Cuts unemployment benefits for more jobless Americans than any president in history.

Presides over the highest gasoline prices in history and the worst energy crisis ever.

Selects cabinet members who are collectively the richest ever to hold those positions.

Signs more laws and executive orders amending the Constitution than any president in history.

Removes more freedoms and civil liberties for Americans than any president in history.

Let's not forget his trip earlier this year to our Motherland. He includes a stop on Goree Island – the port of processing our ancestors from their homeland into slavery – and uses it as a backdrop for a photo-opportunity.

I wonder if he heard the cries of my female ancestors when they were being raped; or the moans of my male ancestors when they were being beaten. [Pause]

Isn't this a disgusting litany?

Well we can't change history, but we *can* put an end to Bushisms.

Our mission at SEIU is to organize and build a united and strong front of workers. But we also understand we have to be advocates for justice and dignity for all people. The skills we learn fighting for justice are the same skill we need to build a stronger labor movement. We cannot close our eyes to what our Government is doing to this country and around the world. And I am sure the NAACP shares this vision with their brothers and sisters in the labor movement.

Every one of us in this room has to live up to that mission.

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

These words – not mine – but President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s in April 1953.

As I close, I leave you with the words of the president emeritus of the SCLC Joseph Lowry; And I paraphrase, “We have come too far, fought too hard, march too long and died too young to go backward.”

Yes, we are traveling right now through a very dark tunnel. So I end with the question – what are we going to do about it?

Brothers and sisters, let’s get busy and not rest until we can see the light!

Thank You!