

SNCC Digital Gateway: Our Voices

Internationalism: Legacy of 6PAC

Clip 1: Geri Augusto “Julius Nyerere’s Speech”

Geri Augusto: Can I read one of the -- this is again from Nyerere’s speech to the Sixth Pan African Congress. He says, well first of all he talks about race in a very important way that I think it was necessary to say it to an African audience which doesn’t see race the same way we did. He explains about having a Black skin and what that means and humiliation and so forth and so on. “It is also true that within nations and the world taken as a whole there’s an economic disadvantage to have a black skin. The level, the average of income, the average level of employment is lower for black citizens in the United States, Canada, and Europe.” It was important for him to make that statement because people have a whole romantic view of who the African Americans or the Afro Americans or the Black Americans are than it is for non black citizens, “the struggle to be accepted as a worker and valued as a worker has to continue. And it is also true that the black nations of the world are all listed among the world’s poorest states, 16 of the 25 poorest nations of the world are in Africa.” This is one of the leading African statesmen and thinkers. “Yet in economic matters, the real problem is not color.” C-O-L-O-U-R - I had to learn my spellings -- “both within nations and between nations, the problem is basically that of oppression rising from an exploitative system. We are neither poor nor are we kept poor because we are black, we remain poor because,” now he’s speaking from Africa, “We remain poor because of the world trading and monetary systems and these, however their other disadvantages, are color blind. They adversely affect the whole of the third world. This means that in order to overcome its economic problem, Africa has to act in unity within the continent and in cooperation with other poor nations of the world. Pan Africanism is important here, when it cause the people of this continent to work for unity,” and he goes on.

Clip 2: Geri Augusto & Courtland Cox “You Had To Be Able to Do Something”

Geri Augusto: You must have a consciousness that is kind of a Black consciousness, you have to have a social consciousness, and you had to be able to do something. And that do something that, I think our emphasis was meeting Nyerere’s on freedom is development. So it’s a notion in which is the title of one of his speeches or books, but the notion that development is not just about greater and greater economic growth, faster and more, it’s not a development that was geared to consumerism, but a development geared to raising the quality of people’s lives. And that in doing so you are freeing -- he had this vision long before [43:53] Amartya Sen who gets a nobel prize for it or something or other, the economist Amartya Sen, but he said freedom to use your capacities but also to be given the opportunity to make the most of them, and in newly independent countries, countries that had been exploited as colonies, that meant everything from your healthcare, your school league, the bridges, the infrastructure, all that stuff. And to do all of that, you needed to know how to do something. So that was our, that’s also part of the vision of why we’re saying, if you’re going to come, come knowing how to do something.

Courtland Cox: You know, one of the things especially during the time that African countries were seen as source of raw materials. And most of the production of, you know, and improvement of the raw materials took place outside of those countries. So, the value add was never inside the countries, and

one of the things that we were hoping was if you could build the capacity of creating a value add within the country, that would be extremely helpful in terms of dealing with the relationship the dependent relationship that existed. So I think that, you know, that was our thinking on these --

Clip 3: "Range of Delegates"

Courtland Cox: Yeah, and the other thing about the United States delegation that was important was that we insisted on bringing people who had science and technology as a background. So, as The Call said, we included, you know, those people --

Charlie Cobb: Like Knox Tull

Courtland Cox: And Neville --

Geri Augusto: Engineer who ended up staying in Dar Es Salaam. Created their engineering department.

Courtland Cox: So we had, I mean, and then we had a few people from Europe. So my sense was that that you had, you know, you had the African countries, you had the liberation movements, participating at various levels, you had people like Walter Rodney and so forth who understood the GPAC as something, a political force moving us in a direction, you had the U.S. you know involved you know both at the political and scientific and technology level. And you had the people from the Caribbean.

Clip 4: Geri Augusto "Talk to the Africans"

Geri Augusto: Kathy and I had a tremendous amount of backwork, behind the scenes work, to do. So we didn't even get to attend all of the sessions, the broke down, there were breakout kinds of things, and what I hoped, and when I met--because there were a lot of people there I knew, some I'd grown up with and people that I knew, and when I would meet them fleetingly on my way, carrying heavy burdens of work and stuff, I would just say to them, "Talk to the Africans as much as you can. Talk to the Africans as much as you can," Because there's a tendency of African Americans sometimes to form an enclave, a self-reflective, self---reflecting on self. What do you call that? Kind of an internal, you're not reflecting outward, you're reflecting inward on yourself no matter where you go. So you carry, like in a bubble, where you go.

Charlie Cobb: Self-centered.

Geri Augusto: Self-centered. So I was -- self-focused -- urging the people I knew well when I was in passing to talk to the Africans, sit with somebody from FRELIMO, go find someone, get a Tanzanian, that was the best -- I thought that's the best advice I could give, because that's what happened to me, which is why I now understand it differently, and it can happen to you, even if it's just a two week event. So for the most part the only real sessions I attended, to sit down in, were the big plenary sessions, and my job was information officer. So what I really did was shepherd around news people. To our surprise, maybe not to the Tanzanians', there were over two hundred foreign press who got credentialed and when the Congress itself was taking place, I was in charge of them all, like no you can't stay here you can -- and this was in the middle of the Cold War so you got your TASS which was the Soviet Union official one, you've got your Xinhua, which is the Chinese official one, you've got your Reuters, which at this time is coming from Germany but I think now it's considered international, you've got your Agence France-Presse, coming from France, you've got your UP--

Charlie Cobb: I

Geri Augusto: I, and then you've got all these newspapers, many of them from the United States and magazines who had gotten credentials. You had every African newspaper, you, and I, my twenty-something year old self was in charge of this huge core of probably old men, I'm trying to think was there a woman reporter in the bunch. So it was things like the President is going to speak, you can take a photo and then you have to leave because the session is not that kind of session and they'd just be down there with their big cameras and stuff, and I would, my folks would tell me we'd be watching them from afar and this little thing would come and rush all these -- you know, get them out. Or making sure that Courtland could get across whatever daily, had to do a daily press re-- what did Courtland want these people to know today. Sit with him a minute. He would say there are three things. Because there are always three things. And I will elaborate on three things and make that into a -- but morning, noon, and night, they had to have phone lines and all the stuff you have to have, and the other big thing was I spent a lot of time with the interpreters, who were always threatening to go on strike. Our interpreters came from the OAU.

Courtland Cox: From the OAU.

Geri Augusto: From the Organization of African Unity. You can't have this kind of meeting without interpreters, and you had to have professionals because they're doing it simultaneous. So they come down from Addis and they're a very delicate crowd. And that was my other job, to make sure that, you know, they don't have the strike right now, please. Because it wasn't against us that they were having it, it was against the OAU.

Clip 5: Geri Augusto "Legacy"

Geri Augusto: There ripples out of consciousness and understanding and the pressure on African, Southern African liberation, or any kind of liberation of a state where there are Black people as a something that we should all support I think it galvanized, gave more information, set up more links, gave more legitimacy to clarify for people who didn't know. A lot of people from the United States and the Caribbean who came who had this their own kind of funny notion of what is Southern African liberation, what is revolutionary. They didn't go back with the same understanding, which furthered the split, I understand people got back on this side. They carried it on. But now it was people who had seen, who had talked to, who had listened to, who had been to in some cases.

Clip 6: Geri Augusto "You Knew It Was Gonna be Intercepted"

Geri Augusto: You know that all correspondence coming out of Dar Es Salaam went through, at that time, Johannesburg. Or the Port of Durban or the Port of Cape Town, sorry, not Johannesburg. It could end up in Johannesburg if they sent it, but remember letters used to go by ship or by air, and what they took to doing, very obviously, is that they would stamp it -- SASS, which is the South African Secret Service -- and they would stamp it and send it on. And likewise things coming from the United States to you to Dar Es Salaam, they would stop, open it, stamp it, so you knew, and send it on. So, who knows. I know that C.L.R. sent me a photograph of himself and a letter, the letter came and he mentions, "I hope you like the photograph." There was no photograph. So you could tell that kind of thing was going on so it was very, and you knew not to put important information in those kinds of, you carried it. People were sent carrying stuff. Or you went and fetched whatever correspondence was relevant -- you didn't send it because you knew it was gonna be intercepted.

Clip 7: Courtland Cox “Surveilled”

Courtland Cox: Everywhere we went we were being surveilled. Everywhere we meant, I mean, and you know when I look at the CIA reports and the FBI reports, I must say that the CIA reports were much better in terms of their quality. The FBI reports were not very good, and I wanted to know why my tax dollars were spent for such sloppy reporting. However, I just want to kind of give you a flavor of the kind of surveillance we had, and I just want to read part of a letter that my wife wrote in 1973 to the age--special agent of U.S. Customs. She's, "Agent Anderson, upon my husband and my return to this country a couple of months ago, we were unduly detained, harassed, and searched several lengthy times. You, Anderson, were personally rude and overbearing, pompous although it was quite clear to all present that you had absolutely no knowledge or understanding as to why my husband should be put through such changes in the first place. Your actions and manners were in keeping with the best image of an SS officer I've seen on the movie screen. Of course you later learned that there were indeed no reasons for my husband's detainment at all." So, I mean, in addition to what was going on on the ground with Bgoya and all of these guys and our beginning to think, there was a sense that we were a threat, a major threat, and we were detained, we were held, we, I mean, we were on the list, and even if the customs people didn't know, they knew they had to hold us. I mean, I came in one day and 7 people just came around me, and I assumed the best thing I needed to do was a little humor. So, I said, well did you guys just pick me out at random? So, you know, I knew you had to build in 4 hours.