TRANSCRIPTION BY FATEHBIR KAUR and KIMBERLY NAO

Peace Prayer Day, Summer Solstice Sadhana Celebration

June 15, 2019, Guru Ram Das Puri, Espanola NM

Siri Singh Sahib Corporation Award for Social Justice

Dr. Fania Davis, recipient and keynote speaker

Krishna Kaur Khalsa, introduction and closing

Gurujodha Singh Khalsa, presentation of award

((INTRODUCTION))

Krishna Kaur: Sat Nam. Happy Peace Prayer Day. We’ve been blessed with the rain. Wahe guru. I’m excited to be here. I’m very excited to have the honor to introduce our keynote speaker. I’m going to tell you some things about this incredible woman. She’s been on the road to social justice, restorative justice, black power, woman power, and all the great powers of the world for a very very very long time. She’s given her heart to it in so many ways. I’m just going to peek at my notes here because I don’t want to leave too much out.

It started back when she was a young girl and there was an incident that happened back in 1963. Many of you weren’t around then but let me just tell you about it. It was in the heart of the Civil Rights issue here in the United States and there was a bombing in a church in which four young girls were killed. It was done by a very racial group called the Ku Klux Klan or something like that. Two of those girls were very close friends of Fania Davis and that fueled in her a longing and a desire that she was going to fight for justice for everybody from then on. And she did. Not only within this country, but she also fought for justice in the apartheid situation in South Africa, and also she’s engaged deeply with the Native American communities here in the United States.

Fania was a very committed person. She became a criminal lawyer and she fought very hard to get her sister out of jail, who was put in jail unfairly because of her vocal, outspoken self when it comes to civil rights issues. Her name was Angela Davis. You might know her – go ahead, it’s all good. ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE))

For the past 20 years Fania Davis has been working on the idea of restorative justice. The idea of bringing people together who have opposite opinions and feelings about things and helping them find a restorative, beautiful way of beginning to heal those differences. Under that umbrella of restorative justice, she began to open that idea up in open schools. She’s been doing that in open schools for a long time. Under that umbrella comes also the notion of mindfulness. We’re finding now in many schools around the country they’re bringing mindfulness into some of these schools under the umbrella of restorative justice. Mindfulness is a practice of meditating, breathing, finding a place of stillness within yourself. Fortunately, other things are being introduced into it now: yoga. Wahe Guru. Say, “Wahe guru!”

Audience: Wahe guru!

Krishna Kaur: That’s a good thing, isn’t it?

Audience: Yeah!

Krishna Kaur: So you have all these elements that belong to this woman. You have her fight, and her determination to bring justice and social freedom to people around the world. You have her in the idea of serving the schools in terms of restorative justice. And we discovered, she and I, when we spoke, that we knew each other many years ago. We met via a very beautiful friend of mine, her name was Bobbie Morrice (sp?), who turned out to be Fania’s yoga teacher. So without talking more about her, she has so much to say and I have a list here but I don’t want to take your time to go over them. I just want you to welcome with a really strong, heartfelt welcome, to a woman who has stood for all the things that we stand for, a woman who has fought and stood solid as a warrior spirit, as one who understands and believes in the development of the human spirit, who does not give an inch, does not give an inch – she’s giving it to our kids – please welcome with me Fania Davis. ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE))

Fania Davis: Thank you, Krishna Kaur. And thank you to the beautiful dancer and drummer. Let’s give them some love. ((APPLAUSE)) I want to open with an African Zulu greeting: Sawubona. If I meet you on a dusty road or in the marketplace I say Sawubona. Can you say that? Sawubona.

Audience: Sawubona.

Fania Davis: Translated it means, “I see you. I see your spirit. I see your goodness. I see the gift that you are to the world.” Can you turn to the person next to you and repeat after me, both of you speaking at the same time: Sawubona.

Audience: Sawubona.

FD: I see your spirit.

Audience: I see your spirit.

FD: I see your goodness.

Audience: I see your goodness.

FD: I see the gift that you are to the world.

Audience: I see the gift that you are to the world.

FD: Thank you. Does this sound familiar to you? What does it sound like?

Audience: Sat nam.

FD: Namaste. Yeah? Restorative justice is rooted in indigenous wisdom and ancient wisdom. And in the world view of all indigenous cultures that human beings are good by nature and have equal moral worth and dignity. This is a core value of restorative justice and so respects us by seeing and honoring that goodness, seeing it in everyone.

You are not only the worst thing that you have ever done. You are not only the worst thing that’s ever been done to you. Sawubona. So much of our work in restorative justice involves seeing others and ourselves. Can you hear me really well everybody?

Audience: Yeah

FD: Okay, great. Restorative justice invites us to see and breathe forth and lead with our best selves as we walk in the world. And so restorative justice is not only about doing work in the justice system and the school system and the prison system. It is not just about doing work in systems outside ourselves. We say, “Restorative justice is an inside job.” What we mean by this is that our work as practitioners, say peacemaking symbols with youth ((phrase?)), requires us to be fully present. Can we be fully present now? Can we be fully present? ((APPLAUSE)) Can we be in right relationship, to bring forth our best selves, our most compassionate and loving selves? So this model is working not only to transform the world but working to transform ourselves. The two are indivisible. Can you repeat after me: I transform myself…

Audience: I transform myself…

FD: …as I transform the world.

Audience: …as I transform the world.

FD: As I transform the world…

Audience: As I transform the world…

FD: …I transform myself.

Audience: …I transform myself.

FD: And so many of us in the restorative justice movement are involved in some sort of regular awareness practice, a body-mind-spirit practice, like prayer, like meditation, sacred dance, yoga, ??. I am deeply humbled to receive the Social Justice Award this year from the amazing Siri Singh Sahib Corporation. I was just at the brunch and met the kundalini yoga teachers from around the world, the Luminaries, elected officials locally, the Yogi Tea and 3HO staff, and learned a bit about this massive global enterprise for peace and service that is the Sikh community.

I just want to acknowledge and honor all of you, members and friends. ((APPLAUSE)) And my mind was blown away to learn of the reach, the global reach of your many operations. So thank you from the bottom of my heart. I want to acknowledge each and every one of you today in the audience for being here and for all that you do and for all that you are – not just everything that you do but everything that you are -- to promote peace and social justice. On the 50th anniversary of the founding of your community, I honor and invoke the great Yogi Bhajan, and all of the gurus and masters of this lineage, especially the founder of international Sikhism, Guru Nanak, and I understand it’s the 550th anniversary of his birth. ((APPLAUSE))

I would be remiss if I did not honor the ancestors of this land, the Pueblo peoples, the Hopi, the Nambe, the Anasazi, the Dine, the Apache, and many others. This is an occupied land on which we stand, a land that is the site of genocide. We have yet as a nation to fully tell the truth, to fully recognize, fully take responsibility for, and take steps to repair this harm. ((APPLAUSE)) Yes. Yes. Although there are some glimmers of hope with the restorative justice-based Truth & Reconciliation initiatives in Maine and in Canada. They can light the way.

Pardon me, I’m sitting down. I mean no disrespect. I’m experiencing some back challenges. Normally I like to get up, walk around, and dance – not the hoop dance -- but I will be seated for much of this time so please excuse me.

Today I wish to share with you my personal journey. How I came to racial justice, how I came to restorative justice, and I want to share with you my journey to becoming a warrior and a healer both at once. I may be kind of like your warrior-saint tradition. Restorative justice is a justice that heals. Through a video I’ll give you a brief overview, a little 101, on restorative justice. How many of you have had a training in restorative justice? How many of you are facilitators of restorative justice processes? Okay. I bet if I come here in a couple of years, the numbers of those raising your hands will multiply.

I will talk a little bit about our work in Oakland and I will talk about the school-to-prison pipeline and how we end it through restorative justice, and will conclude with a few words about social justice and some brief comments about the amazing times in which we live. How’s that sound? ((APPLAUSE)) I’m working hard on keeping this as short as possible.

Alright. So I was born in the most segregated city in the south. It says Birmingham there but you know what we called it?

Audience member: Bombingham.

FD: We called it Bombingham because of the frequency of bombings going off in our neighborhoods, in our churches, in an attempt to terrorize us into silence. I lived on top of Dynamite Hill. That was the name of my neighborhood because there were so many bombs planted in our neighborhood because we were black families pushing the color line moving into a previously all-white neighborhood. My church was fire-bombed solely because we had an interracial discussion group there. The lawyer across the street – the civil rights lawyer who was one of my inspirations in becoming a civil rights lawyer – his home was bombed four times. He took to sitting out on the porch with a shotgun to defend himself and his family.

The racial hate – well, you know about the Birmingham church bombing. Krishna Kaur talked about that. That was the 16th Street Baptist Church on September 15, 1963. How many of you know about that? Yes, almost everybody. In that bombing – again, the bomb was planted by the Ku Klux Klan – four little girls were killed. And do you know what the Sunday School lesson was? It was on a Sunday and they were learning as they were bombed about unconditional love at the moment their lives were taken. How we must love no matter what others do to hurt us.

The racial hate groups did this to intimidate us, as I said. They did it to silence us. But they miscalculated. Just the opposite happened. All of these bombings only made us more determined to be free. Certainly they made me more determined after losing my friends, Carole Robertson and Cynthia Wesley especially. And so I left the south and these experiences of racial apartheid and racial terror with a ferocious, irreversible commitment to be a warrior for justice. There I am ((points to photo)). ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) And you know what that is in front of my face? It’s a Billy Club. There was a police officer this close.

I was active in movements and I’ll mention some of those. Of course, the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, the Black Students movement, the Women’s movement, the Anti-War movement, the Socialists, the Anti-Imperialists, the Anti-Apartheid, you name it, I was involved in all of the major movements of my time. When my then-husband and I moved to California and became active in solidarity with the Black Panthers, police broke into our home, solely because of our activism, and shot and almost killed my husband. I actually jumped on the officer who had the gun pointed at my husband. One of the bullets went into his back, just millimeters away from his spine. The rest of the bullets went up the wall as I jumped on the back of the officer and knocked his hand to the ceiling.

WE were arrested and charged with attempted murder of police officers. But the charges were dropped when the judge found out that the case against us was politically motivated because of our work with the Black Panthers. That’s why we were being harassed. The police entry into our home was an unconstitutional violation of our First Amendment right to political association. So the charges were dropped.

But not so long after that, my sister, Angela Davis – and I heard a response of recognition earlier about Angela ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) – was targeted for her radical, revolutionary political beliefs. This was just six months after the incident with me and my husband. She also faced politically motivated and capital charges of conspiracy, kidnapping, and murder. She was facing possible execution in the gas chamber.

Then-President Nixon, and then-Governor Reagan, and FBI Director Hoover were bent on that, and so I travelled all over the world and in this country organizing millions of people into an international movement to free my sister. I did not rest until she was free. ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) It was the power of the people that freed her. It was an all-white jury that freed her as well. It occurred this month, June 1972, the date that she was freed about 47 years ago.

After her case, I became a trial lawyer, civil rights, fighting racism in the courts. At the time I was filled with rage. I was angry, angry at the conditions of racial apartheid growing up in Birmingham – in Bombingham, Alabama. Angry at the loss of my friends, my innocent childhood friends, who lived just doors from me and who I played with every day. Angry about the shooting of my husband. Angry about the loss of many others in the movement. Angry about the attempted execution of my sister.

So after decades and decades of angry activism and fighting racism in the courts, I began to feel out of balance. Do you feel me?

Audience: Yes.

FD: Yeah. This hyper-masculinist, hyper-rationalist, hyper-aggressive quality, these qualities that I was required to cultivate to be a successful activist and trial attorney, burned me out and I literally became ill. This was a major rite of passage for me. I knew that on several levels I was being called to transform myself, to bring more healing and spiritual energies into my life. I needed to do that to regain balance. You feel me?

Audience: Yes.

FD: Yes. So synchronicity and dreams led me to a PhD program that allowed me to study with healers in Africa. I shut down my law practice and when I came back from African and finished my PhD I learned about restorative justice. This was a game changer for me. I’ve asked how many of you had been trained. How many of you have heard about restorative justice? Oh, great. Almost all of you.

Restorative justice is more concerned about getting well than getting even. ((APPLAUSE)) Restorative justice is a justice that’s more concerned about healing instead of punishing. This is a justice that’s more concerned about broken lives than broken laws. This is a justice that is a healing ground and not a battleground. After decades of being filled with rage, I had something to be for. I no longer had to choose between being a warrior and a healer. I could be both at the same time. ((APPLAUSE))

Now we’re going to get into the restorative justice fundamentals. Can I get the video up, please, tech person? This is a short three-minute video. The most important thing to know I’ll say while we’re waiting is that restorative justice invites a paradigm shift in the way that we think about and do justice.

VIDEO BEGINS

Video Voiceover: If crime hurts, then justice should heal. That’s Fania Davis. It makes sense, right? Unfortunately, that’s not what we’re doing. In the US there are 2.2 million people behind bars and nearly 5 million on probation and parole in a system of mass incarceration laden with racial injustices that disproportionately affect minority communities. One out of every 14 children has a parent in prison, destroying the health, stability, and resources of entire communities. This is the retributive justice system and it operates on the theory that punishing people for crime makes them stop. It’s hugely expensive, destructive to the human spirit, and, worst of all, it doesn’t work. Psychiatrist James Gilligan even calls it the most powerful stimulant to violence that we’ve yet discovered. People are looking for another system. Fortunately, there is one. It’s called restorative justice. It focuses less on punishing the crime and more on holding people accountable in order to heal the harm. Restorative justice is based on who we really are. We’re designed to live in community, to be of service to one another, and to nurture and repair our relationships. Where the retributive system asks who did it, what rule was broken, and how do we punish them, restorative justice asks what is the harm, who has been harmed, how do we repair it? Here’s how it works. All the stakeholders get a chance to be heard in a facilitated process that balances the needs of victims, offenders, and the community. The person harmed explains how he or she was hurt. This itself is healing as it meets the need for acknowledgement, validation, and repair. The person who did the harm is held accountable in a new way. They’re also given the opportunity to accept responsibility for their actions which is also healing, share their perspectives, and to make amends for the harm they caused and the relationships that were broken. The whole community has a chance to address the underlying problems that gave rise to the situation and then everyone works together to find a way to restore balance and offer healing to all stakeholders. In restorative and community justice, the concept of beloved community and living in right relationship is key. You’re restoring justice and just relationships within the whole community. Does it work? Well, look at this. In the prison system wherever restorative justice is tried, recidivism has plummeted. In schools, switching to restorative justice drops suspension, improving students educational and social well-being, while reducing bullying and other manifestations of violence, and it costs next to nothing by comparison. One teacher said, “Every time I used the retributive system, I lost a relationship. Every time I use this new system, I gain one.” Restorative justice is justice that works, justice that transforms, justice that heals. Now that sounds like something we all want more of in our communities, so spread the word in yours.

VIDEO ENDS ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE))

FD: Thank you. I talked about the paradigm shift that restorative justice invites. You could say that ours is a system that harms people who harm people to show that harming people is wrong. That’s justice for us. If I cause you harm, that creates imbalance in the scales of justice. The only way for the scales to be rebalanced is for me to be caused harm. So we respond to harm with more harm. We replicate harm. We reproduce harm. And we know that harmed people harm people, right? Yeah. So this creates an endless cycle of harm that eventually saturates our communities and our lives.

Restorative justice flips the script. It responds to harm with healing and with repair. Ours is a system that drives people apart. Restorative justice is a system that brings people together and it brings people together in sometimes remarkable circumstances. People who you think would be sworn lifetime enemies are brought together through the healing processes of restorative justice.

How many of you have seen the CNN series by Van Jones? Please take a look at it. Yeah. It shows a series of cases where killers of loved ones meet with the families, the surviving families, after a long period of preparation and find amazing, seemingly miraculous healing. But it’s common in well-facilitated restorative justice process to see these amazing connections. There’s also a video that I suggest that you look at. It’s called, “Meeting with the Killer” and you can find it online, where a family who lost a loved one to violence – a young man – met with that killer in the locked facility and found amazing healing.

The origins of restorative justice are indigenous as I said earlier. It’s based in the fundamental belief of all indigenous cultures that we are one based on our inherent relatedness. In the African tradition it’s *ubuntu*, I am because we are and we are because I am. In the Lakota Sioux tradition it’s *mitake oyasin*, we are family, we are relatives. In the Mayan tradition it’s *in l’a kech*, I am the other you.

So let’s get a little interaction going again. Turn to one another, turn to somebody else that you didn’t turn to before if you can. Turn around and repeat after me. ((LAUGHTER)) Some people are having difficulty finding new partners. Say, “*ubuntu*.” Let me hear it like you mean it. “*Ubuntu*!”

Audience: *Ubuntu*!

FD: I am because we are…

Audience: I am because we are…

FD: …and we are because I am.

Audience: …and we are because I am.

FD: Now in the Lakota Sioux tradition say, “*mitake oyasin*“

Audience: *Mitake* *oyasin*.

FD: We are relatives.

Audience: We are relatives.

FD: Now *in l’a kech*.

Audience: *In l’a kech*.

FD: I am the other you.

Audience: I am the other you.

FD: This is the philosophical foundation of restorative justice. Restorative justice, because it’s a philosophy, is applied in many contexts. It’s not just a conflict resolution method. It’s a way of life, a set of values and principles It’s applied in multiple contexts: in the justice system, in policing, the workplaces and families and schools, and to transform large-scale harm like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

So let me talk just a little bit about Oakland. We started doing restorative justice in schools in Oakland in 2005. The non-profit that I founded, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth or RJOY, we started in a really small school in one of the most under-resourced and high-crime areas of Oakland, Cole Middle School. After less than two years of doing restorative justice at that school, we saw a tremendous transformation. All the fights stopped. Kids learned how to talk through their differences instead of fighting through their differences. We completely eliminated violence. We also eliminated teacher attrition and increased academic outcomes. There’s a wonderful story about some young men… ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE))

Thank you. Thank you. There’s a wonderful story about a couple of boys a couple of blocks away from the school who were fighting. And a parent who knew about the program brought them into the Restorative Justice Peacemaking Room at that school. And one of the little boys said to Rita Alfred, who is the restorative justice coordinator ((TECHNICAL ISSUE))…

One of the boys said, “Ms. Alfred, we can’t fight at school and we can’t even fight in the neighborhood.” ((LAUGHTER)) That’s right. That’s right. Cultural change. That’s what this work is all about. And because of the successes of that small program and a study that was done by UC Berkeley Law, a lot of the other schools got interested in 2010. The Oakland Unified School District made restorative justice its schools’ official public policy. ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE))

And you’ve heard about some of the outcomes in the video. Let me tell you a little bit about the outcomes in Oakland schools. That study shows a 50% reduction in out-of-school suspensions. I don’t think you see that up there. That’s not on the bar graph but it shows a 60% increase at ((graduations in)) restorative justice schools, that’s the blue bar, versus 7% at non-restorative justice schools. A 128% increase in the reading level scores in restorative justice schools versus only 11% in non-restorative justice schools. A reduction of chronic absence by 24% in restorative justice schools with an increase in non-restorative justice schools. The four-year drop out rate dropped 56% in restorative justice schools. ((APPLAUSE))

That’s the cold data. I’m a witness. I saw students with failing grades and multiple incarcerations who were not expected to graduate not only graduate but achieve 3.0-plus GPAs. ((APPLAUSE)) And I’m going to tell you the story about one of those youth I have in mind in a moment. I saw girls who were long-time enemies become friends after sitting in a peacemaking circle. Instead of fighting, students come into the restorative justice room to ask for a talking piece at a circle to talk through instead of fighting through their differences. Youth and adults, family members, who walk into the circle feeling a lot of anger toward one another end up embracing.

Let me tell you a bit about the school-to-prison pipeline and about how we were able to disrupt it in the case of this one particular youth, Cameron. Cameron’s first suspension was at the age of four-years-old. Four years old. Suspended. He was suspended because his mother would give him candy, Skittles, when she dropped him off at school because he had a separation anxiety and she would give him the candy to quell that anxiety. One day the principal saw him with the candy in hand and scolded him, grabbed the candy, and put the candy in his office in the bottom drawer of his desk. And Cameron, resourceful even then, followed every move the principal made and then the principal came out and locked the office. Cameron’s trying to figure out how am I gonna get into this locked office to get my candy back? He found an open window – but the window was up this high and he’s down this low. He got a chair. He stood on the chair and went through the window and got his Skittles out of the bottom drawer of the principal’s desk. When the principal saw him with this he grabbed him and scolded him and suspended him for four days for theft of his own candy. ((SIPS WATER)) And this sort of started a cycle. He ended up with 150 suspensions by the 11th grade.

And that is the school-to-prison pipeline. Because with one suspension by the 9th grade, your chances of being incarcerated triple, your chances of dropping out of school double. And if you look at the inmates around the country, 75% of them are high-school dropouts. So you’re pushing a child right into the school-to-prison pipeline if you use exclusionary school discipline, if you push them out of school.

And this is what was happening to Cameron. He had multiple arrests as well. By the time that he was 16 in the 11th grade, he was gang-banging, he was homeless, and a truancy officer caught him and brought him to a restorative justice school where we had a program. And, you know, Cameron’s sagging, he’s got his hoodie on, he’s looking real hostile and thuggish, and he comes up to this school expecting to be stereotyped and not seen. Not seen. But he found something different. The principal hugged him. The vice-principal hugged him. Even the school security officer hugged him. He said, “this is not my imagination, this is different.” ((LAUGHTER)) And then he goes to the principal’s office and she takes his jacket with 150 suspensions and multiple arrests and says, “Take this, tear it up, throw it away. This is a school of second chances.” ((APPLAUSE)) And then she took him to the restorative justice room where they were doing a circle, a black male circle where they were talking about what it means to be growing up in this country as a black young man. And he could see that they were tearful, they were speaking from their heart, and he had not seen that before because the affect was you don’t cry, you don’t show your feelings. This was the first time he had seen black men speaking from their heart and crying. So after those experiences he realized this is more like family. He was seen. He was heard. And he thrived. He graduated with a 3.7 grade point average. ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) And then he went on to work with my organization, from which I’m now retired, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth.

So that is the story of how we helped Cameron and how we are helping many youth to stay out of the school-to-prison pipeline. It’s very simple. It’s not rocket science. If you see a child, even when they’re cursing at you, if you see their goodness, if you see their gift, if you see their spirit, they will thrive. They will eventually see themselves, and they will thrive.

Again I want to thank the Siri Singh Sahib organization for conferring upon me its Social Justice Award. ((ONGOING CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) You’re such a wonderful audience. Thank you. You’re one of the best. Thank you. Thank you. ((INAUDIBLE)) I admire the wide-ranging work of the seven non-profits affiliated with the SSS Corporation providing food, clothing, shelter, to communities in need, including immigrants in Las Cruces, offering emergency services to communities in crisis, and teaching the world about the liberating practice of kundalini yoga and many others. You are an extraordinary community. ((APPLAUSE))

I met Krishna Kaur in the 1970s but before coming here, being invited to come here, all I knew about this Sikh community was Krishna Kaur and Yogi Tea and kundalini yoga. And to discover this whole new world that has been unveiled for me since I’ve been here is truly amazing. So I appreciate and admire the amazing work you’re doing. And I understand that the Siri Singh Sahib Corporation has an affiliate for-profit company, Akal Global, and that’s a small part of their entire operation but I understand that it is an organization that enters into federal contracts to guard immigration detention centers in the US. And as a social justice activist, you see, you know what my story is. I cannot be silent about this. I cannot be silent. ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE))

We are increasingly hearing horror stories about conditions in these centers that violate international human rights—extreme overcrowding, separation of families, solitary confinement, suicides, deaths and inadequate medical care. The wall and massive expansion of detention centers and prisons to warehouse human beings who are coming to this country to seek a better life just as white people have been coming to this country since time immemorial.

This is part of an immigration policy that is White Nationalist in essence. We’ve got to speak the truth. ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) I've got to speak the truth. This is a policy that is based on hate. This is a policy that is based on the idea that we need walls and prisons to hold back the brown hoards. The White Nationalist essence of this policy is fear. When you hear Trump refer to too many people coming from “shithole countries” – excuse my language, you remember when he said that – like Latin America and Africa. Those are the countries that he designated as s-hole countries. This is clear when we hear him say we need more immigrants from Norway. This is clear when you see how Canadians who overstay their visas and live here illegally are not hounded and arrested the way that Latinx people are. So there’s a White Nationalist, racist essence to this immigration policy. And as much as I admire the organization for all of its amazing work--and that is the predominant thing about the organization--I am naturally critical of Akal’s profiting from human misery and from these racist White Nationalist policies. ((LOUD CHEERS AND APPLAUSE))

I understand there is a debate taking place within the community about this. This debate is healthy and I salute the organization for this. I stand in solidarity with those within the community who are raising these questions and I pray that a just resolution consistent with the peacemaking values of the Sikh community will come out of these discussions. ((SIPS WATER)) ((LOUD CHEERS AND APPLAUSE))

Maybe you could use some restorative justice? Did somebody say that? Yeah. Maybe restorative justice can help us through these conversations and these debates.

So in closing, this is a time of a victory of a US president who is a billionaire, and has created a cabinet of billionaires, the one percent. This is a time of a victory of a racist and Islamophobe, homophobe, a misogynist, a xenophobe, a transphobe, and a climate change denier in the White House. These are very dark times. However, as in nature where we find a poison, very nearby we will find the antidote. ((LOUD CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) So side-by-side with this darkness we see surging social justice activism, whether Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ, Dreamers, #metoo, anti-Islamophobia, gun violence, abolitionism, climate or environmental justice, food justice, electoral politics. What about those beautiful women who are now in the US Congress? ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) Electoral politics, economic justice, white anti-racism, truth-telling, reparations, anti-slavery and anti-lynching memorialization and more.

And I’ve just got to say a little bit about this: they think of the 60s as the heyday of social movements, as the pinnacle. I think it’s today. ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) The groundswell of activism in these times is mind-boggling, without equal in history. I mean, you have white people who are researching their ancestry and for the first time speaking about telling the truth about their ancestors’ complicity with slavery and the slave trade. Every time I travel I hear more white people who are doing this kind of research. And there are so many white people who are truly transforming themselves and truly working to eradicate the ways in which they as individuals perpetuate structural and institutional racism. ((CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) And they see this work not just solely as an ally with people of color, but they see this work as something that they must do to reclaim their own humanity. ((APPLAUSE)) There’s a whole field of critical whiteness studies now. There are wonderful books, a bumper crop of books that have come out about whiteness. It’s beautiful. I never saw this in the 1960s. I never saw universities like Harvard and Brown and Columbia and Georgetown tell the truth about the ways in which they profited from slavery and the slave trade, how the foundations of these universities were built on profits from slavery. They are now publishing studies, telling the truth about it, and figuring out how to make reparations. Because it’s not just about saying sorry but it’s about doing sorry. ((APPLAUSE)) And justice is about recognizing the harm, and taking responsibility for the harm, and taking action to repair the harm. I see more people around the country doing this than ever before, not to mention the coming down of all the Confederate memorials happening in 31 cities in the nation, about 110 memorials.

So this is a dark time in many ways but let us not forget it’s a time of activism that is bubbling up all over the likes of which we have not seen in decades. As Dr. Cornel West has said, for us in these times to have hope is too abstract, it’s too spectatorial, it’s too detached. Instead we must BE hope. BE hope, an active participant and a force for good as we face this catastrophe.

Now repeat after me: Be the hope.

Audience: Be the hope.

FD: Be the hope.

Audience: Be the hope.

FD: Be the hope.

Audience: Be the hope.

FD: Transform and heal yourself as you transform and heal the world.

Audience: Transform and heal yourself as you transform and heal the world.

FD: Transform and heal yourself as you transform the world.

Audience: Transform and heal yourself as you transform the world.

FD: And, finally, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Thank you. Thank you.

((STANDING OVATION, ONGOING LOUD CHEERS AND APPLAUSE))

FD: Wow. Thank you. Can I take you all with me? Wow.

((EMBRACE BETWEEN KRISHNA KAUR AND FANIA DAVIS))

Krishna Kaur: Let’s give it to her again because that was something. ((LOUD CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)) Wahe Guru. We said this morning in class we’re not just celebrating 50 years of 3HO. We’re celebrating the beginning of the next 50 years. Are you with me?

Audience: Yes!

Krishna Kaur: The next 50 years we have to engage and surround ourselves with the challenge that beloved sister, Fania Davis, has laid before us. The things we thought about but haven’t really dealt with them, we’ve kept them in the closet a little bit, she’s bringing them out in a way they’re timely and we’re ready. We have the spirit, we have the power, we have the commitment. We have the technology to help us carry ourselves so that we can be a force for change in the world. Not just talking about it, but allow it to happen through us, not just to us. And you gave us all the mantras that we need to do that. Thank you. Give her another hand.

((LOUD CHEERS AND APPLAUSE, ONGOING EMBRACE BETWEEN KRISHNA KAUR AND FANIA DAVIS))

Krishna Kaur: I don’t want to let her go. ((LAUGHTER)) I just want to hang on. I said, “Go on, sister. She is telling the truth here!” We talked about getting to your culture, you know. What do our ancestors say? What are those key words that we’ve been hearing, that come through us, that remind us who we are? When Fania Davis said about the other person. We have the first of five sutras and what does it say? Recognize…

Audience: the other person is you.

Krishna Kaur: Say it again.

Audience: Recognize the other person is you.

Krishna Kaur: It’s the first of our five sutras going into the Aquarian Age.

FD: Oh. Oh. We have a lot in common with restorative justice and Sikhism.

Krishna Kaur: Wahe guru. I just want to say thank you again. Your grace is at the right time for us. We’re ready for you and your words. We want to see more of you and not just up here. Out there in the street. ((LAUGHTER)) Sat Nam.

((PRESENTATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD FROM GURUJODHA SINGH KHALSA, PRESIDENT OF THE SSSCORP))

Gurujodha Singh: Sat nam. Good afternoon. My name is Gurujodha Singh Khalsa and I’m the president of the Siri Singh Sahib Corporation and it’s my privilege today to present the Siri Singh Sahib Corporation Award for Social Justice to Fania Davis. Thank you so much. We appreciate her for her courage, resilience, and grace, her huge heart, and tireless effort. We’re here to support you. Thank you for all you’ve done. Sometimes you can think you’re woke, but then you ((INAUDIBLE)). ((LAUGHTER))

FD: Thank you. This is great. And you’re the best award. Thank you.

Krishna Kaur: Sat Nam. Give her a hand.

((END OF PRESENTATION))