

MS. BOGGS: My name is Grace Lee Boggs.

I'm 92 years old. I've lived in Detroit since 1953, most of that time in the same house.

In 1960s, my late husband, James Boggs, who worked in Chrysler as an African-American auto worker, activist and writer, and I was very active in the Black Power Movement in Detroit. When the rebellion broke out in July 1967, we were on vacation in California; but before we left by car, Jimmy told the members of the inner city organizing committee to expect a rebellion because of the predominantly white police force was harassing young blacks just walking down the street. When we returned a week later, we discovered that we were among the six Black Power activists literally responsible for the uprising.

The 1967 rebellion was so massive that the Detroit establishment realized that white political power could no longer maintain law and order in the city. So, black political power began with the election of Coleman Young in 1963. As the mayor Young could integrate the police and fire department, but neither he nor his successors could slow down the deindustrialization of Detroit, nor could they project a vision for a new kind of postindustrial city. The best Young could do after nearly four terms as mayor was to propose a gaming industry in 1988 to replace the auto industry.

This year, 2007, is the 40th anniversary of the 1967 rebellion. This is also the 40th anniversary of Martin Luther King's April 1967 anti-Vietnam war speech for which he called for a radical revolution in values against the giant triplets -- racism, militarism and materialism -- and for going beyond traditional capitalism and Communism.

So in collaboration with 32 community organizations, the Boggs Center can nurture community leadership -- launched a Detroit City of Hope Campaign with two signature events at the site of Rosa Parks Boulevard, which was Twelfth Street, where the rebellion erupted in '67; an April event to transform grief into hope, which is what you should be doing in the city; a July event to ask where do we go from there.

At the July event, so many people talked about what they're already doing or what we need to be doing to redefine and rebuild and re-spirit the city from the ground up, including urban agricultural; new forms of participatory education; new ways of relating to one another to make other neighborhoods safe; new ways of making a living now that we can't depend on larger corporations; that Detroit, a city which was once a national and international symbol of the miracles of industrialization is presently a symbol of the devastation caused by the de-industrialization, has the potential to become a model of the kind of self-sustaining city that the whole world needs in the 21st century to meet the growing crisis of melting ice caps, species extinction, to tsunamis, hurricanes, droughts, floods, mega-fires, water and food shortages.

To give you a sense of these activities, I brought copies of the Detroit City of Hope Newsletter -- there are about 50 copies out there, and I have a few more here -- which we

distributed last Saturday when Bill Cosby came to town and spoke at the Tried Stone Baptist Church in the Rosa Parks neighborhood where the 1967 rebellion began.

Ron Scott was one of the presenters.

They include these activities: the Detroit Agricultural Network; the Allied Media Conference; and other independent media and activities especially by young people, Community Peace and Safety Zones, the Avalon International Bakery, the Hope District on Detroit's east side, the Black Star Book Store and the -- I think what we need is not so much analyses of our pain and suffering, but we need to see what young people are doing -- the energy, the vision, the hope that they're trying to create; the way in which they are defining themselves; the way they embrace the concept of self-determination; the ways in which they conceive of empowerment. It's a very new and important thing that's happening, and people who have been around for a long time need to stop complaining and listen to these young people.

We're also creating study groups to explore how we can go beyond the concept of jobs, which has only existed for 300 years, which people do all sorts of destructive things, including producing missiles and armaments and guns just to get a paycheck; begin thinking in terms of work that we do in order to develop the skills, in order to develop community, in order to develop cooperation. That's what work is as distinct from jobs. And we've become so trapped to the concept of jobs that we'll do anything just to get a paycheck. We have to think that over. And preachers particularly need to be thinking about that.

All over Detroit, there's a hum of our activity emerging from the grass roots to rebuild, redefine, and re-spirit the city from the ground up. Not only practical but cultural and philosophical, this is coming out of necessity. It's also coming out of vision. Hope is replacing the despair. And all of us, we need to be encouraging those seeds of hope rather than spreading so much negativity and increasing the amount of what's negative in the city.

Thank you.