

Hey all,

Thank you so much for coming to the rally today! Your support is much appreciated, and thank you so much for the kind words. Here is the text from my speech:

"I have been to many protests the past year that have been fueled by righteous anger. Normally when I come downtown for a protest, I am here to fight. As a first generation Salvadoran activist I know that solidarity with Black liberation and Indigenous sovereignty will inevitably release my people from the jaws of our disastrous immigration policies. But today I am not here to fight, today I am here with y'all to lift up the THRIVE agenda that is a key puzzle piece in putting together an image of the world we are trying to create... Starting by funding our communities that are on the frontlines of so many intersecting crises. Today I ask Richard Burr to for once use your power for something good by passing the THRIVE act that gives us the stable financial footing that we deserve.

I would like for you to imagine with me a world where we are not grinding so hard to make ends meet. A world where we do not have to fear for our livelihood when we want to unionize. A world where undocumented workers rights are protected. A world freeing itself from the grips of the fossil fuel industry. A world that invests in our Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. A world where tribal nations are able to provide us with a decolonial roadmap to a regenerative future, in correct relationship with the land. A Just Transition. Imagine.

But this is not the reality we live in. Instead, I will give you some examples of our reality, here locally, that could be changed by the THRIVE agenda:

As y'all know, the city of Asheville has continued to prioritize tourism over our health in the midst of a deadly pandemic. Hundreds of people, disproportionately Black and Brown, have died because of our local governments' inability to prioritize our safety, opening the floodgates to out of town hoteliers, and lifting COVID restrictions way too soon. Because tourism is such a machine here, our neighbors had no choice but to cater to reckless tourists coming in from out of town when they should have stayed at home. Many workers who voiced concerns or refused to return to a

workplace exposed to covid were fired. Imagine a world where we didn't have to risk our lives for a paycheck - under a federally funded, locally implemented jobs guarantee that takes care of our people and begins to repair the harms of gentrification. (pause)

The Buncombe county commissioners voted unanimously for tax incentives to invite a Raytheon facility to build war planes in our backyard. Biltmore farms donated acres and acres of beautiful forest, right on the French Broad River, to manufacture plane parts that will be trafficked thru the military industrial complex to bomb Brown people in another part of the world. All for a measly 800 jobs 5 years from now!! Bear in mind, the US military is the #1 contributor to carbon emissions in the world. Imagine a world where we didn't have to pander to warlords for jobs, but instead reduce our unemployment in North Carolina from 6.8%, to 1.4%. That's 305,400 good clean jobs per year in NC. (pause)

And recently, Senator Burr's peers have introduced anti-immigration bills like SB101 that would require law enforcement across the state to cooperate with ICE. Now is the chance for Burr to show up for us. And as we can see from the Biden administration, our federal government, too, is showing it's no different from Trump's reign of terror when it comes to immigration. Mi gente, our CHILDREN, are still getting caged. Mi gente is still getting deported and separated from their families. Mi gente is still busting their asses in fields as essential farm workers without protection, without getting paid what they deserve, and we are TIRED. Because it is oftentimes US foreign policy and our enormous climate emissions disproportionately affecting the global south, that drives migration in higher numbers over time.... Our government OWES the workers rights and right to unionize for our undocumented relatives. We owe it to immigrants to provide them with dignified green jobs for coming here seeking the life they deserve. Crossing an invisible, made up, militarized colonial border in dangerous conditions for reasons out of their control. Imagine a world where people from all over - not just Latino America - can come here knowing that there is a jobs guarantee where they will be treated with dignity and respect. (pause)

So finally, it feels good to not fight, but to channel that energy and LIFT the THRIVE agenda.. Aiming our anger at something that, if achieved, gets us

closer to this world we are imagining - starting with a jobs guarantee, union rights, living wage floor, and a revised social contract. We won't stop pushing for the future we deserve, and for leaders who actually leave a legacy of change, unlike Richard Burr who profited off a pandemic and denied us COVID relief. We deserve candidates that lift us up, that will invest the \$10t we need to create 15mil jobs across the nation. This movement won't quit until our leaders represent us. Because for BIPOC, the working class, and the health of our planet - it's OUR time to THRIVE."