



## NFG's 40 YEARS STRONG NATIONAL CONVENING SERIES

### We Keep Us Safe: Advancing Community-led Solutions to Neighborhood Violence

November 5, 2020

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>> **COURTNEY BANAYAD:** Welcome to NFG's 40 Years Strong virtual convening series. This is our "We Keep Us Safe: Advancing Community-led Solutions to Neighborhood Violence." I'm Courtney, NFG's Director of Membership and Communications, and I'm excited to pass it onto Reverend Cory Anderson, our board member who will welcome us to this session.

>> **REV. CORY ANDERSON:** Good morning, everybody, or good afternoon, if you're on the East Coast. My name is Cory Anderson. I'm with the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation here in Little Rock, Arkansas. 30 years ago I was a gang intervention specialist here in Little Rock, Arkansas. I worked for an organization called New Futures for Little Rock Youth. Gang intervention specialist was a fancy title, but all it meant was I was young enough and cared enough about my peer to want to go out into neighborhoods and engage with other young people who were not aware of the opportunities that they had, but were acutely aware of the challenges that surrounded them in their communities.

As a gang intervention specialist, at that time, and this was 30 years ago, I had a pager. And whenever my pager went off, it was important that I answer that call. Because if I

didn't answer, a young person might end up in jail. A young person might end up kicked out of school. A young person might end up dead. And through that work, it was reinforced for me the importance of having young people and the people in the communities around me, the adults in the communities around them, engaged in this issue of abating community violence.

Now, this is a systems challenge that community has to be involved in. And so today's conversation I'm really excited about because I know there are other folks who are still doing that work 30 years later. Just last week, my youngest son who recollects is 23, called me. A friend of his here in Little Rock had just gotten killed. And he said dad, where are the people working in communities that are helping solve problems? I had to tell him that they weren't there anymore. Because of COVID, here in Little Rock, the city council actually cut the budget that funded those folks that had been around, that had been in community for nearly 30 years. It was the easiest thing for them to cut when city resources were reduced because of COVID. What I had to tell my son was they're not there anymore. What I had to tell my son was they're not a priority anymore.

And what I'm hoping is that through this conversation all of us can learn more about how philanthropy can be supportive, and how all of us can leverage the resources that are in these public systems to support our communities and to support young people, abating violence, but also promoting the assets that are there. I'm excited to hear the conversation. I want to turn it over to my fellow board member, Amoretta Morris, to lead us into it. Thank you all for being here today.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Thank you, Cory, for that introduction. And thank you so much for sharing your story and how you enter into today's conversation. I think sadly we each can point to touches, to losses that bring this issue so close and personal to us.

And so I, too, appreciate being able to be in conversation with all of you and be focused on solutions and know that there is something that we could do to make our community safer. I also just want to thank Neighborhood Funders Group for convening today's conversation. But most of all, to thank all of you, the participants. Some of you are long-time NFG members, some of you are newer to the organization. But thank you for taking your time with us. Particularly, I know that there are many other places that you could be, you know, potentially other places your head and your heart are calling you to be, potentially under the covers awaiting election returns, or in the streets demanding justice.

But you have shown up for the next couple hours because you know what we know, which is regardless of the outcomes of the election, our work to build power and community across the country must go on if we want to co-create the future we want to live in. We know we are in unparalleled times in our democracy with a pandemic

that is disproportionately impacting Black and Brown communities, and we've also seen recent increases in violence as the safety net in our community has been further weakened by the pandemic and by the federal government's response to it.

We also know that violence is one of the largest health disparities, specifically Black people experience violent deaths at six times the rates of whites. And knowing this for the Annie Casey Foundation, and being a national kids' foundations, especially focused on the experiences of youth and families of color, as a foundation we knew we could not say we prioritize racial equity and be ignoring the largest racial health disparity and ignoring the violence that was happening in the very neighborhoods where the youth and families that we cared about lived.

As we seek equitable development, we know we have to do it in partnership with the neighborhood residents who live at the intersection of both intercommunal violence and police and state violence. We also know that the safest communities are the ones with the most police, but they are the ones with the most resources. By and large, the response to community violence has been simply to increase the number of police. We know that these strategies have been ineffective in solving the problem, while also creating new problems through mass incarceration and the impact on our community.

But the investment in community solutions for safety and violence prevention have been nowhere near what is needed to match the scale of the problem. And even when they are there, they are precarious just like the example that will Cory offered in terms of those are the types of investments that are the first ones to be pulled when there are budget challenges or a budget crunch. But the good news are things are changing.

As the racial justice movement, and there have been conversations about what keeps us safe, the door is open in increasing investments in community-based solutions. And in this session today, we're going to lift up the role of local community organizers in D.C. and Atlanta who have successfully advocated for proven non-police based violence models, such as violence interruption, and the funders who have partnered to support that work.

I know that's a lot to discuss, but fortunately we have three tremendous panelist who is will help us make meaning of this moment and what it means for our efforts to create safer neighborhoods.

But before we move into the panelists, I wanted to get a sense really quickly of who you all are and who we have participating today. We're going to ask two poll questions related to how you are engaging on this issue. So, team, if you could launch the first poll question. Excellent. Thank you. And if you all could take a moment and answer it. Wonderful.

And while you're doing that, I just want to quickly talk about how we're going to spend

the rest of our day or the rest of our time together. I'm going to introduce each of our panelists. We'll have about a 30-minute conversation. And then we're going to open up to Q&A from you all. We'll then take about a 10-minute bio break so you can go take care of yourself. But please do come back because that's the part where we're going to dig in. We're going to break out into smaller discussion groups so you can talk with each other how what you've heard applies to your work and hear strategies across regions and geographies. And then we'll come back to the group and hear closing remarks from our panelists.

First, let's see our poll results. Terrific. We've got a great mix of folks here. Folks who are doing this work, a lot of folks who are funding this work locally, which I think makes a lot of sense given how the work affects us and wanting to make sure we are absolutely committed to the communities in which our foundations reside. And I love the fifth of you who are interested in getting involved on this issue and thinking about how your foundation or your entity may support this work. And I'm also, you know, really excited and deeply appreciative of the folks who don't necessarily see a fit for them right now or in the immediate future for this work, but are still clueing in to learn more and potentially that could change. So, looking forward to the conversation that we have today.

I've got, we have one more poll question. So, if the team could launch that one. Excellent. And while you are answering that one, I wanted to introduce, if you don't mind, what I will characterize as a dope set of panelists. I'm so excited about the conversation that we're about to have with these individuals. I will go actually in reverse order from what you see on this screen, starting with the right.

Welcoming Columbus Ward, who is joining us from Atlanta. Columbus is the executive director of the PeoplesTown Revitalization Corporation. He's also the chairperson of Neighborhood Planning Unit B. Atlanta is divided into 25 neighborhood planning units. They're citizen advising councils that make recommendations to the city council on zoning, planning, and other planning issues. As chair of that, Columbus represents planning associations and residents who live in southwest Atlanta. He has been a neighborhood activist in southwest Atlanta for decades. And for the last three years he's been a co-chair of the Annie Casey Foundation. He was at the table years ago when we undertook a nine-month planning process with residents who piloted a community-based trauma response network, community healing circles, and launching a care violence team in the neighborhood. He also served on the resident advisory committee who partnered with Morehouse School of Medicine. Welcome, Columbus.

Next we have Alise Marshall, who is a native of Kentucky who now lives in D.C. She identifies new levers for impact and builds cross-sector collaboration for social change. Prior to joining public welfare, Alise was with the Wal-Mart Foundation, where she oversaw their diversity, equity, and inclusion portfolio. In that role, she led the

strategic design and managed a combined \$10 million portfolio, accelerating impact for communities of color, LGBTQIA communities, and individuals with disabilities, and women and girls. Prior to that she spent six years in the Obama Foundation. She also served with the recent discipline effort to disrupt the school to prison pipeline. Thank you so much for joining us, Alise.

And finally, we have one of my favorite local organizers, as I'm calling in from D.C., April Goggans. She is a sociologist, activist, mother of one, and a proud southeast D.C. resident. She is a core organizer with Black Lives Matter D.C. Direct action organizing, policing, and police brutality. She launched the Keep D.C. For Me Coalition, working to confront and disrupt violence. April is also a union chapter vice president at large, steward, and legislative coordinator. Thanks so much for being here, April.

Now, let's quickly look at our responses for poll question number two. That's what I like to see. Folks who are interested in funding both. Right? I think that that's one of the keys to this conversation is knowing that with this work that this is not about an either/or strategy. It's about understanding the multiple terrains and investments that we should be, that we're going to need to make in order to see change for our community. And so it's really helpful to understand. Thank you so much for those who answered those two questions. It's really helpful to understand the ways in which folks are entering this conversation.

Let's jump right into our panel. Thank you all so much. Oh, hello, panelists! So, great to see you.

The first question I have I'm going to direct to you Alise. You know, the Public Welfare Foundation has a long history in investing in criminal justice reform and systems change. On a personal note, I was a grantee almost 20 years ago when the foundation supported our juvenile justice coalition as we organized youth and adults to close D.C.'s youth prison, Oak Hill. And now you continue that work while also making deep investments. Can you share what motivated the foundation's investments in community safety both in the foundation's hometown of D.C., but also elsewhere?

>> **ALISE MARSHALL:** Yeah, sure. Thank you so much for creating this space and for the question. So, yes, I'm with Public Welfare Foundation. We've been around for 70 + years, investing in community-rooted organizations. It's nothing new for us. But when I came on a couple of years ago, we were going through a strategic shift and acknowledged that if we wanted to focus more intentionally on addressing mass incarceration, that that would require us to go deeper into place.

And so in doing that, we identified a few jurisdictions that we wanted to hold up as our target jurisdictions that we would be going deep in over the next few years. And we knew we couldn't do that with any fidelity without looking at our own backyard

first. We're based in Washington, D.C. We had funded, as Retta mentioned, we had funded a couple of efforts around the closure of Oak Hill, the former juvenile detention facility and other efforts, but hadn't really built out a strategy here.

So, one of the things we did first two years ago when we identified D.C. as one of our target jurisdictions and said we want to focus entirely on addressing mass incarceration and moving the system to invest more in community-rooted alternatives to incarceration and violence reduction in the city, one of the first things we did was we brought on a couple of partners to help us in listening to the community. So, instead of going in with this top-down approach, which funders often do, we're really good at, right? Creating a really, you know, a beautiful slide deck with all of the indicators we want to move on in a windowless conference room. We knew we wanted to listen to folks first.

So, we held a series of six listening sessions with community members and asked them what are the issues impacting you when you think about the footprint of justice and incarceration and who is bearing the brunt of that crisis. Where should we really be focusing our efforts? A couple of things emerged both through the data and through conversations with local organizations and directly impacted folks and advocates and practitioners in D.C. One is a need to focus on the young adult population who bear the brunt of the incarceration crisis in D.C. D.C. gets heralded as this sort of progressive light (Chuckling) of a city. I see April shaking her head, because we know that's not true. When you treat D.C. like a city, it has one of the top incarceration rates in the nation. It's right up there with Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, you know states who we don't consider ourselves anything like. Right?

And so when we looked at who is getting incarcerated, who is spending the most time in the D.C. jail and going off to BOP, one of the other things that I have to point out that makes D.C. unique is because the city was budget strapped in the '90s and sold off the majority of its criminal justice to the federal government. So, we don't have a district attorney here that oversees the adult criminal justice system and holds the police and other institutions to account. We don't have a local prison. If you are incarcerated in D.C., you are spending your time in any number of federal bureau of prison facilities across the United States. If you're incarcerated and up for parole, you don't have people who come from the community who are accountable for D.C. residents making decisions about whether you go home or not or get a second chance or third chance or not. I think one of the current commissioners is from Kentucky, doesn't live here, none of them live here. So, when we looked at, you know, when we were examining the crisis, it was really important to us to both acknowledge the uniqueness of D.C. and what it would take to move things forward.

So, one is acknowledging the fact that we need, you know, we need to make D.C. a legitimate state. (Chuckling) Another is focused on young adults. So, between the ages of 18 and 24-year-olds who are overrepresented in the city's incarceration data.

And then when you look at those individuals, when you look at the young, predominantly male Black men. And the incarcerated population is almost entirely Black. 95, probably more like 98% Black and Native Washingtonians. It is imperative if we're ever going to address the true scale of the crisis or nationally, we pull out the 2.2 million figure a lot in this space. 2.2 million people are currently incarcerated. Over a third are there for violent offenses. That's why we decided to focus more intentionally on violence.

Our strategy started on the heels of organizers like April and others who pushed D.C. to have a public health approach on violence. And in March of 2019, D.C. passed the NEAR Act. Was that act ever fully implemented or fully funded? The answer is no. So, the work of organizers and advocates on the ground pushing the system to account is so critical. As a funder, our job is to also hold the system to account, but to invest our resources into those smaller, more proximate organizations.

So, one of the things we did really quickly is we launched the D.C. for Just and Peaceful Neighborhoods, in partnership with the Greater Washington Community Organization, to support smaller, more proximate organizations in the wards who are most impacted by overincarceration and violence. Those are by and large boards east of the river in Washington, D.C. We're talking about three wards where predominantly the brunt of the incarceration crisis and of violence resides in those neighborhoods. We said we want organizations from those neighborhoods that are led by Black folks, that are led by Brown folks that don't get funding by local funders or national funders in D.C.

And that's where we're focused on right now. Trying to get additional investment from other funders has been a challenge, and I think that's because violence is still looked at as this niche issue. When folks think about we want to move and address root causes. That's what I hear from other funders. We focus on the root causes. Instead of saying we're going to fund interventions or we're going to fund organizing and advocacy to increase public investment into alternatives to incarceration and harm reduction, but violence is central to that. So, I think it's one thing we've got to do a better job of.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Absolutely. Thank you, Alise. And I think you also made a perfect setup to bring April into the conversation, particularly with the talking about the NEAR Act and the work there.

So, April, in local organizing against violence, I think that similar separation that Alise talked about in philanthropy when folks think about violence also happens in the organizing and activist community. I think some try to draw what I would call a false divide between organizing between state and police violence and then the ongoing effort to address intercommunal violence in our neighborhoods. Black Lives Matter D.C. has been clear that you all are working to reduce both. Can you describe your

approach to that and say a little bit more about your role in passing the NEAR Act in D.C. and building the public will for approaches like violence interruption in the city.

>> **APRIL GOGGANS:** Yeah. Thanks so much for thinking of me, Retta. This is very cool. I couldn't think of anything else to stop everything for than this. I'm literally on BLM Plaza. Actually, my first action, I came out of tenant organizing in southeast, and kind of took like a two-year break, which I think doesn't exist anymore. (Chuckling) But, my first act with BLM was shutting down the mayor's crime bill conference in 2000 and god, it must have been '15 now. She was introducing her crime bill. It was going to be like no-knock raids and warrantless searches and all of this crazy stuff for a violent increase in homicides.

If you live here or in most cities, violence comes in waves. A raise in homicides comes in waves and have to do with things that are sociological, or things they don't want to actually spend time on. We were in a moment of increased homicides. And we said okay, we're going to go and we're going to listen, right? Because clearly this was in the beginning. So, we said we're going to listen to what she says. Because it was in our neighborhood. It was in southeast. And we listened for about three minutes. And she started talking about police and we just shut it down. Literally shut it down to the point where she just couldn't talk anymore. She tried to talk over us. And you just never know how people are going to react.

But people in the audience were like yeah, this is wild, because these are the people in their households who are going to be impacted simply because they either had been in a place where there's already heightened police or somehow touched the injustice system, right? And so, you know, the first thing that everybody says is you guys just shut everything down. You don't have any ideas, you don't have any solutions.

Well had already had a solution. And the solution was to make it a public health issue that says you have a duty not to harm folks in the name of stopping harm, the same folks. It was at the next council hearing. There were dual bills, McDuffy, and his committee on the judiciary committee at the council. And it was the first time I ever heard D.C. talk about the need for fighting something that wasn't about policing. It was me, Eugene, and my brother who testified and just said hey, there's this program in Richmond, California. And you need to look at it. Because the other folks were like, you know, what are we going to do? Clearly we have to lock people up because they're going to be a danger to people on the street. It was just like absolutely no one was talking about anything else.

But at the same time, police violence was, I mean it always is here. I mean it was out of control then, too. So, from there he intentionally and I will say a politician is a politician is a politician. But I feel like Kenny McDuffy spent a lot of time talking to

people who had been doing this for a long time, and that was big. This is not new. As a function of community in D.C., this is as old as D.C. Historically, the neighborhoods here were segregated. I mean folks forget D.C. is below the Mason-Dixon Line. Say whatever you want, but this is the South.

And so, from the beginning folks were taking care of each other. Right? You don't want the police to come into your neighborhood. So, being able to work with each other or work inside the community, folks would be like nah, you can't do that here because we really don't want the police to come over here. It's a function of just Black communities everywhere. And so being able to first honor that and get that history was incredibly important because there were definite like age-old then understanding where that came from. Right?

D.C. will tell you if you talk to the founder of CeaseFire. Yeah, don't smoke the brothers and sisters, he'll tell you his CeaseFire was the first in the country. At first, everybody thinks your thing is the first. Until I went to his office. You have on his wall, then D.C. Attorney General Eric Holder's declaration CeaseFire, but the name belonged to that group. There's also this dueling narrative about who does that work here. I bring that up not just historical terms, but it's a fundamental way that this work comes to be. Right?

Because even today there's the we fought really hard for the NEAR Act. We knew at the time it was going to be the government doing this. We had no falsehoods that this was going to save everybody and be the be all and end all, but it was a means to harm reduction. It meant that we have this gaping, bleeding wound of violence in our community, how do we stop it for now while we're working on the alternatives. And we could not support anything that had to do with more policing, more money in the police budget.

Even then in 2015, we were talking about defunding the police. To be very clear, it was like you need to reduce this money and put it into violence interruption. The very intense level of energy that it took to get the community behind looking at alternatives was in and of itself a function of violence. It was like a symptom of violence. It was PTSD. Let me put it as PTSD. Because if all you have in your most human visceral moments of violence and loss are then, you know, asked well what should we do. Because you're thinking of people you lost. You want to protect your kids. You want to protect the people on your block. All you've ever heard is police. All you've ever heard is we need more law enforcement, more government, more government programs, but nobody is talking about the connections.

So, you automatically then have a government who's like hey, we have all this money for the war against drugs, the war against all of these things, which ended up just being a war against Black and Brown neighborhoods. So, what you had was more police, which meant more police violence, and people who were saying that they were

talking about violence interruption. And until you could look at police violence being gun violence and police violence being part of that inter-community violence, right, because there's not a way for you to pick up guys off the street and act like they told you information and that's not going to start something.

And so in the beginning there wasn't a lot of people looking to fund that because it was very, you know, folks want to be like what are the measurements, how are we going to know if it's successful. And for us, we're like we don't know that this model is going to be successful. But like you have to trust that we're going to figure it out. And then we have to. I mean at some point you have to say this has to stop. Right?

And I will say this is another reason I was really excited about this is because there are philanthropy models that have been very, very important to this being able to be done but not getting in the way of what the community self-determines for itself. And so I had the honor, I'll say, of being one of the co-creators or original founders of the Diverse City Fund here in D.C. I remember sitting down for hours and hours saying how do we take into account all of these things from violence in the community, from people needing to work during the day, to really think about how do we, that resources are important.

And as much as I am anti-capitalist, money pays for things. But how do we do this in a way that empowers the community and doesn't make us beholden to funders. It's a lot different now. But in the day you couldn't go up on your website and have 12 pictures. It was a lot of that.

But the guys on the street that we talk to, this is their reality. So, in pushing the NEAR Act, it became very clear that it was a political education model and tool. What we also learned was it wasn't going to be the government because every time there's a new election, every time there's a new committee chair, all of this changes. And so what we knew as a community was that we had to shift the entire paradigm of people thinking that there were alternatives, right? That there were other ways to do this. Because Black people didn't need to sit and talk about violence all day. Like we didn't need to keep having community meetings about violence. That's kind of like sitting on your porch. So, having the belief and conviction that people know what they need and the patience to listen and not know, and enter the space not knowing everything was incredibly important.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** I'm going to jump in real quick just on that point and then I want to make sure I come back to you because I do want you to also talk specifically, you talked about you alluded to it when you said it takes the energy it took to also do the political education about it. And so how you all approached community education across the city. Because as somebody who has been here for 20 years, like that's part of y'all's work that I thought was so incredible and powerful and a model for other

places. In terms of how you got neighbors talking to each other from the least diverse, wealthiest parts of the city to southeast, right, all kind of understanding and teaching each other about alternatives that can exist. And that was so critical.

I don't want you to go into it now, because I want to pull in Columbus quickly because you had talked about part of the work is part of your encouragement to funders is about community. Trusting the community knowledge that's there. Columbus, you have been a community leader in southwest Atlanta. You are the epitome of community expertise and knowledge and listening and mobilizing those resources and that knowledge to push the city to do better by the neighborhoods in southwest Atlanta. One of the things, and I want to ask you about you about a couple things.

But first, kind of relative to this question is I want you to talk about how you've seen trauma play out at the community level because I think that's a big part of this conversation, as well. One of the things that the Casey Foundation, for example, was informed by, was the Prevention Institute's work on the role of individual trauma and collective trauma in the production of violence. And when we're talking about collective trauma, we're talking about structural racism. Right? We're talking about chronic disinvestment in neighborhoods.

Many people on the call may be familiar with the term ACEs, adverse childhood experiences, which refer to the stressors that impact an individual. And there's the ACER, the adverse community experience and resilience framework, that pulled us back and said we can't just look at what's happening at an individual level, you have to look at what's happening to entire communities.

And what you've talked about, Columbus, is about the years of disinvestment, right, that have happened in neighborhoods. But that disinvestment has also resulted in trauma. Right? In neighborhoods. And so could you just say and talk a little bit about how you see that playing out. What that dynamic looks like in Atlanta and what you think is the path forward to help our communities heal.

**>> COLUMBUS WARD:** Thank you for the opportunity. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm going to start with a little history. Starting back in 1966 when police brutality and killing was going on in my neighborhood. And we got started from that. With some of the Black Panther Party. I experienced being tear gassed and laying on the streets and stuff like that back in 1966. The white police would come into the Black neighborhood and do anything they wanted to. This shouldn't be what we experience. Police coming in and killing Black men and Black fathers and Black sons or Black women in our neighborhoods.

But at that time, it was all about killing Black folks in our neighborhood. It isn't just in terms of violence with the police, that's where a lot of it comes from. Because they have institutionalized violence for the people in charge, create violence, or tell us that

violence is all right.

But also we know that over the years, we've never seen nobody invest in what we think we can do, nor invest in our community where they should. We see all the big investment and all the people with money to do this and or do that, they all start at the same white-led route, like the United Way. Black institutions like the Urban League. They don't have contacts with the neighborhood. They're not part of the neighborhood. So, they don't know what's going on on the neighborhood level.

And I'm thinking if you're going to do something for our neighborhood, you got to involve us as a people. We got to be part of the solution, not part of the plan or something like that, we got to be part of the solution. Bring us to the table, come to the table with us and let us do this together. Because we can come up with things together to work in our own community neighborhood. If anybody knows about doing stuff in our neighborhood, we know it better than anybody else.

And so this is the fact that we've been traumatized by so many events, not only just in terms of the police killing, but, you know, we start seeing some killing among ourselves. Everybody says that's the right thing to do. When I say everybody, I'm talking about the powers that be, those who are in political positions are those police and stuff like that, they turn their back to us who are trying to do something about it. So we don't get the support that we need to get.

So, some of the opportunities with police violence that happened that we got traumatized, it's not only one family that is being traumatized, but it's the victims and the perpetrators being traumatized, and the people in the community also, seeing people being traumatized. We seem to forget about what happens in our lives when there's a violent event that happens that traumatizes everybody. We already dealt with that as a community before anybody came to us. We learned to start dealing with trauma before anybody came to us. Just at a community level. We learned to deal with the family and talking to the family members on both sides to try to prevent people from going back and retaliate against the other one. We tried to do it on the personal level to try to make sure we didn't want to see more violence being created because of violence.

And one of the things that we seem to always forget, you know, when you talk about violence is it's a health issue. But also mental health. That's included as part of this. We always remember that whenever we talk about health and violence, it also has a lot to do with the mental health. Because the mental health component, if you don't deal with it, it's going to create more problems in the community. People are going to be more and more traumatized by that event. We continue to see all the stuff that's coming to us on the regular and that we seem to not have the support, people making an investment in our neighborhood who help us through this process. So, we continue to work hard. We're not giving up.

We appreciate everything that the ACEs Foundation does. It's not enough right now. We need more than that. We need to be a part of the solution. But don't come in and tell us what to do or how to do it. Come in with us and we can work together and we can plan this together. We can come up with a much better plan. We can be the role model, whatever you might want to call it.

But we are the one that can make this a change the way it needs to be changed obviously to involve people in the community. You can't come in and tell somebody to do. You come in and learn what to do and we can do it together. That's the first step. People can go on and on and on because there's so much more that we can talk about to really bring about some changes in our community. Like I said, I like this opportunity and this chance to share and talk about some of the things we've learned. Myself, I've been doing it for a long time. I want to pass it onto somebody else. I want some other people to step up to the plate and come to the fight.

We really got traumatized by the fact that when we had that police killing here in our neighborhood. Rayshard Brooks that was killed by police right here in our community, here in Atlanta, and how that had such an impact on what was going on in the community. We just have to change something. And one of the things to change not only in the community, but the police change. Where they police in the community. We got to make sure our police get the right training in our community. We don't need to be the pipeline to fill up every prison in the state of Georgia and all over the country. Basically what happens is we don't start doing something and make sure something is in place to keep from heading in that direction, we're just going to keep on filling up the prison, the Georgia prison, and the federal prison based on how things are going now, we will continue doing that unless we come up with a change and a solution.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** You're absolutely right. And thank you for noting that the Wendy's where Rayshard Brooks lost his life is there, to help orient folks to the geography of the neighborhood. Again, it's this notion that we cannot separate these issues when we're trying to advance safety and peace in our communities. And you all were right there. Columbus, you were right there. As chair and your fellow MTU members, demanding solutions, demanding greater investment from the city as part of the city's response to the protest. And as part of the city's response to all that happened. And so thank you so much for your leadership.

We are going to open it up for questions. I see some questions in the chat box, which I appreciate. And I encourage you to add a few more questions in there so that we can invite the panelists to respond to them. Before we go into questions, April, I just want to go back to you really quickly. Because again we're talking about going to community with solutions, having conversations among community, and so can you talk a little bit about how y'all approached mass education and kind of those conversations and sparking dialogue among residents across the city?

>> **APRIL GOGGANS:** Yeah, what became clear is needing to have a shared language, reputation became very, very important. And also taking advantage of some of the structure that's already in our community. Retta, you talked about the NEAR Act ambassadors. So, in D.C., there are, we have an ultra micro-micro level of government in our neighborhood with the ANC, the Advisory Neighborhood Commission. In the single member district. It's like I don't know, a few hundred households. Maybe less than that. But those also have commissions where there are a few neighborhoods together.

So, what we did is we created a, so, in D.C., a thing that ANCs do is resolutions to the council about things that they want to have resolutions on. So, we created a resolution on the NEAR Act. So, this resolution went out to every ANC Commission and said hey, we want to come talk to you or is this something that your ANC would sign onto? And had everything listed out. It serves two purposes. Folks go to ANC meetings in most neighborhoods for a variety of reasons, but they do go. And so the commissioners also have great weight in D.C., which is not actually a vote on the council, but it means that the council has to consider what they say in the things that they do.

And at that time, we were also trying to get it fully implemented and funded because the mayor didn't fund it for the first year because she was upset that it got past. So, in going to ANC meetings, it means that people had open discussions about it. We also then invited people to community events. We worked with, this was actually a program that Stop Police Terror Project headed up and BLM supported. East of the river, I wanted to make sure that our communities were also addressed in this.

I will say that our ANC system is very different than across the river, which was also part of the political education, right? Because they weren't going to necessarily sign on a resolution because it meant saying to them they didn't want police, right? So, we learned a lot about having to listen to folks, but also knowing that the ANC commissioners, even if it's not a meeting, are people that we need to engage. Because they literally live in the community. So.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Thank you so much for talking about that. And I wanted to name that because again it was incredible to me to know that I could. Literally, I had the experience of sitting in community meetings uptown, just minding my own business, and having a very unlikely soul, right, kind of challenge the report coming from the meeting. I want to know about violence interruption and how you are investing more in these resources because of the implementation of the NEAR Act. And I'm thinking oh my goodness. Because that was the power of the organizing.

>> **APRIL GOGGANS:** So, what we taught them is what an ANC is, how you present it, and

the questions to ask, so when they went in for these resolution votes they had organized people and challenged already. So, they got to role play and all of that stuff beforehand. So, yeah.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** I think that's incredible. We can continue about that. I've got other questions for you all, but I'm not going to be selfish. There are some questions in the chat box including a multi-level question here. Where to make investments and about geographic scale.

And from the funders on the call who are trying to make a strategic investment in this work, the question is are there opportunities that are particularly ripe at the national, state, or city level. Connected to that, the other population question is how do the pending electoral outcomes impact that calculus around where the investments may most be ripe at the national, state, or city level.

>> **ALISE MARSHALL:** I can take that question. One national investment that I think is ripe is an investment in the, in the incubation of a national credible messengers effort based at Burns. They're creating a credible messengers hub that will be providing technical assistant who are at the beginning of starting credible messengers.

We use it a lot in the criminal justice space, but what I'm referring to is a model that started in New York called ARCHES that was evaluated by the Urban Institute, had great outcomes. But they basically take folks from communities where directly impacted folks live. So, not bringing in outside consultants or outside practitioners into communities, but taking actual people from those communities, giving them sustainable employment, giving them jobs, to intervene in the lives of young people who are going through the justice system. And encouraging the city that instead of incarcerating young people or incarcerating young adults, giving them these more transformative mentor style figures in their lives to help them navigate. Right? It's a way of keeping young people who are in the juvenile justice system in the community.

And in D.C., an example is with the Department of Youth and Rehabilitative Services. D.C. has seen about a 70% reduction in its incarceration of young people for youth over the last decade. And a lot of that was thanks to the work that Retta was mentioning, the organizing that's been happening over the last 15 years in D.C. And that reduction has held and a part of that reduction has led to cost savings that the city has seen. And instead of using those cost savings to expand its incarcerated footprint and say we're going to keep kids with us, they're keeping kids in the community through credible messenger efforts. They partner with six community-based organizations and hire credible messengers who come from the same communities that the kids come themselves, experience incarceration or violence, and actually employ them.

When we talk about what are the other models, what else works. That's another thing. I want to piggyback off of what April just said because I think it's so critical. We have to actually fund communities to do that visioning. We have to actually give them resources. People don't have time. It's not their job to have to, you know, put on a government hat and figure out how to solve all these problems. We actually have to resource that. And I think that's a place where funders can actually play a really helpful role is giving resource to people and communities to identify and design what does safety look like for them? That's the name of this session. What keeps us safe? We keep us safe, right? But actually putting in the room. Danielle who is the executive director of Common Justice, and that's the only program I know of.

When we talk about other models, too, and what's ripe for investment, we have to massively replicate alternatives to incarceration. One of the only models in the country I can think of is Common Justice. They partner with the Brooklyn DA and the Bronx DA. They offer a real alternative to folks who have violent felony offenses. And they go through a rigorous accountability process with survivors of harm and responsible parties.

And unless we actually replicate those models, we're always going to continue to default to the things that aren't working. D.C. has 30 independent police agencies. 30. It is the most heavily policed city in the United States of America. Yet homicides for this year, we're 17% up over last year. So, everybody is up for talking about evidence-based policymaking, and evidence-based decision making, until we talk about what's the evidence behind more police and more incarceration, right? It's also pushing for greater accountability in our systems and having them reduce their data, but we have to massively replicate what we know is working. Things like credible messengers, things like Common Justice.

And there's so many great things happening in Oakland. One that I'll just highlight really quickly is in 2014, the city came together and passed, folks on the ground passed Measure Y, Measure Z. And they actually passed a city tax. Community members said we are willing to pay a tax, parcel and parking tax, I believe it is. And that has led to \$24 million fund every year in diversion programming, in violence interruption, and programs for folks who've been the victims of sexual violence, right? It actually takes real money. And I think funders have to be honest with cities that don't come to us to give you two, three million dollars to address this. This takes real, massive investment. At the same scale of the half billion dollar police agencies that city dollars are going to.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Thank you, Alise. I would just add in real quick. April or Columbus, if you want to jump in on that. But I would add to the part of that question which was about how the calculus changes with the electoral outcome, I think without a more favorable outcome then I think it's just going to continue to have us focus on

changing conditions at the state and the city level and making sure that we are advocating through to unlock the resources. And there's been incredible advocacy actually that's been happening in places.

We've seen in New Jersey where because of the push that advocates have made there, there was an allocation of state dollars towards violence prevention, violence intervention. In Virginia, the state of Virginia last year allocated a specific fund to support violence intervention and community-based strategies. That again was about advocacy that was happening there. If we get a more favorable outcome at the federal level, then that absolutely kind of increases our opportunities to move massive federal investment for these types of interventions. Community-based violence intervention solutions across the country. That's the scale we need if we really are serious about investing at the scale of the problem.

Because again, kind of as was said earlier, nobody blinks at \$65 million in overtime for one police department. Nobody blinks. But we've got to rally 15,000 residents to not have a \$1 million cut in proven community violence interventions. That's the calculus that has to change.

So, my encouragement in this is to also make sure that it's not just about the interventions, but you're supporting orgs like Peoples town, Columbus' organization, BLM, April's organization, and the people who are putting pressure on the system to unlock those other dollars that are available. That's what we have to be able to do.

Columbus, I saw you come off mute. Is that because you wanted to jump in there?

>> **COLUMBUS WARD:** Yes. I basically want to say we need to make sure when people do start giving out the dollars that we don't get left out. Because they don't come to places like Peoplestown. Some of the work that we're doing, they sometimes identify somebody else to get the dollars and they don't do the work. They need to have a track record of actually working in the grassroot level or working with community-based people. They don't just need to give it to somebody because they worked with them on this project and they're good friends. A lot of times we see the dollars to get the foundation running, but they give it to the wrong people.

In the community we've got some proven stuff already. We're doing stuff around trauma response network, peers, giving out food in the neighborhood, feeding people in the community, we're bringing people together. One of the things I am trying to push, some of these dollars that you're spending now, why don't you hire some of the young folks, in what I call the Youth Cadet Program, as soon as they get out of high school or are getting ready to get out of high school, give them a free two-year education at a junior college, learn about community policing.

And they might end up wanting to be being a good police officer. They would get paid, it would be on their training to work along with police or something like this. I think those are the kind of career solutions we have to come up with to put our young people back to work, because this is an economic thing, too. If we don't take care of ourselves, we're going to have issues, because people aren't investing in our lives. We need to make sure we have an opportunity to be creative and think out of the box, think outside of the box and do stuff, and put money into the community where people are doing some of the work that we're trying to do here.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Thank you, Columbus. And I also wanted to flag and thank Natalie who's on the line from the Atlanta, the Annie Casey Atlanta Office, because I saw she dropped in a link to a couple of blog posts that can talk more about the things that Columbus mentioned, including the Trauma Response Network that he helped design. Community residents respond to incidents of violence and help to support community members.

Because again, it was this point that it's not just the person who was involved in the immediate act who is experiencing the trauma. So, it's about how are we wrapping our arms around all of our neighbors and supporting them. He's also been instrumental in helping to bring care violence interruption teams to southwest Atlanta, as well. So, really talking about going to the community organizations who know.

I won't go into this, but we know at the foundation that we are famous for deciding to only work through organizations that are gatekeepers, right? The organizations that we believe have the quote, unquote capacity to do the work who may or may not have relationships in community. And who often in order to get relationships will then end up having to subcontract or work with these same organizations that you didn't want to fund in the first place, right? So, really it's about us being able to walk alongside community and get proximal like so many folks understand.

We're about to turn to break. I saw April come off of mute. I wanted to make sure she was able to jump in with kind of a comment before we went to break.

>> **APRIL GOGGANS:** Yeah, I just wanted to also point out the importance of not organizing around money electoral cycles, funding cycles. Because what we know is that the need, I mean it's always the same, regardless of who it is that you have to get that from or where. And which is why we also there is a mutual aid component to all of that, which is how do people eat when all of that changes and how do people, especially like now. So, we've got what 60% of the people either unemployed or unhoused or about to be. So, how do we also sustain the people that are directly impacted.

And then lastly I'll say part of that mutual aid is taking care of the violence interrupters and the people that are doing that work who often are just getting the very basic maybe living wage, depending on where you, but not for the care for the family or any of the things that also make them or provide opportunities for them to be healthy in the work that they do.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Thank you so much particularly around the point of supporting the care for the folks on the front lines, which we absolutely have to do. And hopefully we can talk a little bit more about what that looks like and some of the strategies that folks might be using to do that in the breakout groups.

But before we go to the breakout groups, we're actually going to give you a short break. And so I believe we are giving you a 10-minute break. And so we're going to come back at, I've got 1:19. Come back at 1:20. We're going to jump back on at 1:20. I hope everybody comes back for that. This is actually my favorite part because we've been talking heads talking at you.

So, we're going to be in the group and now we actually get to talk with each other and talk with the other funders who were on the call about what this work means and make some sense of this. Please come back at 1:20 so that we can go into our groups and actually have more interactive discussion with each other.

**[BREAK]**

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Thanks, folks. I hope that break was helpful. You were able to take a stretch, move your eyes away, and then come back. We know Zoom fatigue is real.

But now we wanted to do the next part, which is give you a chance to get into conversation, get into more intimate conversations with some of the other participants and to be able to hear strategies. So, when you get into the breakout group, one of the team will be there and offer, throw out a few guiding questions to help stimulate some of the conversation, but really it's your time. It's your time to share and strategize and talk about what are some of the insights that have come up for you.

So, looking forward to doing that and then we're going to come back and hear a couple of highlights from each of the groups and have some closing words and closing reflections and charges from our incredible panel. So, that's how we will spend the rest of our time and we're looking forward to what you're thinking, what's going on in your head and what this might have sparked for you. All right, team.

## [BREAKOUT GROUPS]

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Hi, everybody. Thank you so much. Welcome back. I hope you had some good conversation in your places. One of the things, so now we just want to take a few minutes to be able to hear from folks. I am going to try to shift over here so that I can see all of your beautiful faces.

Are there any volunteers who would like to just share a highlight or a takeaway from anything that you just talked about in your small group conversation? And you could either throw up a hand from the little reaction button, or you could actually wave your actual hand. And I think you should be able to come off of, Faron, I see you. Do you want to jump in?

>> **FARON McLURKIN:** Yeah, I'll jump in. Hi, everybody. Faron McLurkin here. One of the things I found was great was one of the participants in our group, and I'm not going to name, just because I don't know if they're comfortable sharing, but, you know, talked about how their foundation has been basically using models that are aligned with or parallel to participatory grantmaking. And they talked about like community design.

So, basically, you know, being able to, you know, participate with community and actually like design, like not only designing, but like sharing models that people might not know from other parts of the country and then sort of asking folks like how might this work here or do any of these things resonate? And I just thought that that was a really, that's a great model because one, I think somebody said earlier this is not people's jobs. So, I don't think it's fair to ask folks to have all the, I mean the answers to these complicated things. I thought that was great. It's kind of like a give and take. You are actually still bringing what our privilege is. The privilege of knowledge. But also like sharing, you know, the opportunity to build and to hear what folks have and what they think could work.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** I love that example. I think it's a really powerful one. Because like you said, one of the things we know as funders, one of the things that we do when we're exploring issues, we fly in experts, we do all the literature reviews, and get all the research, and get all the money to do this and we hold it all in our organization.

What does it mean to rethink that and be on a learning journey right alongside community members, right? So you're not holding that in and you're sharing and you're saying hey. So, you're using that space for convening and that opportunity for learning together. And kind of democratizing the knowledge that's out there so that folks know about what the opportunity is and what some of the options and alternatives are. Again, we're imagining something that's never been here before.

So, we're all learning together. Particularly in the philanthropy when we pride ourselves on this expert culture, that's not what this is about. We don't know what this is going to look like on the other side, so, let's figure it out together.

Anybody else? Does the next person want to share a highlight either from the same group or a different group? And I apologize if you're waving and I'm not seeing you. I am trying to flip back and forth. Hey, Rob.

>> **ROB CHLALA:** Thanks so much. In our discussion, we got onto the topic, as part of that imagination, thinking about the relationship to economic justice and how to bring those conversations closer together.

And coming from the FJE side, how do we get funders who are interested in really funding whole workers' lives and investing in community safety at that grassroots level, as well as getting labor to think more critically about this. And as April talked about, getting them to think about what happens when workers go home and how do we understand workers' lives as a part of this whole structure and especially as a way to move forward the conversation about on reimagining safety and frankly abolition within the economic justice movement, and often gets stuck on the police justice movement, and realizing that it's a bigger picture that involves creating this new way forward in getting both labor and economic justice funders to invest in that grassroots work for the sake of funders, for the sake of folks, and for the sake of building community, and for the sake of building a more power movement.

And for folks for learning that the way the movement has been propelled forward. How do we move the conversation on workers forward with that same kind of energy and emphasis and transformative lens instead of just trying to hold onto scraps of what we have right now.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Thank you. I am going to, well, one, I'm scanning for hands. Hey, Manisha.

>> **MANISHA VAZE:** These conversations sparked some of the things that came out of our group, so I just wanted to lift them up. One of the things that came out that I wanted to talk about is just sort of how clear community is.

So, one of our participants talked about mutual aid models that right now are all volunteer run, but these are the infrastructure that communities and neighborhoods are building on their own because there is a lack of public investment or even philanthropic investment in some of these issues. So, you know, particularly building models and philanthropy, that expert culture that you were sharing, Retta, really resonated with me, because we sort of think that the experts are, you know, people in

academia, or people that have like the credibility, whatever that looks like for us. But actually these volunteer models are ways that we can share and highlight what is actually working.

And the participant also shared, you know, this is something that they are hoping could actually be built into our public system, right? As part of either the public health department and April shared a beautiful example of that with the NEAR Act. But also, you know, ways that these are actually funded.

And it connects to a second thing that came up in our group, which is really just this understanding of what would be possible if we actually funded and invested in community solutions in the exact same way that we fund state-based solutions, right? Like what would be different if we actually had that level of funding? And I think part of the reason why sometimes it's harder to imagine real community solutions is that people aren't sort of also taking into account the millions or billions of dollars in some communities, right, that if we actually invested in our neighborhoods, what that could look like. And, you know, Columbus shared this in our small group, but also on the panel. Just a whole host of other services, housing, education, work opportunities, training pipelines that could also be invested in if we thought about using those dollars differently.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Mm-hmm. Absolutely. I think we're so used to at a community level, we're so used to operating off of pennies that it's hard to reset and even think about that bigger pie, right? That punitive system is frankly just gobbling up, right, to no avail. So, it's really kind of getting us to think out of the norm, like April was talking about earlier. When she was saying it's deeply rooted in your experience, and in our experience that we're not used to other things. So, yeah. Really appreciate kind of hearing those highlights from your conversation. It sounds like they were great small groups.

So, now we want to close out. And I want to give each of our panelists just a moment to give us a closing charge, right? And a closing recommendation that you have for those of us who are funders and making grants in the community relative to this issue. Maybe it's something that you said before and you want to make sure that we hear it so you're saying it twice, or it was something else that was sparked by what you heard. Or maybe it's something that you didn't hear and you want to make sure that doesn't get lost in the conversation. So, closing reflections.

>> **COLUMBUS WARD:** I'll go first if that's fine?

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Thanks, Columbus.

>> **COLUMBUS WARD:** First, I want everybody to change their narrative about how they support community-based groups and programs. I wrote something down. The trauma that we are seeing around our community is the lack of community investment needed to address our issues head on. Our community has been decimated by poverty, violence, old-school choices, lack of community education, no funding for skilled training for those who cannot attend college or technical school. Also these issues are manifested in crime in our neighborhood. Mental health is never invested in our community. We never had a local budget that includes community health for our Black and Brown communities. That's basically what I wanted to get.

And also people who have been committing crimes, a lot of them are not violent people and did not intend to commit a violent crime. We have to look at people as people and not someone who committed a violent crime.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Yes. April or Alise?

>> **APRIL GOGGANS:** I can go. I was just thinking about all the ways in which people shared today about what they're working on and how all of this intersects with violence. And appreciating the complexity of just where and how and how to better listen, how to better engage. I want to say the one thing that I didn't necessarily hear was a little more about the definitions of violence. What we actually consider violence to be and how that looks as far as like cross-victimization. Yes, Marcia P. Johnson. And how that looks. And specifically how folks who live at the intersections of these communities are disparately impacted.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** Mm-hmm. Thank you for that. As you were talking about getting more into the definitions of violence and what violence looks like, I dropped BYP100 and Marsha P. Johnson in there, because one of the things we didn't get into is understanding that violence is also gender and when we're applying an intersectional lens to this, I would also want to encourage folks to engage with organization who is are bringing these particularly Black queer feminist lens to the conversation. Marcia P. Johnson specifically doing self-defense work for Black trans folks just because of not being safe and being in public places. And BYP really looking at the experience of women and girls and gender non-binary folks in this violence conversation because we like to think about it and oftentimes just think of it as just young men. Alise?

>> **ALISE MARSHALL:** Yeah. Since I'm a funder talking to other funders, I would say my charge would be general operating supports to multi-year grants to organization. C4 dollars, super critical. So, folks actually have the resource to run campaigns. If you're not, we talked about in my breakout group how can funders who maybe aren't as

deeply entrenched in this work, how can they get started.

We take it as a given that folks like April or Columbus are just great at organizing and it's an actual skill set that takes a steep investment in training. So, investing in training organizations like BOLD. Some of the most dynamic Black women organizers like in Milwaukee and Jackson, Mississippi, have gone through it. Think I they're fiscally sponsored by the Highlander Center. That's a great way to support, supporting the actual infrastructure required to hold systems and leaders to account for the long term.

And I think getting rid of the notion of we've become outcomes obsessed. And I get that. We want to know the return on your investment. But so oftentimes it's based on these arbitrary deadlines that we get up because we've got a board meeting and we've got to have something to show for it. Being honest with each other and ourselves and our board members about how long this work takes and how much money it actually takes to get done. We cannot be expecting folks to move mountains, change systems, and pay their staff not a livable wage. And give them two years to turn it around. All of these are hundreds of years in the making, the systemic inequities that we're trying to address. Those are just a few things that I would charge this group with.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** I thank you so much for those. I'm going to cede most of my time. A quick 30 seconds. April, could you say one more piece. Helping secure fiscal sponsorship for organizations. That's the question?

>> **APRIL GOGGANS:** For on the ground organizations, it is impossible. We have been looking for a fiscal sponsor for two grants for like four months. It's just impossible. Nobody is doing them. Because everybody wants to be a non-profit. So, having funders actually be like hey, here's some people you can maybe talk to to fiscal sponsor would be huge.

>> **AMORETTA MORRIS:** All right. Thank you for naming that. We know that the fiscal sponsorship space and fiscal intermediary space is a huge one and also bringing equity to that.

I want to thank everybody who was a part of the conversation. As was noted in the chat, we're going to send out a list of these resources. I dropped a few extra. The last one, the vision change, when community safety tool kits, I added that. Because there was also another piece that I didn't talk about. We were focused more on neighborhood violence with this conversation.

But also wanted to lift up there is really radical, amazing, abolition-centered work to

help organizations think about safety, right? Safety and security for their events, for their movement spaces, for their activism, for their organizing. So, I think there's also an opportunity for us to help the movement organizations that we're in relationship to build out that capacity, as well. Because people are talking about that all the time when they're thinking about we want to be able to maintain safety and not be continuing to perpetuate these arcane systems. So, lots of exciting work. Lots of exciting brilliance.

Thank you very much, April. Thank you, Alise. Thank you, Columbus for sharing your brilliance with us today. April, I know you said in the beginning that you are tuning in from BLM Plaza. I know y'all have been in the streets not just these last two days, but for weeks. So, thank you for still coming into this conversation in the middle of all that is going on. We deeply, deeply appreciate you. Bye, everybody.

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