

THE SQUARE ONE PROJECT  
ROUNDTABLE ON THE FUTURE OF JUSTICE POLICY  
THE VALUES OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR JUSTICE POLICY AND PRACTICE

ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS, FINAL DAY

Zoom meeting  
12:00 p.m. EDT  
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P R O C E E D I N G S

1  
2 MR. TRAVIS: Welcome, everybody, to this final  
3 meeting of the Square One Roundtable. It's good to see  
4 all of you on the screen. It's good to know this is being  
5 recorded so that others can watch as well.

6 It's a little hard to say those words. So,  
7 this is the final meeting of the Square One Roundtable.  
8 It's been a remarkable journey together with you and with  
9 so many others who have been with us for the past three  
10 years. And so, I thought at the beginning of this, if I  
11 can just reflect a bit with you on where we've been in the  
12 journey we've traveled together, and the ways in which  
13 we've tried to carry out the Square One mission.

14 So, as you know, the mission of Square One is  
15 to help reimagine justice. That's our tag line, is to  
16 bring together thoughtful people from around the country,  
17 from different disciplines, from different life experiences,  
18 from different jurisdictions, from different positioning  
19 on the reform spectrum to do exactly that. And to  
20 reimagine justice in hopes that putting people of goodwill  
21 together will help generate ideas, generate a large and  
22 impactful network, and really do something that important  
23 for our communities and for our country, which is to  
24 really imagine where we can be if we were intentional and  
25 purposeful and committed to a different vision of justice.

1 I'm reminded, at the first meeting of the  
2 Square One Roundtable in Durham, a number of us had dinner  
3 the night before and one of our members who was there for  
4 the Roundtable the next day said to me, What's the Square  
5 One thing all about, Jeremy? We talked a little bit about  
6 what we were doing.

7 Then, he was talking about what he was doing  
8 under the heading of justice reform, and what I said to  
9 him -- Well, at Square One, we don't tinker. We're not  
10 interested in tinkering. We're not interested in doing  
11 small things.

12 We're not interested in just making things a  
13 little bit better. We're interested in really reimagining  
14 a new way of approaching issues that face our communities.

15 So, ever since then, we've adopted as not just  
16 our tag line, Reimagine justice, but as a somewhat cheeky  
17 tag line, We don't tinker. So, that's who we are, and  
18 that's what we've been doing for the past three years now:  
19 Executive Session, that some of you have been part of,  
20 and the Roundtable that we're concluding today.

21 But speaking of the journey of the Roundtable,  
22 we have covered a lot of topics and a lot of ground,  
23 literally, in the country. We started in Durham where our  
24 topic was the history of racial and economic inequality,  
25 and the implications of that legacy and that history of

1 inequality for justice policy going forward. That was in  
2 October.

3 We then met in March of 2019 in Oakland, where  
4 the theme of that meeting was examining criminalization  
5 and punitive excess and the role of the courts, and many  
6 of you were at that session. It was a great, great  
7 session.

8 We then met in Detroit in October of 2019,  
9 where the theme was violence -- examining violence in the  
10 United States, both personal violence and state violence,  
11 and how that reality of violence in our history --  
12 particularly racialized violence has affected the  
13 trajectory of the way we respond to the harm and advance  
14 justice.

15 And then, we didn't meet in Austin because of  
16 the pandemic, but we had a virtual meeting -- the fourth  
17 meeting of the Roundtable, where the theme was aspirations  
18 for a new social contract. Going bigger and saying, Well,  
19 if we wanted to create a new vision for justice, wouldn't  
20 we have to imagine a very different social contract that  
21 would provide a firmer grounding for well-being and  
22 healing and realization of human and community potential?

23 So, it wasn't in Austin, but it was originally planned  
24 for Austin.

25 And here we are at the fifth meeting of the

1 Roundtable, where the theme is values -- the values for  
2 the future of the justice system. So, it's been quite a  
3 journey with a lot of topics that have been covered. But  
4 we've also been productive in other ways along the way.

5 First of all, we've convened 150 people, either  
6 around the Roundtable or in Executive Sessions, which is  
7 part of the theory of Square One is that by creating nodes  
8 of the network -- people who are in touch with each other  
9 around the country who are willing to think together, do  
10 together, and organize together, that we will move towards  
11 justice.

12 We've had 30 convenings -- Roundtable  
13 convenings, Executive Session convenings, presentations at  
14 academic conferences, virtual town halls on Zoom, too.  
15 Again, spread the word.

16 And we've also been very interested in helping  
17 to put some new ideas in play in writing. So, over 65  
18 publications have come out of Square One. Some of them  
19 are now finding their way into traditional scholarly  
20 journals. Some of them, at the other end of the spectrum,  
21 are blogs as we're talking about today with Danielle and  
22 Vivian and Eric, who've written something about the issue  
23 of values. And we have promoted them widely.

24 The Executive Session has resulted in a number  
25 of very thought-provoking papers. Some picked up by

1 mainstream media. Some by other convenings. Just to get  
2 lots of ideas -- lots of new ideas into the discourse.

3           Along the way, we've been fortunate, and I  
4 always want to say thank you to our funders. We've been  
5 supported by Arnold Ventures, by the MacArthur Foundation,  
6 by the Joyce Foundation, by Galaxy Gives, by the Ford  
7 Foundation, by Schusterman Family Foundation. And today's  
8 meeting is supported by J.C. Flowers, a New York-based  
9 foundation. So, we've seen also that the philanthropic  
10 community has come to support this work, and for that,  
11 we're very grateful.

12           So, here we are at the end of that journey.  
13 And just on a personal note, and I know that my team that  
14 I work with -- Bruce, Katharine, Anamika, Sukyi, Evie, and  
15 Madison, the steering committee of Square One -- are just  
16 very excited by the distance we've traveled, and very  
17 grateful for the opportunity to go on this journey with  
18 you.

19           I speak for Bruce when I say that back to the  
20 days when we were sketching this out on a whiteboard at  
21 John Jay and said, Well, wouldn't it be fun to do  
22 something like this? To look back and see that three  
23 years later -- four years later, that we've traveled this  
24 journey. And we're very -- all of us -- deeply grateful  
25 for the intellectual and collegial and friendship support

1 that we've gotten from all of you.

2 So, where are we today? Today, we are coming  
3 back to a format that the Roundtable has used for each of  
4 our meetings, which is that we're going to have our last  
5 meeting of this session of the Roundtable, and this is the  
6 last one for the Roundtable altogether. And we're  
7 embedding within this a discussion about justice in New  
8 York.

9 So, in Oakland, we had justice in Oakland.  
10 Durham, justice in Durham. It was sort of justice in  
11 Austin, even though we weren't in Austin, and justice in  
12 Detroit was part of that Roundtable.

13 So, we'll talk about that after the break --  
14 that starts at 12:30 today -- and we'll hear from some  
15 people who are doing the work on the ground here in New  
16 York. We'll then pivot later this afternoon to a  
17 discussion of those three discussion papers that I  
18 referenced that will help us think about these issues of  
19 values more fulsomely.

20 So, even though this is the end of the  
21 Roundtable, this is not the end of Square One. So, you'll  
22 be interested to know that Square One has a life beyond  
23 the Executive Session of the Roundtable. There is  
24 something about this idea that is catching people's  
25 interest, and is going to go to do some work at the local

1 level -- do some work in terms of curricular work at  
2 Columbia.

3 We hope to do some more national work on issues  
4 that have been raised about, here particularly, the issue  
5 of racial reckoning. We think it's central to the Square  
6 One enterprise. So, you'll hear more from us. We hope  
7 that you'll be on with us for the next step of this  
8 journey.

9 So, with that introduction, let me just bring  
10 us back to our task for today. So, we'll pivot in 15  
11 minutes or so to a discussion about justice in New York,  
12 but what I wanted to do was first, since we are together  
13 here as part of the Roundtable on values, is just to  
14 remind us that we had covered a lot of ground on that  
15 question.

16 So, the value of values is where we started.  
17 Why do we care about values? We've had discussions and  
18 keynote presentations and papers written all around this  
19 theme. How do we think about the values that should guide  
20 the next iteration of our work? Not our work, but the  
21 nation's work.

22 We recognize and we had this very poignant and  
23 sometimes difficult discussion last time that we're doing  
24 this work this week on Square One talking about -- it was  
25 at a time of just profound national reflection following

1 the conviction of Officer Chauvin, following the murder of  
2 George Floyd, following what seems like one after another  
3 after another of stories of unarmed Black men and some  
4 women, people of color being killed by police officers,  
5 and recognizing that this work is really difficult.

6 So, I just want to say that at the outset,  
7 that's part of the distance that we have traveled together  
8 as colleagues -- as friends. And it's very moving and  
9 very deep.

10 So, we talked about those issues last time, and  
11 the importance of -- particularly for our communities of  
12 color -- having a moment of understanding and grace to  
13 realize that that's going on in our lives, and in their  
14 lives in particular right now.

15 And we focused on some very high order values.

16 And I'm just going to tick off some of them that we've  
17 talked about over the past few weeks and invite you and  
18 anyone wants to use your little blue hand, if you would,  
19 to come into the discussion. But listen to the values we  
20 talked about.

21 We talked about healing, a real, pretty  
22 profound discussion about healing and the importance of  
23 healing. We talked about reckoning. Reckoning with the  
24 legacy and the reality -- the current, present-day reality  
25 of white supremacy and the impact that it's had on the way

1 we think about the justice system.

2 We talked about the importance of centering  
3 human dignity as we think about the road ahead and where  
4 we would like to be as a society. We talked about equity  
5 and that if there is an irreducible minimum to a system  
6 that results after finding just that core, at a minimum,  
7 we said to ourselves, there should be an equitable  
8 applicable of the law and sanctions and other processes.

9 We had a really deep discussion about  
10 forgiveness, and it was clear within the group that it was  
11 not an easy concept for everybody to adopt. But for some,  
12 it was central. For others, it was, perhaps, too distant.

13 Through all of this, we talked about safety.  
14 Safety at a community level. Safety, in terms of one's  
15 personhood. Liberty and dignity sort of go together.  
16 Autonomy is wrapped up within that, I think.

17 And we talked about the importance of  
18 community. The community as being a source of strength, a  
19 source of assets, a source of politic power that has been  
20 removed from community because of the power of the state  
21 to say, No. This is what the state does.

22 These functions -- this is not what community  
23 does. That as an aspiration, as a north star, in essence,  
24 to some of us, was very important.

25 So, we've covered a lot of ground. At the same

1 time, not flinching from recognizing -- to quote from  
2 Nneka's presentation, that the system has done  
3 catastrophic harm. And that we can't just say, let's talk  
4 about values and do that in the absence of coming to terms  
5 with that.

6 So, we covered a great distance, and I want to  
7 encourage anybody who wants to reflect on where we've been  
8 to offer up your reflections. Please find the way to  
9 raise your blue hand function and let me know if you want  
10 to talk, and reflect on where we are, what you've thought  
11 about since we met last, continuing some of the  
12 discussions, anything you want to underscore. The floor  
13 is open.

14 Yes, Gabe?

15 REV. SALGUERO: First, let me say thank you for  
16 all the hard work and the team that has put this together.

17 I think this is the appropriate time, as we're closing at  
18 least this portion. And I appreciate the work, after  
19 life, as a clergy person, in that reference.

20 And I saw Jon also did. So, thank you. I  
21 think there are a few things that I want to underscore.

22 Number one is the breadth of the thing. Right?

23 In every discussion, when we start talking about values  
24 and sometimes the hierarchy of values, the breadth of the  
25 stakeholders makes it challenging to unpack the priorities

1 of values and the breadth of diversity of the  
2 stakeholders.

3 And so, I think that we should begin -- or we  
4 have begun, and we've done a pretty good job -- to talk  
5 about the diversity of voices that are impacted by the  
6 systems we seek to transform, reform. Some have said  
7 abolish.

8 I mean, the verbs abound. The reason the verbs  
9 abound is because the constituencies abound. And so, I  
10 think that's an important factor for how hard this work  
11 is.

12 I think the second thing is, at every  
13 conversation I've been a part of, there is genuine  
14 consensus to say loudly and repeatedly that the systems  
15 are broken, that they're fundamentally unjust. That  
16 there's something here that needs immediate, urgent  
17 attention and cannot be ignored.

18 The third thing, I think, is talking across --  
19 and this was a major topic, maybe two or three  
20 conversations ago -- the theory of change. That has been  
21 a continuing conversation in my hearing -- incremental,  
22 urgent, revolutionary, transforming.

23 The theory of change is where I've seen the  
24 most fecund, fertile conversation, but I've also seen the  
25 most variety of opinions. And I think that's going to be

1 an interesting conversation and praxis and action moving  
2 forward. And maybe there isn't a theory of change because  
3 the systems are so complex that there are theories of  
4 change, and that each of us has to go at it in a  
5 multifaceted way and be allies with those who have a  
6 different approach.

7 But I think that oftentimes when we have the  
8 level of this conversation -- because systems are  
9 complicated -- we try to minimize a theory of change when  
10 the system is not a flat system that -- I want to  
11 underscore that there are theories of change, and that we  
12 can affirm other people's theories of change because  
13 they're doing the good work.

14 MR. TRAVIS: Yes.

15 REV. SALGUERO: And thanks again for inviting  
16 an evangelical into this conversation.

17 MR. TRAVIS: That was very powerful and concise  
18 and integrative observations. I really appreciate that,  
19 Gabe.

20 Jon Simon?

21 MR. SIMON: Good morning, or good afternoon. I  
22 hesitate to raise my hand first in these conversations for  
23 a variety of reasons, but mainly because I'm running about  
24 a week behind mentally. But this seems like the right  
25 point in the conversation to come from last week.

1           What hit me during the week -- I teach a  
2 seminar on abolition and reform in criminal justice and  
3 got to mull some of our conversation from last week over.

4       And we talked about human dignity, but that's a very,  
5 very broad term.

6           I mean, it can be incredibly precise. Like,  
7 everybody needs a toilet. Everybody needs access to  
8 hygiene equipment, and if a jail doesn't provide that, it  
9 should just be closed. Period.

10          So, it can be very precise, but it's a very  
11 general concept. And what really hit me is what you said  
12 among the values that you highlighted, Jeremy -- but I  
13 would say it's defining dignity today, perhaps, is  
14 healing. I mean, there's this massive desire for healing  
15 across so many communities, and so many wounds that have  
16 gone so long unmet.

17          You know, like any term, it then becomes  
18 overgeneralizable. But I do think -- and it's amazing to  
19 think that only in the 1970s, we thought dignity meant  
20 retribution and holding people accountable as much as  
21 possible, right. And so, the term dignity can get filled  
22 with different meanings.

23          But I really took away the healing as a  
24 defining meaning of dignity right now.

25          MR. TRAVIS: Yep. Yeah. Thank you for making

1 that connection.

2 And for me, also, the healing theme -- I  
3 referenced this last time -- I didn't really look at the  
4 transcript, but you sort of reviewed our notes from that  
5 first session. Healing was just a strong theme that I  
6 hadn't quite expected, and that comes from somewhere.  
7 Right?

8 The fact that's such a strong, affirmative  
9 statement, I think we should pay attention to that.

10 Yes, Monica?

11 DR. BELL: I mean, I guess there had been a few  
12 things I've been chewing on, and one of them -- just  
13 thinking about Ellen's presentation last week and the kind  
14 of values-driven policy change model.

15 I guess, the broader invitation for all of us  
16 to think -- not just about our capacity to work in  
17 coalition with people who have different sort of political  
18 ideologies than we do, but also just, like, our different  
19 utility in knowing that we can't all do the whole part --  
20 all of the policy model. But we have very particular  
21 roles to play, and to think about how to be in coalition  
22 with other people along those vectors. I just thought --  
23 I found that to be a really valuable takeaway.

24 And then, I've also just been thinking about  
25 the relationship between pragmatism -- or practicality,

1 maybe, might be a better term to use here -- and vision.  
2 And I think there's been an interesting dialogue and  
3 tension between those two over the course of this values  
4 Roundtable in particular.

5 MR. TRAVIS: Right.

6 DR. BELL: So, anyway, I mean, those are things  
7 I've been thinking about a lot as the Roundtable  
8 continues.

9 MR. TRAVIS: Thank you for that, Monica.

10 And wasn't Danielle's presentation just so  
11 energizing? Because it was so well structured, in terms  
12 of the model that she was presenting and that she's worked  
13 with. I know I came out of that just like, there's  
14 something here that I've just to wrap my mind around. And  
15 she's just a captivating thinker as well.

16 So, Dona, you're going to be our last  
17 observation before we allow Sukyi to take us into the  
18 larger session. So, Dona?

19 DR. MURPHEY: Yeah. I just wanted to extend  
20 this idea of healing as not just being something applied  
21 to harms exacted in the past, but healing that happens in  
22 the present moment. And also, the idea of health as  
23 something that really informs policy moving forward.

24 MR. TRAVIS: Yeah. The other phrase I didn't  
25 write down, but it's used a lot is well-being, which

1 health sounds sometimes too medicalized, but it's really  
2 well-being. Sort of, are we healthy in all ways in the  
3 world? As communities, as individuals, as families.

4 And when you ask, so what's the measure of  
5 well-being? It's something about relationships within  
6 communities. The ability to thrive. The ability to find  
7 your place and to be supported in that.

8 So, I know that Sukyi is listening. I know  
9 that's she holding the people in the waiting room at bay,  
10 because they're eager to participate.

11 Sukyi, is this a time for us to allow you to  
12 work the Zoom magic and make all that happen?

13 MS. McMAHON: Yeah. I can let folks in. We're  
14 also waiting on Bruce to get in, as well, because he will  
15 be leading this session, but we know he won't be here for  
16 a few more minutes.

17 But I think that once we let folks in -- let me  
18 just glance at the run-of-show here. He's meant to  
19 welcome them and to give them a rundown of how this is  
20 going to work, but I think you can also just welcome them,  
21 and let them know we're going to take five for a few  
22 minutes.

23 I'm not going to start the livestream  
24 immediately. So --

25 MR. TRAVIS: Okay. I will be happy to welcome

1       them and do a little bit of an overview of where we're  
2       headed.  But then, shall we wait?  Should we be waiting  
3       for Bruce for the livestream?

4               MS. McMAHON:  Yeah.  I think so, since he's got  
5       the opening remarks, and we're going to ask everyone who's  
6       not a New Yorker to go off-camera.  And then, we'll invite  
7       you to come back on camera around 2:15 -- 2:00 or 2:15 --  
8       once we get done with the local part.  And then, you'll  
9       all be welcome to come back on and ask questions.

10              If you've been at a "Justice in" whichever city  
11       session before, you kind of know how this works where we  
12       invite you to -- oh.  There's Bruce.  We invite you to ask  
13       clarifying questions, try to probe a little bit deeper.

14              Welcome, DA Gonzalez.

15              MR. TRAVIS:  Yeah.

16              MS. McMAHON:  So, you'll have an opportunity to  
17       engage with the locals.  But I'm going to let them all in.

18              MR. TRAVIS:  Cool.

19              MS. McMAHON:  And if you all will go off of  
20       camera, that would be great.

21              MR. TRAVIS:  Good.  Okay.

22              MR. McMAHON:  Eric, you've got this thing on  
23       camera.  All right.  Here they go.

24              (Pause.)

25              MR. WESTERN:  We're still filling up.  Okay.  I

1 see we've got full boat here today, and still filling up.

2

3 Is there more to come, Sukyi? Or --

4 MS. McMAHON: Let's see. I think Liz Glazer is  
5 due to be here.

6 MR. WESTERN: I saw Liz for a second.

7 MS. McMAHON: Okay. I've got Rahson --

8 MS. GLAZER: I'm here. I'm here. I'm just  
9 brushing my hair. So, you know, putting on my lipstick  
10 and primping, generally.

11 MR. WESTERN: That is a problem that is  
12 completely foreign to me.

13 MS. McMAHON: This is everyone, Bruce.

14 MR. WESTERN: Wonderful. Wonderful. Well,  
15 welcome, everyone, to this meeting of the fifth and final  
16 Square One Roundtable. We're discussing values.

17 MS. McMAHON: Sorry, Bruce. I have not gone to  
18 livestream yet. I'm going to start that now, but --

19 MR. WESTERN: Okay.

20 MS. McMAHON: -- you'll have to start over.  
21 Give me one second.

22 MR. WESTERN: Okay. Okay. Well, welcome,  
23 everyone. Welcome to this fifth and final Square One  
24 Roundtable. The theme of these meetings has been values  
25 and the role of values in the project of building a more

1 substantial kind of justice in America.

2 And at each of our Roundtables, we've been  
3 meeting in localities and we've taken time on the program  
4 to discuss the problem of justice in each of those  
5 localities. Justice in Durham. Justice in Oakland.  
6 Justice in Detroit.

7 And today, we're turning the focus of Square  
8 One on New York City. And this is a discussion of the  
9 challenge of justice in New York, and I think it's an  
10 extraordinary way to conclude the Square One convenings  
11 because in so many ways, New York City has been on the  
12 cutting edge of justice reform in the nation. But it's  
13 also presented some of the most serious challenges.

14 We've got an absolutely dynamite group of  
15 people around the table to discuss justice in New York.  
16 We'll introduce them in due course as we ask them to  
17 quickly reflect on this, but that will happen shortly.

18 So, now, I'm going to hand it over to my good  
19 friend and colleague, Jeremy Travis, who's going to  
20 provide an overview of the issue of justice in New York  
21 City.

22 Jeremy?

23 MR. TRAVIS: Thank you very much, Bruce. And  
24 it is a true delight and pleasure to be with all of you,  
25 my fellow New Yorkers, here for this Justice in New York

1 segment of this fifth and last Square One Roundtable.

2 It's been quite a journey that we've been on  
3 with the Square One Project over the last three years.  
4 And we've learned a tremendous amount from these sessions  
5 as we've held them in Durham and Oakland and Detroit, and  
6 virtually in Austin. And then, to come back here for this  
7 session on Justice in New York.

8 My purpose at the outset of this is to just  
9 tell, particularly people who are outside of New York who  
10 are watching this on livestream or on YouTube or on our  
11 platform, just a bit of the big picture, from the big  
12 strokes as to what's been going on in New York.

13 I do this not to assume any sort of special  
14 expertise on this, but just to succinctly say that New  
15 York is at a really interesting place in the way that we  
16 think about the criminal justice system and the way it's  
17 been operating, and the ways in which it's changed in  
18 fundamental ways over the past years. So, I'm just going  
19 to list some ways that come to mind when I think about the  
20 changes in New York.

21 Certainly, we have to talk about the Close  
22 Rikers Campaign. So, the idea that there's now a  
23 commitment by our city to close Rikers, which has  
24 accurately been described as a sort of torture chamber on  
25 an island off in the East River, and to build new,

1 smaller, local jails. That's a monumental accomplishment  
2 with much credit to the people who led the Close Rikers  
3 Campaign, but that's also made possible by the fact that  
4 there's been this stunning decline in the pre-trial  
5 detention population of New York.

6 If you know my history, I've been New York  
7 criminal justice for a long time, and there was a time  
8 when there were 22,000 people held in pre-trial detention  
9 in our city. Now, depending on the day that you're  
10 asking, the number is in the 4,000 - 5,000 range, and is  
11 intended to go down even further.

12 And as Vinny Schiraldi likes to say, we are at  
13 European rates of pre-trial detention. That, in turn,  
14 reflects a lot of activism. A lot of work by city actors.  
15 A lot of work by legislators who passed bail reform. But  
16 that is a stunning reality in our city.

17 I go a little bit further back in our history  
18 and raise up the Close to Home Initiative, which resulted  
19 in the significant decline in the number of our young  
20 people who are being held in secure facilities and brought  
21 as the title says, close to home. This is another part of  
22 a larger national effort to reduce juvenile prisons and  
23 detention facilities, but the New York version is also  
24 stunning. Very small numbers of young people being held  
25 that way when it used to be hundreds of thousands.

1 Another big change in our city -- again, with a  
2 tribute to community activism and legal activism around  
3 this -- is the end of the era of stop and frisk. It used  
4 to be that there were every year, 600- or 700,000  
5 individual stops, mostly of young people of color, by the  
6 police.

7 That was challenged in court. Challenged by  
8 activists for many years and brought to the point where  
9 that phenomenon has dropped by 90-95 percent. So, a  
10 significant change in the daily interaction between police  
11 and the residents of this city.

12 Likewise, a big decline in misdemeanor arrest.  
13 Likewise, a big decline in the use of the criminal  
14 summons, which is sort of a New York phenomenon. But we  
15 give summons with criminal penalties attached to them for  
16 very minor offenses, and that -- again, thanks to activism  
17 and city council reforms, that has changed in dramatic  
18 ways. Those are not now clogging up the criminal court  
19 system, and not now, in many cases, subject to warrants  
20 for non-appearance.

21 Another big change that is still in a work-in-  
22 progress status, thanks to -- we'll hear from Eric  
23 Cumberbatch later, and Liz Glazer with -- the Mayor's  
24 Office of Criminal Justice created a separate office  
25 within that office to use community capacity to fund

1 community capacity and people doing violence-interruption  
2 work and street-organizing work as part of our response to  
3 crime and violence in the city. They've also played a  
4 major role in helping the city through the pandemic.

5 So, big changes in our city. Some of the  
6 people who we'll hear from today have been the architects  
7 of those changes. Gladys Carrión was the leading advocate  
8 for the Close to Home Initiative when she worked for the  
9 state, and she gets credit for making that possible.

10 But at the same time, we are, as Bruce Western  
11 likes to use this phrase, we are the knife's edge. This  
12 is not easy, and it's not necessarily sustainable on its  
13 own terms.

14 There's been a lot of resistance. There's been  
15 a lot of resistance most recently to bail reform, and we  
16 saw that from law enforcement. We saw that from editorial  
17 boards and elected officials.

18 There's now questioning of the Close Rikers  
19 decision by the city, as -- coming up in the mayoral  
20 campaign, where people running for office -- some say,  
21 Well, I don't that's a good way to spend money. As we've  
22 seen rates of violence go up in the city. Not all crime,  
23 but rates of violence have gone up.

24 And that's raising questions about some of the  
25 reforms overall. The reduction of pre-trial detention,

1 bail reform, and the decisions by some prosecutors not to  
2 enforce some low-level offenses. We had, at the same  
3 time, legalization of marijuana in New York, which is not  
4 without its controversy.

5 So, we are meeting today at a time when a lot  
6 of the reforms -- the progress made in New York is on the  
7 knife's edge. Where are we going in the future?

8 So, that's the purpose of Justice in New York,  
9 and hear from some of our colleagues who do this work and  
10 have been at the forefront of these reforms to see what it  
11 looks like to have a forward-looking vision for the city,  
12 recognizing that there's a lot of progress been made and a  
13 lot of work still to be done.

14 MR. WESTERN: That's great, Jeremy. Thanks for  
15 that introduction, and I think that tees up the  
16 conversation very well.

17 I think that's been a theme of this year,  
18 actually, as we look back over this past 12 months, going  
19 back to the spring of 2020 and the summer that we remember  
20 well with the murder of George Floyd and the protests that  
21 followed. Are we in a period of progress or retrenchment?

22 Are we feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the  
23 project of justice?

24 And so, that's the question I want to pose to  
25 the New Yorkers at the table. So, what I'd like you to

1 do -- I'm going to call on people in alphabetical order,  
2 and I'd ask you to introduce yourself and share with us,  
3 just in 60 seconds, a response to this question: are you  
4 feeling optimistic about the project of justice in New  
5 York City? Or pessimistic? And why?

6 So, that's the brief, and I'll begin with  
7 Beverly. I'll go through in alphabetical order by first  
8 name.

9 Beverly?

10 MS. TILLERY: Hey. Good afternoon. I'm  
11 Beverly Tillery. My pronouns are she and her, and I'm the  
12 Executive Director of the New York City Anti-Violence  
13 Project, where we work to address and end all forms of  
14 violence that impact the LGBTQ and HIV-affected  
15 communities.

16 You know, I'm always optimistic, because if I  
17 wasn't, I wouldn't be able to do this work. So, first, I  
18 will start there.

19 All of the things that Jeremy mentioned are  
20 real, concrete reforms and changes that are happening that  
21 we have to celebrate. And so much of the time we don't  
22 celebrate the wins that we have and the successes that we  
23 have. And at the same time, I'm cautious and I'm also  
24 worried.

25 You know, we just ended a year in which

1 violence of trans and gender-nonconforming people across  
2 the country went through the roof, and that included  
3 homicides here in New York City, particularly of Black  
4 trans women. As Jeremy said, we saw really a positive  
5 effort towards bail reform in New York City thwarted last  
6 year by really a false narrative about how people were not  
7 going to be safe if we let people out on the street.

8 And I think that we have a different  
9 conversation that's happening, and there are more people  
10 engaged in the conversation, which is thrilling. But we  
11 still need to keep widening the net.

12 And ultimately, I think we have to get to  
13 violence prevention, and what does that look like? What  
14 does it mean? And how do we create a culture and systems  
15 in our society where people have real safety nets and  
16 support that they need, and that we're not relying on  
17 policing as a way to create safety for people?

18 MR. WESTERN: That's great. That's great.

19 Danielle, good to see you.

20 MS. SERED: I was hoping you meant alphabetic  
21 order by last name. It's so great to see you all.

22 I mean, I'm deeply optimistic. I think a lot  
23 about Mariame Kaba, who is like, Do you honestly think I  
24 would work this hard if I didn't think we would win? You  
25 know?

1           If I didn't think we would win, I would do  
2 something very different with my life. You know? I  
3 believe very deeply in the things we're fighting for and  
4 those of us fighting for them. And so, continue a depth  
5 of optimism that is not the kind of thing that's rooted  
6 in, like, a Biden win, for example.

7           And I would say, I think, in terms of the real  
8 transformation of safety, the end of mass incarceration, I  
9 feel like there are two really central questions that we  
10 keep asking and answering over and over again whenever  
11 these conversations come up. And I try to pay a lot of  
12 attention to how we're answering them.

13           The first is whether or not we will compromise  
14 on telling the truth about the role race plays and has  
15 always played in these systems. As right and left  
16 partnerships, and bi-partisan this and that, and other  
17 kinds of things come up, very often there's a lot of  
18 consensus on some certain policy direction, so long as we  
19 can remain silent about the question of race. And it is  
20 my belief we will never achieve the transformative change  
21 that is necessary if we are all to survive without  
22 speaking the truth about the centrality of race and racism  
23 in our culture, in our criminal justice system, in our  
24 history, in our practice.

25           And I do feel, in this past year, very hopeful

1 about the portion of people who have felt that they could  
2 stop making that compromise and still win the things they  
3 needed to win. I think that the centrality of race in so  
4 many of our conversations -- the boldness of those  
5 conversations testifies not just to individual people's  
6 decision-making or awakening, but rather to people's  
7 judgment that the collective can bear that honesty, and  
8 they won't lose everything as a result. And that makes me  
9 enormously hopeful because I do think it's a prerequisite  
10 for the survival of our democracy.

11           And then I think the other central question  
12 that always comes up in this is, do we really mean we  
13 believe that everyone can be a dignified, meaningful  
14 contributor to our society? Or do we mean almost  
15 everyone?

16           And I think there is a version that shows up,  
17 whether you think about it as precision policing, or  
18 targeted deterrents, or whatever those are. The  
19 strategies that talk about, accurately, that the people  
20 who cause serious violence are a small portion of the  
21 total number of people.

22           But how we relate to the people who cause the  
23 most serious harm in our community, in our ethics, in our  
24 values, in our practice, in our sentencing, in all of it,  
25 I think is still very much an open question. Are we

1 willing, whether we are at a point collectively where are  
2 we are willing to be much bolder for everything but that?

3 Or whether the breadth of our vision includes people who  
4 cause serious harm?

5 And the truth is, if we really want to deal  
6 with matters of safety, it has to include everybody. The  
7 exclusion of people who cause serious harm from a safety  
8 strategy -- and I think about a reliance on incarceration  
9 as exclusion -- I think sets us up for a permanent  
10 failure.

11 And I think that question is very much still  
12 unanswered, and will make or break our chances going  
13 forward.

14 MR. WESTERN: Great.

15 And next, I'll go to Donna Hylton.

16 MS. HYLTON: I thought it was just going to be  
17 one name. I always get the Hylton.

18 MR. WESTERN: Sorry, Donna.

19 MS. HYLTON: No worries. Hi, everyone. So,  
20 I'm Donna Hylton. I'm the Founder and President of A  
21 Little Piece of Light.

22 We are a women-led organization, and our  
23 primary focus are those who have been subjected to abuse,  
24 trauma, violence, and incarceration. So, our population  
25 of folks are not limited to, but absolutely include,

1 women, girls, trans women, LGBTQ individuals, because we  
2 are the most marginalized, right, and harmed.

3 So, I agree with Beverly. I wouldn't be doing  
4 this work if I wasn't optimistic. And my optimism is  
5 premised in that when I was incarcerated, I did not  
6 believe I would ever get out. But that's something that I  
7 held onto -- I kept hope, right. You keep the hope alive.  
8 You hold onto something.

9 And so, I hold onto it today doing this work out  
10 here, and I see that we've made many strides. We have, and  
11 I think we should acknowledge that and feel good about  
12 that. But we do have further to go.

13 Unfortunately, to Danielle's point, racism is  
14 the biggest monster that we have to fight. The majority of  
15 what we go through is premised in racism. The most  
16 impacted people are Black and Brown people. Our prisons  
17 and jails are filled with Black and Brown people.

18 All our issues are, I mean, rooted in poverty,  
19 and a poverty that is premised in racism. Harm -- racism.  
20 So, we do have to be very clear with that. So, I feel  
21 like we have a lot more to go.

22 But one of my greatest concerns is, in this  
23 moment and what we're all collectively going through --  
24 this collective trauma -- that we, who are doing this  
25 work, really understand how important and necessary it is

1 for us to come together, put away our own differences.  
2 Because we're all facing the same common enemy, but we  
3 have the same common goal.

4 And so, that is my biggest -- I wouldn't say  
5 hurdle, but that's my biggest focus right now. To make  
6 sure we, as a movement, as a collective of people doing  
7 this work and understanding that there's more work to be  
8 done.

9 We've made some strides. Yes. But there's  
10 more work to be done -- that we understand and come  
11 together in this moment, because it's going to take the  
12 unity of us all to move us forward.

13 Someone told me that when I was learning this  
14 organizing work that organized people will always be  
15 organized power any day. And we see that. That's what's  
16 happening. That's what's going on.

17 People are showing up and they're standing up,  
18 and they're speaking out and they're saying, Enough. So  
19 we need to do that more, and we need to do it as a  
20 collective of people in this work.

21 We can no longer have this argument or this  
22 separation of nonviolent and violent and all these other  
23 things. To your point, Danielle -- we can no longer do  
24 that. Because at the end of the day, it doesn't matter.  
25 Because what's used against all of us who are Black or

1 Brown is that we're Black or Brown, no matter what the  
2 issue may be.

3 And so, I remain optimistic and I'm hopeful.  
4 And I know that we will get this done as long as we do it  
5 together.

6 MR. WESTERN: That's great, Donna. Thank you.

7  
8 Liz Glazer? You're muted, Liz.

9 MS. GLAZER: Okay. You would think after a  
10 year of pandemic Zooming, we would know how to unmute in a  
11 more sprightly way.

12 So, great to see everybody. Thank you, Donna.  
13 That was amazing as always.

14 I actually have enormous hope. And I think in  
15 part, it's powered not just by the pain of last summer  
16 that became so evident for every single person in the  
17 country when you had people taking the streets.

18 But actually, hope that exists because of the  
19 fiscal crisis that faces us, and that I think that what  
20 that will require us to do is to scrutinize why we have  
21 centered our response -- and it's really just a response.

22 It's not prevention. It's not affirmative -- but our  
23 response to crime or safety in the police and the criminal  
24 justice system.

25 And it will force us to move away from kind of

1 the flood-the-zone monopoly on safety that police and the  
2 criminal justice system have had to a different kind of  
3 goal, which is to create a thriving city that mobilizes  
4 all civic services. Police are maybe one, but just a  
5 piece. But importantly, jobs and physical infrastructure  
6 and education and all the things that safety looks like in  
7 rich and white neighborhoods, it should look like  
8 everywhere.

9           And I think that sort of sounds all lofty and  
10 gushy and that's one of our problems is that -- oh.  
11 There's crime, call the police. Sounds very muscular and  
12 responsive. But what I've just said does not.

13           And what the fiscal crisis will do is, it will  
14 make it very present and evident. Because it will force  
15 us to pressure test every dollar to see what buys us  
16 safety at the lowest of cost. And I don't just mean  
17 dollars and cents cost.

18           I mean the kind of human cost that our current  
19 default to the police has inflicted for generations. And  
20 I think that this more heterogenous strategy and the way  
21 it's sort of centering what we're doing in civic society,  
22 as opposed to in a military and largely unsupervised  
23 structure, will be crucial.

24           And I think that the challenges to making this  
25 shift, even though so many of these pieces are in place,

1 particularly in New York -- the challenge of making this  
2 shift from police-centered to civic-centered is one to  
3 make to this idea feel as muscular, deployable, nimble as  
4 the police are now. The police to whom you see in so many  
5 civic functions, up to and including most recently,  
6 vaccinations.

7           The second thing, I think, the challenge will  
8 be is that, although we have all the pieces in place, do  
9 we have the will and the structure to organize and connect  
10 to those pieces in a way that all those resources are  
11 heading towards that common goal?

12           And I think the third challenge that we have is  
13 that we must address the violence issue. Because violence  
14 will reinforce that instinct to default to the police --  
15 to default to that monopoly and safety. And we have to be  
16 able to show that, in fact, this other approach, of which  
17 police, I think, play a role. I know some of my  
18 colleagues disagree, but I do think police play a role --  
19 but that this other approach is a more democratic, a more  
20 affirmative way to secure our safety and to kind of ignite  
21 a kind of virtuous cycle of social interaction that will  
22 iteratively shrink the justice system.

23           MR. WESTERN: Great. Thank you, Liz.

24           Next, I'll call on Eric Cumberbatch.

25           MR. CUMBERBATCH: Hey, peace. Good afternoon,

1 everyone. Great to see you all. Eric Cumberbatch, Deputy  
2 Director of Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, and I lead  
3 the Office of Neighborhood Safety with two great partners,  
4 Renita Francois and Jessica Mofield.

5 To the question, I'm eternally optimistic and  
6 forever grateful. But my optimism isn't blind. I see,  
7 experience, and feel hurt and pain in this space, and I  
8 think, too often, we're carrying wounds that are  
9 consistently reopened.

10 So, that's how I exist and enter into the space  
11 at this moment. I stay optimistic and stay focused  
12 because I'm really leading efforts that empower community  
13 groups, individuals, to really define, describe, and  
14 ultimately implement what justice looks like through their  
15 lens within their communities. I really think that our  
16 approach is to lift up the brilliance, a lot of the just  
17 greatness that exists in communities that have been  
18 overlooked, that have not been elevated, and purposely  
19 designed to promote failure and to promote adverse  
20 outcomes.

21 So, seeing community and lifting up the  
22 organizations and individuals that I'm invested in, beyond  
23 fiscal resources -- seeing that happen in real time and  
24 being part of that movement really continues to fuel my  
25 optimism. And I see, right now, the younger generation

1 that is coming up as being really socially active. Just  
2 justice warriors, and really focused on creating change  
3 from within, and not the reliance of government and/or any  
4 of these other structures that have ultimately created  
5 harmful conditions that we've experienced and we've grown  
6 through.

7 So, that's where I am. And ultimately, I'm  
8 grateful for the opportunity to share and learn alongside  
9 everyone that's on this panel. Thank you.

10 MR. WESTERN: That's great, Eric. Young people  
11 is a new thread in this conversation that's been really  
12 important.

13 Eric Gonzalez?

14 MR. GONZALEZ: Good afternoon, colleagues, and  
15 nice to see many of you. I've missed you over the past  
16 year, and hope to see you all soon in person.

17 You know, for the first time in over 20 years  
18 in law enforcement -- and I am the Brooklyn District  
19 Attorney. Elected in 2017, but having served in the DA's  
20 office for over 20 years. It's the first time on the  
21 ground that I'm seriously hearing conversations from  
22 ordinary New Yorkers discussing structural racism in our  
23 criminal justice system, talking about inequities in  
24 policing systems.

25 And much of this was laid bare, I think, during

1 the COVID pandemic, where people saw how poverty and race  
2 were all interconnected, and who got sick and who died and  
3 who lacked services. And when violence spiked in  
4 Brooklyn, and throughout the city, which neighborhoods  
5 suffered.

6 And so, I think I'm optimistic that these  
7 conversations are genuine. These are things that are  
8 heartfelt during the protests that many of you referenced:  
9 George Floyd and the protests for racial and social  
10 justice.

11 I saw something that I had never seen before,  
12 having lived in New York City my entire life, where I saw  
13 middle-class and upper middle-class white people marching  
14 alongside of people of color demanding social justice.  
15 And they experienced policing and the excesses of policing  
16 differently for the first time, right, because these  
17 protests -- especially many of the protests related to  
18 George Floyd -- there was excessive policing to control  
19 crowds.

20 And so, for the first time ever, people may  
21 have been on the other side of some of these policing  
22 structures. So, I think these are genuine conversations  
23 about the reform that's needed in policing, and maybe  
24 thinking about how we have public safety in different  
25 ways. The conversations about transferring resources away

1 from the policing systems into community-based  
2 organizations and resources -- I think all of that is  
3 legitimate.

4 But I'm cautiously optimistic, and I agree with  
5 Liz Glazer tremendously, because we're talking about the  
6 concern about violence. To be clear, what's happening on  
7 the ground is that, for the most part, we're seeing a  
8 surge in gun violence. There's no question that gun  
9 violence is up from record lows. And in Brooklyn, it's up  
10 as much as 60 to 70 percent in terms of gun violence.

11 But much of the other crime in the city and in  
12 the county is really at record low levels. I mean, there  
13 are fewer arrests. There are fewer robberies. There are  
14 fewer burglaries. There are fewer violent crimes.

15 And so, the concern that we hear across the  
16 country about violence and this sense that the city is  
17 slipping away, in the sense that we're unsafe, actually  
18 alarms me. Because I expect that over the next year or  
19 two, as people return back to a more normal life, we're  
20 going to actually see more crime.

21 We're going to see increasing crime rates from  
22 these record lows of the past two years, and whether or  
23 not that memory of the pandemic and George Floyd protests  
24 and the things that have led, I think, middle-class people  
25 to support policing reforms, will that stay intact?

1           And I think that is why Liz is completely  
2 correct that we have to make sure we deal with gun  
3 violence. And so, this issue of how we get there and how  
4 we reduce violence in our communities without relying on  
5 police -- but this question of how we change our reliance  
6 on policing to deal with gun violence is so critical on  
7 this issue. We have to deal with gun violence very  
8 directly, because if we don't, I think we could see a  
9 slide.

10           And in terms of what is necessary, I think, on  
11 the ground, we need to make sure that part of what is  
12 being instilled in this community response is what we  
13 expect the relationship to be between our government, our  
14 criminal justice system, and the people we serve. And I  
15 think that is what's most inspiring and why I'm hopeful.

16           I do believe that people are rejecting the old  
17 version of law enforcement; the police, the prosecutor,  
18 and others should decide every aspect of how to create  
19 public safety. There is a genuine interest and a genuine  
20 belief that community-led public safety is critical to  
21 actually getting there. And as long as we all do what we  
22 need to do to continue to support that narrative, and  
23 then, get the resources to actually do that work, I think  
24 we will change forever how this city goes about providing  
25 safety.

1           And so, to that extent, getting the civics and  
2 all the other organizations, all the other public services  
3 in our community to deal with issues before they blow up  
4 and become more problematic is the next step for all of  
5 us. And so, again, a lot of what I said is less eloquent  
6 than what Liz said, but it's really on the same track.

7           There is a will to do it. We have to be ready  
8 for the uptick in crime. There will be an uptick in  
9 crime, because we're at record levels now, and if people'd  
10 level of tolerance aren't for more, we have to prepare  
11 them that there will be rising crime rates. But if we can  
12 do that and lower gun violence, I think we can hold the  
13 line. Thank you.

14           MR. WESTERN: Thanks a lot, Eric.

15           Gladys Carrión?

16           MS. CARRIÓN: Thanks, Bruce. It's great to see  
17 so many of you. I am Gladys Carrión. I am a senior  
18 fellow at the Justice Lab with Vinny, but I was the former  
19 commissioner in New York State, and also in New York City  
20 responsible for juvenile justice reform -- administration  
21 for juvenile justice.

22           And what we did, with Liz as a partner in  
23 crime, was reform the system, or attempt to. And I am so  
24 pleased to see Jeremy, who's also a partner in that work  
25 with us.

1           You know, I am optimistic and I am hopeful.  
2           But I am, like so many of you, also cautious. You know,  
3           we've accomplished a lot, particularly in the juvenile  
4           justice -- and I marvel at the numbers.

5           To think that in Close to Home in the City of  
6           New York, we have 62 young people in confinement today,  
7           which is amazing. When I was at the State, we had  
8           hundreds and hundreds. And even thinking at the secure,  
9           there are 22 young people from New York City in upstate  
10          facilities.

11          So, that number -- we probably never envisioned  
12          that number being so low. But what concerns me and what I  
13          think a lot about is that we don't become complacent with  
14          the success that we've had.

15          And also, you know, I've had lots of  
16          opportunity to reflect, that so much of the work that I  
17          did and did in partnership with many of you, while really  
18          important and transformative in the lives of young people,  
19          it wasn't enough, and it's not enough. And when I look  
20          back at the numbers, the system remains as many facilities  
21          as we closed -- as many programs we implemented, almost  
22          exclusively Black and Brown children, because that's who  
23          we continue to incarcerate in this country and in this  
24          city, and that really concerns me.

25          And so, for me, now as I look back at this work

1 from this vantage point, we've engaged in doing harm  
2 reduction and that's really important. I mean, it is.  
3 But for me, we should really view it as an interim step,  
4 that we need to really transform these systems, that we  
5 need to dismantle them as we know them, because they're  
6 not promoting the well-being of young people.

7           It's just not the solution, and when I think  
8 about -- you know, Liz alluded to this -- there is and  
9 continues to be a juvenile justice system that addresses  
10 the needs of white children. And we haven't managed to  
11 replicate that system.

12           Because that system is grounded in communities  
13 that are well-resourced with the health benefits, good  
14 schools in communities with clean air, with all of those  
15 factors that are so important to create and support a  
16 civil society, which is not in our communities that really  
17 populate these systems: both the juvenile justice system  
18 and the child welfare system.

19           So, I think we have to be bolder and we need to  
20 have a great sense of urgency in making the change and  
21 understanding why it's so necessary because we continue to  
22 capture in these systems just Black and Brown children.  
23 And so, inherently, there is something that at the root of  
24 these systems that is wrong and that we need to change.

25           So, doing what we're doing -- what we continue

1 to do, even very well-intentioned, isn't working for our  
2 children. And so, we need to do something differently,  
3 and we need to do it at a bigger scale and be bolder and  
4 more strategic.

5 But what gives me hope is the fact that there's  
6 so many voices now in this space calling for this  
7 transformational change. So, I'll end there.

8 MR. WESTERN: Thanks, Gladys.

9 Jeremy Travis?

10 MR. TRAVIS: Thanks, Bruce. It's hard to  
11 follow all of these observations because they're so  
12 thought-provoking and so eloquent. Let me try my best to  
13 answer the question.

14 So like many of you, I'm a born optimist. I  
15 can't imagine being in the world any other way. And as  
16 many of you have said, we couldn't do this work unless we  
17 were optimistic and held out hope that things could be  
18 better.

19 But I would like to think I'm a clear-eyed  
20 optimist in the sense that I recognize the very steep hill  
21 that we still have to climb, notwithstanding the progress  
22 here in New York. And these obstacles have been with us  
23 for a long time.

24 Bruce and I just published an essay where we  
25 defined the era of punitive excess as being basically the

1 last 50 years, when incarceration rates started to go up  
2 and the politics of tough-on-crime took hold, and we  
3 started to think that we could both police and prison our  
4 way out of a crime problem. But the history, as many have  
5 alluded to, is much longer than that, and we still  
6 struggle in the shadow of the legacy and the current  
7 application of white supremacy.

8           So, the obstacles are pretty formidable, but  
9 I'm optimistic, in part because of reasons that other  
10 colleagues have alluded to here. One is, just the history  
11 of change in New York has to give you some reason to  
12 believe that change is possible. And just having worked  
13 in New York on these issues for a long time, I feel that  
14 just acutely and very grateful to everyone on the screen  
15 who's helped contribute to that.

16           But also the history of the last year, where we  
17 saw the outpouring of protest in our streets -- New York  
18 and elsewhere -- following the murder of George Floyd, and  
19 the strong recognition of the need to deal with issues of  
20 race and the intersection between racism and the criminal  
21 justice system. And that has become -- and I hope this is  
22 a sustainable -- part of our discourse as we go forward.

23           And I would also add to those who place a lot  
24 of hope in the next generation, I do, too, having been at  
25 John Jay for many years. There's nothing as energizing as

1 being in touch with young people about what their hopes  
2 are for the future, and the ways in which criminal justice  
3 has become a central mission for their energy and their  
4 activism. Along with climate change, along with working  
5 on income inequality, right up there is justice reform.  
6 So, that's very encouraging.

7 I do want to make a special plea here for a  
8 widening of our lens to think about mass incarceration.  
9 It hasn't been mentioned explicitly. Danielle did a bit  
10 in talking about youths in prison. Some of you alluded to  
11 this, but I think we have still failed to focus on an  
12 agenda for what it would take in New York to significantly  
13 reduce -- maybe abolish. I can't quite go there.

14 But at least significantly reduce the number of  
15 people in prison. And I pay tribute, again, to Gladys  
16 Carrión for asking some of us to come together with a plan  
17 to reduce the juvenile population of those in youth  
18 detention facilities, and the numbers are just staggering.

19 I always ask myself, why can't we do that with  
20 adult systems? Why can't we have a politics that when we  
21 support people for assembly or state senate, we ask them  
22 to commit to a number? Commit to 50 percent -- it used to  
23 be the cut by 50. That to me is far too modest.

24 And when you look at where we've come from, in  
25 terms of these prisons in our state, to where we are now,

1 I hold no celebration for the fact that the prison  
2 populations has gone down double digits. That's not cause  
3 for a hallelujah. We still have so many people in prison  
4 who are there for such a long time, and when we saw --  
5 what COVID laid bare was the elderly in prison, those who  
6 are disabled in prison, those who are unhealthy in prison.

7 That's the tip of a big iceberg, which is, we  
8 use prison far too much. And a true next step in this  
9 movement, from my opinion, would be rallying around an  
10 explicit campaign to reduce the prison population in the  
11 near term. And we can do that.

12 I'm not talking about forward looking. I'm  
13 talking about people who are in prison now getting out,  
14 and there are ways the prosecutors can do that. There are  
15 ways that legislators can do that. There are ways that  
16 governors can do that.

17 But in order to get closer to a vision of  
18 justice, we have to do for the adults what we were able to  
19 do for the young people, and bring them close to home and  
20 keep them close to home, not use prison as our last  
21 resort.

22 MR. WESTERN: Great. Thanks, Jeremy.

23 Nadia Lopez?

24 DR. LOPEZ: Good afternoon, everyone, and thank  
25 you for the invitation to be a part of this conversation.

1 I'm the Founder of Mott Hall Bridges Academy, a STEM-  
2 focused school in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn.

3 And so, this conversation is really important  
4 to me because I don't come from, let's say, the formalized  
5 criminal justice background, but my work in education is  
6 aligned to the work that many of you are doing. I'm  
7 cautiously optimistic.

8 When I opened this school, I said I opened this  
9 school to close a prison, and I was intentional about  
10 that. I understood that I had to redefine my role as a  
11 principal, and not see myself as someone who was just  
12 going to be in a school building, in an office, and  
13 complying to all of the mandates of the Department of  
14 Education.

15 I knew that I was serving as a community  
16 leader. I knew that I had to understand the people that I  
17 was serving within that community. And so, that meant  
18 knowing that, as Donna had spoken about, Black and Brown  
19 people have been marginalized and the impact of poverty.

20 What does that look like? Where does that stem  
21 from? Who's responsible for it? Who else knows about it?

22 Why haven't we done anything differently? What needs to  
23 happen?

24 Because as long as I'm still here as a  
25 principal in this school, what am I doing to change the

1 landscape and the future for these children, who only know  
2 prison or the conversation about death as a form of being  
3 and living on this earth? And so, I had to take a  
4 holistic approach to that, and I had to understand that  
5 there are parallels to the criminal justice system that's  
6 embedded in our education system.

7           There are conversations that are not happening.  
8       There's an expectation that we're supposed to live in a  
9       silo, and that's not correct.

10           Right now, the despair that's in Brownsville is  
11       palpable. We are one of five communities that has the  
12       vast majority of our residents who are in the New York  
13       State prison system.

14           And so, knowing that, you have the high crime  
15       that's happening because people feel unseen. There's  
16       trauma in the community. There's a lack of investment in  
17       saying that we should be providing skills and  
18       opportunities and access, so those who are in our  
19       community can be able to become productive citizens.

20           Children who came into my school were literally  
21       on a first or second grade reading level and they were in  
22       sixth grade. Six percent of my scholars actually read on  
23       grade level when they came in to sixth grade, and my  
24       question was, that means there's only two kids who can  
25       read on grade level; what happened in elementary school?

1 What questions are we not asking our parents?

2           They don't have libraries in their homes. They  
3 don't have access to books. All they have access to are  
4 the ones in the school, and most times, principals don't  
5 want children taking the books home because then they  
6 wouldn't have books in the schools for everybody else to  
7 read.

8           So, the only time that they get to see and  
9 touch and feel and read is when they're inside of a  
10 school, because most of their parents don't have the  
11 capacity to read or write. So you think now with COVID --  
12 it's nearly two years -- a year and a half that children  
13 have been home.

14           Schools were a place of escape for them. It  
15 was a place of healing. It was a place of feeling valued.

16           Now they're in a household with parents who are  
17 maybe dealing with traumas themselves, mental health  
18 issues, multiple brothers and sisters. They have no form  
19 of escape. And then, when they were going outside, the  
20 police were policing them and telling them they needed to  
21 go back inside of their household, and creating more  
22 trauma.

23           So, those children -- when Eric spoke about the  
24 fact that there will an increase in violence, I think  
25 about those children because they're going to go into high

1 school not having been able to succeed. They'll go into  
2 schools where there's so much turnover right now because  
3 of the way teachers and principals have been treated  
4 throughout the whole pandemic.

5 So, there will be a new crop of individuals who  
6 are really there for the check, not really there for  
7 understanding the communities. Not really being able to  
8 understand that they are actual agents that can either  
9 deter children from going to prison or being the pathway  
10 for them to end up there. This is a concern.

11 And so I'm cautious about being optimistic,  
12 because as long as there's not a conversation about how  
13 the school system has to be in partnership with those who  
14 are doing the social justice and criminal reform, we're  
15 going to see this divide. And we're going to see many of  
16 our families -- families, generations, who are going to be  
17 destroyed by this very moment.

18 So, you know, everyone on this call, I'm  
19 listening. And I've been taking my notes of what everyone  
20 is saying because I know the value of what it means to  
21 show up, and I'm going to say many of my colleagues, they  
22 don't have the capacity.

23 They simply just don't understand their roles  
24 and responsibilities because, in the Department of  
25 Education, you have to get this data together. You've got

1 to make sure that you have kids on proficiency, but it's  
2 virtually impossible when you've taken away our money and  
3 you don't provide professional development.

4 And so, I've had to partner with individuals  
5 like Ken Montgomery and Keith White, who are my brothers  
6 from the Brooklyn Combine, who provide mentorships for my  
7 scholars since the time I opened the school. I've had  
8 relationships with Marlon Peterson from the time he was  
9 incarcerated and started a letter-writing program since  
10 2004 when I was just a teacher, and continued that on.  
11 And when he was released from prison, he became a mentor  
12 to my scholars.

13 I went to school with Topeka Sam in high  
14 school. So, I know her story. I knew Topeka before her  
15 incarceration, and I know the person she is. And it was  
16 important to share with our girls that you can be  
17 incarcerated as well, but creating opportunities for our  
18 scholars to hear her story so that they can know that  
19 there's other opportunities in life for them.

20 And then, partnering with individuals like  
21 Thomas Edwards of The Circles of Support, in terms of  
22 getting the funding that was needed in order to provide  
23 our scholars with financial literacy and entrepreneurship  
24 so that we can disrupt generational poverty. Because the  
25 reality is, the reason why there's so much violence is

1 because people feel like they have nothing.

2 And so, the reimagining is also, how do we  
3 redefine how we show up? How do we redefine what the  
4 expectations will be for these communities and those who  
5 are serving in the communities and getting funding? How  
6 are they actually engaging those who need to experience  
7 hope and not feel helpless and the despair?

8 So, thank you.

9 MR. WESTERN: Thanks, Nadia.

10 Rahson Johnson?

11 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you for the  
12 invitation to be a part of this discussion. My name is  
13 Rahson Johnson. I'm the Program Manager of the Save Our  
14 Streets. That's SOS. It's a community-based organization  
15 that is under the Center for Court Innovation.

16 Our primary mission is to reduce gun violence  
17 in the community. So, we spoke about violence  
18 interrupters, outreach workers earlier. That's one of the  
19 programs I'm actually a program manager for.

20 To the question, I think of Viktor Frankl, his  
21 book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, and the thing about tragic  
22 optimism. So, yes. I am hopeful, but I do know that we  
23 are living in a time where life and death are permitted to  
24 coexist, where suffering is permitted to exist.

25 Working with violence interrupters and being

1 out there in the streets to interrupt violence, every day  
2 we see gun violence. Every day we see people hurting each  
3 other and we interrupt it as best as we can, while also  
4 trying to remain hopeful that we are changing.

5 The very shirts that the workers wear, Stop  
6 shooting and start living -- it says, Put the guns down.  
7 Stop shooting each other. But also, find ways in which we  
8 can live and coexist together.

9 Just last night, I was on a webinar about  
10 community organizing. And it was about maybe 20 minutes  
11 into the webinar, one of the workers texted me and said we  
12 had a shooting in the community. So, even while having  
13 that discussion, there's still things happening in our  
14 community.

15 But I think about the leadership when I think  
16 about how optimistic should I be. I think about the  
17 leadership. I think about the times that we are in.  
18 Seeing violence at our capitol -- the U.S. Capitol. We're  
19 seeing that there is leadership there that kind of  
20 perpetuated some of the violence.

21 And so, when we go out there and we attempt to  
22 speak to the young people about building community, about  
23 resolving conflict, and being, basically, just loving and  
24 caring towards each other, those are examples that they  
25 point to. They question that leadership. They question

1 the area in which the country has gone and where it's  
2 going.

3           You talk about racialized violence that is  
4 perpetrated against some of our community members by the  
5 police. They point to those examples. Why should I be a  
6 person that seeks to change things when the very  
7 institutions that are here to protect us and to keep our  
8 community safe aren't doing that. They're hurting us.

9           So, those are realistic situations and concerns  
10 that they bring up. And we try to find ways to talk to  
11 them about those issues and try to figure out ways, how we  
12 can deal with the interpersonal situations and conflicts  
13 that we have.

14           So, I am certainly optimistic. A lot of people  
15 say cautiously optimistic. And truth of the matter is, I  
16 have no other choice but to be optimistic.

17           We spoke about closing Rikers Island. We  
18 talked about bail reform. We talked about the criminal  
19 justice system and so many people that are incarcerated in  
20 our country.

21           Those are all points that hit personal and hit  
22 home with me, because at the age of 16, I went to prison  
23 and served a total of 23 to 60 years. I had to no  
24 education. I didn't graduate from high school.

25           But while I was in there, I made choices that

1 allowed for me to gain my GED, get an associate's degree  
2 and a master's degree while I was inside of there. And,  
3 you know, while my degree is rooted in liberation  
4 theology, I've used that same education to talk about how  
5 we liberate the people in our community, and the lens  
6 which we look through is the lens of the oppressed, the  
7 people who are marginalized, those who are hurt.

8           How do we help those people? For me, it's  
9 about how do we -- I know we talk about reshaping,  
10 reforming, and reimagining. For me, it's about how do we  
11 create.

12           I think about our school systems and where are  
13 we going -- and we do wraparound services when we were  
14 able to go in, pre-pandemic. But I think about, where's  
15 the curriculum around gun violence inside of our schools?

16           We have kids that go to school and sit in the  
17 classroom, come home, and see someone laid out in their  
18 community on the street from gun violence, bloodshed. We  
19 have kids who see guns inside of their homes.

20           And then, there's the connection, also, that  
21 Dr. Nadia Lopez wrote up about poverty. Kids who'll go  
22 hungry, who can't eat, who don't have anything to eat, who  
23 don't have enough food to eat. So, I think about how do  
24 we create a system that is going to be really rooted in  
25 trying to help our people and help the young people and

1 really, really radically reform the systems in which we  
2 find ourselves currently under.

3 And I will continue to remain optimistic about  
4 what we can do, even while I'm out there doing violence  
5 reduction inside the community. Right after this call,  
6 I'm going to Albany Houses in Brooklyn, because there was  
7 a shooting over there -- that shooting last night -- to  
8 engage the community.

9 That's something that we do constantly, and  
10 certainly we need help. We need more resources and I  
11 thank definitely Eric Cumberbatch and the Office to  
12 Prevent Gun Violence and Mark Jay [phonetic] for being  
13 able to provide those resources and to assist us in doing  
14 this community work, and we will continue to do that.

15 MR. WESTERN: Thanks, Rahson.

16 Renita Francois?

17 MS. FRANCOIS: Hi, everybody. I'm Renita  
18 Francois. I'm the Executive Director of the Mayor's  
19 Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, part of the Office of  
20 Neighborhood Safety that Eric previously talked about at  
21 the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. It's like a  
22 nesting doll -- many, many names and titles.

23 I work with residents of 15 public housing  
24 developments across New York City that have experienced  
25 disproportionate rates of violence and other social

1 stressors. Any condition that you can imagine, these  
2 residents have faced and have gone against, whether it be  
3 economic, whether it deal with disinvestment, lack of  
4 opportunities for their children.

5           You name it. These residents are doing  
6 everything they can to persevere through it. And through  
7 the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, we're  
8 working with those residents, along with community-based  
9 partners and city agencies, to define what safety means to  
10 them, and not just to talk about it and to imagine and  
11 envision it, but to actually put our hands to work to  
12 create it.

13           And I think that it's really important in this  
14 moment, and I'm glad the national conversation has arrived  
15 at this point where we're really starting to talk about  
16 community investment, as opposed to enforcement. But  
17 residents in New York City have actually been laying a lot  
18 of the groundwork and foundation for that.

19           We see them do it every day. And I think that  
20 the challenge for us in this work is, how do we move  
21 beyond these constant conversations constantly poking and  
22 prodding communities about what they need, and actually  
23 show the bold leadership necessary and, really, the  
24 humanity and dignity necessary to fund justice?

25           And justice, not just when people touch the

1 criminal justice system, but before they ever get there.  
2 There's so much harm that has been done that I can't even  
3 think about justice in the criminal sense because so much  
4 has happened before that.

5 To the question of, am I hopeful? I'm always  
6 hopeful. I mean, I am the descendant of enslaved persons  
7 who could not see freedom for themselves. They couldn't  
8 see me sitting in this seat right now, but I'm sure that  
9 they hoped and that they dreamed that somebody like me  
10 would have the opportunity to be here.

11 And so, I don't have the luxury of not being  
12 hopeful, but I am tired. I am very exhausted, and I am  
13 weary. And I don't have all the answers, and I think that  
14 we saw with the COVID-19 pandemic that safety is really a  
15 holistic conversation that has to do with so much more  
16 than crime.

17 When our physical health is compromised, when  
18 our mental health is compromised, what happens to our  
19 communities? And we're not having the conversation about  
20 trauma that we need to. We're talking about the aftermath  
21 of that trauma, which is gun violence and all of the other  
22 violence that we see.

23 So, I don't have all the answers, but I do know  
24 that a system built on slave-catching and creative legal  
25 disenfranchisement cannot stand, and I know that we won't

1 let it. And so, I'm happy to be here with all of you, who  
2 I'm sure agree with that statement, and I look forward to  
3 the conversation.

4 MR. WESTERN: That's great, Renita. Thank you.  
5 Thomas? Thomas Edwards?

6 MR. EDWARDS: How are you doing? Thanks for  
7 having me today. My name is Thomas Edwards. I'm with the  
8 J.C. Flowers Foundation Circles of Support.

9 Really heavy stuff going on right now, and I  
10 guess -- you know, as someone who spent time on Rikers  
11 Island as a 17-year old, I'm pretty happy about the  
12 closing of Rikers Island because I know what it was. For  
13 someone who spent time in the juvenile facility as a 13-,  
14 14-year old, the Close to Home thing -- all these things  
15 are great things.

16 But I also live in Brownsville. And I look at  
17 what's happening each and every day, and all these new  
18 reforms and these things that change -- I don't know what  
19 they mean to the people most affected. They don't seem to  
20 be changed from any of these things. And I'm sure they  
21 are, and I'm sure the numbers would validate that.

22 But as someone who lived in these  
23 communities -- and this is not by chance that things are  
24 the way they are. These are the values of this country  
25 that segregated and oppressed a group of people.

1           So, I don't know how you change that culture  
2 just by doing some reforms, because it is dire. And as  
3 far as being optimistic or pessimistic -- I'm Black. I  
4 was born Black in this country, and I say that to say,  
5 I've seen so much that I don't know if I have hope.

6           But to be Black in this country, you always  
7 have to have hope, because if you don't believe it can get  
8 better, then it won't get better. But at the same time,  
9 it's a cultural thing, and this country has to really dig  
10 deep and be honest, and really open up some wounds there  
11 and say, Listen. This is what we did and this is how we  
12 can start to fix it.

13           Because this is only the beginning. Thank you.

14           MR. WESTERN: That's great, Thomas. Thank you.

15           Vinny Schiraldi?

16           MR. SCHIRALDI: Thanks, Bruce. I'm Vinny  
17 Schiraldi, Co-Director of the Lab with Bruce, and I'm very  
18 optimistic. I've been in this -- it's my 41st year in  
19 this field.

20           I started in 1980, and for the first 29, 39  
21 years -- 29 years, the prison population rose every single  
22 year. And you couldn't scare up a small conference room  
23 of people that seemed to care about that. And that was  
24 really, really hard and really depressing for a very long  
25 period of time.

1           I moved back to New York in 2010. I was gone  
2 for 25 years from New York, and as probation commissioner,  
3 I started looking at the numbers and a lot of the system  
4 had disappeared. It's just a stunning amount of New York  
5 City's system has disappeared. So much so that I think  
6 New York is arguably post-mass incarceration.

7           So, I get Jeremy's point. If internationally  
8 unique and historically unprecedented are your two  
9 guidelines for mass incarceration, I think it's just true  
10 that New York is neither of those things anymore. Racial  
11 disparities have gone up during that time, but there's 70  
12 percent fewer people being sentenced to state prison from  
13 New York City.

14           It's gone down from 22,000 people to under  
15 6,000. There were 1,500 kids in state custody in the year  
16 2000. There's no kids from family court and state  
17 custody, and as Gladys said, 62 kids in any form of  
18 custody. Twenty-two of them are in something that's  
19 locked.

20           So, I think we need to start to use New York,  
21 not as a perfect example by any stretch of the  
22 imagination. It still stuns me how many people are being  
23 technically violated on parole, for example.

24           I called the statisticians at Rikers five times  
25 last year, and it wasn't one single person any of those

1 times in for a technical probation violation, while one  
2 out of seven people were in Rikers for a technical state  
3 parole violation. So, there's still plenty of stuff to  
4 not be happy about and to be depressed about.

5 But I actually think -- I'm glad we're having  
6 this conversation because I think New York might be an  
7 example of what the end of mass incarceration looks like  
8 in its imperfect way. And I think that's something that  
9 other jurisdictions should kick the tires on, because all  
10 this happened with a pre-pandemic, stunning decline in  
11 crime.

12 I witnessed that firsthand. I mean, the year  
13 before I left New York, my apartment got burglarized  
14 twice. My car got broken into, and my landlord's son  
15 killed his girlfriend in the basement. And part of the  
16 reason I got the hell out of New York was because it just  
17 felt really unsafe, and I live right now in Williamsburg  
18 in a spot I wouldn't have walked when I was living in New  
19 York before.

20 So, this whole notion that I mostly grew up  
21 with that we just need more prisons to keep us safe, New  
22 York has given the lie to that. And I just think we need  
23 to sort of kick the tires on that and say, not just what  
24 can we do more -- which is absolutely true and absolutely  
25 wonderful.

1           But how the hell did this happen? And how was  
2 it so diametrically opposed to what there was a consensus  
3 around during the '70s, '80s, and '90s, which is that  
4 without more prisons, we would be less safe.

5           MR. WESTERN: Great, Vinny. Thank you very  
6 much.

7           And Vivian Nixon, I think, may be our last  
8 participant.

9           REV. NIXON: Thank you, Bruce. You know,  
10 there's not much that's been said that I don't agree with.

11          I just want to highlight a few things, not in any  
12 particular order.

13          I'm Vivian Nixon, Executive Director of College  
14 and Community Fellowship in New York City. And I think  
15 the thread that runs through the few comments I have is  
16 definitely that the underlying driver of every concern  
17 that I've heard is it still continues to be race.

18          Rikers closing was a huge deal. It has to  
19 happen. If there's any choice to make between pessimism  
20 and optimism, I have to say that I am -- optimism, but I  
21 don't use that word lightly, because I have a lot of  
22 doubt.

23          I don't see a lot of evidence that there is  
24 enough political will to push back. If there's community  
25 push back, I don't see enough political will to make sure

1 that we hold our promise to close Rikers without continued  
2 advocacy from the community and insistence upon closing  
3 it.

4 So, optimism is not the word I would use. I  
5 would use hope, and I don't see them as the same thing.

6 But the default to police is also rooted in  
7 race. So, when Eric Gonzalez talked about, you know, we  
8 default to police for everything -- yeah. The difference  
9 is that when we default to police, it shows up differently  
10 in other neighborhoods.

11 The police don't show up the same everywhere.  
12 And so, no matter how small the policing system is,  
13 they're going to show up differently in Brownsville than  
14 they show up on Fifth Avenue and 74th Street.

15 Vinny emphasized that while we have a big  
16 reduction, there's still a racial disparity. Are we okay  
17 with that? The racial disparity points to the fact that  
18 there's still a problem. Is my pain any less because  
19 there are fewer people suffering the same pain I'm  
20 suffering?

21 Danielle talked about us not compromising.  
22 Those of us who are on the side of really dismantling --  
23 doing more than shrinking -- doing more than reforming --  
24 not tinkering, I can't agree with that, either. Because  
25 without compromise, there will be absolutely no progress.

1 We will be stuck.

2 So we've got to find ways to do the things that  
3 we know are really going to change lives. Like the level  
4 of not having food to eat, or the level of living in fear,  
5 at the level of not having a school system that has the  
6 resources it needs to make sure children get the education  
7 they need.

8 We've got to make those kinds of compromises.  
9 The compromises that are going to make changes that are  
10 long and lasting changes that give people real hope for  
11 real opportunity. Not pie-in-the-sky dreams about what  
12 they could be if they became rich and famous.

13 Incrementalism can work if it is the right kind  
14 of change. We need to all work together. Yep. We do.  
15 But we don't need to be uniformed.

16 Unity is not uniformity. We all can have a  
17 lane that we are really good at. We can have something  
18 that we do better than everybody else, or at least, as  
19 good as.

20 And if we put our hands to the plow and do  
21 that, whether it's education or employment or helping  
22 people reduce violence in their communities. Do that to  
23 the best of your ability.

24 And we can do that in unity, but it doesn't  
25 mean we all have to believe the same. We don't have to

1 have the same foundational beliefs, and we don't all have  
2 to act in unison. We have to have a unity of the goal of  
3 severely dismantling the criminal justice system.

4           And then, I'll just end with the reason I can't  
5 use the word "optimism." I find it interesting that a lot  
6 of people see these changes that have been made -- the  
7 things that have happened like closing Rikers and more  
8 investments in programming in communities, and reducing  
9 juvenile justice systems, and can easily say they're  
10 optimistic.

11           But that's because most of the people who can  
12 be optimistic without qualifying it -- and I've paid  
13 attention to those who are just straight up optimistic,  
14 and those who qualified it. Most who can qualify it,  
15 understand how much of a tightrope we are on, and all you  
16 have to do is think about January 6 to know that.

17           We are on such a tightrope. The level of  
18 entrenchment that is possible is, to me, beyond anything  
19 we have imagined in my lifetime, or even my mother's  
20 lifetime. Because if that element of our society is able  
21 to gain complete control, they have legal authority to do  
22 just about anything they want with us if we are duly  
23 convicted of a crime, and authority to make anything they  
24 want to be a crime a crime.

25           That's a serious threat, and it weighs on my

1 mind daily. So I think what has come to my mind very  
2 clearly over these Square One Sessions and Roundtables is,  
3 there needs to be -- we can't move forward without  
4 acknowledging just how tenuous the lives of Black and  
5 Brown bodies are still in America.

6 We can't move forward without an agreement to  
7 repair the harm that has already been done, and a  
8 mechanism to stop the harm from continuing, and a complete  
9 rejection of any authority that is rooted in white  
10 supremacy.

11 And for some people, that looks like abolition.

12 For some people, that looks like something else, and it  
13 has to happen at every level: on the ground, in the  
14 Mayor's office, the Governor's office, the House, the  
15 Senate, the White House, in communities, in the academy,  
16 in business. It has to happen everywhere.

17 So, I'm not optimistic because the evidence  
18 does not make me believe we're there. But I am hopeful,  
19 and I'm hopeful for the same reason I heard many people  
20 say they were hopeful on this call.

21 Because my people are not supposed to have  
22 survived the torture that they survived for hundreds of  
23 years. We should be extinct, but we are still here. And  
24 that's why I have hope.

25 MR. WESTERN: That is great, Vivian. That is a

1 fitting point at which to pause. We may be rejoined at  
2 some point by DeAnna Hoskins from JLUSA. DeAnna had to  
3 step away for a moment, but she may rejoin us.

4 We're going to open the floor now to the New  
5 York panel, and I want to acknowledge that this  
6 conversation is enabled with the support of the J.C.  
7 Flowers Foundation. And as I was listening, something  
8 I've been wrestling with as I've been thinking about this  
9 panel is that in many ways, we can look at a lot of  
10 numerical indicators and we heard a lot about that from  
11 you all in the last half hour.

12 The Rikers' numbers are astonishing. From  
13 22,000 to -- at the height of the pandemic, the Rikers  
14 population got down to 3,800 from 22,000 in '91 or '92.  
15 And Vinny put the point very sharply that we can think of  
16 us living now in New York in a post-mass-incarceration  
17 era, which is a stunning statement, and the numbers, I  
18 think, bear it out.

19 And yet, from around this table, the project of  
20 racial justice seems actually just as urgent. We feel as  
21 if we've not made tremendous progress on that project. As  
22 Vivian said, the security of Black and Brown bodies does  
23 not seem greatly advanced despite the large reduction in  
24 the jail population, and white supremacy does not appear  
25 to have been defeated, despite these improvements.

1           And I felt, in many ways, people were saying  
2 there remains a mountainous unsolved challenge that has  
3 not been reflected in the declining crime rates or the  
4 declining jail population.

5           So, I just want to open the floor, and I want  
6 to push on the challenges. I think often you get a group  
7 of New Yorkers together and particularly with people from  
8 outside the city, and the victory's well and appropriately  
9 documented. I wonder if we can push on the challenges.

10           How do we make progress on the much more  
11 challenging problem of racial justice, and the security of  
12 Black and Brown bodies, and the defeat of white supremacy?

13           Because shrinking crime rates and shrinking jail  
14 populations has only taken us so far, it seems.

15           I know this is not a reticent group. I know  
16 that from personal experience. You can raise your blue  
17 hand with the reaction button to get in the queue, and for  
18 the moment, there's the discussion among the New Yorkers  
19 and we'll open the panel shortly.

20           Liz Glazer?

21           MS. GLAZER: I am probably -- I am the wrong  
22 person to lead this off, but I think as long as we focus  
23 on reducing incarceration and the footprint of the  
24 criminal justice system as the sole way to improve lives  
25 and to right the wrongs of the past, we will continue to

1 miss the mark. Because the issue is less -- well, I mean,  
2 that's surely an issue, and that has to be fixed. But the  
3 issue is that -- and I'm so sorry that the principal who  
4 spoke so eloquently about the Brownsville school -- I'm  
5 sorry. I don't know your name.

6 Wait, Nadia Lopez?

7 MR. WESTERN: Nadia.

8 MS. GLAZER: I mean, I think that the issue of  
9 not having access to just more than basic resources of  
10 good schools and decent housing and well-maintained public  
11 spaces, and putting our shoulder to that wheel in a very  
12 sort of focused and concentrated way is the way that  
13 everyone's life becomes better and the touch of the  
14 criminal justice system recedes.

15 It's not to say abandon the project of reducing  
16 the touch of the criminal justice system. Absolutely, we  
17 should make it less punitive, et cetera, et cetera. But  
18 we should start way, way, way before. And right now, we  
19 only have sort of language of negation.

20 We talk about prevention. We talk about all  
21 these other things, but we have to sort of figure out a  
22 way to make it as powerful as it actually is to put  
23 together the pieces that give people access to the  
24 resources that have been denied for centuries.

25 MR. WESTERN: That's great, Liz.

1                   Beverly?

2                   MS. TILLERY: You know, I was hesitating  
3 because actually, I was surprised by how much the  
4 conversation and hearing people's comments was creating a  
5 really emotional response for me.

6                   I think that is because of exactly what you  
7 said, Bruce, in that you can look at all of the  
8 statistics, but the reality is that this is still a very  
9 divided city and our realities are so different.

10                  And there are -- for some people, they can walk  
11 more safely in the city, and for some people, they do have  
12 access to resources that they need in increasing  
13 resources. And again, we saw with COVID how that is not  
14 the case for so many. I think until we define our success  
15 in terms of the lived reality of the most marginalized,  
16 the most impacted by violence, we will always have this  
17 divided conversation about how far we've come because  
18 there will always be hoards of people that we're leaving  
19 behind and we're kind of saying that's okay, because we've  
20 made all these other strides.

21                  And so, I think about how do we get to the  
22 point where we are no longer debating the humanity of  
23 certain people in our society? I mean, that is really the  
24 core.

25                  We talk about radical reform, which I truly

1 believe that we need. But I also believe, as people have  
2 said so eloquently, until we deal with racism and racial  
3 equity in this country, we will keep recreating systems  
4 that continue to punish and harm Black and Brown people  
5 and queer people and immigrants over and over and over  
6 again.

7           And that getting to the core of that, in all of  
8 the work that we do is, I think, what is really the  
9 hardest thing, but the most important thing.

10           MR. WESTERN: Thanks, Beverly.

11           Thomas?

12           MR. EDWARDS: Yeah, I think that a lot of this  
13 is cultural. When you look at certain things, the way  
14 they happen -- you know, we didn't get to this place by  
15 accident. And what I mean by that, when you talk about  
16 how policing is different in different communities, and as  
17 it should be because policing, as someone pointed out, it  
18 started with slave patrols.

19           So, if it wasn't slave patrols, it was about  
20 property protections. Black people were either property  
21 and had nothing to protect, so they could never have a  
22 good relationship with that organization. So, it evolved  
23 into what it is today, and it just has over grown over  
24 time.

25           And then, you look at the lack of resources.

1 Nadia talked about education in prison, and it's been long  
2 thought that you could tie the lack of education into  
3 going to prison at some point. If you do statistics, a  
4 vast number of people in prison don't have a high school  
5 diploma. So, it starts right there.

6 So, it's not by chance that certain  
7 neighborhoods like Brownsville, the South Bronx, and other  
8 neighborhoods lack resources. This was by design, and it  
9 was set up a certain way to keep this thing going. And  
10 the fact that the numbers have come down -- like I said  
11 before, I don't know how much that means to the individual  
12 people.

13 You know, we talk about violence in the city.  
14 Much of the violence is perpetrated against people of  
15 color and with no resources, no protection. So, these  
16 things are not just, like, perchance that they happen.

17 I mean, you even look at the way the city was  
18 designed by Robert Moses. All these things were designed  
19 to keep certain people down. The educational system, the  
20 way it's set up. The immigration system. I mean, certain  
21 immigrants have come over here -- they are wanted over  
22 here.

23 But it also depends on what color you are,  
24 where you come from if you're wanted here. And the worst  
25 thing to be in America is Black. I don't care where you

1       come from or who you are.  If you come here, you know you  
2       are over one group of people.

3                 You have seen it on the news.  You have read  
4       about it.  You have seen it on TV, that this one group of  
5       people are beneath you, no matter where you come from or  
6       what your situation was.

7                 And so, this has continued to be perpetrated.  
8       So, it becomes a cultural thing, and I think without  
9       really going all the way back to the core of this and  
10      providing real resources -- and I don't know if  
11      reparations or whatever the word you want to use are the  
12      answers, but there's some real things that need to be done  
13      and looked at.

14                Because I don't think any one grows up -- you  
15      know, Rahson went to prison at 16.  He sat in a courtroom  
16      where everybody had a college degree, and he didn't have a  
17      high school diploma.  But somehow that was fair in this  
18      society.  And what we need to look at is dignity.  How do  
19      we treat people?

20                And then, I think we have to look at this  
21      country's history.  Who are people?  Let's not forget  
22      that.  Who are people in this country?  Because there was  
23      a time in this country the law dictated that certain  
24      people wasn't people -- that they weren't human.

25                So, we need to look at the whole history of

1 this country and rebuild on what happened because we can't  
2 act like it didn't happen. And I think that's where the  
3 whole core of this thing has to start from. Thank you.

4 MR. WESTERN: Thanks, Thomas.

5 Donna?

6 MS. HYLTON: Thanks, Bruce. I just want to  
7 jump in because what Beverly said, it just -- I do this  
8 work intentionally, right. And the intention comes from a  
9 lived experience, and that lived experience is rooted in  
10 so much trauma and so much harm and so much pain.

11 But in my journey and in my own healing, I have  
12 to understand that the majority of that was not my fault.

13 I had to really understand that.

14 So, when I went into the criminal legal system  
15 when I was sent to prison, I met hundreds of other women,  
16 young women like myself, who shared very similar  
17 stories -- journeys as mine. And it was at those points  
18 in incarceration that I started getting an understanding,  
19 and the understanding was like, What's wrong here?

20 Why is hundreds of women -- young women like  
21 myself -- in this system? Not one that said anyone  
22 listened, cared enough to help, paid attention. Not one.

23

24 And so, what I recognize is that we really have  
25 to hone in on the root causes of things, as I mentioned

1 earlier and some of us have been saying. Nothing that  
2 we're doing is ever going to change if we don't recognize  
3 and acknowledge the root causes. And those root causes  
4 are not just premised in racism. They're premised in  
5 harm, abuse, violence, trauma, poverty.

6           Nadia's talking about the kids not having what  
7 they need. Why is one school more equipped than another  
8 school? During this pandemic, it hurt us so much -- it  
9 hurt me as a mother, as a woman, as a human being -- to  
10 hear and to learn that there were children that didn't  
11 even have Wi-Fi.

12           They didn't have a laptop or whatever they  
13 needed to use to participate in schools, in the work.  
14 Why? Why is -- I believe it's Brownsville -- the only  
15 area in our city that doesn't even have, I believe, a high  
16 school?

17           Something's wrong. We must, must recognize,  
18 acknowledge, and understand the root causes of all of this  
19 stuff. We're all guilty of it. We're all guilty of it.

20           It's more difficult for us, yes, those of us  
21 who are Black and Brown to correct the ills that were  
22 thrown at us, and we continue to live with daily because  
23 we're walking around Black and Brown. So we don't know if  
24 we're going to live to see tomorrow free or alive.

25           So, in order for any of this stuff to really

1 change or even get the support, the work that's necessary,  
2 we have to first acknowledge that there's some issues  
3 here, personal and societal. Why do we have kids living  
4 in abject poverty? Why do we have anyone living in abject  
5 poverty?

6 Why has prison become the response to substance  
7 abuse, substance issues, mental health, poverty -- all  
8 these other things -- medical issues. Why has prison and  
9 this system become that? Why?

10 We know why, right? Because it was created to  
11 harm us. Let's be very clear. Black and Brown people, it  
12 was created to harm us.

13 So, we have to first recognize those root  
14 things, those ills that are so embedded in this country  
15 and to Vivian's point, entrenched. Because it's not okay.

16 We've become so comfortable, and those who are white  
17 allies -- counterparts, we need your help. And I really  
18 challenge you to recognize your privilege.

19 Recognize the privilege and recognize and  
20 understand how you can help with this because we cannot do  
21 it alone. But it must first be acknowledged that it's not  
22 just the systems -- these physical systems that we're  
23 dealing with -- but those mental, emotional, spiritual  
24 systems that have been created to harm people.

25 So, root causes for me is so important. Our

1 office is located in Bedford-Stuyvesant, but we do work  
2 across this country, especially in New York. And the  
3 common thread, the common themes are all the same. All  
4 the same.

5           So, no matter what position or role or title  
6 you carry, I challenge everyone to recognize their  
7 humanity. Recognize your humanity so you could recognize  
8 it in other people. And as a human being, ask yourself,  
9 why are kids going hungry? Why don't the children in a  
10 certain area have what children in my area might have?

11           Why are so many women or people incarcerated in  
12 this country and they have the same stories? The same  
13 journeys? What's wrong here?

14           So, for me, the work is premised in recognizing  
15 that, acknowledging that, and working in whatever capacity  
16 I can contribute to change it. And if that means shaming  
17 people, I will shame you because lives are on the line.

18           When I was a little girl, you didn't help me,  
19 but there's no anger there. There's an understanding that  
20 it's hard sometimes to face the truth. And so, I  
21 challenge everyone to look in the mirror and say what is  
22 that truth for you? How can you contribute? How can you  
23 not? What can you do?

24           I wouldn't even care if it's picking up the  
25 phone, signing something, whatever it may be. What is

1 that? But really recognize and acknowledge that harm  
2 comes in so many ways. And the vast majority of it is  
3 directed at one race of people, and something is wrong.

4

5 MR. WESTERN: Thanks, Donna. We only have a  
6 few minutes. I'll go right to Nadia in one second.

7 We only have a few minutes before we bring in  
8 the whole Roundtable, but there's a very strong continuity  
9 across Donna's comments and Thomas's and Beverly's: the  
10 importance of acknowledging root causes, getting beyond  
11 debating humanity. Beverly said, until we deal with  
12 racism, we'll continue to harm.

13 So, I think a question for this group is, what  
14 dose this mean concretely? This is very much picking up  
15 the challenge that Donna has presented us with. What do  
16 we do in our politics, in policy, to tackle the challenge  
17 of racism and racial injustice in New York City today?

18 What does that mean in terms of action today?  
19 I really want to push us to try and speak to that in a  
20 direct way.

21 Nadia?

22 DR. LOPEZ: I guess my answer -- I couldn't  
23 have said as well because Donna was saying so much, I was  
24 like, If I put my hand up -- but honestly, I think about  
25 what's the holistic approach that we're taking?

1           We understand that Black and Brown people are  
2 disproportionately affected by the criminal justice  
3 system, by the education system, by healthcare, by  
4 housing, by economics, mental health -- all of the things.

5           And when you look at the conversations that are had,  
6 they'll be a conversation about criminal justice reform.  
7 There's no one in regards to mental health on that  
8 committee. There's no one in regards to education.  
9 There's no one in regards to economics.

10           Then, you have another conversation about  
11 mental health. There's no one in conversation about  
12 criminal justice. We'll all say the same things in our  
13 respective industries, but we're not actually coming to  
14 the table and having a holistic conversation about what  
15 would it mean? What does it look like?

16           What is the impact that's being had in our  
17 communities? Yes. Racism is at the root of it all, but  
18 what does it look like for us to design policies or  
19 provide the funding? Or to actually ask the question:  
20 why is this happening?

21           I learned that by literally being inside of a  
22 school. It was virtually impossible for me to lead a  
23 school not recognizing the mental health issues in our  
24 school system, and not understanding until I ended up --  
25 and this is why I'm not the principal of the school

1 anymore -- with health issues as a result of the stress  
2 that occurred because of the work.

3           So, when we talk about COVID, and we talk about  
4 Black and Brown people having the largest number of cases,  
5 all I could hear on the media was this is related to  
6 underlying health issues. But does anybody really get to  
7 the root of the why? Why would I have all of these health  
8 issues? It's because of the stress. It's because of the  
9 lack of support.

10           It's because of the vicarious trauma that I  
11 walk into every single day having to deal with the effects  
12 of poverty in a community that has been so traumatized,  
13 that deals with PTSD, that deals with depression, that  
14 deals with anxiety, that deals with police brutality, that  
15 deals with abandonment, that deals with children not  
16 having fathers in their homes, mothers being abused in  
17 front of them.

18           That's every single day. And so, if we don't  
19 have conversations that brings everyone to the table --  
20 all of the leaders to the table and say, What do we need  
21 to do to make this happen?

22           Because the reality is, when we start breaking  
23 down what do communities that does not look like ours --  
24 in communities that are affluent, that may be  
25 predominantly white -- what do they have? We'll talk

1 about all of the services that they have.

2 All of the opportunities that they have, the  
3 access and everything. Because they get together and they  
4 say, What do we need? And we're going to create it, and  
5 we're going to provide it, and we're going to have to get  
6 the money, and we're going to do all of the things.

7 Our community doesn't know how to advocate for  
8 that. They don't even know what they don't have. They  
9 don't know what they need because they've never received  
10 it.

11 So, all we know how to do, literally, is  
12 survive. We've never been taught how to properly thrive.

13 We've never been taught what we deserve in this life.

14 Our kudos is that we survived another day. Our  
15 existence is based off of trauma every single day. And  
16 then, we look to the right and look to the left and say,  
17 I'm still here.

18 And so, until we have a real conversation --  
19 until we're able to say, Who's at the helm of this? Who  
20 are our leaders in positions that do make the policies?  
21 When have they shown up in our community?

22 Do they truly understand us? It's not enough  
23 to throw money at organizations. Do you know what the  
24 work that the organization is doing? Do you even know who  
25 they're partnered with?

1           That's the real work that needs to happen in  
2 order to do transformative work that will have greater  
3 sustainability and impact for the future.

4           MR. WESTERN: That's great, Nadia. Thank you.  
5 Thanks very much for that.

6           We have been joined by DeAnna Hoskins. Good to  
7 see you, DeAnna.

8           So, I began by asking everyone to give us a 60-  
9 second introduction whether or not they felt pessimistic  
10 or optimistic about the current moment. And so, DeAnna, I  
11 wonder if I could ask you to introduce yourself and put  
12 that same question to you.

13          MS. HOSKINS: Thanks, Bruce. I apologize to  
14 everyone for having to step away. DeAnna Hoskins,  
15 President and CEO of Just Leadership USA.

16          Am I optimistic or pessimistic about the  
17 current climate? I think I straddle the fence, but I lean  
18 more towards optimistic, because being directly impacted  
19 and being in this work for over 20 years, I've always  
20 moved towards solution.

21          I struggle when we regurgitate a problem  
22 especially when you've lived the problem over and over.  
23 How do we move to solution? What is the strategy to get  
24 to solution?

25          And what I'm seeing is progress is being made

1 and barriers do come up. And I think when you've come  
2 from a community of people that understands when you start  
3 to move forward, barriers and traps are going to be thrown  
4 in front of you, your job is to figure out strategically  
5 how to maneuver them and around them to keep going in this  
6 climate, in this culture.

7 I was listening to the conversation before I  
8 joined back and one of the things that I think -- we keep  
9 skirting around it. We're all talking about we know race  
10 is the problem, and it's like digging up a tree.

11 We're digging to the root, but then, we get to  
12 it and it's like, Ooh. That's too big. So, let's try to  
13 back off and find something else that can actually subpar  
14 that or actually try to fix it. When we talk about  
15 policies, policies are great, guys.

16 But if we're not looking at the policies from a  
17 cultural lens -- because policies are going to land  
18 different in Black and Brown communities than they land in  
19 white communities -- who's going to benefit from those  
20 policies? And I just think all the policies -- and right  
21 now, I'm critiquing the George Floyd on police reform  
22 policy.

23 The fact of saying you have to put in a policy  
24 not to chokehold a person? That's not even seeing people  
25 as human, that you have to put that into a federal law to

1 say don't choke somebody and kill them. And that's  
2 directly saying, Don't choke Black people and kill them  
3 when you're arresting them.

4 That's deliberately what they're saying. So,  
5 what they're showing me is that we know -- I heard someone  
6 say it's the devaluing of Black lives -- that we're not  
7 even considered human. We're still considered three-  
8 fourths of a human, and society continues to treat us like  
9 that.

10 So, I'm kind of at the point -- everyone who  
11 knows me, I just call it what it is -- if we don't have  
12 the courage to stand up and call it what it is, we're  
13 going to continue to be pushed back. We're going to  
14 continue to keep coming to these moments of these tables.

15  
16 I agree with Nadia. If we are not cross-  
17 collaborating -- because the criminal justice system is  
18 just a catch-all. It's a catch-all of all the other  
19 failed systems that are not fully funded and operating to  
20 actually function and to actually provide what's needed so  
21 that we don't end up in the criminal justice system.

22 And to keep acting as if the criminal justice  
23 system solo is the problem -- it's not. It's the systemic  
24 of all these other systems that have been failing Black  
25 and Brown communities for years.

1           Someone made a comment to me the other day,  
2 This is a very uncomfortable moment. And my response was,  
3 Well, welcome to Black people's world. We've been  
4 uncomfortable for 400 years. It's about time other people  
5 are starting to get uncomfortable, too.

6           So, I'm hopeful, Bruce, and I'm just going to  
7 stay on my lane. But until we start working in a cross  
8 collaboration manner to address what it is -- and let's  
9 put this out there, too. It's just not this criminal  
10 justice system.

11           It's even being a Black woman running a  
12 national organization and being oppressed by philanthropy,  
13 so it's showing up everywhere. Still being marginalized  
14 by the color of my skin in different aspects.

15           So, when I say the trauma -- I think Nadia said  
16 it -- the trauma of this conversation, the trauma of what  
17 happens every day in life, the trauma of the work is  
18 falling real hard on Black people right now. So, and I'll  
19 stop there.

20           MR. WESTERN: Thanks, DeAnna. So, Renita has  
21 her hand up. Eric, did you want to come in as well? So,  
22 you don't have to be --

23           MR. CUMBERBATCH: It depends on what Renita  
24 says or doesn't say.

25           MR. WESTERN: Okay. I, myself, feel that way

1 about most things. So, we'll go Renita, and then, maybe,  
2 Eric. And then, we'll open the floor to the whole  
3 Roundtable group.

4 Renita?

5 MS. FRANCOIS: I just wanted to react to what  
6 Nadia was saying. But first, I want to -- as part of the  
7 Office of Neighborhood Safety, we're doing this community-  
8 based participatory research project with an organization  
9 National Innovation Service. It's a Black-led research  
10 and policy organization, and they do great work.

11 And so, we commissioned them to do this project  
12 to help us understand, from the residents and folks in the  
13 community's perspective, how they think about safety.  
14 Because right now, the statistics that we look at and we  
15 want to determine whether a community is good or bad, safe  
16 or thriving, it's just if crime went up or crime went  
17 down, and that's the full story.

18 And so, we really wanted to go about this  
19 undertaking of really learning what communities actually  
20 say about feeling safe. So, the people that contributed  
21 to this are residents who live in public housing,  
22 residents who live in underserved communities, our  
23 community-based partners, like ones that operate the cure  
24 violence model.

25 And so, I want to read a quote that was in

1 their findings about thriving that just struck me because  
2 residents have such -- they understand the complexity of  
3 the situation in which they find themselves. And I think  
4 that as government actors -- and especially in the  
5 enforcement realm -- you hear this language of fear around  
6 the excuse for why communities have to live under the  
7 occupation that they do.

8 So, I'm going to read this quote from a person  
9 who's a part of this. It's says, "We're not thriving.  
10 We're surviving, and it's a difference. It's a very big  
11 difference. When all of my needs are met and all of my  
12 child's needs are met, then we can strive. We can thrive  
13 for something. We can reach for something.

14 "We can see that goal happening because I'm not  
15 worried about her eating. I'm not worried about nobody's  
16 busting down my door because I got \$5 more than them,  
17 knocking me over my head, knowing I ain't got but five  
18 more nickels than what you got."

19 When all of your needs are met, then you're  
20 moving forward, but if you're always moving backwards,  
21 you're not thriving. And I just think that that person's  
22 understanding of -- they were being asked questions about  
23 safety and what they need to feel safe. They went to the  
24 part about, Can I protect my child?

25 What's the economic condition in my community?

1 Is there a scarcity mindset where people feel like they  
2 have to target one another to get what they need?

3 There's just so much richness in the  
4 understanding of people who live in a community about what  
5 they need, and we oftentimes minimize that to, Well, we  
6 need to keep the condition like this. We need jails. We  
7 need police officers because who's going to keep the good  
8 people in the community safe? And they just have a very  
9 different understanding of what that looks like.

10 And to the point about having these  
11 conversations in silos, I think that -- one, in New York  
12 City, we do something called NeighborhoodStat where we do  
13 convene different agencies, community-based partners, and  
14 residents together to be in conversation explicitly about  
15 issues that arise in the communities where these residents  
16 live. And we work with them to prioritize, what do they  
17 see as important and critical and needing to be addressed  
18 now?

19 And what are the more systemic things that they  
20 are willing to be at the table with us to work toward?  
21 The challenge with that is -- one, we have to build the  
22 local infrastructure. We have to be doing that  
23 everywhere.

24 People should be in conversation with their  
25 government at every table possible about what their needs

1 are. It's not just about centering the voices of people  
2 who are impacted by the criminal justice system. It's  
3 centering the voices of people who are impacted by  
4 inequity and disinvestment in every situation.

5 So, I agree that we do need to be convening  
6 people and figuring out how we do that at a broader scale,  
7 and how we invest in that. And the other part of it is  
8 just -- I'm losing my train of thought. So, I'm going let  
9 Eric go.

10 But I just wanted to lift up that that is  
11 happening in parts of our city, and just figuring out how  
12 we bring that to scale and bring in more voices is a part  
13 of the work that we have to do to figure out how to make  
14 this approach more widespread.

15 MR. WESTERN: Great. Thanks, Renita. Can I  
16 just say, the idea of building a local infrastructure for  
17 promoting political voice seems like a profoundly  
18 important idea to me.

19 Eric?

20 MR. CUMBERBATCH: Yeah. I just want to add to  
21 Renita's comments and really take a step away from the  
22 operations part, but how we arrived in this space and why  
23 we're in this space. First and foremost, our entire unit  
24 is comprised of young, brilliant Black and Brown people  
25 that have never seen themselves as having the

1 opportunities to be in these spaces.

2           So, what we come here with, what we reflect,  
3 what we project, what our outwards touch is, is really  
4 based a racial equity lens and steeped in leading with  
5 love in our heart and spirit from lived experiences  
6 coupled with theoretical, gained knowledge in the spaces  
7 where we are.

8           So, I think when we talk about holistic  
9 approaches, we're bringing holistic approaches into spaces  
10 that have traditionally been very sterile and very black  
11 and white, and did not represent our communities, and did  
12 not look like us in being in leadership positions, which  
13 is beyond key in moving us forward.

14           Someone mentioned earlier -- I think it  
15 might've been Vivian -- about a collective effort. And  
16 what we're doing is building networks across the city with  
17 the understanding that everyone has some sense of  
18 brilliance that they could bring as problem solvers,  
19 researchers, and be part of the solution in their  
20 particular role, in their particular part.

21           And the role and part that we're playing right  
22 now is not just to bring people to the table, but to build  
23 tables of ownership in community and resource and undo  
24 harms, challenges, barriers that exist across so many  
25 agencies, sectors, and so forth within city government.

1 I also want to say I'm hearing a lot of  
2 systems, systems. And, you know, I think sometimes we  
3 don't always lift up the self-resiliency, self-sufficiency  
4 that exists in our communities and within our people. And  
5 the strength and just the overall ability to be where we  
6 are today, and to really use these positions and platforms  
7 to lift up.

8 And that, in essence, is the core of our  
9 approaches, our work oftentimes in government space. I've  
10 worked in government for -- this is now 17, 18 years.

11 A lot of people in Brownsville are on the line.  
12 I'm in Brownsville often. I was just at Van Dyke Houses  
13 for a very horrific incident, and a lot of the brothers  
14 and sisters said, I haven't seen you in a while, E. And  
15 for me, the reflection was, if you haven't seen me, that's  
16 a good thing. Because when I'm here, it's about the  
17 systems that have failed so many people.

18 And really understanding the power that the  
19 collective has and allowing each other to network and  
20 mobilize, which has historically been disallowed in Black  
21 and Brown communities. And for us to come together and  
22 unify and really have power across community, power across  
23 agency, power across government, those are the steps that  
24 we're taking in New York City. And those are the types of  
25 things that we're doing, and we're not moving with

1 ideology of old school criminal justice system and so  
2 forth.

3 I told Ms. Glazer when she brought me to MOCJ  
4 very early on that we're not here because we believe the  
5 criminal justice system works for Black and Brown people.  
6 We're here -- me, in particular -- to blow it up as it's  
7 always been.

8 MR. WESTERN: Yeah. Let me bring in the whole  
9 Roundtable group now. And so, here's everyone. And the  
10 Roundtable has been meeting over the last week or so  
11 discussing the topic of values.

12 Now, I want to ask the Roundtable group first,  
13 do you have questions for people on the New York panel?  
14 And so, we'll start there with questions from the  
15 Roundtable group to the New York panel, which might be to  
16 the panel in general or to specific people.

17 Monica?

18 DR. BELL: Sure. I have a question. It's  
19 something, I guess, I'm wrestling with in this debate  
20 about pessimism, optimism and compromise or not that was a  
21 big theme that a lot of you all talked about.

22 I guess that maybe this is less of a factor in  
23 New York, but I also participated in an event earlier  
24 today in which it was people who kind of think that  
25 radical transformation of the criminal legal system -- to

1 talk about the racism and the systemic and structural  
2 racism of the system is almost like off the table for them  
3 because of their political commitments.

4           There's almost this sort of -- to go as radical  
5 as we've been talking about, to really get into the  
6 systemic racism aspect of things, to deal with that is  
7 impossible given the politics. And I guess, of course,  
8 compromise is necessary. I really appreciated what  
9 Reverend Nixon was saying about that.

10           But like, how much can we compromise on  
11 acknowledging and understanding systemic racism? How do  
12 you all think about those types of compromises that you  
13 have to make on a day-to-day basis to get work done?

14           MR. WESTERN: And that's for the whole panel.

15           DR. BELL: Maybe it's more helpful to direct  
16 that question --

17           MR. WESTERN: Okay.

18           REV. NIXON: I don't think compromising on the  
19 race issue is on the table. That's the one place we can't  
20 compromise. I think we can compromise about strategic  
21 decisions to make policy changes in certain systems.

22           But unless race is the core of the  
23 conversation, every policy decision is subject to  
24 reversal. So, yeah. That's the one thing I wouldn't  
25 compromise on.

1           So thank you for pointing that out.

2           MR. WESTERN: So, what's the test? Right? If  
3 you're compromising on race, what does that look like that  
4 you're failing to acknowledge before humanity? Do we have  
5 a shop definition of that?

6           I guess that's for Vivian. How do we know when  
7 we're compromising on race?

8           REV. NIXON: Really, I want people who feel  
9 optimistic, please feel optimistic. I don't want to be  
10 Debbie Downer. But I think that when we make public  
11 statements -- when we talk to media about these issues,  
12 when we make progress, we should talk about that progress.

13           We should say incarceration is at a lower rate  
14 than it's ever been in New York City. However -- there  
15 should be a however there -- until we can eliminate the  
16 racial disparity, we have not finished our work.

17           All of this celebrating has to come with, And  
18 there's more work to do because there's still racism  
19 entrenched in this system.

20           MR. WESTERN: That's great.

21           Thomas?

22           MR. EDWARDS: I think the whole thing has to  
23 start with race because in this country, that's what it  
24 was built on. I mean, for years, you're talking in this  
25 country, you hear things about Black-on-Black crime. You

1 hear all these things about like it was Black people's  
2 fault that they were in this position that they were in.

3 And for many years, Black people felt like  
4 that. Oh, you have to do better. You have to learn how  
5 to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. But the reality  
6 was, it was a plan to keep a certain group oppressed in a  
7 certain situation.

8 So, I don't think you can do it without looking  
9 at race as a core of everything that happened afterwards.

10 I mean, not too long ago in this country and certain  
11 states, it was illegal to marry out of your race, and now  
12 all you see on commercials is mixed families. I mean,  
13 sometimes it's comical. It's almost like we forgot what  
14 it was even 30 years ago.

15 I mean, and then, we forget what it is today.  
16 I mean, you'll look at the news, where a 62-year old Black  
17 woman was literally pulled on the head by her hair by  
18 white police officers. They would never do that a 62-year  
19 old white woman; if they had saw her shoot three people,  
20 they wouldn't have treated her that way.

21 Because it goes back to race -- how you see  
22 people, and if you don't see them as human -- as real  
23 people, then you can't change how you really treat them  
24 because you don't change how you think about them. So, I  
25 think it always has to be -- race has to be a part of this

1 equation when we talk about equality, justice.

2 It has to be race in this country because it  
3 was built on that. That's what this is.

4 MR. WESTERN: Monica observed that there are  
5 forums and there are conversations where it's very  
6 difficult to talk in a very direct way about race and race  
7 as the root problem that needs to be solved. I wonder how  
8 much that is true in New York, and that varies. Or is it  
9 as true here as it is in other places?

10 I sort of put that question out there, but I'll  
11 go to Courtney.

12 MS. ROBINSON: I was lowering my hand because  
13 you were actually asking the question I was going to ask.

14 But in thinking about the differences, you know, I live  
15 in Texas.

16 So, to see the progress that you all have made  
17 in terms of the lower numbers of incarcerations and  
18 arrests and supervisions, and how's the coalition or the  
19 groups of people that are doing this work managing the  
20 tension between those numbers and the numbers of still the  
21 disparate treatment and the increased numbers that you're  
22 seeing in other areas?

23 And so, how do you sort of hold that balance?  
24 Or work towards an all? How's that being done from you  
25 all's perspective in New York?

1           MR. WESTERN: Danielle, do you want to come in  
2 on this?

3           MS. SERED: I had put my hand up right before  
4 that question, so I'll try and sort of weave those. But I  
5 think it builds on what Vivian offered, too, where I think  
6 we conflate political compromise and narrative compromise  
7 as though one requires the other. And I think politics,  
8 legislation requires compromise.

9           Politics is a -- I always describe it like it's  
10 field of shit. You don't walk through it in white boots  
11 and expect to come out clean. It is a place of horse  
12 trading and compromise, and giving the most you can, and  
13 political assessment. I think, in my view, the best that  
14 you can do is do that in accountable relationship with the  
15 people whose lives depend on the outcome of the decisions  
16 that you're in a position to influence in some way.

17           And so, the fact that that requires  
18 compromise -- and I believe in those compromises because  
19 people get free. I don't believe in compromises that make  
20 it harder to win the next thing. I don't believe in  
21 compromises that cause harm. But there are compromises  
22 that are just about incremental reform.

23           I would argue even if we were to end mass  
24 incarceration, were we not doing that reparations and  
25 addressing capitalism and climate change, we'd still be

1 doing incremental reform. And so, I think in the policy  
2 realm, there has to just be some acknowledgment that if  
3 we're going to use policy as a tool, it is going to be a  
4 tool that involves compromise.

5 I think the mistake we make -- and I think we  
6 make this about both violence and about race -- is that we  
7 think that political compromise also requires a comparable  
8 narrative compromise.

9 On the violence issue, it requires us throwing  
10 certain people under the bus, saying we're fighting for  
11 the good ones, not the worst of the worst. And on the  
12 race issue, it requires silence of us. Or at least a much  
13 more moderated thing than what we know to be true.

14 I think in New York City, certainly, policy  
15 compromise is still the reality, but I think we don't have  
16 to make those narrative compromises. And I think when we  
17 do, we create the barriers to the things we subsequently  
18 want to win.

19 It's the same way -- the narrative frame that  
20 we're up against in fighting for reform that applies to  
21 violence is the one we put forward in fighting for reforms  
22 for nonviolent crime. It is a barrier of our making, and  
23 I think we do comparable things when we sort of "all lives  
24 matter" the conversation.

25 I do think the dynamics around that become more

1 difficult when we're talking about state legislation. So,  
2 like New York City -- you can just build enough power to  
3 be able to speak pretty truthful about race and still win.

4 When you get to the state level, the dynamics  
5 are harder. I used to always accidentally call  
6 Binghamton, New York Birmingham, and I stand by that. I  
7 think I was intuiting something not making a mistake.

8 We have KKK strongholds. We have rural places  
9 that depend on incarceration for their livelihood. We  
10 have a great -- the state, itself, is very different.

11 And so, when we get to the state legislature, I  
12 think we end up making choices that are more comparable to  
13 the ones that you see in other jurisdictions. I don't  
14 know if that's helpful in the questions being raised, but  
15 it's the way I see it.

16 MR. WESTERN: No. That's great.

17 Gladys, I know you're trying to get in, too.

18 MS. CARRIÓN: I wanted to answer that question  
19 because I think that when I was trying to close facilities  
20 in upstate New York and when I was doing that, I led very  
21 much with the issue of race. And I talked about Black and  
22 Brown children that we were incarcerating in the State of  
23 New York, and I was vilified in many places, but I thought  
24 was really important.

25 And some people were offended about the fact

1 that I led with that, but that was the reality. That's  
2 who these systems captured, and my system that I led was  
3 almost exclusively Black and Brown. And I wanted people  
4 to understand that and to really grapple with who we were  
5 incarcerating in the state.

6 And I was very vocal about that, and said that  
7 I would no longer export Black and Brown children to  
8 support upstate economies. That was the truth, and I  
9 thought that I had to lead with the truth. And I think  
10 that I had to confront the legislature with that reality.

11 And, you know, I think it drove change. I  
12 mean, I think it changed a lot of people's minds when we  
13 pulled the veil and said, Hey. This is what you're doing.

14 But most leaders don't lead with that,  
15 unfortunately. My colleagues didn't. But I make no  
16 compromise there. That's what we had to do.

17 MR. WESTERN: Great. Nicole?

18 DR. GONZALEZ VAN CLEVE: Thank you for this  
19 amazing presentation. I've often focused on Chicago; it's  
20 my hometown and where my research began. And so, it's  
21 wonderful to hear about another city, kind of a sister  
22 city.

23 One of the interesting things that happened in  
24 Chicago during the pandemic is, they have one of the  
25 largest single-site jails, the size of 72 football fields

1 -- is that they saw the jail population decline and  
2 everyone started to rejoice. And what happened is the  
3 graph looks like this.

4 I mean, I don't which ways you guys are seeing  
5 it. It went right up, and there's jurisdictions across  
6 the nation -- people were very hopeful, and lots of people  
7 said this is the end of incarceration.

8 But unfortunately, the pandemic and people  
9 coming back meant they were coming back to the same  
10 practices prior to the pandemic. Arrests were going up.  
11 You know, cases were starting to be pled. And sure, the  
12 jail population was declining, but people were  
13 incarcerated in their homes.

14 And so, I say this not to be a pessimist, but  
15 to be a realist, which is that the system and institutions  
16 from a sociological standpoint have a tendency to snap  
17 back exactly where they were without true reform. And  
18 true reform meaning that we're changing the cultural  
19 logics and the sensibilities that rooted these practices  
20 in the first place.

21 One of the things that I found in my research  
22 is judges, prosecutors, public defenders, even police were  
23 using racist tropes to understand small crimes that were  
24 nonviolent and violent crimes. They called defendants  
25 either "mopes," which was almost like the N word

1 reconstituted for a color-blind era, and they called the  
2 violent offenders "monsters."

3           And people were pushing back and saying, Well,  
4 that's Chicago. Then, more and more people anecdotally  
5 were saying, No, no, no. We had words for that. It's not  
6 quite monster and mope, but it's this and this. But it  
7 was a dichotomy.

8           Studying a large west coast jail, a co-  
9 researcher and I found the same tropes being deployed in  
10 another jurisdiction in a jail setting -- not in a court  
11 setting -- which shows that the race and racism is  
12 essential to the system functioning, that it helps us  
13 rationalize an enormous amount of entrenched practices.  
14 And it's not happening in one jurisdiction. It's  
15 happening in many. It is larger than one space, which  
16 makes sense.

17           But I think -- I'm curious to what the panel  
18 thinks about that because we're starting to see life  
19 regenerate itself in a lot of wonderful ways. But we're  
20 also seeing that it could be the system goes to back "it's  
21 normal."

22           I think about whether George Floyd would've  
23 lived, and I imagine that he would've been charged with a  
24 low-grade felony. He would've been roughed up by the  
25 police, but survived.

1           Gone to that local infirmary in the jail, and  
2 he might've been a "success story", meaning we didn't  
3 detain him in the jail, but we marked him, convict him, we  
4 put him back on the street, no social service provision,  
5 no treatment, no access to mental health care, and that,  
6 statistically would've looked like a success.

7           But I don't call that the end of mass  
8 incarceration, and I certainly don't call that the end of  
9 police brutality. So, I throw out these challenging  
10 questions because I feel like this is the panel to really  
11 take it on. So, thank you.

12           MR. WESTERN: Thanks, Nicole. Vinny?

13           MR. SCHIRALDI: Thanks, Nicole. I was  
14 deliberately trying to be provocative. If you define mass  
15 incarceration the way Bruce and Jeremy did and the  
16 National Academy of Sciences does, I just think it's not  
17 what New York is anymore.

18           So, I'm going to stay with that. I'm not  
19 backing off on that, and it's not just during the  
20 pandemic. In fact, it's a wash. New York's a wash during  
21 the pandemic.

22           There was, like, 5,800 people in Rikers before  
23 the pandemic started. It dropped down to 30-something,  
24 and now it's back up to 5,800. This happened starting in  
25 Giuliani. We're talking like Giuliani era.

1           Actually, even Dinkins, the incarceration  
2 numbers started coming down since Dinkins, through  
3 Giuliani, through Bloomberg. And then, accelerated under  
4 De Blasio.

5           It certainly could go back up, but I just think  
6 from the standpoint of -- not ending racism, not making  
7 your justice system fair, not doing all things good, but  
8 confronting mass incarceration, that I just feel like New  
9 York needs to be discussed, debated, and studied as an  
10 example of what that looks like with all its successes and  
11 all its flaws.

12           I think that when I look at that, you know, I  
13 see a lot of factors. I see a lot of voice of community,  
14 voice of formerly incarcerated people, open-minded elected  
15 officials, funding of community programs -- really  
16 interesting factors that I think need to be unpacked.

17           And I think it's important to do that because I  
18 think we need to understand it and figure out what it's  
19 applicability is to Chicago and L.A. and Boise and all the  
20 rest of the country. Maybe parts of it don't apply.  
21 Maybe New York was just so rich that it could afford to  
22 pay for a lot of community programs that other places  
23 can't.

24           And maybe those other places are going to have  
25 to figure out ways to kick-start community resourcing that

1 didn't happen in New York and would need to happen in a  
2 different way in Tulsa. But I think that's a worthy  
3 debate, not because I think New York solved all the  
4 problems that other people legitimately are raising in  
5 this, and not because I don't see those problems.

6 Donna and I are working on a campaign. I'm  
7 furious about the fact that New York state incarcerates  
8 more people for technical violations than any other state.

9 And 56 percent of the people being paroled to New York  
10 City go to a homeless shelter, while we're spending over  
11 \$680 million locking people up for technicals.

12 So, it's not like I'm missing the fact that  
13 there's a whole bunch of terrible shit going on, and that  
14 that's landing on the backs of Black and Brown people.  
15 And I'm maybe too much -- maybe I'm too focused on mass  
16 incarceration, but I feel like it's not a trivial thing to  
17 focus on. And if we are, we should kind of examine and  
18 kick the tires on and look at, compared to other places,  
19 how New York did this for decades -- not just during a  
20 pandemic, decades.

21 Even if it could turn around tomorrow, it's  
22 still decades worth of progress starting in a place that  
23 before it started, had higher than average incarceration  
24 rate, and now blows the rest of country's incarceration  
25 rate away. I just think that's not trivial.

1 MR. WESTERN: Great. Thanks, Vinny.

2 I just want to do a time check. We have seven  
3 or eight minutes to go. I've got Liz and Donna in the  
4 queue. So, we'll hear from you. And then, I will turn to  
5 Katharine Huffman for a wrap-up.

6 So, Liz?

7 MS. GLAZER: Great. Thanks. So, I just wanted  
8 to respond to -- and apologies, Nicole, I guess? And a  
9 couple of other things that people had been talking about.  
10 How did the number of people who are incarcerated get  
11 reduced? Or how do we end it all in all?

12 And I would just sort of flag that the way in  
13 which everybody has been talking about this is in the  
14 passive voice, as if these are sort of semi-autonomous  
15 systems that just simply keep on operating. And for sure,  
16 they do, and that's a problem.

17 But I think that what -- the one thing to take  
18 away, or that I take away from kind of the past seven  
19 years in New York in which there was a much, much sharper  
20 decline in incarceration than at any previous point in its  
21 history. And then, to take away from the six weeks from  
22 the beginning -- starting sort of mid-March in the  
23 pandemic, is that there can be intentionality and there  
24 should be intentionality, and it requires leadership.

25 It requires somebody to put people's feet to

1 the fire because there's so many decision makers that  
2 result in the number of people who end up in our city in  
3 jail, and that there was a very explicit effort to  
4 scrutinize who was going in and why they were going in,  
5 and that got distilled in the pandemic at a point at which  
6 the stakes were life or death.

7           There was an intentional effort to empty out  
8 the jails. And is it possible to take that sense of  
9 urgency, and use those structures of leadership so that  
10 there is someone who wakes up every morning with a  
11 stomachache to take these different parts of the legal  
12 system, all of whom answer to different bosses, and have  
13 them focus towards one goal?

14           And I think the second thing that happened over  
15 the summer is that -- what is really sort of often  
16 unspoken, although it is right in front of us, is that, as  
17 Gladys said, everybody in jail -- I mean, just the  
18 overwhelming number of people are Black and Brown, and  
19 they come from about a dozen neighborhoods in New York  
20 City that suffer from all the sort of other social issues  
21 that deprivation has imposed.

22           And so, I think that there has to be  
23 leadership, and the leadership has to lead with the issue  
24 of race, exactly as Gladys pointed out. That has to be at  
25 the forefront, and in some ways, last summer and those

1 social forces meant that there was a lot of language about  
2 race.

3 So the police commissioner made an apology for  
4 sort of the way in which the police department for  
5 decades, centuries had acted. But did that translate to  
6 action? Did that translate to accountability?

7 I think that's sort of what the challenge is --  
8 is you can have a leader like Gladys, who does what she  
9 did. But you have to have a sustained attention every  
10 minute of every day with a leader that has the capacity to  
11 bring people together and to move from A to B.

12 MR. WESTERN: Great. Donna, you'll have the  
13 last word before I turn to Katharine.

14 MS. HYLTON: Thank you. Thanks, Bruce. I want  
15 to go back. I know Courtney, you had said, What was our  
16 compromise? How did we compromise? Right? That's what  
17 you -- basically, what you were saying.

18 How did we deal with -- you know, I'm going to  
19 say this. For me, it wasn't so much about compromising.  
20 I want to just take this last few seconds here to say that  
21 my -- and a lot of us, because I can speak for some  
22 others, right, and I have a team behind me in the back  
23 here -- what helped us stay centered and stay focused and  
24 stay determined, no matter what, throughout all this was  
25 the myriad of grassroots organizations.

1           The people -- the organizations in the city and  
2 the state that, no matter what, was going to stand up and  
3 support the people. So if we didn't get a win or things  
4 weren't happening the way we wanted it to happen, myself  
5 and others felt secure in that people doing this work --  
6 fighting the system and these systems were going to  
7 continue to do that.

8           Like, we were going to show up and we were  
9 going to be heard, no matter what. Campaigns happen. You  
10 fought. We were rallying. We're protesting. We were all  
11 doing all kinds of stuff, and we're still doing it.

12           So, that compromise, for me -- and I speak for  
13 a lot because I have a team back there. They're listening  
14 and some of the stuff that I hear them saying, and I just  
15 wanted to say this, because we don't thank those on the  
16 ground, boots on the ground, people doing the work,  
17 enough.

18           Organizations -- Danielle represents one,  
19 Common Justice, fighting that fight. Just Leadership --  
20 DeAnna. Vivian, College and Community Fellowships.  
21 Exodus Transitional Community, Fortune Society, Osborne.  
22 I mean, so many different ones.

23           Now, A Little Piece of Light. We're new kids  
24 on the block, but we've still been doing this work, right.  
25 We don't recognize what collectively that has done and

1 how, no matter what, wins or losses or whatever it may  
2 have been. Whatever those compromises may have been, we  
3 are secure in that we have that.

4 We have these existing things. We have these  
5 people. We have ourselves. That those systems will not  
6 waver. Those systems will not -- basically, silence.  
7 Those systems know that they have to deal with.

8 And so, I just wanted, as we close here, to say  
9 that that, to me, means a whole lot -- as a Black impacted  
10 woman, a Black mother -- that we have us. So, I don't  
11 care about the systems, because that's what it means.  
12 It's that. I'm always looking for that.

13 Now, I look for it differently. But we do this  
14 work, and we're relentless in it because we know that  
15 people's lives, again, are on the line and it means  
16 something. And we want better for people as a whole, but  
17 we definitely want better for Black people.

18 MR. WESTERN: That's a great and powerful note  
19 to close the conversation on.

20 Katharine?

21 MS. HUFFMAN: Thanks, everyone, and thank you  
22 all just so much for this conversation. I'm tempted to  
23 not try to revisit some of the themes that I heard and  
24 leave Donna's voice right there.

25 But I'll make a little bit of an attempt to

1 pull some thoughts together, acknowledging just how  
2 important what you just said was, Donna, and what we've  
3 heard from so many folks.

4 So, we just had a conversation about New York  
5 City and New York, and what has been happening there, what  
6 hasn't been happening there, what could happen there. And  
7 the initial question that each of you was asked to answer  
8 was this question about optimism versus pessimism. Are we  
9 in a moment of progress or a moment of retrenchment?

10 It was just incredibly striking to hear how  
11 most people reflect optimism but with various  
12 qualifications. Beverly said she feels optimistic almost  
13 by sheer force of will. It's a survival mechanism. It's  
14 something that we must decide to have.

15 Danielle quoted Mariame Kaba and said, If I  
16 didn't think we would win, I wouldn't work this hard.  
17 This where optimism comes from. Eric Cumberbatch -- I  
18 feel optimistic, but not blind. Eric Gonzalez and several  
19 others as well -- optimistic, but cautiously optimistic,  
20 suggesting that there's much more to that than just a  
21 simple answer.

22 Rahson mentioned tragic optimism, which is an  
23 incredibly compelling way of thinking about what optimism  
24 can be. And Renita said that she's optimistic, but she's  
25 tired and exhausted, and I think that resonated with a lot

1 of folks, as well. And then Vivian brought us back to  
2 where she had taken us in our fourth Roundtable, actually,  
3 making a distinction between optimism and hope, that those  
4 are two different things, and how important is to think  
5 about that.

6 So, we brought all those feelings into this  
7 discussion about what the future may hold. I was  
8 listening for your visions and your thoughts about what is  
9 the future and what does it require?

10 Some of the reasons, I think, for the optimism  
11 with its various qualifications that you mentioned were  
12 things like there seems to be a change in political power  
13 and political sensibility. Eric Gonzalez was talking  
14 about discussions he'd heard about the importance of  
15 centering race and racism and ending white supremacy over  
16 the course of the last year. Middle-class white people  
17 joining in walking in the streets in support of the  
18 importance of that.

19 Donna talked about the power of people coming  
20 together and how organized people are organized power and  
21 this is such an important part of the change that we're  
22 feeling, in terms of the political power that drives real  
23 change. Vivian agreed with that and tapped off of it, but  
24 pointed out that coming together does not mean -- unity is  
25 not uniformity, and that we don't all have to do the same

1 thing or even believe the exact same things, but we have  
2 to have the same goals.

3 We had some really also great conversation  
4 about compromise and the role of compromise and what that  
5 means in different contexts, the difference between  
6 narrative compromise and sort of policy compromise that  
7 Danielle raised for us. But the place where we've all  
8 agreed it seemed that we could not compromise was on this  
9 question around race and the crucial centrality of  
10 grappling with racism and white supremacy in order to move  
11 forward.

12 In addition to that change in political power  
13 that was giving people hope for the future was a sense  
14 that in the future, real safety is going to have to look  
15 different than just policing. And this is something that  
16 we've heard a lot about what that means over the course of  
17 the last year.

18 Beverly was talking about how this has to go  
19 far beyond police. A lot of folks had something to talk  
20 about with regard to that. Renita talked about how safety  
21 is so far beyond the justice system, in particular, and  
22 Nadia talked a lot about that, as well, as did others.

23 Liz talked about the potential in this moment  
24 of fiscal crisis that can force this change -- force us to  
25 be more thoughtful and more critical of how we spend our

1 dollars for safety in terms of the dollars that we've been  
2 able to and willing to put towards policing in the past  
3 without a second thought. That now is the time where a  
4 fiscal crisis is going to help contribute to a more  
5 critical look at that.

6 Several folks mentioned the power of young  
7 people and the energy of young people. Eric Cumberbatch  
8 talked about just the power and the brilliance of the  
9 young people that he works with on his team and that he  
10 sees in communities bringing young people into the spaces  
11 of leadership and communicating to them and with them, and  
12 also, to and with others that young people are leaders.

13 Young Black and Brown people who would not have  
14 previously imagined themselves as being around certain  
15 tables, that they were there and that they should be there  
16 and that they had so much to give and to lean into in  
17 leading those tables.

18 And then, there was a lot of discussion about  
19 the future holds this sort of actually doing it that both  
20 what we've seen recently in some of the things that are  
21 happening, and even more that aren't happening yet. That  
22 that's what's giving us hope for the future.

23 We heard about a lot of progress. Vinny and  
24 Gladys talked about reductions -- dramatic reductions in  
25 numbers of people in prison, of kids in detention, and

1 folks acknowledge that for the people who are affected by  
2 that, that's incredible, real change.

3           Jeremy said we can and should just get more  
4 people out of prison. Just do it, and that's not only  
5 about future impacts of policy change that should be made,  
6 but about right now, that that could be happening and  
7 should be happening.

8           Liz pointed out that that's a good example.  
9 These changes don't just happen. The systems are not sort  
10 of passively evolving into these, but they change when  
11 leaders make those changes. They change when people in  
12 the public insist on those changes.

13           Nadia talked about the holistic approach, that  
14 this is what's needed. That we see this happening in some  
15 places -- we see the way that real investment in the  
16 fullness of life happens in wealthy, white communities  
17 already. And we need to be making those same types of  
18 investments in Black and Brown communities all over the  
19 city, all over the country, all over the world.

20           And Eric and Renita reminded us again about  
21 seeing the resiliency and the power of communities and  
22 within people, and that we actually do have examples of  
23 this in the works that they're doing and many others that  
24 we need to further lift up, that we need to create more  
25 support for, and that we need to really empower and make

1 permanent in all the different ways that we can contribute  
2 to that.

3 And Donna just echoed again, you know, just the  
4 power of the boots on the ground and the power that comes  
5 from the permanency of people who are not willing to give  
6 up on each other, and the ways in which in Black and Brown  
7 communities, for Black and Brown people, that there's so  
8 much important power and security that comes from knowing  
9 that others are not giving up on them.

10 So, just quickly in closing, I also want to  
11 note some of the dangers and the threats to the potential  
12 of the future that we heard about. One is violence. Both  
13 the reality of violence that people live and fear.  
14 Beverly notes this very real for many people walking down  
15 the street, and as numbers really do rise, that the  
16 reality of violence will have an impact on the future.

17 Not only the reality the violence, but also,  
18 violence is a tool for political fearmongering. Eric  
19 Gonzalez noted this as he talked about the potential and  
20 the growing political will for foundational change and for  
21 grappling with racism. His fear that violence would  
22 overcome that political will and be dangerous.

23 And Rahson pointed out that in addition to  
24 that, we've also got a real threat that we saw on January  
25 6. Literal violence perpetuated by our political leaders,

1 which is something that in that particular format, we  
2 haven't seen in a while. And that is something that is  
3 very damaging and very dangerous to the potential for the  
4 future.

5 Gladys reminded us that complacency is a danger  
6 for change in the future, a sense that either we've done  
7 enough or we're close enough or whatever version that  
8 might take.

9 And then, finally -- and this really where I  
10 think the core of our conversation landed -- the problem  
11 of racism and the problem of white supremacy, and that  
12 unless and until race is the core of the conversation,  
13 every policy decision is subject to reversal. That was  
14 pointed out to us by Vivian.

15 So, here we are as we finish out this time  
16 together and start to move into the last part of our day  
17 where we think about aspirations and what the potential is  
18 for change. I just want to kind of summarize that in this  
19 conversation, we kept coming back to the values of  
20 humanity, of recognizing the value of every person as a  
21 human being who has dignity that must be recognized, and  
22 that being able to do that is inextricable from grappling  
23 with race and white supremacy.

24 Thomas said this several times: we have to  
25 start with race. The promise that we made in New York --

1 the promise that we still need to make, that's just the  
2 beginning. Until we deal with the history of racism, the  
3 history of segregation and oppression, and the current  
4 reality of segregation and oppression, this won't change.

5 DeAnna said this is about culture. The reality  
6 that policies, programs, any types of investments are  
7 going to land differently in Black and Brown communities  
8 and that's because of this history of racism and the  
9 current reality. Donna and Nadia talked about investing  
10 in the wholeness of people, and that's about recognizing  
11 humanity in Black and Brown people.

12 And Vivian reminded us that this is not just  
13 about rooting white supremacy in the justice system. It's  
14 throughout government. It's throughout corporate America,  
15 in the private sector. It's throughout all of our systems  
16 and all of our cultures, and it's something that we have  
17 to think about in all of those levels, but also on a  
18 personal level.

19 So, I just want to finish with two things that  
20 I thought were really striking. Beverly reminded us that  
21 part of the reason that we feel this disconnect is because  
22 we don't define our success based on the same people. She  
23 said until we define our success based on the lived  
24 reality of the most disadvantaged, we will continue to  
25 have these disconnected realities, and we'll just

1 perpetuate racism in these systems.

2 As Danielle said, the question for us is do we  
3 really mean everybody? And are there ways in which we  
4 will be able to so deeply recognize the humanity of each  
5 person that we can stop making the distinctions that arise  
6 around race? That arise around other types of labels that  
7 we create?

8 Do we really mean everybody when we're talking  
9 about recognizing human dignity? So, with that, I will  
10 close, and just thank you all again for that incredible  
11 conversation and really looking forward to continuing it  
12 this afternoon and far beyond.

13 MR. WESTERN: That's great, Katharine. Amazing  
14 wrap-up. So, we break now, and we will resume at 3:30  
15 Eastern, and we'll convene for our final meeting in this  
16 series of Roundtables.

17 So, I'll see you at 3:30.

18 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

19 MS. HUFFMAN: Good afternoon, everyone, and  
20 welcome back to this conversation about our aspirations  
21 for the values of justice. This is our final panel and  
22 session of the Roundtable on the future of justice policy.  
23 Not only the final panel and session of this Roundtable,  
24 but the final session of our series of five Roundtable  
25 convenings over the past three years.

1 Over that past three years, at each Roundtable,  
2 we've always concluded our convenings with a session on  
3 aspirations, and this event is no different. This is a  
4 crucial moment for the Roundtable in which we uplift work  
5 that's happening in the field of transformative justice,  
6 and it fits into this crucial moment in our history when  
7 we really must uplift the people and the efforts that they  
8 are leading if we want to have any hope of foundationally  
9 reimagining justice in our country.

10 We've asked some of the many luminaries in  
11 transformative justice to join us for this closing panel  
12 discussion to get us started -- to share with us some  
13 promising practices and solutions that exist that  
14 radically changed the values and the principles of  
15 justice.

16 So, it's my great pleasure to introduce to you  
17 all today: Eric Cumberbatch, the Deputy Director of the  
18 Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice in New York City, and  
19 the Director of the Office of Neighborhood Safety; Vivian  
20 Nixon, who is the Executive Director of College and  
21 Community Fellowship; and Danielle Sered, who's the  
22 Executive Director of Common Justice.

23 They've all been part of our Square One and  
24 Roundtable journey for this entire time, and it's just  
25 really wonderful to have a chance to talk with you all for

1 a few minutes. And then, we'll be opening up to all of  
2 our Roundtable participants for this discussion about the  
3 aspirations of justice.

4 So, for those of us who joined us for our  
5 earlier session today, we were able to talk and hear about  
6 a lot of the work that's been happening in New York and  
7 the excitement, the potential, the challenges, the  
8 problems from a number of New Yorkers who have been a part  
9 of that experience. Danielle and Eric and Vivian were all  
10 part of that conversation, and they've also prepared  
11 writing for us to tee up this conversation today.

12 You've written about individuals and their  
13 efforts that have already gained ground in the justice  
14 system and changing the justice system, and in the ways  
15 that communities create and manage safety. I'd love to  
16 hear from you -- tell us a little more about what were the  
17 driving forces behind the creation of those organizations  
18 or efforts?

19 Was it community leaders? Was it people who  
20 have experienced the criminal justice system? Who was it  
21 that was the driving force behind those?

22 And anyone can jump in, or I will start calling  
23 on folks. How do these things get started?

24 REV. NIXON: I don't mind starting. You know,  
25 I have trouble picking out an organization to highlight.

1 And so, I really highlighted a network of organizations  
2 that I belong to that extend beyond New York City, and the  
3 reason I did that is because they're all motivated by the  
4 same thing and that is their incarceration experience.

5 Every organization that's a part of the  
6 national network that I wrote about, The Formerly  
7 Incarcerated and Convicted People's Family Movement, is  
8 motivated by a direct experience with the criminal legal  
9 system, and has a passion to change it from the  
10 perspective of understanding its root being cemented in  
11 structural racism.

12 There are two New York organizations that are  
13 part of that national steering committee. That's why I  
14 chose it.

15 MS. HUFFMAN: Thanks, Vivian.

16 Danielle, tell us a little bit about Common  
17 Justice and the motivating work there, or the motivations  
18 and starting points of some of the other organizations  
19 that you write about in your paper.

20 MS. SERED: Okay, so I would be remiss if I  
21 didn't start by lifting up Amanda Alexander, the co-author  
22 on the paper that we circulated to all who is just a  
23 beloved friend and colleague and teacher of mine in many  
24 ways. In thinking about the conversation we had this  
25 morning and a trope that I hear a lot in the public

1 conversation now, we know what safety looks like. It's  
2 what exists in rich, white neighborhoods or rich, white  
3 suburban neighborhoods, or however it's framed.

4 I think there are two problems with that that  
5 can include the answer to this. I think the first is, it  
6 misses the way in which, even in those neighborhoods, if  
7 Black and Brown people -- particularly from outside those  
8 neighborhoods -- dare cross the perimeter, the level of  
9 violence there is even greater. That price of entry is  
10 death.

11 So, they are very -- they have moats around  
12 them. They have snipers at the top of the towers, right.

13 And we should understand them that way. They are not  
14 places free of violence for everyone.

15 And so, even in those neighborhoods, there is a  
16 constant, permanent presence of racialized violence, even  
17 if most of that is obtained by having made so clear the  
18 grave consequences of crossing that perimeter, that very  
19 few people do. And so, I don't want to mythologize them  
20 as a place that is somehow outside of a structure of  
21 racialized policing.

22 And then, the other thing is we talk about -- I  
23 think the biggest mistake people of color make about white  
24 people is people of color overestimate how good we are to  
25 each other. I do aspire for most people to have the

1 relationship to the state that most white people have. I  
2 think the state, in general, acts as though it has an  
3 obligation to us, including one to meet our most basic  
4 needs.

5 It acts as though it has an obligation to  
6 create conduits for our input, including through things  
7 like voting. And it acts as though its use of force  
8 against us should be constrained in some way, including by  
9 some entitlement we have to life and liberty.

10 That's a set of things I would wish for  
11 everybody, but that's different than the way white people  
12 relate to one another. And I think about the core modes  
13 of white supremacy, in my view, are controlling,  
14 punishing, exiling, and exterminating, and I didn't come  
15 to that list through a 500-year study of white people in  
16 the United States in colonial history.

17 I came through it through an observation of  
18 patterns in my own white family, and what we do to whom  
19 people regard as the least among us. And so, I say that  
20 because the examples that Amanda and I lift up are almost  
21 exclusively examples that are led by Black and Brown  
22 people in communities of color, where people have been and  
23 are solving their problems, mending pain by restoring  
24 peace, healing through loss and harm, and have been for  
25 centuries.

1           And I think all of the evidence about how  
2 cycles of violence work can explain why there are high  
3 levels of violence in neighborhoods like East New York or  
4 Brownsville in Brooklyn. None of that literature can  
5 actually explain why there isn't more. It cannot explain,  
6 given centuries and centuries of both structural,  
7 interpersonal violence and torture, why anyone does  
8 anything other than commit harm.

9           Like why the vast majority of people in Black  
10 and Brown neighborhoods act in ways that are loving and  
11 life-affirming, and often even joyful. It is not  
12 accounted for in the way we think about safety -- not  
13 sufficiently.

14           And so, one of the things we know is that the  
15 strategies that exist have to be extraordinarily  
16 powerful -- that they are the explanation for the gap  
17 between what the literature would otherwise predict and  
18 the fact of what is a comparably low level of violence  
19 given the set of historical and current conditions.

20           And so those -- we looked at those  
21 interventions, not as like clever, promising, grassroots,  
22 something or other. We look at those interventions as  
23 ones that have demonstrated an efficacy in the face of an  
24 ungodly amount of opposing and intervening factors, and  
25 therefore, recognize that in them, a really extraordinary

1 strength -- particularly if they were given the  
2 opportunity to act in the absence of those intrusions.

3 And so, in the argument Amanda and I make, it's  
4 not just like, Can we be safe and defund the police? We  
5 asked the question instead, Can we be safe without  
6 defunding the police?

7 And if we understand policing as we know it, as  
8 something that intrudes on the efficacy of community-based  
9 solutions that are in the ongoing business of producing  
10 safety, then the answer is that defunding the police is a  
11 prerequisite for the level of safety to which we aspire.

12 MS. HUFFMAN: Thank you, Danielle. That's just  
13 so important, the context that you've given there and the  
14 way -- connecting that the motivations and the driving  
15 forces with the differences across communities and across  
16 time, really.

17 Eric, tell us a little bit about the work  
18 you've written about. How did that happen? And how has  
19 that been able to continue? Are there things that we can  
20 learn from the experience that you were describing in your  
21 paper or others that you know of in your work?

22 MR. CUMBERBATCH: Yeah. Definitely. So, first  
23 and foremost, I want to recognize that there's great  
24 activists and advocates in New York City that have  
25 propelled me to this space, but have also lifted up a

1 national movement through their sense of being in New York  
2 City.

3           So, a lot of the approaches and models and  
4 methods that I can talk through today are really about  
5 their brilliance. Even though they may be public-health  
6 based and evidence-based approaches, a lot of these things  
7 happened organically and they were doing without the sort  
8 of nomenclature or framing from a more academic space and  
9 sense.

10           So, a lot of the groups -- well, two of the  
11 groups that I chose to write about were Man Up,  
12 Incorporated, in East New York, and Brownsville Think Tank  
13 Matters. And these groups are really special to me, both  
14 personally and professionally.

15           So, Man Up is an organization that formed  
16 together in East New York, Brooklyn, over a shooting death  
17 of a young boy in the area, and really just concerned  
18 individuals from the community that came together and  
19 said, We're not going to tolerate reckless and senseless  
20 killings, especially of our young people in our community.

21           They formed an organization called Man Up,  
22 which is led by A.T. Mitchell, who's an East New York  
23 legend -- hero for all of the right reasons. And he plays  
24 almost a role that's like an uncle to me, a really good  
25 brother.

1           And you know, really, his vision, his thoughts,  
2 ideas around how to transform neighborhood spaces, how to  
3 build and empower community, to be at the forefront of co-  
4 producing public safety, how to force the relationships  
5 with government, strategically resource different levels  
6 or spaces for intervention and engagement is what he's  
7 doing on the ground. So, it's really great work.

8           And I felt I wanted to highlight him because we  
9 share a very common false narrative that happens across  
10 our community. So, I'm from Bed-Stuy, East New York. And  
11 oftentimes, what we would receive here from media, other  
12 spaces, other agencies, really trying to diminish Black  
13 men, men of color, by labeling them gang members and/or  
14 former gang members.

15           Me and A.T. would have these conversations on a  
16 regular basis, and what he wanted to do was really start a  
17 campaign, and the campaign was, I am a man. First and  
18 foremost, I am a man, and my past discrepancies are my  
19 past discrepancies. You know, how we define crews and  
20 gangs in New York I already think are way out of line, in  
21 general.

22           I think you live in dense areas and people are  
23 your family, and that's your communal network. But in New  
24 York, if you're in East New York or Bed-Stuy, you're part  
25 of a gang, according to a lot of agencies' framing.

1           So, the 'I am a man' piece was really about  
2 allowing Black men to control their own narrative, that  
3 only I can tell you who I am. And no one else can put a  
4 label on me to diminish me or to remove me from a position  
5 of power and/or to really create a space where there's no  
6 empathy or no sense of belonging, contributing, or  
7 understanding. And those things happen every day when we  
8 turn on the TV, when we read newspapers, or listen to the  
9 ways that people frame those who have been harmed and/or  
10 have caused harm.

11           So, I really wanted focus on A.T. Mitchell and  
12 Ronald Robertson, brother powerful from Brownsville Think  
13 Tank Matters. Both of these men are formerly incarcerated  
14 individuals that have come back to their community. They  
15 operate within great organizations on the ground at a very  
16 local grassroots level.

17           And for me, I've worked with them probably  
18 since 2010 and '11, when these groups, these organizations  
19 probably had fiscal year operating budgets of maybe a  
20 quarter million dollars, to now lifting them to capacity  
21 upwards of over \$10 million budgets to really go back in  
22 community and do a lot of what we're at the table talking  
23 about. They're actually doing it.

24           So, just brilliant people that I'm grateful to  
25 be surrounded by, protected by, and serve with.

1 MS. HUFFMAN: Eric, thank you for that. It's  
2 just so powerful, the story you just shared and the  
3 information that's in your paper about the importance of  
4 centering humanity by claiming the space of 'I am a man,'  
5 and that's a definition that I create for myself and that  
6 can't be taken away. That's just -- it's so powerful and  
7 important.

8 So, talk to me for a minute -- I mean, I just  
9 would love to hear from any of you really concretely.  
10 What are the things that for any of the leaders, for any  
11 of the participants, for any of the people who are part of  
12 and who are driving the work that you're describing and  
13 the things that are happening around the country in New  
14 York -- otherwise, as well -- what would be something that  
15 would contribute to -- that would support any one of those  
16 leaders that you just described -- that each of you just  
17 described -- being able to do more?

18 Being able to do something to get around --  
19 DeAnna mentioned earlier -- to get around the barriers  
20 that are put in our way and that we have to strategically  
21 figure out how to get around. What does that look like?

22 What's needed? What's missing? What could  
23 contribute to that leadership and to the continued growth  
24 and development of those organizations?

25 REV. NIXON: A lot of times it's the basic

1 premise of how we go about doing this work. So, in the  
2 work to reduce mass incarceration, to dismantle mass  
3 incarceration, to reform, reimagine, reinvent, dismantle,  
4 abolish the system, we have created many, many different  
5 types of solutions.

6 But the ones that are based in communities and  
7 in trying to help repair harms and move people forward,  
8 there was traditionally for years, I saw, kind of the  
9 expectation that people were there to be helped and  
10 served, and not to develop out in order to figure out how  
11 to be the drivers of the solutions in their own  
12 communities the way Eric describes. And that's exactly  
13 what I saw when I joined College and Community Fellowship.

14 It was an organization that did a lot of good  
15 for all of the women who were in it. We were getting our  
16 college degrees. We were getting support in doing so. We  
17 had better opportunities for our individual futures  
18 because of it.

19 But until I got connected to Just Leadership  
20 USA, and then, got connected to the Formerly Incarcerated  
21 and Convicted People's Movement, I found that there were  
22 all these other directly-impacted people who had a bigger  
23 vision, who had a vision of organizing and changing  
24 systems and policies in their local areas. I did not make  
25 that connection, and once I did, we embedded advocacy and

1 organizing training into the organization because it's not  
2 being done everywhere.

3 It's two different things, that either you're  
4 serving people's needs or you're advocating and  
5 organizing. Both can be done at the same time, and  
6 they're done most effectively at the same time.

7 MS. HUFFMAN: Danielle, if you -- do you want  
8 to jump in there?

9 MS. SERED: It just resonates so much. And I  
10 feel like one of the things that I think is available to  
11 us now is I feel like for so long, our movement has been  
12 like 90 percent destroyers and 10 percent builders, and  
13 that we have an opportunity to invert that ratio. I think  
14 Doctors Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Angela Davis for decades  
15 have been teaching us that abolition is mostly the work of  
16 creation, not of destruction.

17 I have a 2-year old now, so I have become  
18 somebody who needs to understand different kinds of trucks  
19 and things at construction sites. This is not a realm of  
20 knowledge that was previously important to me, and what  
21 I've observed now is that at any construction site, almost  
22 all of them have a bulldozer. It's true. And they all  
23 tend to only have one, and then they have just like a ton  
24 of other things.

25 They have this crane truck, and this other

1 crane truck, and this thing that brings stuff in, and this  
2 thing that loads stuff up. Then there's trenchers,  
3 there's plumbers, there's all of this.

4 It is absolutely the case there, I think, that  
5 we have to tear down. It's absolutely the case it'll take  
6 force and power to do that. That work is important. But  
7 that work of construction, I think, has been in so many  
8 ways undervalued.

9 So I think about the end of mass incarceration  
10 in so many ways about the work of displacing it. And that  
11 means both building the things we want and, to Vivian's  
12 point, building the collective power to secure those  
13 things as our society's central response to harm and to  
14 behavior that has previously been criminalized that may or  
15 may not include harm.

16 And so, I think, largely, when we see people  
17 build that power, the main things people do with it is  
18 they command resources, they command narrative power --  
19 meaning they take up public space in a different way that  
20 shapes the discourse. They create barriers to the  
21 intrusion of other actors into the work that they are  
22 doing. That they can defend the spaces that they are  
23 protecting, that they are generating, that they are  
24 creating from the intrusion of others, including law  
25 enforcement in its various forms.

1           And so, entirely agree with Vivian that the  
2 organized power is the biggest difference between where we  
3 are and where we need to be.

4           MS. HUFFMAN: Eric, I'm going to ask you to  
5 weigh in, too. And also, go ahead and invite some of our  
6 participants to start waving your hands if you are  
7 interested in asking questions or weigh in, because we  
8 want to make sure we have plenty of time for a group  
9 discussion as well.

10           But Eric, I'll give the floor to you to respond  
11 to the thoughts of Danielle and Vivian, and this question  
12 about what's still missing and where are we headed and  
13 what's needed.

14           MR. CUMBERBATCH: Yes. I think opening spaces  
15 and platforms for small community-based organizations to  
16 really redesign, gather research, secure resources, and do  
17 actual implementation work, not only in their communities,  
18 but in the agencies, in city government, local  
19 governments, what have you, that have touched and so much  
20 impact on a very already vulnerable population.

21           And I think when we talk about reimagining  
22 systems or just system change as a whole, oftentimes,  
23 what's missing are the key people that are the end users  
24 of a lot of how these systems show up, how they do harm --  
25 whether intentional or unintentional -- and how that harm

1 that can lessened, if not taken away completely. And I  
2 think the more spaces we open in all of these structures  
3 that are inclusive in a true capacity to build with the  
4 small grassroots organizations, and specifically, the ones  
5 that I'm naming, then we see results that are incredible.

6 So, there was a lot of conversation earlier  
7 today around youth in secured detention facilities, or  
8 youth in ACS Close to Home facilities, and the closure of  
9 Rikers and so forth. Part of that story -- a lot of the  
10 organizations that we resource equipment and fund are  
11 actually in those spaces as well. And they're not in  
12 those spaces because we believe any young person should be  
13 detained in a secured facility and/or be at a Close to  
14 Home facility.

15 They're in those spaces because they're sharing  
16 their story. And they're lifting up those young people as  
17 shepherds and mentors and being part of the process to  
18 heal those young people in those spaces without having to  
19 become bureaucrats or government actors. A lot of these  
20 young people are coming back to the community seeking  
21 these individuals out to continue those relationships and  
22 to continue that network.

23 So, that network actually captures a lot of  
24 people who have risk factors in their lives, allows them  
25 to fail just like any of us have failed, captures them and

1 lifts them right back up. And that's, you know, what I  
2 think -- those platforms and spaces being open to system  
3 change.

4 MS. HUFFMAN: Eric, thank you so much. That  
5 just really resonates. I'm going to be handing over the  
6 facilitation of our group discussion to Jeremy Travis, but  
7 we'll start off with Monica Bell.

8 I'm hearing a lot of the themes and a lot of  
9 the questions that you were talking about in the paper  
10 that you wrote for the earlier session of the Roundtable  
11 about the relationships between different types of  
12 organizations and communities.

13 And so, Monica, I'll hand it over to you.

14 DR. BELL: Yes. So, I just mostly want to  
15 thank all three of you for all of your amazing work, and  
16 also the papers that you wrote.

17 We started the Roundtable with this, I think,  
18 like, kind of challenging conversation. I was like, What  
19 are we even talking about, starting with values -- why  
20 would you do that? We don't have shared values. I think,  
21 if anything, we learned from what's going on in the world  
22 of the criminal legal system that there are a lot of  
23 conflicting values.

24 And so, we kind of started with this values  
25 conversation -- talked, I think, a lot about politics.

1 Because you can't have a conversation about values with  
2 really just thinking about the political space.

3 And the other thing we were talking a lot about  
4 was really learning from the work that is actually  
5 happening on the ground. And that's how you would get a  
6 sense of what the right values are.

7 And so, I guess one of the things that stood  
8 out to me, just in this conversation, and also reading the  
9 papers, is that the values that were implicitly discussed  
10 in all the work -- or explicitly discussed -- are, I  
11 think, very far away from what a lot of people who sit in  
12 spaces like this, and also, people who kind of think  
13 they're big time policy people in the current legal space  
14 are up to.

15 So, things like -- you know, Eric, you were  
16 talking about just now, people being able to control their  
17 own narrative and defining themselves. And you talk in  
18 the piece about Black men who have transformed and  
19 liberated themselves, and that personal transformation  
20 process.

21 That seems so deeply important.

22 MR. CUMBERBATCH: Yeah.

23 DR. BELL: But there's not a deep story of  
24 really centering personal transformation that builds from  
25 inside. It's not attempted to be imposed by some like

1 punitive force. That's not deeply a part of -- even the  
2 pretty radical transformative conversations we have. So,  
3 I want to think more about that.

4 Danielle, in the piece, you and Amanda  
5 Alexander talk a lot about what the new world looks like,  
6 exactly where you're picking up in the conversation, as  
7 well as, you know, collective power and you way break it  
8 down -- the piece with economic narrative and political  
9 power. Then, of course, the way Vivian talks about self-  
10 determination, collective power, and accountability.

11 All of these values are what emerge from the  
12 work you're actually doing, but are deeply -- I mean, I  
13 think I'm so haunted by thing I just participated in  
14 earlier this morning with these federal policy people  
15 where it was like, you know, Well, the police haters --  
16 blah, blah, blah.

17 And I was just like, What are you even talking  
18 about? It's really hard to be there because there were  
19 just things -- and then, the way of thinking seems really  
20 far away from the work you're doing. Yet, they're in  
21 these federal policy spaces that are quite divorced from  
22 communities.

23 So, I guess what I'm thinking about in this  
24 conversation about values and aspirations is how we get  
25 over that political hump. Maybe we ought to think about

1 that. Maybe the thing is just to focus on work that is  
2 actually happening.

3 But if we want to take control of this moment  
4 and build power that scales, how are you all thinking  
5 about those sorts of questions?

6 MR. TRAVIS: So, I think the baton has been  
7 passed to me, and I see Nneka had raised her blue hand  
8 before we switched gears and mindsets.

9 I'd like to ask her to join the conversation.  
10 And then, we'll move on.

11 MS. TAPIA: Well, thank you. I think maybe we  
12 lost Vivian for a moment, but thanks to Vivian, Danielle,  
13 and Eric for your conversation.

14 I had a follow up question mainly for you, Eric  
15 and Danielle, based off the comments that you raised. I  
16 think it was DeAnna earlier who, rightfully so, said that  
17 the criminal system is not the only system that causes  
18 harm. That's not the only system we should be focusing  
19 on.

20 Danielle, you talked about abolition in terms  
21 of creating and what we're building. And Eric, you talked  
22 about the power of our young people, and how organizations  
23 are going into these institutions to support the healing  
24 of our young people.

25 I'm wondering, is any work being done with the

1 New York school system to teach our young kids about  
2 organizing and advocacy and thinking about creating our  
3 next generation of leaders, and hopefully, building some  
4 buffer to some of the harms that we see? And also  
5 creating communities of healing, instead of schools that  
6 harming our kids?

7 MR. CUMBERBATCH: Yeah. I would say work is  
8 being done, but not at the scale that it should and could  
9 be. And I do have some schools that use their, so to  
10 speak, discretionary funding to invest in these types of  
11 opportunities.

12 And then, you have others where it's a foreign  
13 concept, and that process doesn't occur. We're blessed to  
14 have a lot of great organizations across the city that  
15 also do a lot of youth empowerment, youth building types  
16 of activities, workshops, and just have large footprints  
17 in certain schools.

18 But I don't think, and this probably gets to  
19 your point -- there's not a concentrated effort around  
20 curriculum building from our Department of Education that  
21 specifically focuses on that type of really deep healing,  
22 understanding, truth-telling, youth empowerment, community  
23 engagement. So, I haven't seen that in our schools, but  
24 there are individuals and organizations who do that work.

25

1 I'm also of the mindset that I'm not  
2 trusting -- I have a 14-year old son, Eshawn [phonetic],  
3 who's texting me as I'm speaking -- but I'm not sure the  
4 schools necessarily being the ones that deliver that  
5 message and/or carry that torch for me -- I don't trust  
6 the institution. And it's almost to the part of getting  
7 back to what I was raising earlier that, you know, these  
8 systems continue to cause harm.

9 I'm not going to entrust that level of  
10 spiritual building within that institution for my son.  
11 So, just wanted to also share that. Thank you.

12 MR. TRAVIS: Thanks, Eric. Danielle, would you  
13 like to respond also to Nneka's question?

14 MS. SERED: Sure, and I'm happy to sort of loop  
15 it back to the question Monica offered into the space,  
16 too. I agree with Eric. I think the New York state  
17 school system is a likely target of organizing and most of  
18 us don't dream of people who will take us down or displace  
19 us.

20 So, but I think a lot about a mentor and friend  
21 of mine, Lorenzo Jones -- talks about a mentor friend of  
22 his who taught him: we don't win because we're right. We  
23 win because we're strong.

24 I think we make a lot of arguments about --  
25 evidence-based this and even moral arguments. The thing

1 that will carry the day is going to be organized power.  
2 When I think about your question, Monica, I think I  
3 actually feel very optimistic about building a substantial  
4 enough national consensus around the failings of mass  
5 incarceration to be able to bring it to its knees.

6 That's in part because I think of the FWD.us  
7 study that found one in two people in America have a loved  
8 one who has been incarcerated. And so mass  
9 incarceration's very expansion has in it, I believe, the  
10 seeds of its demise, because there are so many people who  
11 have direct experience and information about its failings.

12 The one thing that typically overcomes a steady  
13 onslaught of propaganda is our own lived experience. And  
14 so, the range of people -- including plenty of white  
15 people. Not a lot of rich people, but plenty of white  
16 people have an understanding of the ways in which that  
17 system fails. I think there is a huge opportunity in  
18 that.

19 We see, in our work, a really profound  
20 consensus among crime survivors that incarceration is not  
21 the thing that will protect them or heal them. It is  
22 increasingly clear that the survivors' voices who have  
23 been held central are a really non-representative set of  
24 outliers, which means that the problem we're facing in  
25 that case is not a hearts-and-minds problem, but a

1 narrative one. It means we have to make the vast majority  
2 of people who know it fails visible to one another so that  
3 they can experience themselves as a majority and do what  
4 majorities then do, which is to win.

5 And so, I think for those reasons, I'm  
6 extremely optimistic about our ability to dramatically  
7 reduce mass incarceration. I think it becomes complicated  
8 when we get to the question of whether we can reach to  
9 serious violence or not. But even that, because of what I  
10 know about crime survivors, I think is within reach.

11 I do not feel the same kind of optimism about  
12 white supremacy and racism in this country, and I think  
13 that's partly because I do not think there is the same  
14 majority-level consensus. If we're talking about when you  
15 think about federal policy and we're talking about running  
16 the numbers and building power, which is partly about  
17 numbers -- and I don't think there is way through that  
18 that is as incremental as we would like it to be.

19 I think it will require of us a national  
20 reckoning. I think we have gotten as far as we can get  
21 without telling the truth about what we have done and what  
22 it, therefore, requires. And I think absent that level of  
23 truth-telling and reckoning, we'll continue to sort of  
24 trim around the edges and watch the tree continue to  
25 thrive and grow, because that's what happens to trees

1 whose roots are left intact and whose edges get trimmed.

2 And so, I think the demand to confront the  
3 white supremacy and the legacy of racism in this country  
4 requires a level of directness, a level of difficulty that  
5 is going to happen. The reckoning is upon us. I believe  
6 it.

7 But that, I don't see us choosing as willfully  
8 as I do see a path to choosing an end to mass  
9 incarceration.

10 MR. TRAVIS: Thanks, Danielle and Eric. Let me  
11 just help all of us understand where we are in our time  
12 together.

13 This is the end of the end of the Roundtable.  
14 And in many ways, we're going to spend the next hour or so  
15 trying to pull together many threads of a very rich  
16 conversation into some sort of tapestry that we can take a  
17 look at and say, Well, we've put something together that  
18 has some strength and some durability through these ideas.

19 I'm going to recognize Bruce in a second, who  
20 had his hand up. And then, after hearing from Bruce,  
21 we'll come back. And I have just a prompt that will help  
22 us sort of organize this last hour plus together around  
23 the theme of values and goals and obstacles and  
24 aspirations and hopes.

25 So, let me throw that in after we hear from

1 Bruce. And then, we'll try to wrap up our conversation.  
2 Bruce?

3 MR. WESTERN: This is a really interesting  
4 conversation, and it's pulling together a lot of different  
5 threads that we've been talking about over the years, I  
6 think.

7 I was struck by Danielle's observation that  
8 movement has been mostly about destruction, not creation.

9 Sort of 90/10, and we've got to flip the ratio. That  
10 strikes me as right in a lot of ways.

11 You think about sort of the wins that have been  
12 registered, and the kinds of goals that people have been  
13 mobilized around, and it's things like -- look how drug  
14 policy has changed over the last 10 or 15 years. That's  
15 mostly about shrinking, right. That's shorter sentences,  
16 defelonization -- that sort of thing. Bail reform --  
17 mostly about shrinking. Sentencing reform, in general, is  
18 mostly about shrinking.

19 So what does this positive model look like?  
20 What does this sort of more creative alternative look  
21 like?

22 I heard two things from the three of you. One  
23 is that it replaces the current punitive logic with some  
24 alternative kind of logic -- some means of accountability,  
25 perhaps, that does not have punishment at its center. So,

1 that's one.

2 And then the other is that some creative  
3 alternative that's beyond shrinking is organizing, is  
4 mobilizing, is promoting of social solidarity, and  
5 capacity for collective action. We don't have so much of  
6 that. It's hard to point to models of sort of active  
7 policy changes that are on the table -- if adopted, would  
8 be empowering of communities to act collectively on their  
9 own behalf.

10 And then, the theme of reckoning was brought in  
11 again, and this started way back in Durham. That in order  
12 to get to that model of more foundational change --  
13 flipping the ratio, going from 90/10 to 10/90 -- we need a  
14 truth-telling process or a reckoning process.

15 I feel we're missing a step. I want to  
16 understand better. So say we do this reckoning process or  
17 begin a journey on a process of reckoning, how do we get  
18 from that -- acknowledging history, acknowledging past  
19 harm, bringing system actors to the table to do that,  
20 providing communities with an opportunity to describe the  
21 harms that they've experienced.

22 Say we embark on a process like that. How does  
23 that yield this new kind of policy or this new kind of  
24 politics that is not just about shrinking, but is  
25 positively constructing, perhaps, alternative modes of

1 accountability, and is mobilizing for communities?

2 I feel I'm missing a step, and maybe I'm just  
3 missing it and it's there. Or maybe we need to spell  
4 something out. There's something else in this process in  
5 which reckoning is getting us to a type of vision of  
6 alternatives so it's community-empowering.

7 I don't know if that's clear, but that's what I  
8 was sort of wrestling with listening to the conversation.

9 MR. TRAVIS: Professor, that's a great  
10 question. And as you noted, it's been a theme for the  
11 Square One Roundtables since Durham, and actually, from  
12 our first Executive Session, and we hope to have some  
13 writing on this topic coming out fairly soon.

14 Let me just ask folks, who would like to take  
15 up Bruce's challenge to -- you called it a missing step.  
16 But if reckoning is a pre-condition -- if confronting the  
17 legacy of white supremacy and the racism in the system,  
18 and acknowledging the harms caused by the system over the  
19 years -- if that's a pre-condition to moving forward,  
20 what's the next step?

21 Let's just assume that it is, because we've  
22 said it is important in a pre-condition. It may not be  
23 sequential, but it is necessary. Has anybody got some  
24 thoughts on that question before we move ahead? Huge  
25 question.

1           Last time, you'll remember, we were together,  
2 we talked about the truth and reconciliation idea. And  
3 then, it was mostly framed as a matter of accountability  
4 for harm, as a way of sort of naming the harm, talking  
5 about how we got here, who -- what systems, what agencies,  
6 what institutions had been responsible for that harm. So  
7 it came under that accountability heading.

8           Now, but Bruce is asking a different  
9 question -- not that that's not an important one. That's  
10 also important.

11           But how does that lead to -- and what might the  
12 next step be, leading to a different sort of vision for  
13 justice and safety and well-being and healing?

14           Bruce, it looks like it's a big question. It  
15 looks like a big question.

16           MS. SERED: I'm happy to say something briefly  
17 about it, and then stop talking.

18           MR. TRAVIS: No, Danielle --

19           MS. SERED: -- with this question --

20           MR. TRAVIS: We love hearing from you. Please.

21           MS. SERED: -- which is, like, TBD. I think  
22 that's the thing about reckoning, is we don't -- it's not  
23 a plea bargain, right. It's not we get to know what the  
24 thing is and once we know it, we acknowledge our guilt.

25           I think -- I've told a story about my godson

1 when he was five, and there were a bunch of kids around,  
2 and there's a party. And they broke this glass thing that  
3 I think was once a vase, and I sat them all down. I was  
4 like, Who did it?

5 And they're like -- and I was like, I can wait  
6 you out. You're five. And finally, my Godson raised his  
7 hand and said, What will the person who did it have to do?

8 I said, You know, they'll have to pay a dollar and write  
9 an apology if they can write, or say it if they can't, and  
10 make something beautiful to replace it.

11 Then, he said, You know, I did it. And then,  
12 this other kid was like, And I helped. Because they  
13 wanted -- and I think as white folks in America, we're  
14 like, What will we have to do if we admit it? We want to  
15 know in advance.

16 Because I think in the ethos of white  
17 supremacy, the only possible cost for what we are on the  
18 verge of admitting would be centuries of torture and  
19 death. It would be an eye-for-eye reaching forever -- to  
20 our children's children's children. And so, we're like, I  
21 wasn't here when that happened.

22 We're still there. And so, I think that's one  
23 of the things about a reckoning, is that it is a fulcrum  
24 in these processes. They are a fulcrum between the past  
25 and the future, and they are necessary because the future

1 isn't knowable without that truth-telling.

2           If it were, we would go straight to it. But it  
3 is the missing piece in the alchemy of that generative  
4 process of developing things, other than the things that  
5 already exist where we just get the eff out of their way  
6 and let them thrive. I mean, there's a ton of that to do  
7 right now that doesn't have to involve this level of  
8 transformation.

9           But for that level, I do think it comes  
10 sequentially. And I think that's part of what makes it so  
11 hard for us to choose it, is that we want to be told in  
12 advance what it will cost us, and that is not possible.

13           And I think what we know from people who  
14 participate in restorative and transformative justice  
15 processes is that the things that are possible on the  
16 other side of telling the truth are not knowable on this  
17 side of it, and it is part of what makes them so  
18 extraordinary, and part of what makes so few people want  
19 to choose them.

20           MR. TRAVIS: Thank you, Danielle. You've given  
21 a lot of thought to this topic, we know from the title of  
22 your book. And you're welcome to make contributions on  
23 the theme of reckoning at any time. That's very, very  
24 helpful.

25           Jon Simon is up next.

1           MR. SIMON: Mainly, I just really wanted to  
2 thank this panel, both for the work that they've done  
3 individually and the essays that they have written in  
4 conjunction with this. I actually think it's a perfect  
5 kind of conversation to end on, or to continue in terms of  
6 the national or the public out-facing conversation. I  
7 think it brings together the themes of anti-violence and  
8 human dignity that I've been thinking about during this  
9 values process, and it grounds it very concretely in the  
10 realities of where violence comes from.

11           I just wanted to respond briefly to the thought  
12 about the mechanisms -- to Bruce's question. One that --  
13 and obviously, a lot of people are talking about this, but  
14 I'm curious what others think. I meant reparations.

15           One of the interesting things about the  
16 carceral state is it's sort of like the Germans. They've  
17 kept meticulous records of all the crimes that they  
18 committed, essentially, against people. Who has been  
19 arrested? Whose wealth was forfeited?

20           There's records of all this. Who has spent  
21 unnecessary years in prison based on a flawed theory of  
22 incapacitation that was supposed to create public safety?

23           All those people should be considered for some kind of  
24 compensation that would actually invest in their  
25 communities through them.

1           So, that's one sort of level. It seems to me  
2 we could reach an awful lot of people that way. The other  
3 is sort of going back to one of my old hobby horses, which  
4 is human rights.

5           It seems to me, you know, if you have a country  
6 like Argentina, where the military runs amok for a while,  
7 you need to then create an institution that permanently  
8 marks a new deal in terms of that institution. So, you  
9 have a human rights court, or you create some kind of  
10 committee for the prevention of torture that has  
11 tremendous authority to intervene in all kinds of other  
12 state agencies.

13           I think in the U.S., we have developed so few  
14 modern human rights institutions, at least on a global  
15 standard. We don't even accept the Nelson Mandela rules  
16 for prisons. It's always struck me that in California,  
17 where we did in some ways a much worse version of mass  
18 incarceration than, perhaps, even New York, that we ought  
19 to close the Department of Corrections and not just add  
20 names like rehabilitation to it, and have something like a  
21 committee for the prevention of torture that basically has  
22 authority over any detention facilities that we're going  
23 to continue to have at the local level or at the state  
24 level.

25           Thinking out loud.

1 MR. TRAVIS: Yes. Terrific thoughts. Jon,  
2 just to mention to others, if they didn't notice it, that  
3 in the chat through the last session where there was  
4 discussion about mass incarceration in New York State and  
5 New York City, you very helpfully, I think, added a  
6 discussion about policing in New York and in other parts  
7 of the country.

8 So, just if you would expand upon that -- get  
9 that into the conversation as well, because I think that's  
10 also another point of possible intervention in terms of a  
11 reckoning in terms of harms caused.

12 MR. SIMON: I think there's an important point  
13 here that's sort of raised by Vinny Schiraldi's very  
14 provocative, important question, When will we know that  
15 mass incarceration has ended? Has it ended in New York?

16 I always -- looking from California, at sort of  
17 around the end of the first decade of the century, I  
18 thought the story was New York had replaced mass  
19 imprisonment with a kind of mass aggressive policing,  
20 where a good deal of the population was being essentially  
21 imprisoned in a functional way by stop-and-frisk, by  
22 aggressive use of what Issa Kohler-Hausmann writes about  
23 in *Misdemeanorland* -- the marking and having lots of  
24 people in orbit around the carceral state and various  
25 forms of not quite freedom.

1           So, I thought that was the story, which didn't  
2 look all that attractive to me. Like are you going to  
3 trade mass incarceration for that? It's certainly not  
4 worse, but is it really better enough?

5           But if I'm hearing correctly, something  
6 happened in the laet seven years. Stop-and-frisk stopped,  
7 at least went down very dramatically.

8           It leaves me just with an empirical question,  
9 Are Black bodies being less messed with after eight years  
10 of this than they were in the later Bloomberg years? What  
11 is the NYPD doing with all this time on their hands?

12           If they're not arresting people or stopping and  
13 frisking them, what exactly are they doing? Is it  
14 contributing anything to public safety? Or should we  
15 shrink them rapidly and use that money to do something  
16 more productive?

17           MR. TRAVIS: Right. So, we've landed on this  
18 really important place. And appropriately at the end of  
19 our time together and thank everybody for helping us to  
20 get here, which is to have our last discussion be on the  
21 importance of accounting for harm over decades,  
22 generations as a pre-condition to some form of reckoning.

23           It's a way of accounting for harm, and there  
24 are lots of ways to think about how that might be done.  
25 Jon just said we know the names of the people who have

1       been in prison, right? We can presume we do the same for  
2       people who have been arrested. We know the children  
3       who -- the research that Danielle cited.

4               In essence, we know the extent -- the reach of  
5       the carceral state over the last, we could say, 50 years  
6       or so. So, we actually can identify, at an individual  
7       level, individual harms, some more extreme than others.  
8       And I think we have some sense of communal harms and harms  
9       to our democracy, and harms to labor market participation  
10      and the like.

11             So, certainly if you believe that one of the  
12      pre-conditions to arriving to a new vision of justice, and  
13      maybe -- again, I never think it's sequential. I think  
14      they're actually simultaneous processes. Is a form of  
15      reckoning a process of reckoning?

16             It would be really helpful if we could just add  
17      into the mix here and make believe this is a chat on the  
18      screen. What do we want to account for in this truth  
19      process that might lead to reconciliation? At least it's  
20      a truth process that recognizes harms. Anyone want to add  
21      to the list that we've constructed here already?

22             Abbey, you had something in the chat that was  
23      also very constructive. Additional thought that you might  
24      want to articulate? Let's just sort of think about this  
25      for a second.

1           What might this look like?

2           MS. STAMP: I hear you calling on me, Jeremy.

3           MR. TRAVIS: I did. I did.

4           MS. STAMP: It's okay. No. I was just  
5 thinking back to -- a few of us went to South Dakota, in  
6 Pennington County, which is Rapid City, and then drove to  
7 the Pine Ridge Reservation.

8           And, you know, those of us who came  
9 representing systems and academia just really, I think,  
10 stopped talking and just leaned into listening for a  
11 Native community who was so -- I mean, bad, and how -- we  
12 would have these visits and get back to the van and just  
13 kind of be like, How do you even deal with that?

14           And just -- we acknowledge that. Who gets to  
15 decide what a reckoning or accounting for harm should look  
16 like, or should be? And I think that, you know, depending  
17 on -- you could even get down to the neighborhood level.  
18 It's just going to be different.

19           And that if systems want to shut up and listen  
20 and figure out about what process would be meaningful,  
21 then I think folks should really define that. And I think  
22 when we listened -- I think Katharine was there -- when we  
23 listened to folks who lived there about their experiences,  
24 it was all across the board.

25           So, we couldn't, you know, even put all the

1 people who live on the Pine Ridge Reservation in the same  
2 kind of category. And how individualized it was, that was  
3 really the a-ha I had during that visit. And I just  
4 shared it in the chat because it felt like really was a  
5 pertinent experience for myself as it pertains to this  
6 conversation today.

7 MR. TRAVIS: Thanks, Abbey. Katharine?

8 MS. HUFFMAN: Yeah. No, Abbey. I'm glad you  
9 brought that up, and thinking along those lines, I'm  
10 thinking this is a little bit responsive to the question  
11 that you've just raised, Jeremy. But also was sort of  
12 thinking, if we're trying to grapple with what does it  
13 actual mean to reckon? What is that process? What comes  
14 out of it?

15 You know, then the way Danielle framed it --  
16 what's the bargain we're making to go into that? Or  
17 whatever that might be.

18 What strikes me is that we can think about, we  
19 have the receipts, as Amanda Alexander has said before, as  
20 Jon was just alluding to. We actually have records.  
21 There's some very concrete things we can potentially do.

22 I think, in this room, we also have consensus  
23 that that would barely scratch the surface in terms of the  
24 reckoning that needs to take place in this country. And I  
25 guess I'm just trying to think, like, okay. What if we

1 just start on some of these things?

2 I heard a fascinating story the other day that  
3 was talking about efforts in the decades following the end  
4 of slavery -- the end of explicit slavery -- to set up  
5 pensions for former slaves and the leadership of a  
6 particular Black woman who was a former slave herself to  
7 work to try to create this idea that individual people who  
8 had previously been enslaved would be compensated on a  
9 yearly basis.

10 And I just was listening to that and thinking,  
11 you know, that would've been dramatically insufficient had  
12 it happened. But what would be different now if 140 years  
13 ago, that had actually happened and there had actually  
14 been, in this case, financial reparations, or at least a  
15 contribution to reparations in a financial sense for huge  
16 numbers of formerly enslaved people? I think it would've  
17 been really different.

18 So, I'm trying to think, to your point, what  
19 can we add to the list of the many things that we could  
20 start to think about and put on the table? Perhaps direct  
21 financial or other types of compensation for people who  
22 have a receipt, and their families, and others.

23 But then, also, these -- as Abbey was saying --  
24 also thinking about this at a community level. Let's just  
25 start on some of these things and see where we can move.

1 And then, you know, that's going to lead us to new answers  
2 and lead us to pieces of this that we can't all see right  
3 now, moving that forward.

4 MR. TRAVIS: In addition to that, there's this  
5 interesting first step, which is finding as big a  
6 descriptive basket as you can for describing the harms.  
7 You talked about the people in prison, the children of  
8 incarcerated parents, but merely counting is not enough,  
9 right.

10 So, that's not a very satisfying answer, and  
11 I'm reminded of the work that Heather Ann Thompson is  
12 carrying out in Michigan. I may have mentioned this to  
13 some of you before. She, as an historian, is working in  
14 that state to find as much documentation as she can about  
15 the era of mass incarceration.

16 Letters home, receipts for the trips for family  
17 members for visitation -- all the ways in which the burden  
18 and the experience has been documented by those on the  
19 receiving end, as part of an organizing effort because  
20 people on this screen had an easier time talking about  
21 harms than the general public does. So, what does that  
22 look like as a matter of pricking the national conscience  
23 to get to that point?

24 Other observations about the truth-telling part  
25 of truth and reconciliation, and whether that's something

1 that can be imagined? Susan Glisson, please.

2 DR. GLISSON: I want to just lift up the  
3 brilliance of Sherrilyn Ifill, who wrote *On the Courthouse*  
4 *Lawn* a few years ago. She said that we start to have  
5 these conversations and we start to, you know, pull all of  
6 the last 400 years of history into the conversation, and  
7 it's overwhelming. It's hard to get a hold of it.

8 She said the best and most effective  
9 conversations about these topics are the ones that are the  
10 most local. So, getting as close as possible to  
11 neighborhoods, to communities --

12 MR. TRAVIS: Yeah.

13 DR. GLISSON: You know? In New Orleans, we  
14 worked in cities where death rates were highest from gun  
15 violence, but what was working in Central City didn't  
16 necessarily work in Tremé, or work in Marigny. You get  
17 that local. You get that close to folks.

18 It reminds me of Reverend Peter Storey -- one  
19 of the architects of the TRC in South Africa -- said when  
20 folks talk about the failure of the TRC, he flips it. He  
21 said the TRC didn't fail South Africa, South Africa failed  
22 the TRC because it did not continue the work of the TRC in  
23 regular local communities.

24 I think that's where we've got to go.

25 MR. TRAVIS: Excellent. Thank you for that

1 very much.

2 I saw another hand. It was up momentarily, but  
3 it's down. Yes, Courtney? Down? Okay.

4 That's okay.

5 MS. ROBINSON: Yeah.

6 MR. TRAVIS: It's up to you, of course. So,  
7 let me just push us a little bit. So, let's just, in our  
8 mind, imagine that there's some sort of reckoning  
9 underway, and that we feel that it's as fulsome as it  
10 should be given the extent of the harm and the many ways  
11 in which this has been carried out and realized throughout  
12 our society.

13 What I'd like you to do in our last half hour  
14 together is to really flip this around a little bit and  
15 just help us imagine a way forward. You can be very  
16 explicit about this, just sort of as a prompt to get some  
17 discussion underway.

18 Now I'm going to ask you to answer the  
19 following question: Imagine we're sitting here 10 years  
20 from now, and something very important has changed in the  
21 world that we described to each other over the course of  
22 this Roundtable. Something is significantly better. And  
23 maybe the pessimists among us who are not as hopeful would  
24 say, Well, that's just not going to happen. But please  
25 see if you can imagine that something is significantly

1 better in -- I'm not talking about the system,  
2 necessarily. That could be your answer.

3 Or it could be what's happening at a community  
4 level on these issues. It could be what's happening in a  
5 sector. Something in the world that you know -- maybe not  
6 your world, but the world that you know -- something is  
7 significantly better about how our society responds to  
8 harm.

9 The second part of the question is, If you can  
10 imagine that, what would be the necessary pre-condition to  
11 getting there? We take reckoning as something that's  
12 already underway as a given in this mind exercise. So,  
13 I'm not saying that we're going to go to the promised land  
14 and imagine that everything's better.

15 I'm not saying let's wait for a century and  
16 hope that lots has happened. Just, is there something  
17 within sight that you in your work could imagine would be  
18 significantly better -- significantly different? Maybe  
19 the work sector that you work in. Maybe not. The sector  
20 you write about, or maybe not -- or where you can see that  
21 there might be some significant changes.

22 If you want to put that out there, what's it  
23 going to take to get there? Be as ambitious as you want  
24 to be. So, this is a constrained visioning exercise,  
25 constrained by time, ten years -- constrained by only your

1 imagination, really.

2 And don't let the second question be the  
3 constraint. I don't want to know from you only those  
4 things that are possible. But what do you think is out  
5 there that could actually change so that we can end our  
6 time together with some sense of possible movement in the  
7 world.

8 So, take a moment. Think about it. I'll ask  
9 you to raise your hand when you're ready to jump in, and  
10 we'll see where we go. I'm not going to ask everybody to  
11 answer, but I'm really interested in what you think is  
12 possible 10 years from now if we sit here together.

13 Courtney, I note your hand was up from before.  
14 Are you also raising your hand on this question?

15 MS. ROBINSON: Mm-hm.

16 MR. TRAVIS: Okay. So, in that case, because  
17 you had your hand up earlier, you get to go first. And  
18 then, Monica, Nneka, then Keith, then Danielle, great.

19 Courtney, take us 10 years out.

20 MS. ROBINSON: So, I'm glad you gave us a  
21 moment, because sometimes the first thing that pops in my  
22 head isn't always the most brilliant thing. So, I had a  
23 few moments to kind of tie some things together.

24 So, in terms of the 10 years, I'm thinking that  
25 significant community investment in those communities that

1 have been most impacted by incarceration. We know the zip  
2 codes. We know what those communities are.

3 So, instead of --

4 MR. TRAVIS: Yep.

5 MR. ROBINSON: -- getting gentrified, that they  
6 are actually invested in. And for me --

7 MR. TRAVIS: Great.

8 MR. ROBINSON: -- when I think of something I  
9 can set my sights on in the work that I do, it's  
10 education. In the next 10 years, if we can school  
11 differently -- if we can school children differently, at  
12 least in my state, we cut down 40 percent of the children  
13 who end up in our criminal justice system. And --

14 MR. TRAVIS: Fabulous.

15 MS. ROBINSON: -- it may even be bigger than  
16 that, because that number is about referrals. School is  
17 so connected to what they're doing in the community, how  
18 they spend their time, you know, what they're focused on.

19

20 And so, we could truly, I think, break the  
21 link -- disrupt the link --

22 MR. TRAVIS: Great.

23 MS. ROBINSON: -- between education and justice  
24 if we focus on education.

25 MR. TRAVIS: Great. Fabulous. Great. You

1 have modeled, not the precise answer, but you modeled a  
2 way to think about this question. So, thanks for that,  
3 Courtney.

4 Then Monica's next. And then, after Monica,  
5 Keith.

6 DR. BELL: I'll be really quick. So,  
7 Courtney's intervention is really quite germane to mine,  
8 because I was actually thinking about myself and my space  
9 as a legal educator and law school and the complicity of  
10 lawyers in doing this -- actually carrying out the system,  
11 enabling the system as a way in which legal education is  
12 just so focused on punitiveness, individual  
13 accountability -- all of these tropes that are part of a  
14 lot of toxicity.

15 So, on the horizon, I see -- largely because of  
16 the activism of many people, but including law students --  
17 a reorientation of curriculum. So, Jon Simon mentioned  
18 earlier teaching an abolition seminar, but we can go so  
19 much deeper than that.

20 Like incorporating abolition, incorporating  
21 focuses on white supremacy, and healing centered ideas  
22 into every place in the law school curriculum. I actually  
23 see that as being possible because individual law  
24 professors control what their [audio skip] is.

25 And also, there's been some movement building

1 within the legal academy, so I'm excited about that.

2 MR. TRAVIS: As somebody who went through that  
3 system unhappily, came out the other end okay, I will  
4 volunteer my time as a tutor to one of your classes. That  
5 is so important.

6 You know, lawyers, unfortunately, control so  
7 much power, particularly in that system. So, thanks,  
8 Monica. I love that idea.

9 Keith, you're up next.

10 MR. WATTLEY: Thanks. My comments are very  
11 much in line, I think, with what Courtney shared, and  
12 that's just getting the police out of schools and  
13 replacing them, really, with counselors, therapists who  
14 are not connected in any way to law enforcement or  
15 probation or any of that.

16 I think the way we get there is by -- I think  
17 we have to stop pretending we don't know what we mean when  
18 we say defund the police. We can just tell the truth  
19 about what we're trying to say and actually make it happen  
20 and support the services that, especially, our kids really  
21 need.

22 MR. TRAVIS: Yeah. Great. Again, doable -- 10  
23 years and as you said, Keith, enormous implications for a  
24 narrative of what reform really looks like. Thank you,  
25 Keith.

1                   Next is Nneka.

2                   MS. TAPIA: I'm going to go with a two-fold  
3 answer about what we're deconstructing and what we're  
4 building. So, I think we're in the midst of figuring out  
5 what transformation can and should look like because we  
6 have increased transparency into policing -- thanks to  
7 cell phones -- and it's forcing a conversation about what  
8 a world with a different type of policing or without  
9 policing can look like.

10                  MR. TRAVIS: Mm-hm.

11                  MS. TAPIA: I believe we're on the horizon of  
12 increased transparency into all other parts of the  
13 criminal justice system, which will force us, hopefully  
14 much earlier than 10 years from now, into conversation  
15 about what transformation in those parts of the system can  
16 look like as well.

17                  And then, I do believe that -- and this is  
18 building on what Monica, Courtney, and Keith have all  
19 said -- I do believe that we are also in a very good  
20 position to build up healing communities within schools.  
21 We have a lot of healing curriculums and healing  
22 frameworks for schools.

23                  I think it's getting the political will to get  
24 school systems to pick this up so that we can build up our  
25 young people in healing communities, and not just think

1 about what we're destroying in hopes that they don't have  
2 to experience it as kids or adults.

3 MR. TRAVIS: Nneka, if you would just go one  
4 level deeper on the accountability and transparency points  
5 that you made about cell phones and policing. So, what's  
6 it going to take to get transparency and accountability?

7 You mentioned policing and what's visible with  
8 a cell phone, but more broadly, we've talked a lot about  
9 the roles of other system actors, and the agencies that  
10 run the system. Ten years from now, what is transparency,  
11 accountability for their actions look like?

12 MS. TAPIA: We're starting to see it. So, I  
13 think it was the *New York Times* recently released a report  
14 about uses of force in New York corrections --

15 MR. TRAVIS: Yep.

16 MS. TAPIA: -- and talked about how that we're  
17 lying on reports. I think the more that we have an  
18 insider's view into what's happening into these systems,  
19 thanks to advocacy groups, thanks to human rights  
20 groups --

21 MR. TRAVIS: Mm-hm.

22 MS. TAPIA: -- thanks to journalists, then I  
23 think that those windows will open up more.

24 And we, as community members, can kind of  
25 encourage the political will of these elected officials

1 who are running these systems to say, We want to know more  
2 about what's happening within them. I think we haven't  
3 learned more because we haven't asked for more, partly.

4 MR. TRAVIS: Yeah.

5 MS. TAPIA: We're starting to ask those  
6 questions now.

7 MR. TRAVIS: Yep. And just one New Yorker's  
8 observation -- that *New York Times* article was made  
9 possible only because the disciplinary records of  
10 corrections officers had to be made public only because  
11 the statute that otherwise barred them from being made  
12 public, known as 50-a, had to be overturned by the  
13 legislature and the governor. And they did that only  
14 because of the insistence after the uprising after George  
15 Floyd of those who were leading the movement. That was a  
16 target of organizing.

17 So, it's a clear case of organizing to  
18 transparency to accountability. Now, we'll see if  
19 anything changes in Rikers. So, thanks for those.

20 We have -- up next is Emily. And then, Susan  
21 after Emily.

22 DR. WANG: Great. So, I, too, appreciate this  
23 question with a 10-year time horizon. And much of what  
24 Danielle is saying really resonates with me, which is  
25 really thinking about the part of abolition that's tied to

1 building. You know, we haven't just spent enough energy  
2 there. And also, the TBD.

3 And to me, it's in the TBD, but really, it's  
4 the processes. I've just been trying to spend more time  
5 thinking about the processes that need to be in place to  
6 get us to where we want to go, that are critical.

7 Thinking about what Renita and also Nadia  
8 shared today really kind of centered around the  
9 perspective of a person that was living in Brownsville.  
10 What they could name was that it wasn't important to be in  
11 a community with lower crime rates or violence, but what  
12 it feels like to live in a community that thrives.

13 And so, you know, this might be a technocratic  
14 solution, but I've really been thinking about how it is --  
15 and this is happening in the health systems now -- where  
16 we redefine, reclaim the narrative of success. What does  
17 a successful health system look like?

18 What does a successful educational system --  
19 even as we dismantle criminal justice system, what does  
20 success look -- and I can imagine that, led by people that  
21 have been disproportionately impacted by mass  
22 incarceration, we have new measures of success that define  
23 what thriving communities look like, where people have  
24 access to food, access to medications they need, feel safe  
25 in their community.

1           These systems and organizations are equal,  
2 shared, and decide kind of with those that are most  
3 impacted on these measures that are across communities.  
4 And so, in doing so, the systems are now forced to work  
5 together. They're forced to think about kind of their  
6 success in different terms.

7           And the data, if transparent, then, have these  
8 systems accountable to us -- accountable to the people  
9 that live in these communities. To me, that's the most  
10 transformative part. Also, with a high lens towards how  
11 they are disproportionately oppressing communities of  
12 color, I think, are key.

13           We can see some of this in the health system  
14 right now. There's anchor institutions that are happening  
15 now where the metrics of how health systems operate are  
16 actually being defined by the kind of thriving nature of  
17 communities around them.

18           And so, especially funding is tied to them, and  
19 that's what happening within health system. This feels  
20 like a lens that can move it forward.

21           MR. TRAVIS: Thanks, Emily. As so often  
22 happens when you join the conversation, we realize that we  
23 have so much to learn, and you'll be quick to say the  
24 health system is not perfect, but we have so much to learn  
25 from you and your colleagues who work in the health

1 systems.

2 Because the crosswalk is not that big, and you  
3 embody it, but I think we have a lot that we can learn. I  
4 have a hope that someday we can have a conversation about  
5 crime policy and never use the word recidivism. It is, to  
6 me, just -- that should never a part of our discussion.  
7 It's so toxic.

8 So, we have up next is Susan. And then, Dona.

9 DR. GLISSON: Just quickly, to Keith's really  
10 great point in the chat and to Nneka's point about  
11 political will, if over the next 10 years community  
12 organizing was invested in, in a way that it was in the  
13 last 10 years in Georgia, in all the 11 states of the  
14 former Confederacy, you would transform the South.

15 Reverend Barber said that we're not red here;  
16 we're underorganized. That would change everything.

17 MR. TRAVIS: Yeah. May that happen. Thanks,  
18 Susan, and I think we know what it takes. Just look at  
19 Georgia, and other states we can add to that list.  
20 Virginia's my other favorite state to talk about these  
21 days.

22 So, we have -- up next is Dona. Then,  
23 Danielle.

24 DR. MURPHEY: So, I will say, also, that  
25 education, to me, is really foundational. I had mentioned

1 in the chat earlier that we had youth-led organizing in  
2 our community. And they are organizing, actually, to  
3 change our educational system, and the people who are  
4 currently making decisions in that system.

5 I have a specific call to action, which people  
6 can make take as a more general commentary on what might  
7 be important and the change we'd like to see here,  
8 ultimately, that impacts the criminal justice system.  
9 That is we need locally for our local government to be  
10 representative in terms of single-member districts, as  
11 opposed to at-large positions, particularly in communities  
12 that are showing a lot of demographic change.

13 In our community, in particular, we do not have  
14 representative government because they have decided to  
15 keep entrenched a system that will perpetuate the least  
16 amount of change for the longest period of time, and that  
17 is all at-large seats, which is totally not  
18 representative, right. The kids are trying to push for  
19 this.

20 We do need legal partners in making that  
21 argument legally. So, those who are in the legal system  
22 who are trying to support the activism that is happening  
23 there, we definitely need help with that because that's a  
24 lot of pro-bono work that legal groups could be doing with  
25 us.

1           Anyway, if we had representation, then I think  
2 we'd have changes. For instance, in hiring practices in  
3 our district, we have a gross, disproportionately small  
4 number of Black educators versus our Black students in our  
5 district. That would look a lot different if we had  
6 representative government here.

7           They would understand the importance of having  
8 racial concordance in our schools. And that would do a  
9 lot of things, from making sure we identify all of the  
10 academically-gifted students -- even if they are from  
11 communities of color, which is happening not so much right  
12 now. We would have less of a school-to-prison pipeline --  
13 hopefully, no school-to-prison pipeline happening anymore.

14           But those things really are at the root of the  
15 systems that sustain, I think, the problems that we see in  
16 the criminal justice system.

17           MR. TRAVIS: Great. Thank you so much.

18           And then, next we have Danielle. And then,  
19 Katharine.

20           MS. SERED: That was so powerful. Thank you.

21           I'm going to go big and say by my best  
22 estimate, on the day I was born, there were 443,850 locked  
23 up in the U.S., and I would ask Bruce and Jeremy and any  
24 other data types on the call to not calculate my age to  
25 the month, as Todd Clevelands [phonetic] did when he heard

1 that.

2 And so, when I say -- and I believe we can get  
3 to that number in 10 years, and I don't believe that's  
4 inevitable. It might not even be likely. But I do  
5 believe it's possible, and I think it's really important  
6 that we acknowledge it as possible as we think about how  
7 we shape our work over that kind of time-frame.

8 I'll say quickly why. I think the first is  
9 that to get to that number -- we keep talking about  
10 reimagining justice, like we have to imagine some magical  
11 world from scratch, when, in fact, we need the capacity to  
12 recall the late '70s. And while I know that capacity's  
13 not one everyone possesses, it is a capacity some people  
14 possess. And there are records, even from that ancient  
15 time, that we could turn to for guidance. And so --

16 MR. TRAVIS: Watch out on that ancient time  
17 thing, Danielle.

18 MS. SERED: I'm sorry. Look, I work with  
19 adolescents all the time. I'm like, I remember when  
20 computers were invented and -- just to horrify them.

21 And so, I think it's important that we not let  
22 the scope of imagination that we're called to do put us in  
23 a mindset that we think that we have to be capable of that  
24 kind of vision to just get to a number that most of us  
25 have seen. And so -- and I think also, I said a bit

1 earlier that I think that sheer number of people who have  
2 now have direct information about mass incarceration has  
3 in it the seeds of its demise, and I think we cannot lose  
4 the opportunity that is present in that. Like, the sheer  
5 scale of how many people in America know.

6 But there are two things I'll say about why I  
7 think that's possible in the timeline we're talking about,  
8 not just broadly. And one is, I think about this book I  
9 read many, many years ago called *The World Without Us*,  
10 that talks about what would happen to New York City if  
11 human beings just suddenly disappeared. It's like, How  
12 long until the bridges collapse? How long until certain  
13 plants came back? Until forests came back? Until bears  
14 came back?

15 And the lesson was, this shit requires very  
16 constant maintenance -- very constant maintenance because  
17 it's unnatural. The system we have in place is  
18 extraordinarily unnatural in any way we understand that  
19 word. And it requires constant maintenance -- constant  
20 surveillance, constant arrests, constant sentencing,  
21 constant denial of parole, constant reinforcement through  
22 sentencing law and everything else.

23 And so, in working, when we understand it as a  
24 thing that is not just, it's the status quo and we have to  
25 change it. But rather it's a thing that requires the

1 continual reinstatement and reimposition, and  
2 reaffirmation, and resourcing to do that -- because all of  
3 those things are also very expensive, the possibility of  
4 cutting off the sort of gasoline to that tank, I think,  
5 becomes much more imaginable to us in a way that's really  
6 important.

7           And it doesn't mean we don't have to make  
8 things retroactive and release people. Of course we do.  
9 But even the resistance to that requires that same  
10 maintenance.

11           And then, the last thing I'll say about why I  
12 think it's possible is, I think that once in a while,  
13 there are periods in history where a change happens at an  
14 accelerated pace. We see that. The Highlander Folk  
15 School was doing great stuff in the '40s and '50s, but  
16 wasn't nearly as busy as in the '60s. We see that  
17 happening, and I think we are living in one of those  
18 times.

19           I think things that were unimaginable a year  
20 ago have become normalized now. And I think younger  
21 organizers know that, and I think we are called on morally  
22 and in every other way to listen to them and recalibrate  
23 our expectations and our ambitions and the way we work,  
24 the associated labor to their far more ambitious vision.  
25 Because I think that they may be right.

1 MR. TRAVIS: Great. So, Danielle, I'm with you  
2 on the ambition. I'm with you on excusability. I am  
3 increasingly with you on this might be the time to really  
4 push hard so that not only do we change sentencing --  
5 that's why I raised it in the New York session. Where's  
6 the organizing around that goal?

7 And I think the time -- in my most optimistic  
8 moments, the time might actually be right, and requires a  
9 discussion about retroactivity. I think that might  
10 actually be possible. So, in my most optimistic moments.  
11 A lot of variance there.

12 So, Katharine, you're next.

13 MS. HUFFMAN: Thanks, Jeremy. Danielle, thanks  
14 for that, and I'm going to take a page from your optimism  
15 there a little bit, as well. When you posed this  
16 question, Jeremy, the thing that first popped into my mind  
17 was, you see these sort of surveys that are of young  
18 people who don't believe that they're going to live past  
19 age 18 or 21.

20 For Black and Brown young people, they don't  
21 believe that they have a future in that very literal  
22 sense -- high percentages. Not all, but high percentages.

23 And I was thinking 10 years from now, if Black and Brown  
24 young people universally believed that they had a future  
25 of their choosing, of their empowerment, of their

1 [indiscernible].

2 And then I was getting stuck on the second part  
3 of the question, What is it? What would that take? My  
4 list was really long.

5 And listening to all of you all, what I'm  
6 struck by is that, like, everyone has named a goal, and  
7 everyone has named a mechanism to get there. And you  
8 could practically interchange every single one of those  
9 with every other one and still be moving forward to the  
10 same place, which I think is really exciting and  
11 inspiring.

12 If we get back down to disco and the '70s, like  
13 Danielle and Jon are suggesting, in terms of our rates of  
14 incarceration, that would have an enormous impact on what  
15 I just mentioned. That would have an enormous impact on  
16 the sense of thriving in communities that Emily was  
17 talking about. It would have an enormous impact on all of  
18 these different things that folks have brought up.

19 And so, I just take that as a push to choose  
20 any and all of these and start moving forward in them,  
21 because that's the interconnectness I was thinking about,  
22 bringing all of these things together in terms of what  
23 we're building, as Keith was saying. And not just only  
24 focusing on what we're tearing down.

25 MR. TRAVIS: Well, this is just a great list of

1     achievable dreams -- let's call them that -- and a very  
2     clear-eyed sense of what it will take to get there. Bruce  
3     has been listening carefully and has volunteered to offer  
4     some observations about what you all just produced, and  
5     maybe some clear-eyed, realistic assessment of the  
6     hurdles.

7             And then, I'll come back after Bruce for one  
8     more prompt. And then, we'll move to closing it out.

9             MR. WESTERN: This was a challenging prompt for  
10    me. I was chatting with Jeremy on the side. I'm saying,  
11    I'm not sure I can fully do this. I'm thinking about  
12    stuff that seems very difficult.

13            One thing I think is really possible -- it goes  
14    to Danielle's last number of comments on the political  
15    process. We look at concrete processes of policy change  
16    in our own localities -- changes in drug policy, bail  
17    reform, things like that -- and think about the resistance  
18    to them, the hardline DAs and the sheriffs, and just a  
19    reservoir of punitive sentiment in public opinion, and  
20    that's shifting.

21            So, one really positive thing, I think, is I  
22    wonder if this resistance shrinks in a very nonlinear way.

23            We get to some tipping point, and the whole political  
24    environment changes, and very significant change becomes  
25    possible.

1           We're not there yet, but we're on this path  
2 where political resistance to reform is gradually  
3 shrinking, and I wonder if this is nonlinear. You get to  
4 a tipping point. And then, really, really big things  
5 become possible quickly. So, that's a positive proposal.

6           Here are two things I'm just so deeply worried  
7 about -- they're not related to the criminal justice  
8 system at all, but I think they're just fundamental to the  
9 context we're in. One is economic inequality.

10           And you think about the trend in income  
11 inequality and wealth inequality, particularly in this  
12 country over the last 40 or 50 years now, and it has just  
13 steadily increased year after year. We now have a tiny,  
14 tiny, little class of people in this country who are  
15 unimaginably wealthy and command unimaginable amounts of  
16 power in American society.

17           And so, it's new. We used to be able to point  
18 to the Roaring 20s and the robber barons, and so on. But  
19 we've even surpassed that now, and the concentration of  
20 economic power and wealth is so extreme in this country  
21 right now. And I think that presents an enormous  
22 challenge to democratic politics.

23           The other thing is climate change, and it seems  
24 inexorable, right. We've past the point of no return now,  
25 and the only viable alternative for us as a global

1 community is sequestration of carbon -- pulling carbon out  
2 of the atmosphere.

3 Because it's not 10 years off or five -- it was  
4 always in the future. That point has changed. And the  
5 costs of climate change are going to fall massively on the  
6 most disadvantaged and disempowered people.

7 So, I just can't fully get my head around those  
8 challenges, and in our patch, there is such incredibly  
9 positive stuff happening. But then, I kind of zoom out  
10 and I think about those things.

11 MR. TRAVIS: Thanks, Bruce. With your  
12 permission, I'm going to ask our group to zoom back in a  
13 little bit, recognizing that climate change is huge,  
14 income equality is huge enough to drive us to inaction.

15 I want to just take your first comments about  
16 tipping point. Is it possible? And just ask this group  
17 to answer another question. And then, we'll turn it back  
18 to Bruce to wrap up this entire Roundtable.

19 We talked a lot about power. We talked a lot  
20 about power sharing. We talked a lot about the reluctance  
21 of those in positions of power to give up the power that's  
22 required to make the changes that we would like to see.

23 At the same time, we've talked about -- on the  
24 side of that -- coalition building, organizing, the ways  
25 in which the last -- at least, since the George Floyd

1 murder, but I'll go back to Ferguson -- that the dynamics  
2 about justice reform have changed with the Movement for  
3 Black Lives. There's an insistence for reform.

4           So that, we put under the heading of reasons to  
5 be optimistic. We did that this morning. So many of you  
6 mentioned that as something that was a presence in our  
7 modern life. So, here we have entrenched power, a  
8 movement that we see as having potential in terms of its  
9 power.

10           So the next thing I'd like anybody to offer  
11 observation about is to get from here -- I'm still in the  
12 10 years thinking -- to get from here to being able to  
13 wrest power from a system that is likely to want to hold  
14 on to it, and make some of the changes that we think are  
15 possible in 10 years, not necessarily the ones you  
16 nominated before. What's the organizing pre-condition in  
17 order for that to happen?

18           And I know that's a very broad question, and  
19 it's not my particular area of expertise or firsthand  
20 experience. So, I'd love to hear from people: what's it  
21 going to take terms of a coalition building? Organizing?

22

23           Is it at the ballot box? Remember in our  
24 session in Detroit where our first paper was on violence  
25 as a tool for political change, or resistance as a tool

1 for political change? And that's prompted a really pretty  
2 deep discussion. So, just help us think about what's the  
3 organizing activity that you think might be necessary?

4 So, be the historian looking back on 10 years.

5 Say, We got to a much better place because that happened.

6 What do you hope for in terms of that coalition building,  
7 organizing, activism? Not in an individual level, not any  
8 institution level, but in terms of broad coalition --  
9 people demanding that things be done differently.

10 Is that a vision that you want to articulate  
11 for us? As to looking back 10 years from now, you say,  
12 Oh. That's what helped us get to this point.

13 So, take a moment to think about that. I'd be  
14 grateful for anybody who has thought about that. And  
15 then, we'll share those thoughts for 10-15 minutes or so.

16 And then, turn it back to Bruce. Again, please  
17 use your blue hand.

18 Thank you, Nneka, for being first up, and we'd  
19 love to hear your thoughts on this question of how is  
20 power going to -- we think of it as a pre-condition that  
21 there has to be a shift in power, and how is that going to  
22 happen?

23 MS. TAPIA: I reflect on the conversation that  
24 we had with Marlon and Daryl. And I think about how there  
25 was a conflict there in whether or not people who are

1 organizing in community can coalesce with people who are  
2 working within the system to uproot the system.

3 I believe that progress is happening as it is  
4 right now, with us working in separate lanes for the most  
5 part. But I believe more progress will happen when people  
6 who are organizing in community can partner with people  
7 who are working within these systems and understand how  
8 toxic they are and want to see them dismantled, working in  
9 community to dismantle these systems and reduce these  
10 harms.

11 MR. TRAVIS: That was a wonderful contribution.

12 Thank you, and good to be reminded of that part of their  
13 discussion, which was so rich and really personal for  
14 them. They were really eloquent on that point.

15 Who else wants to contribute to this discussion  
16 about -- it's a version of Bruce's optimistic prognosis  
17 that maybe we're at a tipping point, but what's going to  
18 tip the balance here? And frankly, I don't see a lot of  
19 tipping happening already, but I think that's necessary.

20 Monica?

21 DR. BELL: I guess I'll say one thing, which is  
22 I think we reached a tipping point, in part, by pointing  
23 out the relationship between a lot of the conversation  
24 we're having here. Like, education, housing -- all of  
25 this broader network of the change we're trying to build.

1 I think leaning into the fundamental  
2 interdisciplinarity of transformation can help build  
3 enough political capital, because it's not just about  
4 people who tend to work on --

5 MR. TRAVIS: Yeah.

6 DR. BELL: -- [audio skip] in the criminal  
7 system.

8 MR. WESTERN: Did Jeremy freeze? Okay. I had  
9 a two finger. I'm going to totally abuse Jeremy's  
10 internet failure to --

11 MR. TRAVIS: I'm sure there were pearls of  
12 wisdom that I missed. Sorry about that.

13 MR. WESTERN: I hadn't started yet. I --

14 MR. TRAVIS: Okay.

15 MR. WESTERN: It took me a second to realize  
16 you were frozen, Jeremy. But I had a two finger on  
17 Monica's, and mine wasn't as substantive as that, but I  
18 thought was right on. I think what could be very  
19 generative politically is the creation of virtuous cycles  
20 where policy change commands more support, commands more  
21 change.

22 You see, the model I think of is in social  
23 policy, right, where social security gets established in  
24 the 1930s, becomes very, very difficult to dismantle, and  
25 then, expands in the Great Society to eliminate poverty

1 among the elderly. It's an incredibly popular program,  
2 and it's politically -- you can't retrench it.

3 We don't quite have virtuous circles of policy  
4 change commanding support, creating more change. But I  
5 think this more expansive idea that involves housing and  
6 education in tandem with changing how we think of and do  
7 justice -- I think that's the basis for a virtuous circle  
8 in our sphere.

9 And we don't quite have models for that yet.

10 MR. TRAVIS: So, same question for Monica and  
11 Bruce, just as follow-up. Are you saying to us that it's  
12 important for people in those other sectors -- who work in  
13 those sectors or work on those issues -- to be advocates  
14 for justice reform? Or that their effective advocacy  
15 around housing, for example, will help support justice  
16 reform?

17 Have you seen that difference?

18 DR. BELL: I'll jump in and say, I mean the  
19 former more so than the latter, actually. I think that's  
20 also true for work on the criminal legal system  
21 transformation, which is to say we have to understand how  
22 intersections happen and not --

23 MR. TRAVIS: Right.

24 DR. BELL: -- and just not be sort of so  
25 limited in our scope of understanding how you're actually

1 going to build.

2 As Danielle was talking about -- how do we  
3 actually create stuff. I think we create a new world by  
4 not just folks staying on like internal to one -- MR.  
5 TRAVIS: Yeah. I'm reminded of the contributions from our  
6 school's principal from New York, whose name -- I'm sorry.  
7 I've forgotten. But when she was saying, I'm an  
8 educator, but I really care about what guys do because it  
9 effects my students and my ability to function well.

10 So, any final thoughts on this organizing  
11 idea -- sort of power-shifting idea before we move on?

12 MS. HUFFMAN: I'll echo again what we were all  
13 mentioning before. The organizing that happened in  
14 Georgia, and the very direct linkage of political power to  
15 change.

16 I mean, that's -- when we're writing the  
17 history, that's going to be in there, and hopefully,  
18 because it was then expanded to all of the former states  
19 of the Confederacy -- as Susan said -- and beyond.

20 MR. TRAVIS: Yep. I would add to that very  
21 explicitly organizing around voting rights for people with  
22 felony records. And there is various calculations as to  
23 how that would've changed the outcomes of various  
24 elections. Our colleague -- Daryl Atkinson's very much  
25 involved in that, as are others.

1           We see this as difficult. Only look at Florida  
2 to see how difficult that is, but what a change that would  
3 make if that was across the board -- statutory reform.

4           Susan?

5           DR. GLISSON: Yeah. Just to put an exclamation  
6 on that, in 2016 or 2017, the Women's March, there were  
7 eight major women's marches in Mississippi, my state. The  
8 largest marches that had happened since the '60s.

9           Last summer there were 32 Black Lives Matter  
10 marches across Mississippi. Thirty-two. Most of them  
11 were planned by young people. It's a tipping point.

12          MR. TRAVIS: There you go.

13          MS. GLISSON: It's a tipping point.

14          MR. TRAVIS: Yeah. Great. So, unless there's  
15 a final contribution to our thinking on organizing, we  
16 will start to bring this to a close. Not seeing any hands  
17 raised, blue or otherwise. Great.

18                 So, I'm going to turn it over to Bruce for some  
19 final observations about this Roundtable, but let me  
20 just -- if you would, as a matter of sort of a personal  
21 privilege here, just to thank all of you for your  
22 contributions to not only this Roundtable, but to the  
23 other Executive Sessions and Roundtables that you've  
24 participated on.

25                 It's been just a remarkable journey of a

1 lifetime, frankly, for me. And you made it possible and I  
2 know that I speak on behalf of others who are not here  
3 who've been some of our participants over this three-year  
4 journey.

5 My only hope is for you -- and now, I'll make  
6 this a 10-year hope, is that you take some of the ideas  
7 that have been generated here and just make them happen.  
8 Whatever it takes.

9 Because the ideas that have been generated are  
10 really, really powerful. And I know that there's a  
11 capacity with members of the Roundtable and the larger  
12 Square One family to really change the world. And we will  
13 be running alongside you, watching you, supporting you  
14 where we can, learning from you as we've done over the  
15 last three years.

16 Thank you for making all this possible. So,  
17 our final thoughts are from Bruce.

18 MR. WESTERN: Yeah. I feel we're getting  
19 pretty talked out. I had some summary notes. I don't  
20 want to go through them all because I don't think I can do  
21 justice to the conversation that we had.

22 I will say -- this is just sort of my  
23 concluding observation -- the conversation we wound up  
24 having, which is characteristic of the Roundtable. We  
25 draw it up on the whiteboard one way, and then the

1 collective genius of the group takes it in a completely  
2 different way.

3           And I thought we were going to be plumbing the  
4 depths of philosophy and thinking about the deep  
5 principles that will govern the future of a radical  
6 justice project, but we spent a lot of time talking about  
7 politics, actually. The theme of values surfaced for the  
8 group an urgency about action, which, I mean, I learned so  
9 much from the Roundtable process in this way.

10           In retrospect, of course that's what a  
11 conversation about values would be. It would be, How do  
12 we act on our values?

13           One of the really interesting things for me in  
14 this whole conversation over the last week or so -- the  
15 forces that divert us from our values. What keeps us from  
16 honoring our values? An interesting thread in that  
17 conversation was professionalization and the professional  
18 pathways of career advancement and even, I suppose,  
19 personal development, and so on -- can distract us from  
20 the principle and sense of mission that we most esteem.

21           We had a very honest conversation, I think,  
22 about system actors. Nneka spoke to this just now. I  
23 think it's a super interesting and critical question, and  
24 I think sort of figuring out how coalitions can be built,  
25 broad coalitions that remain very, very honest to our

1 missions and can overcome all of the personal diversions  
2 of professionalization.

3           That happens on the movement side, as we well  
4 know, as well. I think that was an important thing for me  
5 that came out of the conversation. So,  
6 professionalization can divert us from our values.

7           What can help us honor our values? The thing I  
8 took away from that was democracy. It is in democracy  
9 that we need to affirm the connections of social  
10 solidarity. It's in democracy that we see our wishes, our  
11 problems in the lived reality of other people, and we come  
12 together to solve those problems.

13           And of course, democracy is under deep threat  
14 right now. I mean, we've just seen that in our political  
15 process in the last six months. So, that's all I want to  
16 say. I wish I had something more elegant and deeper, but  
17 that was a lot for me, and unexpected.

18           I wanted -- so this is our last meeting, and  
19 we've been doing this for three years. We've been doing  
20 it in the Roundtable format, and we've been doing it in  
21 the Executive Session. I've got to thank the incredible  
22 people who work on Square One every day.

23           I mean, they just walk the walk every single  
24 day, and it's Sukyi, who, I think, has just provided such  
25 astonishing leadership. It's Anamika, who has played a

1 parallel role with the Executive Session. Madison and  
2 Evie, who you've all had contact with -- just utterly  
3 extraordinary people.

4 I'm in complete awe of how Katharine stewards  
5 this whole crew. And on a staff call last week, Jeremy  
6 and I were reflecting the best decision we've ever made in  
7 the last three years was bringing Katharine, Sukyi,  
8 Anamika, Madison, and Evie on board, who are  
9 extraordinary.

10 I want to close these thanks by just  
11 acknowledging Jeremy's role in Square One over the last  
12 three years. I mean, if it wasn't clear in the Justice in  
13 New York session, Jeremy has been fighting for a fairer,  
14 more equal and just, humane, and compassionate New York  
15 City for decades now.

16 It's a life's work that's truly extraordinary.

17 Listening to the conversation, I could see Jeremy's  
18 influence through many of the panelists at the table, and  
19 it has just been utterly brilliant. It's been a gift to  
20 be able to work with him for the last three years. I'm  
21 very grateful for that.

22 Final thing: This is not the end. We're going  
23 to do more. This is the end of this chapter, although  
24 there's still more work we want to do with this particular  
25 chapter, because there are papers that we have plans for.

1 And so, that work will continue.

2 But the friendships and the relationships that  
3 have been built around Square One, I think, are so  
4 powerful. For us, I believe, we've made some contribution  
5 to the larger national conversation. This work will  
6 continue. We'll fill you all in on that as our own plans  
7 develop.

8 But there's definitely more work to do, and we  
9 hope that you'll continue to join us. It's been amazing.

10 I think you're all extraordinary. It's just been a  
11 privilege to work with all of you.

12 So, thanks very much.

13 MS. HUFFMAN: Yay.

14 MR. WESTERN: What's next, Sukyi?

15 MS. McMAHON: The recording is off. Yay.

16 MR. WESTERN: Yay.

17 MS. HUFFMAN: Thank you, Sukyi.

18 MR. TRAVIS: Now, we can relax.

19 MS. HUFFMAN: Here she is.

20 MS. McMAHON: That was awesome.

21 MS. HUFFMAN: Sukyi, congratulations and thank  
22 you so much.

23 MR. TRAVIS: Yay, Sukyi.

24 MS. McMAHON: I'm happy. I'm just so proud of  
25 everyone, you know? I want to thank you all for taking

1 the time, and for just really putting yourselves into this  
2 whole journey, whether it's the last three weeks or just  
3 throughout the course of this.

4 So, it means a lot. As Jeremy said, life-  
5 changing. Certainly, for me, as well. What happens in  
6 Square One happens here locally and gets transferred into  
7 the work that we're doing here, and I think Courtney might  
8 be able to vouch for that.

9 You know, I feel like the values that we embody  
10 are trickling right down to the community level, and I  
11 think that's probably happening wherever you all are. So,  
12 thank you for being validators and carrying this work on.

13

14 So I'm just going to be bothering you all next  
15 week or so to get a debrief, and I'd just like to have one  
16 last discussion about this particular Roundtable. But as  
17 Katharine says and Bruce says, the work continues. And  
18 we'll all be reaching out and trying to get more because  
19 that's all there is, is just more.

20 We're going to be continuing the work until  
21 it's over. So, thank you all.

22 (Whereupon, at 5:15 p.m., the Roundtable was  
23 concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MEETING OF: The Square One Project

LOCATION: via Zoom

DATE: April 30, 2021

I do hereby certify that the foregoing pages,  
numbers 1 through 201, inclusive, are the true, accurate,  
and complete transcript prepared from the verbal recording  
made by electronic recording by Latrice Porter.

DATE: May 10, 2021

/s/ Anna Marie Reyes  
(Transcriber)

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