



## Video Transcript

### Making Racial Equity Into Law: Organizing for an RSJI Ordinance

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[**Image Description:** A recording of a virtual meeting. The speaker at any given time is automatically shown on screen.]

[The first person on screen is Kelly O'Brien, a dark-skinned, masculine-presenting person with a bald head and goatee with chinstrap. Kelly is wearing a dark polo shirt and glasses. He has a virtual background that says, "Interrupt white dominant culture".]

**Kelly O'Brien:** So I'm not gonna be taking up a lot of space in this session today. Just welcoming folks to the room. Hi, everybody. Thanks for joining us for the second event or, our second panel, second event today, our Transformative Justice Day for the 2022 RSJI Summit & MLK Unity Jr. Day celebration. So it's a long name, but we put together the two things, and that's how we celebrated this week.

And so, thanks for joining us. This is our panel on making racial equity into law, organizing for an RSJI ordinance. All right, we're gonna focus on the potential benefits of ordinances, and some of the background information on this. I want folks to know that in the early days of Seattle, we have the city government passing an ordinance, an early ordinance really banning Native Americans from living in this city. We're gonna get a link to that in the, get a link to that in the chat, so you all can see that. But this is some of the background around where we see what the power of law has for discussions of race and social justice. So I'll do one more thing. I'll start with land acknowledgement, and then I'll turn it over to MiKayle Boswell from the Office for Civil Rights, who's gonna be our moderator for today. Okay?

I always do a couple of things when I do a land acknowledgement for our work. And it's for us to really understand that this is where we're coming to this discussion from, in a land that was stolen, with resources that are not ours, you know? And so I'm gonna read from the [duwamishtribe.org](http://duwamishtribe.org)'s website, but then I'm gonna add some more context. It says here, really basically, "I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish people past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the Duwamish tribe." And I'm gonna extend that to the Salish; the Coast Salish peoples that are the original caretakers of the land upon which we're doing this work today.

And the reason why we start with land acknowledgements is not so that we can have a good old time, and just show how virtually aware we are. You know, to just sort of be follow fashion. It's to really understand that, like, "Hey, we are here in space that starts from being stolen. We



are here in space where communities were disrupted." I used to say, when we were in person, I would say, "We couldn't be in this tower if this land underneath us wasn't stolen, if bloods wasn't shed, if families weren't disrupted, if people were in this place, we wouldn't be here. Our government, our City Hall, is a descendant of that settler colonial government that came into Seattle and got that ordinance passed banning Native Americans from living in the city."

And so when we do a land acknowledgement, we're acknowledging that we're starting from a place that's bereft. We're starting from a place of disruption and pain and harm. And it's not just a history for Native folks here, but for other communities of color as well. Chinatown was moved twice before it ended up where it is now. The gentrification and stuff that we've seen recently in historically Black neighborhoods like the Central district. We experienced displacement as part of our history in this city from the jump-get.

And so I want folks to think about that when we're doing this land acknowledgement and understand that that's where we're coming from, and we're starting from this space of decolonizing as we go into our discussion, when we go into our work. Okay? So, thank you all for being here for that, and understanding our approach to how we do land acknowledgements when we're doing RSJI work. I will now go ahead and pass it over to MiKayle. Thank you. (device chimes)

[MiKayle Boswell appears. MiKayle is masculine presenting, with brown skin, close-cropped black hair, and a light mustache. He is wearing a dark shirt with a white shirt underneath. His background is a tan wall.]

**MiKayle Boswell:** Thanks, Kelly. And thanks again, everybody, for coming to this panel. We appreciate you guys spending your time to come and listen to us. My name's MiKayle Boswell. My pronouns are he/him/his, and I am Black. I work as a paralegal with the Seattle Office for Civil Rights with the enforcement team. I will be the moderator for this panel, and I'll also be speaking amongst the panelists. Thanks to the panelists for coming out and sharing your experiences. This is a discussion. So we're just gonna talk about our experiences with working with this city, and feel free to leave any comments and we'll read over them and we'll get back to you on any questions or comments that you have. And we're gonna start off with Anita.

- I think we're starting...

- I thought we were gonna talk, start with Sylvia.

- We are.

- A little overview--

- Oh, sorry,

--from Sylvia.

- That was my mistake, guys, sorry.

- That's okay.

[Sylvia Cavazos appears. Sylvia ]

**Sylvia Cavazos:** That's all right, because we talked about it earlier. Thank you for that introduction. Hello everyone. My name is Sylvia Cavazos, but before I launch into what I'm gonna say, I really, really wanna take a moment to acknowledge and thank all of you for the taking the time to join us today. And just, ultimately, ideally, you will join our effort about this transformative work that we're doing in the city.

So I'm Sylvia Cavazos, and I am Latina, but Mexican first, and then generally Latino. And my pronouns are she/her and ella, which is her in Spanish, because I also like to keep that connection with community, non-English-speaking community. And I work at SPU. Who am I, and why am I in this space with you today? Just as a little bit of background, I am actually one of the original, one of the participants in the original RSJ Core Team for the City of Seattle, which was hosted by the Office of Civil Rights way back when. I'm not gonna say when, but it was way back when, okay? And I was one of the authors who wrote the mission and the charter for the RSJI in the city. And I'm also a founding member of our RSJ team in the Utility, in Seattle, in the SPU.

I'm also a founding member of Hola, which is a Hispanic or Latino affinity group in SPU. And then I also do a lot of work with the citywide, Latino city employees of the city of Seattle. And so, I'm here to just share a little bit of background with you about how you can join us. And what is it that I want to leave with you today in my very brief presentation, here?

I wanna start by saying that I care passionately about this topic, and about making it real, and about actually operationalizing our RSJ, and our equity in the city. And over the years, we have had many, many attempts, and much work around this topic. But I wanna just kind of lay the foundation for the rest of the work that we're gonna be doing today, and let you know a little bit about what is an executive order? How many of us know what an executive order is and why does it matter? What is a resolution, and what does that mean? And then finally, what is the ordinance? What is an ordinance? And that's when some of the other panel members are gonna be focusing on.

But, I know that we tossed these terms around. We actually hear them all the time. We are meant to use them. We are meant to know what they are as we do our work, but that's not always true. And so, I just wanna touch on a little bit about what is, what is an executive order, first of all? An executive order really is an order by the mayor; whoever, whatever mayor is in power decides, "This is important. I'm making this an executive order. I'm signing off on that." But it delegates and uses his power or her power to help us do the work that they've deemed it's important.

And so, it doesn't have the power of law, but it does direct us to do work and focus in certain areas. Typically, when those mayors leave, not always, but when those mayors leave, then that no longer really has any teeth, or is not enforced, or people don't practice or use it. So, that's kind of the lowest level of a direction from the city, and from the executives and the powers that be within the city to help us focus on the work that they decide is important.

Resolutions, on the other hand, they also direct us to do work and focus in a certain way, but they do not have the power of law for us. They commonly deal with matters of a special or temporary character, and I'm trying to stay true to what that means. I'm reading what what I have. So a resolution ordinarily denotes something less solemn. Pay attention to the words, less solemn or less formal than, and not rising to the dignity of an ordinance. They seldom, if ever, contain penalties. Again, very important for us.

And are at the most common form of legislation employed by the governing body to deal with special matters. And, you know, typically those don't actually go out to the public; they're internal, but they do not rise to the power of law, and it doesn't affect the general public. So it makes it a little bit harder for us, and then, getting to what the other panelists are gonna be covering, an ordinance.

An ordinance is a local law, for example, within the city of Seattle, it's a local law of a municipal corporation and it's duly enacted by the proper authorities, prescribing general, uniform, keyword, and permanent, keyword, rules of conduct relating to the corporate power of a municipality. City of Seattle. So that does have the power of law for us. And it affects most local legislative actions. Everything we do can be governed by the ordinance, and we are required to follow it. Because otherwise there will be penalties, there will be other consequences of us not doing it.

Typically, ordinances within the local authority like the city of Seattle, also have powers granted by the state. And I can think of one for Seattle Public Utilities, where you can't throw, for example, food and compostables into your garbage can. Because then we will go out, and after

a certain number of mornings, we do a lot of education and awareness, after a certain number of you doing this again and again, you will have a monetary penalty.

And so, ordinances are pretty much laws that we in the city use. And so, why is it that I wanna make sure we understand that? Because over the years, and I've been doing this work for a long while, since we started it in the city of Seattle with a citywide core team. There have been efforts that have opted in and opted out, and opted in, and opted out and not real, real, laws around this. Everyone, I believe, has the right intention to do better work, better equity work, better race and social justice work. But there is intent, and then there is impact. Some people may think they're doing the right things when they're not, and we may be causing harm, or we may not actually be being true to what that executive order, that resolution was asking us to do and pay attention.

And one of the reasons that, one of the concrete examples that I have, that I would like to share with you is that, in my area, and I work in Seattle Public Utilities. And this isn't true just for Seattle Public Utilities, it is typically true for the entire city, people of color come into the city at the lowest salaries compared to other ethnicities. And that's African-American people, Latinos. And then our very own research shows that, for example, Latinos enter, typically enter, at the lowest salaries. And then guess what? They never catch up, as do some other groups. They never actually catch up to those salaries.

And so that's an impact. It's a very real, concrete, impact that we as employees feel, see, live out every day. Because we have families to support, we have expenses that we have to deal with, and it never gets highlighted, or kind of lifted up to an area where we can pay attention and look at this and see how do we make a difference? How do we actually work with this?

And so, what Denise is gonna talk about is gonna be what's the difference, and why it's important that we focus our effort in this way, and trying to make this requirements and this mandates, really, more permanent, and with the power of law. I think I've taken up enough of my time, but if there's anything else that people need from me. And the best and most important thing that I think that we as a panel want to keep reinforcing is, we would love to invite you to join us in making this a reality, so that we can all benefit from this. Thank you. And I'll be around the rest of the time.

[Denise Krownbell appears. Denise is feminine presenting, with light skin and long brown hair. They are wearing a blue button-up shirt and earrings. Their background is blurred.]

**Denise Krownbell:** So I think it'd be great, well, I can follow on with what Sylvia said, but Anita, I know you're gonna have to leave us soon, so, I'd like to have you say what we want you to say. So please share. (Anita laughs)

- [Sylvia] Unfettered by time.

[Anita White appears. Anita is feminine presenting, with dark skin and voluminous curly black hair. They are wearing a dark shirt, lanyard around their neck, and earrings. They are sitting in front of a large whiteboard with nothing on it.]

**Anita White:** Remember you said that! (chuckling) No. Hi, I'm Anita White. I identify as a human being. I work for Shared Services in Seattle Public Utilities. Been with the Utility for 20-plus years. And I'm also the Black African American Affinity Group Chair. I have worked with the original diversity team from way back. Worked on the Change Team, the Equity Bridge, here at Seattle Public Utilities. And I am glad to be here today, and glad that you are all here.

I'm gonna make this very brief, because those of you who know me, know that I'm very vocal. I'm not shy about anything that I say. I'm tired of talking. Plain and simple. We have talked ourselves into oblivion. Yesterday was Martin Luther King's birthday. And we are still talking about the same things. I want everybody to look up this song. I said this earlier, in another meeting I was in on the Equity Bridge. It's called "You Should Be Ashamed." It's by PJ Morton. I love music, if you love music, or if you don't like music, really, I'm a lyricist. And I love lyrics. This song is powerful. Says you should be ashamed. That nothing's really changed. You know.

You can put a bandaid on some things, and, you know, we can pat ourselves on the back for some of the accomplishments that have been made. And I appreciate all that. But when I come to work, and we're still talking about the same thing, that's a problem. I've been at the city for 20-something years, and we are still talking about the same thing. I'm exhausted. So ordinances, for me... You know. If you're not going to put what you're talking about into practice, if you are not gonna hold people accountable, then people like myself, 'cause I'm not gonna speak for anybody else, but just myself and people like me, that I know that are like me; we bow out. We bow out after a while. Because it's exhausting. With everything that is going on in the world, not just within, you know, within our city.

We need, and the solution to that for me, is that we need to actually speak up, stand up, speak up, never give up, but also just stop tiptoeing around the big, white-supremacy elephant in the room. It's the culture. It's a behavior that we continue to allow. And it's because people are afraid to lose their jobs, or they're afraid, you know, I understand that you have to put food on the table. I get that.

But when does it become important to stand by your sister or your brother that really is in need, that really is in trouble. Because until we come together as Black, Indigenous, people of color and our allies, which... Sorry, that's my alarm. (chuckles) My alarm telling me. Until we

come together and I don't need allies. I need people to get into the trenches that are actually gonna do the work. From the mayor to the governor, to the president, whoever. Whoever's in charge; because it's time that the people took back our voice. If it's gonna be we, the people, it needs to be, we, the people, and that means we all need to stand up. Otherwise we is gonna be those people who're gonna stand up, which leaves those other people over here.

This is a behavior. So let's change our behavior. We can all, we all want the same things. Let's change our behavior. And let's do something about it. Instead of talking, tired of talking, I'm exhausted. I'm talking about same thing that I talked about last year. So how do we hold people accountable? From the CEO, to the mayor, how do we hold those people accountable, and what can we do, working where we work with this body of people; you're here. So how come we haven't made a difference? How come we have not made a change, something that we really wanna see change?

I don't care if we're working on one thing for a whole year. If it changes it, then after that year, let's work on the next thing. So that's really all I have to say. (laughs) It's probably not what you wanted to hear, but you know, I'm not dancing around people's feelings anymore. Let's get to the heart of the problem, and let's do something about it.

We already know that the hiring practices, we know that we're being underpaid, we know that we have managers that are white supremacists, 'cause that is what, because it's a supremacy behavior. It is a behavior. It is a racist behavior. Whether it's in the city, whether we're in our communities, whatever it is, it is a behavior. Let's change that behavior. Let's call it out, and call it what it is instead of dancing around it and trying to make people feel better about themselves, patting them on the back because they did one little thing right. We all can do the right thing.

So, I'm sorry that I have to leave; I have to go to another meeting. I appreciate you listening, Sylvia, you know, I love you. Thank you for that. (indistinct) (Sylvia laughs) And thank you for inviting me to be a part of this. MiKayle, and Ellie, all the rest of you, I really appreciate you. Thank you very much.

**Sylvia:** Thank you, Anita.

**Denise:** Thank you. Well, that was awesome, and I am sorry that Anita had to go, so I'm gonna follow up on what Sylvia was saying. Sylvia, I appreciate that context, for folks. That's really helpful. And I greatly appreciated, that was so funny, that Anita was like, "You don't even know what I'm gonna say." And I'm like, "I have a good idea." And I'm glad she said that. (Sylvia chuckles) So, that's powerful. So just to let folks kinda follow up on how we got to where we are now.

Oh, I guess first I'll introduce myself, sorry, Denise Krownbell. I identify as White, she/her pronouns. I'm a City Light employee of 22 years, and I'm on the City Light Change Team, and currently the Chair of Seattle Silence Breakers. And, so, just for how we got to this session, Silence Breakers has been in existence since the end of 2017. We have both past and current employees in the group, and working to end discrimination in the city. And obviously, that's what the RSJ community is doing, trying to end that.

And with that, with the work that we've been doing, particularly over the past year, just keep coming up against the same things. That, as Anita was saying, and Sylvia was talking about, with the Race and Social Justice Initiative, there's progress being made, but things aren't really changing, fundamentally, at the employee level, at the systems level, and for stakeholders who we serve. And so, as I said, in Silence Breakers was discussing where things, we're like, "There is no force, there is no way to make people accountable."

With the Race and Social Justice Initiative, there's still not that level of accountability. It's better than what we had, but it's not enough. And that's where we need the force of law. And that was where we came to the conclusion that an ordinance was needed. And we have several Silence Breakers members who have been doing this work, and with other groups, for several years. And they let us know, they're like, "Hey, there are other groups that have been asking and pushing for an ordinance also." And we just, this moment just kinda jelled, where we reached out to other groups.

And I have to say that there was a statement of legislative intent by the City Council, that just finished up at the end of 2021; where they requested, essentially, sorry, sorry, a racial equity toolkit be performed on the formation of, and the running of the Seattle Office of Civil Rights. That had not been done. And long story short, they went through that. And one of the fundamental things that they realized was that, "Hey, we need an ordinance." And so, they drafted a Race and Social Justice ordinance specifically, mostly focused on the Office of Civil Rights. And it is a great start, and we definitely wanna build from that, but I think more needs to move forward from that. And that's what we've kind of realized.

Currently, the draft ordinance, again, with the end of the council terms and sessions ending at the end of 2021, it was in council member Morales' committee. We believe that's where it still is, even with the switched council assignments, but we're gonna confirm that. But essentially, what we're hoping is that, 'cause when we spoke with council member Morales, she wanted to, essentially, what she was proposing was going out to city employees and stakeholders, and finding out, "Hey, what do we actually need in an ordinance?"



So the session is kind of kickstarting that off, where we take this information. 'Cause I do intend to look at what, you know, encourage people to put their ideas in the chat. Also with questions to ask us as panelists, so that we can see from your lived experiences, you've got ideas that what do we need to do to make things better for employees, and for the citizens we serve, and for our stakeholders. So that's the real push. And then, just for me personally, and how I'm representing myself today, and for this ordinance, I've been a shop steward for many years when I was a member of, then, Local 17 and then PROTEC17.

And as a shop steward, it will not come as a surprise to folks here, most of the people that I was helping who were facing discipline, were people of color. And a lot of them were also women, and older women. Through looking at labor negotiations and through that lens, going to the city and being like, "Okay, what's your data on discipline, citywide?" And the city was scrambling to pull together the data from the departments, because the city does not have a citywide database with demographics and metrics or the information of whether it's a White person that's been disciplined, and they got X number of days, they're not required to keep that data. And so they would reach out to the departments and say, "Hey, give us your information."

Well, the departments have it scattered and they can pull it together, but they're not required to hold the data. You can't change what you don't know. And so, for me, that is one of the key things, as far as accountability, and requiring the city, citywide, develop the demographics information that you need to track. Capture that. Require all the departments to send that, and keep that, and then see, "Hey, do we have a problem?" And I guarantee you, there's going to be a problem with disproportionate discipline to people of color. And so we need to change that.

But right now, without an ordinance, the city is not required to do it. And we essentially, we're trying to push the Durkan administration to pull that data together. And we kept getting, "Well, we haven't gotten that information from the departments," because they're not required to. So that is one concrete thing that I think our Race and Social Justice ordinance will change. Require the data to be captured, and state how you're going to change it after you've gathered that data. So MiKayle, pass it back to you to have it go to the next panel member. Thank you.

**MiKayle:** Thanks for speaking on that, Denise and Sylvia. And I enjoyed hearing all of your experiences as well as Anita. Again, hello everyone. My name is MiKayle Boswell, and I am a paralegal for the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. I've been working with the Seattle Office for Civil Rights since July, so I'm a fresh employee. But I got the opportunity to be a part of this panel and speak on my experiences so far while working with the city, and in the short amount of time that I've been with the city, I've seen so much; and I've just been introduced to so many issues that've been going on, that it reminded me why I wanted to be a part of this panel in the first place.

The first being is the representation, and how that affects, I guess, the perception of like, working to do something like an ordinance, and improving our current situation is that when you see someone that isn't really fighting for you, it's really hard to want to assist in that. And seeing all the work that RSJI has, and all the city workers have done, it gives you, basically, that hope and that drive to be a part of it, essentially. And another thing being that it's not going too in-depth with what's going on. Going through education as well as previous jobs that I've held, even as a service member in the military, these issues aren't really brought into light, to where you fully understand it.

And hearing it from your guys' experiences, as well as, just, all that's going on in this city, it's comforting knowing that you guys are fighting to make the situation better for us, as well as making it easier to be a part of, 'cause this isn't an easy topic to talk about, especially in the professional sense, 'cause you fear backlash or any bad things that happen to you. And to see it being, to see this issue being raised on this level is a great thing. And I really appreciate that. I really appreciate hearing things like that.

I grew up in Tacoma. So a lot of my experiences come from Tacoma, but also seeing what happened with Seattle, especially a couple of years ago with the protest, that really put things into perspective for me and how important, what we experienced, people of color, what people experience, it matters to everyone. And to be able to fight for it as well as risk your life for doing these things, 'cause this is not a safe environment to do all of these things. 'Cause also, it means so much to me, I'm sorry if I'm stumbling over my words a lot. It's just that, you know, it brings me a lot of joy and a lot of confidence in being a part of this work and contributing in any way that I can.

And although that I am fresh to working for the city, I am definitely looking forward to seeing this ordinance come into play as well as how we work to improving it. And what goes on in the future, because this doesn't just do good for us, but it does good for future employees, as well as people amongst the city and amongst the state. And it just, it's a ripple effect. It just, it affects so many different people.

And yeah, even seeing the support coming from the mayor's speech, as they mentioned, pledging to do an executive order for the RSJI, just seeing that support from different authorities too. It's also really nice. So, yeah. Sorry if I was bouncing a lot in my thing. But basically, to sum up what I said, I appreciate all the work RSJI does. I appreciate all the work the City employees do. And I am looking forward to seeing what City accomplishes, as well as what we have set for the future. So. Yeah.

**Denise:** Hey, MiKayle, I wasn't sure, I'm thinking Vickie was able, is still able to join us via phone.

- [Vickie] Yes, I'm here.

- Awesome.

- So, can you hear me? Hi.

- Yes.

[Vickie does not appear on camera. Instead, it's a screen with the letters CU in a white circle. On the bottom, it says "Call-in User\_4".]

**Vickie:** So what I wanted to say was, we did an interdepartment team and we actually got

**Denise:** Hey, hey Vickie? Vickie, just hold on a second, would you introduce yourself to everybody?

- Oh, sorry. I'm Vickie

- And your--

**Vickie Kobayashi:** I'm Vickie Kobayashi I'm part of the Seattle Silence Breakers, and I'm Asian. And I've been working this issue for a few years now. And one of the experiences, okay, as an Asian, the model minority, I've done a lot to assimilate, and to pass as white. And learning from that, I've learned that that's so wrong in many ways, and it was so hurtful. And so, but that's how I felt I had to behave to be successful in this system, in this environment. And that's not what should be.

So one of the things we did was we had an interdepartment team, and we hired an HR investigation unit and also an ombud. So hate and racism is alive and well, because there are so many cases and so many problems. And Amarah Kahn, Dr. Amarah Khan of our ombud, she did cite racism, hate, and what you look like causing a lot of conflict and bias. And also, how power and privilege is used to create the haves and have nots.

So I learned that, you know, we all, I need to do it differently. We all need to do it differently, because it's not getting better. And it's getting worse. And, for all the training we do, yeah, we learn a little bit. We try to do a little better, but it hasn't been sticking. People come and go. We got new people. People who learn, they retire out. So we gotta make this stick. And we cannot keep moving backwards. We have to move forward.

So having an ordinance, and making this law will further encourage training, accountability, and consequences. If you behave in a racist way, and you hurt other people, these are the consequences. And there's also great benefits for our customers and our community, because if we can't treat each other well, how are we gonna serve our customers? Because they're different. They're BIPOCs. They have different needs and identities.

So in order to move forward, we have to learn how to behave better, in a more fair and equitable way that allows people to excel to their best ability, to serve and to promote our society into to being a better place. Because eventually, everybody will experience some kind of bias. Or, whether you get old, whether you're poor, whether you're disabled or something.

And so, in order to be a better society, where we have better benefits and just are a fuller people, we need laws that further encourage the change and the growth. Otherwise, people just blow it off, and it's the flavor of the month. No, it needs to be a way of life and a new way of behaving and producing within our society. So, I'll pass it on to the next person.

**Denise:** Thanks, Vickie, and thanks again MiKayle. Do we have any questions from folks in the chat?

**MiKayle:** Uh, yes, I see one that just popped up from Natalie Sharkey. Do you just want me to read the questions out loud?

**Denise:** I'd appreciate it, I don't know about the other panelists, I'm having a hard time keeping up with the chat, so thank you.

**MiKayle:** Yeah. Okay, so this one says, "I think that data is a very important part of making change, but what happens when the data is seen and nothing changes? I've seen instances where the data is clear about where the need is, specifically when it comes to racial justice, and people in leadership positions, including people of color, do nothing about it. Beyond collecting data, what can an ordinance do to hold those with power accountable to making change?"

**Denise:** I'll take a stab at that, since I was definitely the data person. So that's where I was saying not only should the ordinance require the city to capture that pertinent data at the citywide level, and at the department level, but also require that the changes be made, so that you don't see a disparate impact on whatever the data is that you're collecting.

You know, in my case, I was looking at discipline, but it certainly, the same can be said, as I believe Sylvia was mentioning before, and Vickie, too, about promotions. That people of color are not getting promoted. And what was said before about entry-level, who's coming in at the entry level? How are they getting, you know, they hit a ceiling really quickly and don't move

forward. So, showing that there needs to... We essentially need to see no difference. There needs to be equity in it, and that needs to be built into the ordinance. So, yes, I totally agree. Not just collecting the data, but stating how you're gonna use that data to institute the change. And if anybody else wants to comment on that, fire away.

**Sylvia:** I can maybe just give a couple of thoughts on that. Especially around what is it that you do when the data is clear, yet we're not changing anything. And I think one of the things for me is, as I mentioned at the start of this, I've been involved in this work for many, many years. And one of the things that I have seen time and again, is that, yes, we do have data, good data, solid data, yet we don't make change. And we don't either pay attention, or choose not to look at this data.

So what is it that we do? Just from a very personal point of view, I have learned to temper my expectations around how quickly we can make change, and also look at ways, different ways and different avenues to keep addressing the issue, to keep surfacing the issue. I mean, people see me coming in, it's like, "Oh my God, here she comes again, something."

But that's the nature of this work. You know, you think, come on we're a city, we use data all the time to inform how we put services out in the community, what services we offer, all sorts of ways that we use data very effectively. Yet, when it comes to some of the work around this area, equity, RSJ, we seem to either turn a deaf ear to it or we all of a sudden become, in my view of the world, purposely obtuse about that the data exists, that we need to be using it, and that it makes a real difference to people.

So I have learned to, again, temper my expectations, but also not getting so frustrated that I drop out of the effort. Because one of the things, if you know, about RSJ, is institutional racism is at work all the time. And one of the ways it wins, or defeats our efforts is by tiring us out, and just burning us out, and just like, kinda can not do one more day of this. Yet we have to step back and look at, I think it was Anita, or somebody was talking about that self-care, and renewing the commitment. And for me, that really works. I have to step back, and I have to keep engaging our stakeholders, our groups, in continuing the discussion and continuing the work and continuing the effort.

**Natalie Hunter:** Hi, it's okay for me to tag in now?

- Yes.

- You bet.

- Absolutely.

[Natalie Hunter appears. Natalie is feminine presenting, with brown skin and a braid on each side of her face. The braids come out of a beanie-style hat with vertical stripes. Natalie is also wearing a gray sweater over a dark shirt, and glasses. Their background is blurred.]

**Natalie:** So, I just wanted to give a little history too about this RSJ ordinance. It's something that the citywide co-leads have been talking about for years, maybe a decade or more. The RSJI Affiliates Group was created and included members from the city's employee RSJI community, and also people from around the community, activists and organizations and stuff.

And we've been talking about it for a long time because we know that it's something that we really need, and things that keep coming up, it's like, when we got the racial equity toolkit, it was something that departments just didn't take seriously, right? So every department did it differently. If things came up, they didn't do nothing with it. It's just something that they did, it didn't hold any weight to it, right? They may have hired interns to come and do those four that they needed to do their report out yearly. They may have just had made the Change Team responsible for doing that, but leaving it to those tiny groups of people does not do the work that those things were intended to do. And that's saying, "Hey, whatever disparities or issues that come up in these racial equity toolkits you need to address, right?"

So there's no accountability behind them other than doing the toolkit and talking about it at your yearly, your annual RSJ report out for what your department did. So, what us and SPU, we expanded the use of that. We expanded RSJ in our department. We have what we now call Branch Equity Teams, so that we make sure each one of our line of business is covered by something in RSJ work. Our line of business or our other business units. And we have our Environmental Justice and Service Equity Group that also works on RSJI toolkits with employees in the department, so that we're developing project managers, policy writers. We have big construction projects that come out. We go through that toolkit, we've engaged so many people now that they know that this is a part of their job, it's a part of what they're supposed to do.

It's a part of the Asset Management board that they have to go in front of to approve their project and the type of project that they're gonna do and how they're gonna do it. It gets that, what is the impact to those communities when we're going in there, where're the places where we're dropping the balls?

Oh, sorry. I just saw a quick intro. I'm Natalie Hunter, I'm with Seattle Public Utilities. I've been with the Race and Social Justice programs since, in the very beginning, building it and defining it, and refining it. I'm currently also a member of the Seattle Silence Breakers. I started up a group with fellow affinity groups across the city to fight against the discrimination that we're

experiencing, acknowledging the fact that, you know, the racism that we experienced doesn't stop when we walk into our workplace and our jobs. And we experience a lot of that inside.

And it has gotten worse with the current political climate that we're in. And I'm kinda like, all over the place (chuckles) with the race and social justice stuff. So I've been in it for a really long time, like Sylvia. She's just got a few (Sylvia chuckles) years on me. So when we say that this, we wanna end discrimination, we wanna end the disparities, we wanna do all these things.

But if we just, we have like this passive aggressive approach to it. So that's not gonna get us there. The ordinance is what is gonna get us there. And it has to be written very specifically on what we're talking about. What're we talking about for the communities we serve, and what're we talking about for the employees that work here? What are department heads' responsibilities gonna be? How are we gonna make sure every single employee has some kind of aspect of Race and Social Justice initiative in how they do their work and go about doing the business of the city.

So, the thing that we've seen is it's very minimum; it doesn't really get at what we're trying to do. We're really trying to do it this way so the department Heads will have to do a better job, and not that passive aggressive, it's like, it's just a volunteer thing they have to do, but that it's something they are required to do that, their performance reviews will be based on that, that they have certain metrics and things that they have to meet, and that they really have to expand it so that all their employees are doing some kind of part of this work and that we will be seeing for those of us that have contact with communities, we will be seeing the difference in community, and how they're being impacted by this work. So it can't be a passive aggressive thing.

And that's, I love how Sylvia talked about and explained what the difference between a resolution, the executive order and an ordinance would be. So the ordinance would give us more power to do this, And departments just can't hem and haw about it. They actually have to do something that's gonna be effective, that's gonna benefit the city and the communities we serve. Yeah, so, you know, and like, yeah.

But I just want to make sure that you guys know that it will be stronger than that. And it just can't be written with just a couple of basic things like what we've seen now, it has to be really specific, and measurable, and attainable, and sustainable. That's all.

**Kelly:** Natalie, thank you so much for adding that context. Can folks hear me? Good, hey, MiKayle, thank you so much for letting me jump in. You know, I just wanted to add another dimension to this conversation. And that is around the fact that, look, a Racial Equity Toolkit

(device chimes) was also conducted on the Office for Civil Rights. And one of the recommendations out of that Racial Equity Toolkit was a need for an RSJI ordinance.

And that some discussion has begun around that with City Council. And this was in the last session, saying, "Oh, I know we're in a new session, we got new members," and all that sort of stuff now, but I wanted to add that context for folks to know that it's also been sort of looked at from other ends as well. And we had this racial equity toolkit done, which, if you all know, most of you do, that's our tool, right? That's the tool that we have for putting a racial equity lens on things. And that was one of the recommendations that came out of it was this, RSJI ordinance. And so, if we are organizing, not just from the community side, I mean, the employee community side, but also from the side of, "Look, we have this data, we have this information, we have these recommendations around this. How can we move forward?"

I just wanted to add that in there too, because this is a discussion that could bring in Seattle City Council as well. And so, there's lots of questions around how do we actually get this done? That's coming up in the chat. I just wanted to put that context in there, then I'll hop back, okay?

**Sylvia:** Thank you. And if I may add to that, just as a reminder to ourselves that getting an ordinance is a great tool, but it is not the end-all, be-all. As a community, as employees, we still have to keep doing the work. We still have to keep ourselves accountable. We still have to continue doing the work because just because we have ignored it doesn't mean that the work will happen.

What it does do, it does give us that fundamental support to make sure that there are consequences, and that there is some teeth to the work that we do, and that we're all held accountable within the city. But the ordinance by itself will not make that happen. It will take all of us working together, cooperating, the way we do now, around this work. So I just wanted to put that out there.

[MiKayle is no longer on camera. Instead, it's a screen with the letters BM in a white circle. His name is at the bottom.]

**MiKayle:** Thank you, Sylvia. I see that Sarah Lee has her hand up, in the chat. Sarah, did you wanna speak?

[MiKayle's screen remains while Sarah speaks, then switches to Sylvia, who listens to Sarah.]

**Sarah:** Yeah. So, I guess part of my work when I was at the city attorney's office, was to look at out of order layoffs. And one of the things that I noticed was that the municipal code 404080, which is the Affirmative Action ordinance.



And I was just wondering if there was a way to build on that, because there is, in the legislative history, the documentation of the discrimination that occurred with people who were persons of color, who were, I guess, separated after the Boeing bust. And to me, that would be, instead of starting from scratch, you already have an ordinance on the books in terms of getting more teeth behind it and adding more to it. I'm just wondering if there was a way to do that. That's, I guess, more of a reflective question.

And then given the fact that Governor Inslee's new directive, in affirmative action, may be that... 'Cause I know one of the things just dealing with that, with I-200, but I know that that's kinda in the transition mode right now. So, you know, it just seems like that. And then I know that they, Office of Civil Rights and both HR have a lot of data to kinda use for creating future legislative history for an RSJI ordinance.

I just, one quick comment, I do agree with Sylvia, in the sense that an ordinance, in and of itself, even a well-written one, you still need to have people to kind of actively make sure that people are forcing it. Like, for the instance that the ordinance that I was talking about, it's on the books, but I can tell you there was internal opposition when it came time to talking about who's gonna be laid off first.

- Yeah.

- And to me, a lot of this stuff in terms of RSJI, at the end of the day, it's about money. It's about who's gonna hire, who's gonna promote. And to me, without having that link between budget, and the ordinance, and personnel rules, and enforcement of the same, equitable, you know. You can get only so far with the ordinance, but I think you need, kinda, to look at all three aspects, kind of the iron triangle of sorts, in order to actually build momentum over time to actually deliver on it. That's all.

- Yeah.

**MiKayle:** Thank you, Sarah. Thank you all for the questions in the chat, by the way, I'm looking through them right now.

**Vickie:** Hey, can I just say thank you for bringing up HR? Because that is an issue, and that needs to be changed too. And we will start with an ordinance and trickle through the rest of the system. So we gotta start some place, and we gotta start with something that can influence other processes we have.

**MiKayle:** The next question is coming from Stephanie. This is for all the panelists, "What's the process for creating an ordinance."

**Denise:** It's Denise, well, Sylvia was saying, it generally starts either in a department, or, in this case, since there essentially is one already that occurred because of the statement of legislative intent that's already been drafted, it's in the pipeline. But it's currently on hold because I guess it got more legs, it was more towards September, and Council was gearing up for the budget process. So it got put on hold.

And then with the mayoral transition, it was put on hold. So this is where it's up to us, I think, to us as city employees to reach out to council and say, "Hey, we think this is something that's important." And the various stakeholder groups that we might represent, or the citizens that we support, and say, "Hey, this is something that's important, and here's why." And I totally agree.

think it was Sarah that was talking about the budget. You know, it all winds up with the money. Oh, the first thing that gets cut is training. And I saw something in there, in the chat, briefly about, we're not allowed to essentially require that there's RSJI or RSJ training. And those are the kinda things that an ordinance can give more teeth.

And the draft ordinance that I've seen, essentially, there's a 1% for RSJ that is in that ordinance, so that departments have to set aside money. And they have to financially support change teams. So those are ways to get at... Well, that would be the outcome. But as far as getting it rolling, it's putting the pressure on, and explaining to our representatives.

And for those of you who don't live in Seattle, and you're like, "Oh, I can't really pressure Council." If you work for a department, then there's a council member that supports your department, and you can reach out to them and say, "Hey, these are the impacts that I see in my job." And that it impacts not just employees, but how it may impact citizens and stakeholders. And that all matters. And that's one way to get it rolling.

**MiKayle:** Thank you, Denise. Were there any other comments from the panelists?

Okay, and for this next question, it's coming from Juliana Ross, "Would we need a high-level sponsor, like the mayor? If so, what do we need to organize to start that approach and build a relationship?"

**Sylvia:** This is Sylvia. And I just wanna say this about that question, or that inquiry, is that as we move this work forward, and especially with looking at having an ordinance passed, it's really good to build partnerships and allies with the new administration, and continue to build on the

work. So I would love us to find concrete ways to partner with our newly-elected mayor, his administration, and continue building alliances with City Council so that we can make progress. Maybe move it a little bit fast, but as a previous director of the Office of Civil Rights would remind us, "If you wanna go fast, just go it alone. But if you wanna go far, you wanna go it together."

And that's why I think partnerships are really important, especially with the new administration, who may or may not, and when I say administration, I mean everyone in the administration, because they may or may not be aware of the efforts, the works, the little successes, the little defeats and failures that we've had along the way. So we want to partner and educate, but still be very focused about keeping this moving forward, and working like crazy as a community to make sure we're organizing around getting this done. Thanks.

**MiKayle:** Thank you. Sylvia. Were there any other comments? So for this next question, this is coming from Asha and it says, "So many of the great questions that are coming up in the chat and this conversation were questions we wrestled with in the work groups stemming from the racial equity toolkit to create a draft ordinance. I'm wondering how we answer those questions and move forward."

**Sylvia:** Hey, Denise, do you have any thoughts about that? Because I know you've been working with that question for the work you've been doing.

**Denise:** Yeah. Thanks. And I think, you know, Kelly was trying to cover some of that too, as far as giving the backstory more on what I had said too, about the racial equity toolkit being performed on the Office of Civil Rights. And that's how they came to one of the conclusions of they needed an ordinance.

But it definitely is what Sylvia was talking about before, forming partnerships. And, 'cause I think I saw somewhere else in the chat, subgroups. 'Cause an ordinance of this magnitude, I personally think, to have it done right, is that needs to be detailed, and it's gonna be kinda big. And that's where I think the subgroup concept is a good one to chunk off, "Okay, how do we deal with discipline? How do we deal with hiring? How do we deal with the budget process itself, and how that happens?"

I know there's a session later this afternoon about a participatory budget process. Because again, where the money goes, that's how a lot of things get changed or not. You know, for training. And again, for me, the bigger thing, accountability. 'Cause I do agree with Natalie, I think RSJI needs to come into literally every employee's job description. Like, then it has meaning; we are operationalizing race and social justice when it is in all of our work plans,

accountability agreements, and our job descriptions. How do we do this? So, I think I might've gotten off the topic a bit, but I think that's all part of it.

**Natalie:** Wanna mention about the work you guys done so far with grabbing ordinances from other jurisdictions, and looking at their stuff, and looking at that, I think they need to make an IDT, like they did for the entire harassment discrimination group, but not rushing through it, right? Get it so that you have the right time, make sure you don't miss anything. Because I think it will take little breakout subcommittees to focus on the employee side of things, on the community side of things, right? 'Cause, you know, different people will have that expertise.

And to me, I think it really needs to be led from employees and not at the top. 'Cause I feel like when you, and that's the way the work is done, right? We're just like living in work, and experiencing all the things that are happening. Not the people at the top. They're supposed to be informed by the people, I hate to say at the bottom, but the people that are out there, that are out there, in there, experiencing this, 'cause they will have the best ideas and be able to, you know, uncover the things, the places that we really need to address. The work.

**Denise:** Yeah. And just, thanks Natalie. And to follow up on that and kinda channel Anita, 'cause Natalie pulled up some information and shared it with our Silence Breakers group on the King County ordinance. And we've also seen, like, a Tacoma resolution. And there's lots of words, and not a lot of action that's described in their ordinance. And so that is, to me, exactly what we don't want. I mean, it's great to have the high statements and this is what we're shooting for, but unless you can follow that in with the details of how you're gonna get there, then we're just gonna have more words and no action.

**MiKayle:** Thank you all.

**Vickie:** It's Vickie. I think a lot of the heavy lifting has been done at the grassroots level. And so, we'd like to see everybody doing some heavy lifting, including our very talented management and people in power, that they need to be able to work with everybody and promote a way of business that's good for all of us, and not for specific people, or groups, or types, or biases. So it would be encouraging if we all participated in it. And we all try to do our share of making the changes. So thank you.

**MiKayle:** Thank you. And for this next question, It's coming from Mary Mitchell, and it says, "Will the ordinance also create accountability for drafting new legislation to identify the communities that will be or have been harmed, and outline how the new policy will seek to undo harm?"

**Denise:** That sounds great. I'm looking forward to getting all this information out of the chat, but yeah, again, if groups of people are pushing for things, then that's how we get information and statements into the ordinance, and that's a great thing to add.

**MiKayle:** And this is a question for the panelists, and it says, "Do the panelists wanna speak to the audience about how they wanna get more involved?"

**Sylvia:** I am totally shining on the thought of finding ways to get more involved. And the other piece I hear, find a centralized way where we can leverage all our efforts as we work on this. And I know that, Denise, I'm gonna kinda throw the ball to you because you've been working on this for a while, and you've been working with some of our groups to help weigh in and provide feedback and be part of this ordinance-building thing. So you might have some immediate, concrete, ideas of how people who are in this workshop, or in this panel presentation can get more involved.

**Denise:** Appreciate that, Sylvia. Sylvia: But I really like the idea of a centralized way. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah, and, cause I was gonna say, Sylvia, I know you were asking people, "Please join us, please join us." And absolutely. So, to folks participating today, there's obviously the different groups within your own departments. And when I say different groups, there's the Change Teams that you can reach out to, and also affinity groups that are more citywide versus departmentwide.

And then there's, of course, reaching out to Silence Breakers and myself, or Natalie, as far as getting plugged in. 'Cause I don't know... Silence Breakers was reaching out to, as Sylvia referenced, Change Teams and affinity groups, and trying to get folks' thoughts and support for pushing to Council, the ordinance idea. And there's also WEPAC, Workforce Equity, sorry, I can't remember all the acronyms, that they've also said, "Hey, yes, we think an ordinance is a good idea." So there's other groups that are pushing for this. So I don't know if it's the citywide co-leads, 'cause I don't know as an overall umbrella, but definitely getting involved with your immediate groups, and Silence Breakers.

I know this is something we're gonna keep pushing, so we'll keep reaching out to groups. But we definitely, we wanna hear from folks. Because as the workers, we see the impacts, whether it's to ourselves, or our coworkers, our constituents as in our stakeholders and our citizens who we work for. So bringing that base-level knowledge is what will be how we impact a really, I think, make an ordinance written in a way that changes systems. 'Cause that's really what I think we need to do to end the institutional racism at the city, we need to change the racism. So those are ways for folks to get involved, and please join us. I appreciate that folks are interested, and please do reach out.

**MiKayle:** Thank you. I see we're about to reach the end of our time. So is there a way that you wanted to conclude this, Denise?

**Denise:** Well, I definitely wanna thank the panelists. And Natalie, appreciate you also jumping in, and I'm sorry that Anita had to go, but I'm glad she could fire us up, so to speak. 'Cause that was, that was all good. And MiKayle, I really appreciate you being a great moderator, and participants, I thank you.

But really, appreciate the interest and that folks, there's interest in seeing this forward, and moving this forward. I think folks get how we need to make an ordinance; we need the law, as opposed to just the initiative. So that we have the force of law, and can hold, the city and ourselves accountable. as Vickie was saying, starting with ourselves. So, however people can get involved, like I said, reach out to the groups and I do believe, at least, Sylvia, when I'd last seen, there is a page on the SharePoint now. I think hopefully the--

- Good.

--(indistinct) will take you to the SharePoint site and for folks to get ahold of affinity groups too, 'cause there's several different organizations out there. But yes, welcome everybody's input 'cause it comes from us. Like, we're the ones, be the change. We're the ones, we are the leaders we've been waiting for. Like, we gotta do this. It comes down to us. So, thank you all.

**Natalie:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** And I need, there's a question on the chat about, "Am I to assume that this panel is only here for conversation, and not immediate solutions for those experiencing current issues?" The only thing I have to say about that is if you are experiencing current issues within your workplace, you need to immediately take steps to get in touch with your designated body within your department, such as the HR group or whatever. We, as a group, are here looking at how do we make this law, or would the effect of the law for helping us support this work. So, but I would say, please don't wait, if you are experiencing some kind of thing in your workplace, immediately report it up to your manager, your HR person, whomever.

**Denise:** And I'd just say, if you're a union person, obviously reach out to your shop steward, or your union representative too, for additional help navigating the process.

- Yes. Mmhm. And I wanna thank everyone for their attention and their interest in this topic. And as I said in the beginning, it's gonna take all of us doing this work together, jointly, cooperatively, to really make change.



**MiKayle:** 2:30pm. And again, thank you to the panelists, and all that came, and I hope you all have a good one. Feel free to reach out to us too, if you wanna discuss this further, or have any questions. Thank you.

- Thank you everyone.

- Yeah. Thanks everyone. Stay well, folks, take care.

- Yes. Thanks.

