



Video Transcript

The Pursuit of Transformative Justice

[**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: For those of you who don't know me? My name is Kelly O'Brien, Black Pan-African. He, him, his pronouns. It's really good to be here. I'm a member of the Race and Social Justice division in the Office for Civil Rights.

And welcome to the RSJI Summit, y'all. It's really good to be here and it's good to have Sean Goode here from CHOOSE 180. I'm gonna start off with a land acknowledgement and then we're gonna get into the programming. Let me see if there's anything I'm forgetting from my notes here. Okay. All right, let's get started with the land acknowledgement.

I'm gonna read, I'm reading from duwamishtribe.org, because there's a couple of things I do is I try to make sure that I'm getting good information from folks who should know, right. Those most affected. And then I'm gonna add a little bit in here so that we know what we're doing. 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 by extension say the Coast Salish peoples of the Pacific Northwest.

Now we all know that they do land acknowledgements all the time. It's all the fashion now, but it's almost as if people don't understand why and how we do it. So first of all, we didn't come up with land acknowledgements. It's been Indigenous practice by folks that are native to the land for time immemorial to acknowledge the land and to acknowledge the people of the land, all right?

And when we do that, especially when we're doing race and social justice work, we are acknowledging the origins of those systems and those things that are put in place that has us right where we are today. We are acknowledging and understanding that city hall is a descendant of a colonial government. It is actually a colonial government on native land. And we are acknowledging some truths. None of the buildings that we work in would be there unless they took that land from somebody. All right?





None of this work that we'd be doing would be possible, none of the resources we would have would be possible unless they had taken those resources from somebody, some community, some place, a history of displacement is big in Seattle because it's not just native people who've been displaced, but other people of color and communities of color as well. And so a land acknowledgement for us doing RSJI work is acknowledging that we are here and we're part of this process, and we're trying to actually undo something that starts its roots with colonization and that kind of oppressive disruption of communities.

And you could do something about it for real. You could check out payrealrentduwamish.org. Let me make sure I have the right, realrentduwamish.org. You can do actually something transformative and material to help provide resources to those who are, up to this point, not acknowledged by the federal government as being worthy of receiving federal funding, because they're not enough people and they don't all speak a common language, which are both actual effects of government racist policy. So when we do our land acknowledgement, this is where we're coming from folks, and this is where we start.

So I always want people to really take a moment and envision the disruption. That's the beginning of what we're trying to undo. Okay? Just take 30 seconds, close your eyes and really understand that we start our work by decolonizing our work. Okay. All right, so that's where we start. I am going to introduce you to our first panel today, which is on transformative and restorative justice. And the question I ask is, did you know that transformative and restorative justice have their roots in Indigenous peacemaking? Okay. So after the session, we encourage you to learn more about Indigenous practices by following this link and I'll put it into the chat.

I just want folks to know that today we're gonna be speaking or hearing from Sean Goode, the executive director of CHOOSE 180, which is a local nonprofit that works to help the youth transform what they do into normalcy as opposed to it being criminalized.

So I'm gonna start by saying like, Hey, some of the work that we do, when you realize when we're doing race and social justice work in the city, there are a couple of things that we pay attention to. One is we keep race in the room, right? Two is, I said a couple but three things. Two is we pay attention to those most harmed by systemic racism and historic racism. And three is we look to those on the cutting edge of anti-racist movements and anti-racist organizing to get our direction. Okay.

So for a lot of us in the last decade, a lot of this organizing started with organizing for No New Youth Jail and not imprisoning young people in our communities. And a lot of work has come out of that. Broadly, a lot of community organizing has come out of that broadly and CHOOSE 180 is part of that whole conglomerate of action that took place, and that's what I know about



Sean Goode. That's what I know about his work. I know that his work touches the youth in a way in which we always forget. A lot of our systemic institutions really just want to dismiss and criminalize Black and brown youth. And for us to have any kind of a future, we have to actually like pay attention to where it is a youth are coming from.

I remember saying or knowing, like no major social movement occurs without the involvement of young people. So this is the direction that I see Sean Goode coming from. Now, here's the thing though, there's another thing. So part of this work too is also we challenge sort of capitalist practice, right. Racism made Black bodies capital. Okay.

So before we actually got Sean Goode, it was maybe two days before we pinged him, but then came out in the news, this article about paying all the people at CHOOSE 180, \$70,000. And they got a lot of big press, but I don't know if people understand, I don't know if people understand what something like that does, right? When you challenge sort of capitalist practice by being real about what resources people need in this space, that's very forward thinking. And so that's the other thing I wanted to talk about with Sean. I wanted to say like that sort of forward-thinking notion is what I think will help us to really center how we think about transformative justice this year and how we think about going into the year of doing our work as race and social justice initiative advocates in the city. Okay.

So without any further ado, I will introduce Sean Goode, please know that there will be a Q and A after Sean speaks. If you have questions, you can type them in the chat as well. And you can raise your hand later as well. And Sean, I hope I did good. I hope that made sense. And welcome. Welcome, bro.

[Sean Goode appears. Sean is masculine presenting, with light skin, a shaved head, and goatee. He is wearing a dark hoodie that says, "Decolonize". His background is the corner of a room. On opposite walls are illustrations of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.]

Sean Goode: Yeah, thanks Kelly. I only got to do a little bit of cleanup, but I appreciate you brother.

Kelly: Thank you.

Sean: Man, I'm excited to be in space with all of you. And I'm grateful that I get to be able to be in space with each of you this morning. My mornings start everyday at 4:00 AM and it's like 10:00 o'clock, so I'm close to lunchtime. So if I have a peculiar level of energy for 9:45 in the morning, I just want to be grounded in that. And I'm gonna begin and I'm gonna... Oh, and one other thing too, is I'd like to invite you if you're comfortable to turn your cameras on, because I

really feed off of like the actual reaction to being in space with people, like the screens are cool and everything but when I see...

There we go. I feel like an auctioneer right now. Can I get another one on, can I get another camera, another camera, another camera, add them up, add them up, add them up. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. More cameras on, more cameras, we are winning. I almost got my whole entire main screen with cameras.

Look at that. I even got Chief Scroggins with the camera. Look at that, this is a good morning. This is a good morning. I'll take that. All right, y'all. Let's get it going. Most important things to clear. I'm married to the most amazing woman in the world. She's my gift from God, my angel from heaven, the love of my life, the woman of my dreams, my favorite part of every day that ends in Y, she's currently 2300 miles away right now in Montclair, New Jersey, taking care of both of her parents, which means a few things.

Which means when she's not there, I sleep on the couch because I fall asleep to "Law and Order" whatever, judge me. It is what it is. Okay. Yeah, it's like, I know there might be like some sort of dichotomy here with the work that I do and falling asleep to like SVU, but we all have our things. Okay. Judge Judy is no longer making live episodes. I got to go to what I got, okay. And it also means that like she's my safe space in my corner. And so when I do stuff like this, I am absolutely like an introvert that dresses up in extrovert clothing. And so I usually do stuff like this and then go run and hide in her embrace. And that's not happening today either. So I'm asking for a little bit of empathy from you.

And the last thing I'll call out, which is real is I've been eating microwaveable meals for the past several weeks. And I can tell you that if that's your reality Trader Joe's is not a bad place to begin that journey, but I will tell you, based upon the recommendation from my dear friend, Caedmon, stay away from the vegan shepherd's pie, okay. Stay away from it. It's not the hit. And it is somewhat disappointing that they've gotten rid of the chocolate covered Joe Joes already. I mean, I know it's January, and we're no longer in the holiday season, but like, I mean, can you at least like buffer it to get me to Girl Scout cookies? 'Cause then at least I feel like I don't have to wait like in this lull in between. Like I need eggnog and then Joe Joes chocolate covered and Girl Scout cookies. 'Cause a brother gotta a self-medicate when his wife's away. All right.

Other thing, also important. I have two children. My son is 20. He's a college sophomore at Central Washington University. I'm really proud of him. He wants to be a business major and wants to open up dispensaries. And his vision is to call them Goode Bud. That is not the kind of play on my last name that I had ever anticipated raising a child, but it's 2022. So it is what it is. And I have a 14-year-old daughter, her name's Hope. And she is that for me. She's incredibly



gifted, brilliant, just strong, confident, like, ah, all of that. And I bring them with me in these spaces all the time.

And I'm still with this organization CHOOSE 180, where we work to transform systems of injustice and support the young people who are impacted by these systems. And we did recently make some headline news around the wage equity stuff we did, but I want to be clear, there were organizations that were already leading the way and we followed their lead. Organizations like Collective Justice, Creative Justice and Freedom Project are three of several who really had already embedded in a practice of wage equity.

We got it wrong from jump and then had to work to get it right. And I think like that narrative is compelling because there's so many of us in the nonprofit organizations that are out here getting it wrong and have to figure out what does it mean to get it right. But if not for them setting the example, it would have been much more difficult for us to be able to make that move because they demonstrated a precedence of possibility, we were able to live into that because of their leadership.

So I just want to make sure that that clearing is there. 'Cause too often the folks on the front page get all the credit and the folks who aren't included in the piece get left behind. And it's important that we're acknowledging, like who really is out here putting in the work, that's creating the space for others to thrive.

Okay, y'all ready to do this? Ready to do this? I'm excited. So something to know about me is I run. In fact, I run typically three to four times a week, more often on the three side of things. I run Wednesdays and Saturdays with my friend Caedmon I know she's already mad at me putting her name on here like this, but whatever. I see you in the chat would do, it is what it is. You're my friend. And on Sundays, I run with my friend, Heather, and this Sunday it was like an epic scene out of a like National Geographic magazine.

Okay. So we're running along Seward Park and there is like this pooling up of what is called these American coots, right? Google it, American coot, C-O-O-T. And these American coots are all pooled up together, and it kind of looks like they're in a huddle. Right. And they're doing it for one of a couple of reasons. One of the reasons are, they're a bird that migrates from Alaska, and so part of this, like coming together is for warmth, right. But another part of the coming together is for safety. And so when they're all together, they just look like one big black mob all together. And so when there's predators coming in from above, it's harder for them to pick off any one of them because they're united together in a collective.

And so here we are running along Seward Park, minding my own business, and I see this huge bald eagle like swooping back and forth along the water. I'm like, oh, he's fishing. Something's



about to go down. So I'm like kind of like looking while I'm running, I'm slowing down because I want to see this thing happen. I don't usually bring my phone with me when I run, because I want to be present for the run, but now I'm regretting the fact that I don't have my phone 'cause I want to capture this moment. So I can remember it. And I'm watching this eagle swoop back and forth. And as we get around the corner, I see him swoop down into this group of these American coots.

And as soon as the eagle swoops down, these birds in the water just disperse and immediately, without hesitation, they come right back together. And then the eagle goes around, does the loop comes down and swoops again and they disperse, and immediately they come back together. And as I was continuing my run, what I saw that was so beautiful, was regardless of the threat that was coming from above, they knew that their survival was contingent on their coming together.

And regardless of the fact that one of them could be victimized by this threat, they knew that most of them would be safe. The majority of them would be safe by their coming together, because in their coming together, it was nearly impossible to distinguish an individual bird. What you knew was that there was strength in their coming together. There's resiliency in their coming together. There's safety in their coming together.

And in our community, one of the places we struggle with the most is when threats come from on high, whether they come from political positions and the posturing of those in those political roles, or whether they're coming from folks in other leadership realms, whether it's the business community, and they swoop down and threaten us, too often as a collective, we do the exact opposite. We run away and disperse, but we don't come back together.

I will tell you, in my opinion, there is no greater power than the collective us. When we choose to stick together, regardless of what the threats may be, there is nothing, absolutely nothing that we can't accomplish. But there's reasons y'all, there are sincere reasons why we have a hard time staying together when there's impending threat just hovering right above. I think it's imperative, as we assess this, we begin to learn from our past.

One of my favorite speeches that I like to ground myself in these conversations is a speech from John F. Kennedy on civil rights and the civil rights address. And I'm gonna read an excerpt from that speech and share with you as we talk about where we are today and contextualizing it at all.

This excerpt [paraphrased] starts as such, "And it ought to be possible for Americans of any color to receive equal service in hotels, restaurants, theaters, and stores. And it ought to be possible for American citizens of any color to vote in a free election without interference. And it

ought to be possible, in short, for every American to enjoy the privileges of being American and without regard to his race or his color. Every American ought to have the right to be treated as we all would wish to be treated and to expect his child to be treated like any other child.

“But this is not the case. A Black baby born in America today has about one half as much chance of completing high school as the white baby born on the same day. He has one third as much of a chance of completing college and of landing a good job. He's likely to earn only half as much and twice as much chance of becoming unemployed, even his life expectancy is seven years shorter.

“This is not a regional issue. Discrimination exists in every city, in every state and in many cities and is producing a rising tide of anger that threatens the public safety. This is not even a legal or legislative issues alone. New laws are needed at every level, but law alone cannot make it right. We are confronted primarily with this moral issue.”

I ground myself in this because when I read this excerpt, it seems like it's something I read like yesterday, not like something that was written some 50, 60 years ago. It feels like that should have been written yesterday because it still applies today. And as I consider how it is, that we can move so far in time and still feel as though there's only been incremental changes along this journey, I wonder one of two things, one of the things I wonder is when we have these climactic moments of coming together, why is it so hard for us to stay that way?

And I also wonder, could it be perhaps that this journey we're on, is it one that's linear, as we find ourselves in a situation that seems so similar to situations of our past, but instead of journey that's circular, that has this coming back to a point and coming back to a point in effort to learn a lesson to advance this further on this journey towards justice.

Let me address the first point. Why is it that we spread apart when we need to come together? Several years ago, pre pandemic, I took a pilgrimage, a journey, I don't really like that word pilgrimage, it has all kinds of negative connotations to it. But somehow like the alliteration of it is attractive, so I say it, and then every time it comes out of my mouth I'm like why did you say that word again?

I went on a journey, which is really a spiritual journey to tap in with my ancestors and to get a deeper grounding in my being to the south. And of the many impressionable stops we made when we are in Montgomery, Alabama, the poetry of this place was so pronounced that it just spoke volumes to me.

Now we know Montgomery, Alabama from our history texts around the civil rights movement. We understand the church that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. preached from, we understand the

bus stop that Rosa Parks boarded the bus on. We understand some of those historical narratives, but being in that place, and walking those streets was transformative for a different reason.

I left my hotel one morning and went for a run, there's a kind of a theme here, that's not intentional. It's just when you do the thing, you just keep doing the thing. I already told you about my issue with Joe Joes and eggnog. Like, if I'm gonna maintain any kind of shape, I got to make sure I get my cardio, ♪ Do this thing like cardio ♪ Now see, I get distracted.

So I was running and I went down along the waterfront and this city of Montgomery, round is a shape, yes, it is. And it's a shape that I've grown to appreciate. I got some childhood trauma though. Like I can't get into this, we don't got that much time. But if we ask a question about it, I will affirm that yes, round is a shape, I also want to affirm that I got like some body issues, right? Like body image issues where I still think like I should look like a He-Man doll when I know that's not the reality, but when I was a child in the '80s, like that was like peak masculinity. And I adopted that as a narrative of what I had to embody. And I'm still dealing with it today.

Back to Montgomery, Alabama. See that's why I should have closed the chat box box, Jason, y'all said, can you read the chat box? So I kept it open. And now I'm on tangents. So I guess one of the benefits of Zoom, you can't do this in a typical keynote, right? Like I can't just go off and answer, like reply to a question, but here we are.

So I'm running and I go down to the riverfront in Montgomery, Alabama, and they're doing their best to whitewash the history of what's happened there. They got all these memorials there and narratives there about like the starting of the civil rights movement. But the reality of that riverfront is that that's where enslaved bodies were brought on boats and brought to the street where there's warehouses that still exist today, where they would house these bodies.

Something else that wasn't lost on me was there's train tracks that are just parallel to this body of water and the same enslaved people that came off those boats later would build those train tracks which would then help better accommodate the transporting of slaves. It's all deeply muddled and problematic. And so as you walk these streets, right, you go in from of the river and to the street that's adjacent to it where the warehouses still stand today that would one at one point of time in our history, hold people who were living as slaves and you walk further up and there's this really beautiful fountain.

And this beautiful fountain is actually a place holder for where the slave trading block used to be with stands in the shadow of the Capitol building. So the electeds could literally like look

down from their perch on high, at bodies being sold in the streets of their city. Now, this fountain is directly across the street from the bus stop that Rosa Parks got on the bus from. And just down the street from the church that Martin Luther King Jr. was preaching at, at the time that the civil rights movement began its burgeoning beginnings.

And when I think about all of these moments in history and juxtaposition, I wonder how far back our ancestors would consider if they look to the future and said to the folks in the '60s, why are we still battling for freedom when we were supposed to be given freedom? Why is it we're still challenged by liberty when we were all supposed to be promised liberty? How was it that we allowed from being emancipated people to go to chain gangs and convict leasing and vagrancy laws, and mass incarceration. And to the point that we have more Black bodies in prison today than we had Black bodies enslaved, how is it that we've traveled so far in time and haven't come to the point where we really are living into the freedom that we espouse we should carry as citizens of this country?

And when you dwell on stuff like that. And my wife calls me kind of like a masochist because of my reading selection, right? 'Cause my Audible like stays on something that's like diving into these issues and she's like, "Husband, you got to take a break." So I recently read, Will Smith's book. "Read". I listened to Will Smith's book, it was a break, but now I'm right back at it again.

But when you dive into these things all the time, you have to wonder, well, where's the hope? Like what is it I'm supposed to hold onto? We often, when we talk about abolition, we point to slavery as an example of having the courage to imagine something different than what's currently existing. And if we never imagined we could abolish slavery, then what would be? And I often ask the question, well, we may have abolished slavery, but then we allow for mass incarceration.

And so it feels like they're two different things, but all into the same bucket of hopelessness, where do we go from here? And it can be distraught, and it can be discouraging, and yet I still find these moments of hope, not because I believe there's a farther distance we can travel, but I believe that we're learning something in each one of these moments, these moments where we show up at a place that feels so similar, show up at a place that recognizes familiar from our inside of our being. And if we continue to learn, we can continue to advance and get better incrementally time after time after time, but that's our past.

And so if we understand over the history of our past, we can go from the time of being enslaved, to the civil rights movement, to our current prison, industrial complex and see it through line and feel like we haven't gone as far as we should go, particularly with the values we espouse, then it begs the question, well then what do we do from here? I think it's

imperative that we learn from our present and we live in our present. Sorry, learn from our past and live in our present.

How many y'all marched and protested after George Floyd was murdered? Right. Man, I remember a weekend down in the south end, and I am from South King County, right? Like all the way. South King County all the way. Like I know many people that grew up in the city of Seattle don't believe anything south of Seattle exists except the airport and Portland. I understand that. But there's a whole bunch of cities in South King County.

But I spent a lot of time in South Seattle, so I understand the appropriate way to pronounce it is "south". So I was in the south end and as I was in the south end during a march, right around the Othello, go ahead and shout out Skyway.

See, this is where you got to make sure that Skyway is South King County y'all, I just want to call that out. Skyway and Renton are South King County. Sometimes people from Skyway and Renton say that they're from Seattle and I got to correct them like own where you're from, okay? Like own it, all the way. Especially my White Center people, own where you're from. I'll talk to a young person the other day said I'm from West Seattle. I'm like, no, you're not, come on, shout out Green Bridge. Shout out, shout out Park Lake. Come on, come on. Y'all know.

Anyways, so the point being, as I was marching through South Seattle with a whole bunch of people, I get a phone call, phone call from a very good friend of mine. So there's 8,000 people marching through South Seattle, chanting Black lives matter! Black lives matter! I get a phone call, invited to a meeting at City Hall. And in this meeting, the conversation at the core is how do we deescalate the tensions at the CHOP and are there people who are violence interrupters in the community that we could employ contract with to deescalate the tensions at the CHOP.

Now the irony in this wasn't lost on me at all, because we got 8,000 plus people marching through South Seattle saying Black lives matter, then you got hundreds if not thousands of people, organizing on Capitol Hill for the sake of Black lives matter. And you invite Black and brown bodies into a room to ask us how we can deescalate a protest that only exists to be able to emphasize the need to honor our existence and our humanity.

Now where we came from becomes to mirror where we're at, so this seems deeply problematic. And so the seeds of discord began to be sowed at that very moment, because what happens sometimes is when the apex predators hovering from above and begins to crash down into the collective, we want to get as far away we can from the collective and begin to distinguish ourselves. So hopefully the apex predator won't come after us, but will continue to attack those that didn't make the wise decision to flee. And undoubtedly, like there always is in spaces like that.

Some people latched onto the opportunity and others ran away. And those of us that ran away found other places to congregate at, because we knew that there was safety in the collective that we had to always come back to the collective and yet and still they were able to pick some of us off one at a time. And sow discord into a movement that was supposed to promote Black lives. And we watched this thing play out.

And it wasn't a surprise to many of us or really any of us, if we're honest, that like we go from this peak moment of Black lives matter after the murder of George Floyd, and then we go to the same time in 2021, and there's no conversation about any of that, but a vicious snap back. In 2020, we had city council members come out quickly and proclaim that we needed to make sure that we divested from antiquating the practices of public safety and invest in alternatives at the same or greater level. Elected officials.

And then weeks later, they walked back from some of those proclamations to say, well, we believe that ambitiously and ideologically, but in practice we can't actually do what it is we thought we would do because it doesn't actually function like that and get instilled, where do we find ourselves today? We had commitments for multi-million dollar investments into Black community, that were supposed to be year over year so that way it would add to a billion dollars to be able to revitalize the community that holds a nickel to the dollar that white folks have in wealth.

To revitalize a community where there's not enough homes for us to buy for us to still be present in the spaces that we historically lived. To revitalize a community where youthful behavior for our children is criminalized at astronomical rates. Where you can be a young person in the South End, and do the exact same thing as a young person in the north end and end up with law enforcement engaging you here and end up with parents having a conversation there.

And somehow we're supposed to throw some measly millions on top of historical problematic narratives in white supremacy and all of the things that the political powers that be positioned themselves on top of, and it's gonna make things better, but all of these commitments came out of this movement. And that doesn't even begin to speak to the millions of dollars that CEOs locally and nationally said that they were going to invest in Black community. And when you look at the numbers from CEOs that made those commitments and how those commitments were fulfilled, we're talking about pennies on a dollar.

But see, we shouldn't be surprised because this happens time and time again, the question I have, the burning question I have, is when will we learn from our past in order to live in our present and do something different in moments like this? Because if this thing keeps coming

back around and back around, and back around, eventually we have to learn the lesson that allows us to move forward. And I feel confident that we can't progress until we progressively begin to consider our past mistakes and shortcomings, and address those things.

And see here's the challenge y'all, if this was just about Black people and brown people and Indigenous people, and marginalized folks coming together and figure it out, we'd probably do all right. In some respects, we have our own issues and side beefs But you know what really causes a ton of disunity is that our community in King County, in Martin Luther King Jr. County, 74% of y'all are white, which means like, even if all 16% of us were monolithic in our ideals, right. Which we know isn't true because Black is not a monolith, that Black folks got all kinds of different perspectives on all kinds of things. Brown isn't a monolith, LGBTQ+ is not a monolith, None of these communities are monoliths, right? We all got a diversity of perspectives and views, but let's just suppose that the 16% of us all aligned uniquely, that still is not enough to change the trajectory of the performative politics that continue to show up in our city.

And I had hope y'all, because I saw the slate of candidates that were brought forward as a response to the protests post the murder of George Floyd. Where you got candidates like Nikkita Oliver, who served the community diligently, faithfully in a variety of different capacities. Had you looked at the vote tallies, I can't help but wonder how many people who marched through those streets in Othello forgot the chant that was bracing the lips of their mouth, and only held onto the fact that they were concerned that their neighbors who used to live next door, but were one check away as a result of the pandemic, lost that check and now they're living on the sidewalk, are more of a disruption to their world than the disruptive power of white supremacy that created the situation that allow for so many people to live unhoused in the first place.

We even had a prosecutor who was aligned in principle with the values that were being carried forward by many people in this racial reckoning movement for social justice in our community. And despite a history of challenging tweets, what was hoped to be brought forward had such great synergy and alignment with creating a future where Black and brown children were no longer needed to be criminalized. Where we're no longer criminalizing poverty in our streets, where we are providing mental health support instead of incarceration.

Where we wouldn't be debating when we have a jail that's full of people who are compromised because of COVID, whether or not we should find a way to release those who could live outside of those bounds and that risk in healthy and safe places, instead of keeping them confined in cages until they get COVID and hopefully not die. But here we are because of choices that we've made as a collective. Because as individuals sometimes we forget our responsibility to the whole and we begin to follow our best interest instead of following those who have been impacted the greatest and are most uniquely designed to lead.

This brings me to a Baldwin quote that I have to surface in our time together. James Baldwin, in *No Name in the Street* in 1972 wrote that "Well, if anyone wishes to know how justice is administered in our country, one does not question the policemen, the lawyers, the judges, or the protected members of the middle-class, one goes to the unprotected, those precisely who need the law's protection the most and listens to their testimony. Ask any Mexican, any Puerto Rican, any Black man, any poor person, ask the wretched how they fare in the halls of justice and then you will know not whether or not the country is just, but whether or not it has any love for justice or any concept of it. It is certain, in any case, that ignorance allied with power is the most ferocious enemy justice can have."

"That ignorance allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have." What we learned from Baldwin here is two things. Number one, if you want to go, you got to follow those who have been. And those of us that have been there and done that, are those of us that are most marginalized and most impacted in the community. But when we begin to vote on our self-interests, we begin to lead by our self-interests, when we're not grounding ourselves and those that are most impacted by our decisions, we end up running off lost and astray and aligning ourselves in ignorance in a way that only empowers our historical way of being.

I know this personally, when we did the wage thing, I was challenged by it, because I had bought into this historical narrative about what non-profit employees should make. And it was easy for me to do that because now as an executive director, I'm no longer one check away. When my greatest concern is making sure my son's tuition payment is taken care of, that's a different level of privilege y'all. And because I was so distant from the pain point, it was convenient for me not to align myself with my team, particularly when I could have adopted some sort of perverted bootstrap mentality in Black community specifically, we do a revision of bootstrapping called the Oppression Olympics, where we'll be like, well, I survived all of that. So if I survived that you should be able to survive that too. Oh, you think that was bad, let me tell you about this. I went through this, this, and that. And my mama, we do this thing, right?

And we don't call it bootstrapping because we can't buy into that because we know that we've been barefoot from the jump, but what we do call it is well, if I did it, you can too. And the struggle is real, but it's through the struggle that you learn how to grow. And all of these things that we adopt that really align us with white dominant culture narratives, like who established non-profit wages in the first place? who said that the person that's a case manager in a nonprofit should make \$30,000 less than a person who's the case manager at King County, who said that? Who said that the probation officer should make more than the person keeping the young people out of the system altogether? Who said that?

But somebody did, and we believed it, bought into it, and we begin to live out these principles because we aligned ourselves with ignorance, instead of those that are most close, most proximate to the pain points. And this is absolutely true, as we begin to lead our way forward into the city, that we can be in pursuit of justice. First and foremost, family, we have to follow the leader and we have to let those lead who have experienced the greatest harm and hardship in our community, because they will blaze the way forward.

This is another reason why we find ourselves in this cycle. I went to Selma with my wife, I walked across the Pettus Bridge. And if any of you have ever been to Selma before, and you walk across the bridge, it is one of the most depressing experiences in your life. Because on the other side of the bridge is the town that's absolutely falling apart that lacks any type of significant investment. And you listen to the local historians there, and what they'll tell you is that once a Black man became mayor, all the white people left. And as the white people left, all the resources went with them. And all the tax base went with them. And it no longer had the tax dollars necessary to sustain the city in a way that made it economically viable so it could flourish.

See what I'm saying here? It's not about a particular part of the population learning, it's about a collective learning. It's about a collective journey. It's about all of us moving together with the type of synchronicity that's necessary for systemic change to actually manifest itself. It's about finding a common language. It's about finding a common vision and we don't have to agree on every one of the nuts and bolts, but in principle, we can land at some conclusions that ground us in our why, so we can journey from a place that's really rooted in a being that honors those that have been impacted the most.

But I'm gonna tell y'all, I don't know what the end of my lifetime is gonna look like. And I don't know when the end of my lifetime is gonna be, but I have that 14-year-old daughter. Oh, and I love her with all of my heart. And my 20-year-old son, God bless him as he goes through this college experiment, I'm grateful that he has the opportunity. It took me 15 years to get my AA and I tapped out right there. And I don't want the world that they grow into to feel like the world that I'm living in right now. And those words I just said are words that my ancestors said. And yet here we are.

So Seattle, I got to ask you all the questions, what are we gonna do different this time round? How are we going to be different this time around? If somebody plays this conversation back 50 years from now, and they say, man, that really resonates today, then what is it that we've accomplished together? What is it we've learned from our past? If we're able to find and have these huge moments of marching and protesting and coming together, only for us to disperse into the comfort of our own casual settings and our own political preoccupations and definitions of liberal and progressive, if we're able to do that after we marched together in the

street, did you ever march next to me? Were you marching with me? Were you marching because of me? Was it ever about me?

We must live in our present. We must live in our present. We must live in these current conditions, understand them for what they are and begin to act differently because we understand the cycle that continues to repeat itself. And family, we must lead in pursuit of justice. And one of the greatest expressions of leadership that we can demonstrate is a willingness to follow. You do know you can lead by following.

The example of a follower is transformative. It's an example of one who's willing to step back from their position of power. Step back from their positionality. Step back from all the things that they've held and controlled and dictated, step back from that and follow someone else. I get irritated by words like power sharing, because power sharing supposes that you hold a proportionate amount of power that you could then offer to someone else. And that like you were entitled to that power in the first place.

I would like to have a conversation about power ceding, where you let go of something that wasn't yours in the first place, that you held way too much of from jump and begin to give it back to those that deserve to hold it because they're the ones that can truly lead us through. We have some challenging and dynamic years in front of us, but I wake up with hope. Hope that we can be like the American coot, that even in spite of the many things above that would swoop down and tear us apart, that a conviction of our collective strength will keep us coming back together.

I believe it's possible. I carry the hope in my heart, and I know that with us, nothing can hold us back. But without us, we'll be back here having the same conversation again. There is no greater power than the collective us and for this to work and for us to move forward on this journey towards justice, it's gonna require each and every one of you.

Thank you for the time for that presentation. And I would love to answer any questions that folks may have, or continue to dive in on any one of these topics.

Kelly: Thank you so much, Sean. I hope folks can hear me. Very amazing moving speech, Sean, thank you so much for sharing with us. You can have questions, folks. If you have questions, you can put them in the chat or you can use the raise hand function and we will unmute you when it's your turn.

Make sure to do our intro, right? Name, race, pronouns, maybe department too. So people know where you're from, so we know what our RSJI network looks like. And yeah, let's get to

that portion. But again, thank you Sean so much. I don't have anything to say, but to bring folks on.

Okay, now I see someone saying in the chat that they will commit to doing the daily work. And so that was what I was gonna use to be my entrance, what do folks think as city employees that they can do to support transformative justice? That could be a good entryway into a discussion or a question and answer.

Sean: Was that a question for me, Kelly? Like recommendations or was that... I wasn't sure what you were doing there.

Kelly: No it's to give folks an insert... I'm sorry, an insertion. A way to jump into the conversation. You can ask yourself what can we do as city employees to support transformative justice, particularly in what we heard from Sean just now, maybe that can get us into the conversation asking Sean some good questions. This is just me helping you all out.

I see a question in the chat. I see from Bridget Molina. Bridget, do you want to ask your question? You want to jump on the mic?

[Bridget Molina appears. Bridget is feminine presenting, with tan skin and dark hair in a bun on their head. They are wearing a dark sweater, headphones, and mask. Their background is a cubicle in an office.]

Bridget Molina: Hi. Hi everyone, Bridget Molina here. Thank you, Sean, for your voice and everything. I wanted to ask what the current legislation session is, what can we do to help be a voice to change what's going on with mass incarceration and youth justice, et cetera?

Sean: Yeah, thank you for that question. First thing I'd say is make sure you're following the likes of like Decrim Seattle, King County Equity Now, they're often elevating legislative priorities as well as we are as an organization that allow you to kind of lock in and focus on the things that may be most pressing, where you can focus your attention.

I'd also say something we really advocated tough for last year, that's gonna get brought up again in this legislative session is raising the age. In our state, you can be eight years old and criminalized for your behavior. Just let that sink in for a second, eight years old and be criminalized for your behavior. So what we had brought, and the legislation that was brought forth was to raise the age to 13 and to 20, right? So you could be an adult up to 19 and you wouldn't be considered able to be charged for your behavior until you were 13.

And that didn't pass at the state because there's some folks from around the state that felt like if we weren't able to criminalize the behavior of eight-year-olds, that they'd be recruited into gangs to do harmful things. And that those eight-year-olds would cause harm and do it without any consequence, that was legit some of the arguments that were held. And there's also like this pretend concern about how do you support 19-year-olds as young people.

And come on y'all, nothing magical happens at 18. The only reason why we have like 18 as an age has more to do with like draft than it does to do with justice. And so we know from our work that adolescents clearly, brain science tells us you're not fully developed till you're like 25, 26, right. You're a woman who identifies as a woman, in biologically a woman it's a little bit faster than what it is brain-wise than it is for a man. So there's that.

So we've gotta begin to lean into some of those things. And that's one legislative point, but I would just encourage everybody. Like, man, it is easier now than ever with like Zoom to be able to tap in and bring comment. So bombard these folks with comments and make sure that they don't forget that you're the face that they're representing.

I was in a council meeting in Federal Way last week and then a subsequent followup meeting that was like so triggering because the people in the room were self-proclaimed conservative Christians, and there was other folks who carry their liberal views, but the conservative Christians didn't want to learn what it was we were doing. They wanted to interrogate it. And as triggering as that space was, I'm grateful I was there, because it reminded me that there's a good part of our community and our region that not only doesn't get it, but doesn't want to get it and wants to prove that it's wrong. And so we have to continue to be a force in all of those spaces to make sure that our presence is felt. Thank you for that question, I hope that helped.

Kelly: We actually have a number of other questions, Sean, that came up and I'm wondering, I want to invite folks, So, okay. So the first question we have was from Mariko Lockhart, who's the director of the Office for Civil Rights. I don't know if Mariko, if you'd like to jump on the mic to just say hi and to ask the question?

[Mariko Lockhart appears. Mariko is feminine presenting, with tan skin and dark curly hair. They are wearing a gray sweater over a dark shirt. They are in an office with pictures on a desk in the background.]

Mariko Lockhart: Hey, Sean, that was a beautiful talk and remarks that you gave. And I think on the one hand, yes, you were talking about depressing and hard information and also that you still retain hope. And I was wondering if you could share more about what gives you hope. What you see around you today, what what's happening in our community that's uplifting to you.

Sean: Yeah. Well, thank for that question, Mariko. I think at the core, it's the fact that I woke up this morning and I get the opportunity to continue the journey. Because I know that there's folks that didn't get that luxury. We lost folks from the city over the weekend, you know what I mean?

Like there's people who legit don't have that privilege and because I have the privilege to wake up and I have the responsibility to carry hope and I have to believe that we can come together and that we can continue to journey together because if we don't, this thing's in vain. Like we can't move this without having a collective adjoin to it.

Even with the wage equity stuff, for example. It's cool that a handful of organizations are getting it right. But if I don't get like the YMCAs, the United Ways, like these larger nonprofits to move off that mark and we're really, aren't gonna lift, we're not gonna be able to redefine nonprofit wages, right? We're not gonna redefine the baseline. And so it requires people to inconvenience themselves in ways that they don't historically want to, to prioritize others in ways that are unfamiliar in order for us to do this well and do it right.

But Mariko, we've been rocking together for a long time. And so at the core, I have hope because I can breathe. I have hope because I can show up in spaces like this and speak unapologetic truth. And I'll say that I know that's difficult than some of the city spaces because folks feel constrained about speaking the truth because of how the backlash might show up. And I feel that tension, and I know it's real.

When I worked for a large nonprofit, I regularly felt like I was showing up in space less than fully human. And then it occurred to me that my ancestors were considered less than fully human and they fought and died to be considered fully human. So I would be damned if I ever show up in another space and not bring my full humanity. And even if you're not entitled to it, or you don't deserve it, you're gonna get all of it because that's what my ancestors died for. And so I bear a responsibility to do that in that way too. And I feel a certain burden to make sure I do it for folks that for a variety of different reasons just don't feel like it's possible for them.

So I find hope in a lot of different spaces, but like primarily, because look, we got today, y'all. Tomorrow we don't know about, but right now we can speak truth right now. Right now, we can challenge power right now. Right now, we can take back what belongs to us right now. We can do that right now. Tomorrow? Well, we'll see when tomorrow comes. But today I got hope. Thank you, Mariko.

Mariko: Thank you.

Sean: Thinking a lot of how we fund non-profits and making sure... Whoever question is that, can you pop on? I think, is that Jennifer Dawson-Miller?

[Jennifer Dawson-Miller appears. Jennifer is feminine presenting, with light skin and short brown hair. They are wearing glasses and headphones. Their background is blurred.]

Jennifer Dawson-Miller: It was kind of like my comment and coming from the nonprofit world myself and finding myself in a world of better benefits and better pay at the city, just like recognizing how much nonprofits, kind of fly on your goodwill and your mission driven is like, as if mission driven actually pays. And just thinking about how the city does grant and fund nonprofits, and that maybe we need to be thinking about structurally how do we pay nonprofits to match the level of benefits and pay that we receive at the city. Just thinking about how do we like up the game?

Sean: Yeah. Yeah, I've had some conversations with HSD about this and the conviction is there's a desire and a will to fund appropriately. And we just need to make sure that it's the mayor's office that's leading the way. And so with this new administration, it's absolutely going to be a priority of mine, personally to begin to engage in that conversation.

Because I don't think we can talk about... We can't talk about addressing our neighbors who are living unhoused if we're not addressing the wage discrepancies for BIPOC folks and women, right. When you look at the nonprofit industrial complex, it largely employs Black, Indigenous, people of color and women, and the gap is humongous.

Like I was listening to somebody this morning talk about how difficult it is to hire folks to serve and to support unhoused folks. I'm like, of course it is because you're not paying them nothing. Like you want to go work at the shelter that you might have to sleep at next week? And how is that helping the people who are living unhoused to imagine a world that's better for themselves.

One of the things that came from our team when we did the thing, they were like, man, well, now like young people can look at what we're doing and be like, yeah, I want to do that. And that can actually be like a career, right? Like it's deeply problematic. And it's steeped into this historical narrative of what charity work is supposed to be. I've been really excited though about the way that our contributors have responded and whether it be foundations or folks that have been resourcing us historically. And even our contract partners, like they're all on board, but I think everybody is a little bit nervous about how to press play.

And I keep encouraging folks, if you wait to press play then the song will never start, then forget if you can dance or not, nobody's ever gonna know. And this coming from a guy who has no

rhythm whatsoever, I got all of my mama's DNA in that. And so what I suggest is if you work in the HSD space, or if you work proximate to the mayor's office, or if you hold positions of power at the highest levels, then continue to nudge, continue to encourage, continue to speak up and say it's cool that I can make this.

And now that I'm in this position of privilege, I wouldn't need to be here if I would've got paid right working at a nonprofit in the first place. And if we begin to remove what we've affectionately referred to as the golden handcuffs that keeps some of y'all on the jobs that you're in that you really don't want to be in, but you know you've got bills and a mortgage. And we want to work on this generational wealth thing and my Robin Hood account ain't looking right, so I gotta make sure I get that. You know what I mean? Like we got all these different things and we want to remove those golden handcuffs. We got to liberate the other people whose handcuffs aren't golden. And we can only do that if we appropriate resources and honor labor in an intentional way. Yeah.

See how I did that without you, Kelly, it's almost like I don't even need you anymore.

Kelly: Yeah, you don't need me, Sean. You're good. You're good. Especially my tech thinks you don't need me. That's what's going on. My computer is pretty sure that you're fine on your own. No, I thank you so much for jumping in there, Sean. We had a question from Suzette Espinoza-Cruz, do you want to jump on the mic or do you want us to ask your question?

Suzette: I can jump on the line. Can you hear me?

Kelly: Yes.

[Suzette Espinoza-Cruz appears, walking on the street and holding their phone. They stop in front of a brick wall and pull down their mask to ask their question. Suzette is feminine presenting, with long black hair. They have earbuds in their ears.]

Suzette Espinoza-Cruz: Okay. So I'm multitasking as a mom that works from home. My son getting his eyes done right now. But I need to be here, even though I have this time as sick time, I have to be here for this conversation because I am a LatinX Indigenous identified. I call myself Chicana woman. I've been working with the city for almost 20 years. I was called to do this nonprofit work. My pronouns are she, her, they, and I do this work for my job, but I also volunteer on the Child and Youth Advisory Board for best starts for kids, and I'm the co-chair.

So everything that you've been saying Sean, touches me in many ways. And my question was about how we often speak about the narrative of social justice from a Black, white perspective. And how do we work to intentionally also send our Indigenous community and Latin-X

community. And your story about the birds and how they come together and come apart, come together and come apart, it just reminded me of how we're not always united even within our own movements. Like how do we work toward making sure that those are movements in the LatinX community and the Indigenous community are also closely tied and connected to what's happening in the African-American community in South Seattle to support, especially our youth. And can you speak to that a little bit?

Sean: Yeah. Yeah, Suzette, thank you for that. I think most binaries, in fact, I think all binaries are harmful. 'Cause nothing really is binary, it's like it's Black, white issue. It's this, it's that issue. And I think in part, when I'm invited to space, it's really hard for me to speak on the experience of others because I can only be grounded in what it is that I've lived through. And I often know that I find myself in similar eco-chambers around issues that only address folks that are reflective of the community I could most closely identify with and that's not helpful, right?

And I think your point is like an important point and one that we have to intentionally address as we continue to journey, because I don't think we do a good job at it. And I don't actually know what the resolve looks like. It'd be cool if I could be like, here's my three-step plan to unite our communities. I just don't know. But what I do know is spending time with people and sharing space with people, it transforms the way we see the world around us and it transforms the way we see our own issues, right? And the more time we get to be in space, the more trust that's earned, and the more we can build together and create together.

And I believe that is the way forward. That just requires a level of intentionality that I don't think we've embraced as a city at large yet. I will also say that like many of my people are like communal people and you there's so much that gets lost in interpretation on virtual calls and Zoom. And I think this pandemic has been really disorganizing in that way, that I've watched meetings go really, really salty fast, that wouldn't necessarily go like that if we were actually in person with each other. Like when that meeting...

I'll tell you the power of this, like a moment, right. I was in, the meeting I was talking about with these folks in Federal Way last Saturday, Estela Ortega was there. And while I was speaking, she looked over at me and gave me this look of affirmation that was so encouraging and so affirming because it was from her, right? Whether or not we agree on everything or disagree on everything, like the work that's been put in at El Centro and the legacy that's been created, like, yes. And the fact that you know me and you see me, like I want to be seen by you because you matter to me. Right? And I think we need more of that in space. And I don't know what that looks like, how we get there, but I agree with you that it's an absolute need for our community. Thank you for the question.

Kelly: Thank you, Suzette. And thanks for sharing your time with us today. Really appreciate that. And our community, I mean, our RSJI network is like that. So I'm really appreciative. We have a question from Jenna Franklin. Jenna do you wanna jump on the mic?

Sean: I think Jenna, might've had to hop off. I thought I saw in the comments.

Kelly: Then I'll ask it. Can you talk a bit about how you address horizontal aggression and frustration in your work? Often the systems, institutions and structures are so powerful that we can be disheartened and then look to those who may be working with us, but in different ways we don't relate to and see them as frustrating or part of the problem.

Do you have thoughts on this? Horizontal aggression and frustration in your work, which might be some of that's really playing out maybe in our system, the way in which we have things set up internally in our city government, maybe that's what's being expressed here. So I don't know, what do you think Sean?

Sean: Yeah, think in principle it's why we do restorative practices, right? It's because we know people who are harmed and wounded have the trauma response they show up with, and unless folks have been invited to be on a healing journey as individuals and collectively, it's really hard for us to like co-labor and we end up triggering folks in ways that we didn't even think we are triggering folks based upon some trauma that we weren't even proximate to, but like it reminded them of something

I'm absolutely guilty of that as a nonprofit leader, like I have absolutely caused unintended harm by not being present to my positions of privilege and how that's triggering others. I think in moments like that, and this conversation, this is gonna sound abstract, but it also feels really concrete to me that the only way forward is grace. Because like grace selectively applied as favoritism. And so if we give out grace based upon who it is we're giving it to, then we're no different than the criminal legal system. Right?

And so there's a higher calling for those of us that are in this work, and a higher calling to apply grace where there's confusion, apply grace where there's disunity, apply grace, and not a grace that like absolves, in a way that like there's no accountability, but a grace that invites to a journey of healing where we can both get better on the other side of the thing. And too often, when strife is present, we just run away and don't come back together because the space isn't created for us to really engage in that kind of practice with one another. And I think that's real. And I think like the lack of grace in our professional spaces is a catalyst for a lot of disunity that we see when we're looking at co-labor with each other.

Kelly: I just want people to know that we have about, ooh, thanks host. Thanks Sean. We have a few more questions. I just want people to know that we have 15, 16 minutes left on the schedule. Just so people are aware, I know people may have to jump off and stuff, but just giving us a time check. So, Sean, I had a question here from Duncan Munro. Duncan, are you on, that you can jump on or do you want me to ask your question?

[Duncan Munro appears. Duncan is masculine presenting, with close cropped gray hair and glasses. They are wearing a tight blue shirt. Their background is .]

Duncan Munro: Sean, thank you. Deeply moving. I thank you for your engagement with us. What happened to the corporate world and their promises? Were there barriers that we can work to lower for them? Paradoxical as that may sound.

Sean: Yeah. I think that in large part... Firstly I bear there are some corporate folks that lead in and lead in intentional ways and I'm grateful for those and I'll highlight them because I'm gonna talk bad about other folks. I want to make sure I talk good about the ones that have done right. Like Vulcan has done a really impressive job in leaning in and honoring their commitment. Russell Investments is someone we partner with. They've done a really good job. The Seahawks have been so intentional in resource and work to transform communities. Those are just a few that I can think of off the top of my head.

I just think a lot of it was PR, so it's not like, what can we do? It was just PR, right? It was responsive. It was no different than the city council being like, yes, we'll divest by 50%. Like it was like a moment. And we've all had those moments in life, right?

Like my wife's gone, I emotionally eat. And so I was driving through Burien the other day and I stopped at Bakery Nouveau, and I got a piece of chocolate cake. Now I really didn't want the chocolate cake, and then I brought it home and I said to myself, I'm just gonna have a taste right now and I'm gonna eat it later. And then after I had the taste, I was like, no bump that I'll eat the whole thing right now. So that was like there was just a moment, right. I really didn't enjoy the cake, and I probably won't get the cake, it was a good cake, but like, it was a moment.

And I think the whole world was having a moment and they responded to that moment because it felt right. And then once the feeling was gone, then there was nothing else to affirm why they should keep moving forward.

And I'll just add one more thing to that. Feelings are like, so fickle. As somebody who spent time being trained as a minister in the church, I will tell you one of the worst moments for me. And some folks might look at me sideways when I say this, is like the altar call, right? And this is why I used to loathe the altar call moment. Is because you get people in these peak emotional

moments, and then they'd show up to the front of the church to like make this profession of faith and this commitment for this journey they wanted to be on.

But it was because of the emotions they were feeling. And the minute those emotions went away, like the compulsion to like live a different life went away too, because they were attached to the feeling and not attached to the actual need. Right? And so I believe in large part that the corporate folks were attached to the feeling and not to the actual felt need, because if they were attached to the need, these corporations have made jabillion of dollars while their workers are still making less than a living wage. We still have corporations in our country who have part of their wage being subsidized by the government because they don't pay living wages for their staff.

Like, forget giving me a million dollars. How about you raise the wages of the folks that are working at the grocery stores and are doing Uber Eat on the side while they're being vulnerable and exposed to COVID all day long. Yeah. And shout out to the Seattle Storm too. Humble brag, my wife's a chaplain for the Storm. Humble brag. All right.

Kelly: Thanks, Sean. I like jabillions as well. I like jabillions a lot. Okay, so we have about 12 minutes left and there are so many questions actually that ended up rolling in, Sean. So I'm gonna end up picking and choosing your... But I'm gonna pick one that I think speaks to some learning from history and then speaking to where folks see themselves as city employees, Sean. This is what I see here from Anne-Marie Hunsaker.

And I don't know if you want to jump on, Anne-Marie, but I could also read your question. I'll give you a few beats to unmute.

Anne-Marie: Can you hear me?

Kelly: Yes, we can hear you.

Sean: And thank you for a tour of your house.

[Anne-Marie Hunsaker appears. They are feminine presenting, with brown hair pulled back. They are wearing a white shirt and have earbuds in their ears. They are standing in front of closed blinds.]

Anne-Marie Hunsaker: No, I had to get to a place with better internet. Thanks so much. And I can feel as I'm listening to you, something and I wrote it in the chat too, that I've been really wrestling with is working in government, but also really believing in transformative justice, prison industrial complex abolition, and how much there's sometimes there's that dissonance in

that wrestling. Being here and how I really do believe that like justice can be realized and harm can be addressed outside of criminal punishment in the criminal legal system, so can you speak to that? How, I guess I just want to honor that, that that is like a real struggle, but that I'm trying to show up for, and I would love to hear you talk about how transformative justice addresses harm outside of this state, outside of police, outside of criminal legal system.

Sean: Yeah. Anne-Marie, and we're talking like in the context of kind of our day-to-day, like engagement, is that what we're talking about? Or-

Anne-Marie: Yeah, even.

Sean: Okay.

Anne-Marie: Yes, sorry. Like how you are doing it in your organization too.

Sean: Okay. Yeah. Yeah, great question. And thank you for that. Yeah, so for us as an organization, we believe that we have to constantly be working to transform the systems that cause harm and support the young people who've been harmed. We believe that's a necessary both. And because otherwise we'd benefit from the suffering of young people in perpetuity because the system can continue to do what the system does, and we can continue to do what we do. And we can have jobs forever and young people will be harmed forever. And that's like statistically altruistic. And so like that's not a way forward.

I will tell you. And this is, like I said, I'm present to today Anne-Marie, so as an organization, internally, we are working on what it looks like for us to like support each other through transformative justice. Right? Like how do we take it? Cause you know what happens with these nonprofits, right? Like when you get someone like me who worked at a large nonprofit, when I show up and I'm building structure, I unintentionally begin to build structures that mirror white dominant culture, because it's what I'm most familiar with because of where I came up out of. Right?

And so like when we were building out strategies for how we support people in growing and developing, we didn't build strategies that weren't punitive. Right? We renamed punitive strategies, right? We kind of like how they dress a different types of court and there'll be like this court or that court, we just kind of renamed a practice that wasn't helpful in the first place. And instead of having like performance improvement plans, we call them coaching plans. All right. And we're progressive, but like at the core, it kind of carries the same connotation.

So internally as an organization, we're wrestling with that like today, like right now, what does it look like to be restorative in the way that we engage each other, as folks have challenges that

show up or cause harm in unintentional manner. Externally it's really about a constant extension of grace for the young people, the families we serve and the people who we partner with to access the young people and families we serve, which is a really challenging exercise, that's absolutely exhausting.

Particularly when folks cause harm, whether it's a young person who you supported or a family that you supported that then causes harm, or whether it's systemically. When like the prosecutor says something and you're like, really? Is that what we're doing in 2022? Right now, that's what we're doing that today? And so it's this constant churning away at how to apply grace, how to center humanity, how to move forward and how to invite people on a healing journey. I think that like if we don't center humanity and we don't lean in with grace, the invitation to healing, it feels token. And it kinda feels like land acknowledgement sometimes.

I think Kelly, you did a really great job. So I'm not talking about your land acknowledgement, but we've all been in every meeting that's ever been since the past year, since we've been doing this thing, and you're like, oh, okay. Right. I hope that helps answer some of what you asked in a way that honors your question. Thank you.

Kelly: Okay, thank you, Sean. Yes, I want to be cognizant of time while also balancing my aversion to cutting anything off that makes sense. And that is organic and that is real, like a good conversation. But we have a couple more questions and I think I'm sort of jumping around to see sort of what I can ask that makes sense at the time.

And so Bean, they, them from Seattle Public Library, you had a question. Are you able to jump on the mic and ask, or do you want me to do it?

[Bean does not appear on camera. Instead, it's a screen with their initials, "BT", in a white circle. Their name and pronouns are on the bottom.]

Bean: Hello, it's me. Okay. Hi Sean, thanks so much for everything you've said so far. My name is Bean, Indigenous Shimanchu Asian. I use they, them pronouns and work at the Seattle Public Library. So at the library, our job is to steward free public space. And we are asking ourselves all the time, how we can steer to space that centers, safety and security for everyone, staff, workers, the public, patrons and not all of us are in agreement about what that means or what that looks like. And I think that like in all spaces in our society, we see that systemic inequities really play out in libraries.

And so the question I have is how would you recommend that we in libraries and elsewhere, define safety from an intersectional lens so that we can get closer to genuine security and not like dominant cultural security?

Sean: Yeah. Yeah, thank you for that question, Bean. Let me start by saying like the internal leadership that's necessary to see stuff like that come to fruition is profound, but when there's a culture in place where that's just your way of being, it gets so much easier. I'm gonna share a quick story and then I'll do my best to answer your question in what I think could be a helpful way.

I went to breakfast with a friend of mine on Sunday morning at this place called Classic Eats in Burien, South King County, a Black-owned restaurant. And the staff there were amazing, and the service was great, but that wasn't like what stood out to me the most. There was a gentleman who came in who it seemed to me was navigating some sort of a mental health burden. And he was holding a clown doll. Now, can I be, I'm gonna be 100 with y'all, I can't front, right.

The dude looked a little disheveled, was carrying a clown doll and walked into the restaurant as we were trying to exit. Now, this kind of played out in some of my horror narratives in my mind, right? I'm like how am I gonna get by? And I watched something happen that I almost... I just sat in my car and was almost brought to tears.

The bartender came around the bar, talked to the gentleman, because she knew the gentleman's name. And walked outside, talked to the clown doll and asked how Charlie was doing, because Charlie has a name too. And the gentlemen just had the conversation and then walked away.

Like that level of humanity, like that level of humanity, the way that that person showed up for that man, it was so beautiful. And it wasn't complicated. We are so afraid because we've been told to be afraid. Now I'm not saying that there aren't people who like are in the midst of a crisis and in their crisis could cause harm. But we are so afraid because we're told to be afraid. But what would it look like if we just weren't afraid of each other? What would it look like if we provided enough information and education to the people who served at the libraries to know how to deescalate and engage people in their own shared humanity? Like, what if we did that? What if folks felt confident in their ability to deescalate? So they didn't have to activate historical practices of problematic public safety, right?

Like, I know it's not the easy, like call this number and they'll take care of everything. But I think like we depend way too much on other people to handle our own stuff. Like I got stuff y'all that I'm working through right now. We all got stuff. But if that stuff keeps us from seeing our shared humanity, like that's some self-work we got to do in order to get it right. Because that man deserved dignity, and I was scared of that man, and was not in a position where I was

going to give him the dignity he deserved, but that woman behind the bar saw his humanity and honored him for who he was and his clown, in a way that I was not prepared to do.

I don't think many people who serve in our public spaces are prepared either. And so we got to do a better job equipping those on the front line to show up in a way where they feel safe, but also feel safe to know that we can be present in our humanity, even if we show up different. Thanks, Bean, for the question. And thanks y'all for being present with me while I worked through that emotionally.

Kelly: Thanks, Sean. I really appreciate you. You taking us there. A lot of the times when we do our implicit racial bias training, one of the things that we talk about is a way to stop from falling back on your implicit racial bias is to just sort of be more human, be more aware of things. It's not even like having to do specifically with race, but just be more human and make sure you've eaten. Make sure you slow down, you think about it.

These are a lot of times the humanity that we're forgetting. And I really appreciate you bringing us there and your vulnerability too. 'Cause that's the other thing with us doing this work, us being in any kind of serious professional work we can't be vulnerable. Us being men, we can't be vulnerable. Us being Black men, we can't be vulnerable, but well, that's a lie. So I appreciate that, Sean.

We had a couple more questions, but I want us to round out. I want to thank Sean for joining us today. Folks, I want you to check out CHOOSE 180 at choose180.org, you can make a donation there. You can find out more about Sean's work there. And I'm sure Sean is open to community and to being in community with us in different ways.

So Sean, I don't know if you want to add anything, or if I'm forgetting anything.

Sean: Thank you all for being here. Thanks for your willingness to turn on your cameras. It made this much more enjoyable experience to be able to see faces and thanks for your really intentional questions. We got a long way to go, but I trust and believe we can get there together.

Kelly: Thanks, Sean. And thanks fam. It's good to see a lot of you all here today. It's good to see you all here for our next summit. See, or the next session at 12:30. All right, be good. Go eat something, drink something. Take care of yourself. Okay. Bye everybody, bye Sean.

Sean: Thanks, Kelly.

Kelly: Thank you.