Video Transcript
Black Directors Forum

[**Image Description**: A recording of a virtual meeting. There is one large video feed taking up most of the screen, with a smaller line of five video feeds above it. The speaker at any given time is automatically placed in the larger video feed, with the previous speaker moving to the smaller feeds above.]

[The large feed is occupied by Kelly O'Brien, a dark-skinned, masculine-presenting person with a bald head and goatee with chinstrap. Kelly is wearing a colorful shirt with blue, red, and white. He has a virtual background that says, "Interrupt white dominant culture".]

Kelly O'Brien: Viewers, members of the Race and Social Justice network and the City of Seattle to the Second Annual Black Directors Forum, where we have a chance to speak with Black leaders in city government who are directors in their various departments. I'm your moderator Kelly O'Brien. And we have with us five of the directors of different various government departments with us today. And I will move forward to introduce them.

I lost my little cheat sheet. Part of what I do is I'm just honest about how I approach anything so that I'm not too flustered. So let me just see if I could find that break, I tend to be efficient, and I ended up being less efficient. There we go. Yes, thank you very much. I got my cheat sheet back, so yes, just to welcome all the members of the RSJI network, various change teams, core teams, equity leads, and folks that have different RSJI positions throughout the City. Thank you very much for joining as directors. This year, what we're gonna do, is we're gonna have a follow-up conversation to last year where we met a number of the directors and heard a lot about their background and their journey towards their positions as leaders in city government. And this year, we wanted to have a more in-depth conversation, responding to issues as they came up over the last year, particularly the movement for Black lives and protesting in the street and ways in which BIPOC communities were calling for change in society over the last year. And wondering how this stuff affected you folks as Black leaders in city government. So this is how we're framing the discussion this year.

I'm gonna start first, however, by doing a land acknowledgement as is often customary, I'm gonna read out what I have, but then I'm gonna say the words that I normally say. So we provide a land acknowledgement for the unceded tribes of the Coast Salish people, and the, what is it? The unceded tribes of the Coast Salish people in the unceded territories of the Pacific Northwest, right? That's what it is. And so what I like to do when I'm doing a land acknowledgement, is to really actually bring our attention to a real simple fact that we would

not be here, if it weren't for the displacement of the Indigenous people of this land. And a history of displacement affects all the major BIPOC communities that are in the city of Seattle, right? Chinatown folks, Black folks from the Central District and Indigenous people.

And so when we think about giving a land acknowledgement, what we're doing is we're acknowledging the fact that we have to be aware that city government is a legacy of colonialism, and it's a legacy of something that's disruptive to communities, particularly communities of color. And that we, when we're doing anti-racist work are trying to repair that. And so I always ask folks to close their eyes and think about the fact that without that disruption, without that murder, without that mayhem, without that displacement, these buildings that we, you know, SMT, the Central Building, where we're at it wouldn't be there. They wouldn't exist. This government city hall wouldn't exist, right? So when we're trying to do anti-racist work and we're trying to turn the clock back to something that's more free and more inclusive or turn the clock forward to something that's better than what we all know, that's what a land acknowledgement is all about.

The last thing I'll say is we ask that you be more action oriented around all that that you don't just sort of sit and do it as a matter of course and for fun. And so I always mentioned Real Rent Duwamish. Simply type that into Google and you have an opportunity, just one opportunity to support the Duwamish people, help them raise funds. We know that the Duwamish Tribe is not only is it not recognized by the Federal government because of a language and a population numbers, but there's also disputes about whether or not they're considered the true people of the Indigenous people of Seattle or not. And so these issues, they come to bear, they affect people's lives. And so a land acknowledgement contains all of that. That's why I invite you to go to Real Rent Duwamish, and to look into supporting some of our Native peoples.

Okay. We'll move on now. We're gonna start with some introductions. We're gonna have everyone introduce themselves. I'm gonna do the first modeling of the introduction. We always lead with race and we always have pronouns so that everyone feels that they're included and they belong. And that we're able to actually have race be the lead of the conversation that we're going into. So my name is Kelly O'Brien. I'm with the Race and Social Justice Division in the Office for Civil Rights. I am Black Pan-African, I use he/him/his pronouns and, oh, we have a check-in question. It's like your favorite holiday meal. I've been testing this question out all week in different meetings and people really like it.

So I'm gonna go with the mac and cheese. So here's the deal in Trinidad, we have something called the macaroni pie and it's a really, it's very like, well-constructed, you can like cut it in squares, but it's like, it's kinda like a hard mac and cheese, but then I came to the states and you people, man, you, people got ooey, gooey, crunchy, yummy, just all kinds of wonderful mac and cheese that I just absolutely adore. And so whenever it's Thanksgiving or anything like that,

that's the dish that I'm kind of rushing for making sure I have my good hefty portion. So, what's your favorite holiday meal? Whatever holiday you celebrate about also make sure your name, race, pronoun, and your department. And I will just call on my director first to go because I see her there.

[Mariko Lockhart appears in the large video feed. Mariko is feminine presenting, with tan skin and dark curly hair. She is wearing glasses and a colorful blouse over a black shirt. She is in an office with pictures on a desk in the background.]

Mariko Lockhart: All right. Thank you, Kelly. And I love being back here again. It was such an honor and a pleasure to be in this conversation last year. I'm Mariko Lockhart, I'm the Director of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. I identify as Black and Japanese. I use she/her pronouns and favorite holiday meal, I was thinking not so much of a meal, but that around the holidays in December cookies, there are so many, so much baking happens. And I just don't think you see that in other times of the year, and it's a wonderful selection. So I'm gonna go with the dessert and the great variety of cookies. And I will go ahead and call on my colleague, Robert Nellams.

[Robert Nellams appears in the large video feed. Robert is masculine-presenting, with brown skin and a bald head. He has a lanyard around his neck and a green shirt. He sits in an office with an L-shaped desk behind him, with a round desk close to the back wall, which has several framed pictures.]

Robert Nellams: Thank you, Mariko. Hi, I'm Robert Nellams. I am Black. I use he/him/his pronouns. I'm the Director of Seattle Center and my favorite holiday meal, I'm not gonna talk about a dish, I'm gonna talk about a time that we get together. I mean, my family is a large family here. There's over 50 of us. We get together for Christmas brunch, on Christmas morning. It's usually 10 to 2:00 P.M. And we have everybody coming through. We divide up into five different homes in our community, and we rotate the fare each time around. And it's a chance for us to continue the legacy of our grandmother, who brought us together every Sunday of every week of every year. So that's my favorite holiday meal. And so, I'll go and ask Royal to join us.

[Royal Alley-Barnes appears on the large video feed. Royal is feminine-presenting with brown skin. Her hair is inside a gray headwrap styled in a bun above her forehead. She is wearing large sunglasses and has a gray shawl around her shoulders. In the background is a large painting on a brick wall.]

Royal Alley-Barnes: Thank you, Robert, Mariko. This is my first time out. I've heard great things about the discussion and the gathering from last year. So I'm looking forward to our experiences this year. My name is Royal Alley-Barnes. I use she and her. I'm Black, African and

diaspora. And my favorite holiday is Ramadan And I love the way in which Southern rice or corn pudding fits well into any of those menu factors. The other piece that's amazing to me is the emotional and mental respite that we can contribute to and be a part of as we gather. So the gathering aspect and how it makes us feel and who we get to see is what constitutes a holiday in my mind. And I'm gonna call on, oh, I'm gonna (laughs) I'm gonna call on Your Honor.

[Anita Crawford-Willis appears in the large video feed. Anita is a feminine-presenting person with dark skin and black hair in curls. She wears glasses, a blue shirt, and a pearl necklace. Her background appears to be a virtual image of a large modern office.]

Anita Crawford-Willis: Thank you so much. And I have to echo what everyone has said. It was wonderful being with you all last year, felt such a great sense of community. And of course I love Ms. Alley-Barnes. So for me, my name is Anita Crawford-Willis. I pronouns are she and her. Race, Black African-American. Department, I work for Seattle Municipal Court. I'm a judge there. I'm not the presiding judge. I am a judge there and I am co-chair of our RSJI team. And like so many of you said, well, when you said a meal, I thought of the whole meal, just not one, one aspect of it. So I like Christmas of course is my favorite. And again, as so many of you said, it's a feeling that we get the chance together with family and the carrying on of traditions that our families have had. So I like it all, not so much the turkey, but ham, the candied yams, the greens, the mac and cheese, the corn bread and the cornbread dressing. So I don't wanna offend anyone, but I read something recently. They said, if you put stuff in your dressing that your grandmother didn't put in, then that is not dressing that's stuffing. So I'm talking about the down-home dressing that's made with the corn bread base. So they get, see Robert we're right on there. And I am going to go to none other than our chief.

[Chief Harold Scoggins appears in the large video feed. Chief Scoggins is a masculine-presenting person with brown skin and close-cropped black hair. They are wearing glasses, and a white shirt with Seattle Fire Department patches and a badge. Their background is a virtual image of the Seattle cityscape with the SFD logo in the top right. Below the logo it says, “Here to Serve”.]

Harold Scoggins: Hello, everyone. Kelly, thank you for having us back and welcome. So all of the other panel members, I hope to learn from all of you as we have this discussion, every time we get together as a group, I feel like I always learn something. So that's important. My name is Harold Scoggins. I identify as Black African-American. My pronouns are he and him. And as mentioned, I'm with the Fire Department, I am Fire Chief, but I'm a firefighter at heart. I still love the boots on the ground work of being a firefighter. So I just don't get to do as much these days. That's why I have a tie on and a white shirt. Favorite holiday meals out first, I'll say Kelly, I have mac and cheese all year round. As a matter of fact, I just had some today with my lunch. So I am a fan and I try to make it every opportunity I get, but I'll give two, I love barbecue and smoking meat. So the Fourth of July, I probably always do more than I should. So we have a lot

for a long time and that's always good with me. But desserts is really, it brings back a lot of family memories and it makes me realize I'm not the cook I think I am because my grandmother would make these sweet potato pies and oh my god. And the recipe was passed down to my aunts and I have tried probably hundreds of times and I just can't make it taste the same. So the fond memories of my family, that when I get a bite of that sweet potato pie, generally around Christmas time, it brings back a lot of reflecting on so many great memories. So I'll leave it there.

Kelly: Gosh, thank you so much. Thank you all for sharing and for introducing, I wanna make special--did you have a question?

Royal: I wanted to mention that I'm the Acting Director of the Office of Arts and Culture for the City of Seattle. That's probably a piece of information--

Kelly: Thank you, no, no, no. That's very, thank you very much. We shouldn't forget that. So, all right. Now, thank you all for sharing. I really appreciate the fact that you all remember how it was last year, too. And remember now was the moderator who was for me here. So I really appreciate you all coming back. And the first question is really, first question is there's a really general question about your experiences over the last year, last year and a half during the pandemic in all your various capacities.

So, Royal, I know you weren't here at the City at that time, but you're a leader in community and you're a person that does a lot of work. And so I think you could totally answer this question as well, but the question is like, how did your work change during the pandemic, during that time when there were protests every day. And I was counting down those protests when we went beyond a hundred days, it'd be 120 days I was counting those days, were going on and on. And a lot of action was being called for. And how did your work, how was your work affected over that time? And each of you have about three to four minutes to answer.

This is a sort of first question, not our deep discussion question, but just a reflective question. And I'll start with you Royal, if you don't mind, just to get your experience, yeah.

Royal: It's interesting because people say you can't go home again. But I think that for elders in the community, such as myself, we did go home again, 1970 was right in front of us. 1969 was right in front of us James Baldwin "I'm Not Your Negro" was right in front of us. And we saw different generations pushing and pulling for the same efficacy of being human beings of living one's lives.

You're right, I do a lot of community work. I'm embedded and there's a level of pain. And watching our young people do what we did 50 years ago at their age. And you begin to wonder

what have we done as leaders that would still require our young people and our children to be doing exactly the same thing 50 years later. And it gives thought to not only the integrity of their tenacity, but the fact that they still know what right should look like.

And so when we have these shootings, the unfortunate pieces that we elevated as a visual to represent the trauma, the fact of the matter is that every single day, a Black person, a Black man, woman, or child loses their life because we live in a society that does not value Black people. That's the bottom line, that's the fact. The underlying condition is racism. And so anything on top of that is just a determinant, either positive or negative. And I heard that from high schoolers, I heard that from artists in the art sector, I heard that from nonprofits. I heard that from various religious leaders, I heard that from just standing in line at cash and carry. People talking about how their businesses are impacted, how they're hurting. I've watched people actually just pay for groceries for the person, either in front of them or in back of them. I've seen people literally just pass money for gas to each other.

And the pain points are so obvious that as leaders the burning question is how do we rise above the pain points in a way that has the efficacy of flourishing? We have survived. We're all sitting here. We're talking about our ancestral taste and memories. So we have survived. We have thrived in various different areas of excellence. The question is, can our children flourish? And I leave that open. So my answer is, I don't know that answer, but I see people working on it from all generations every single day. And it's painful to watch proud to be part of it, but painful to watch and absolutely unbearable to think that eight year olds, there was a photo that said I'm eight year old. I should be learning my colors, not defending my color. And that's pretty much where I'll leave it right now.

Kelly: Thank you so much. I invite everybody to jump in and to tack onto that or to just like, go ahead into their reflection, but thank you for that so much. Who wants to give it a shot?

Robert: Well, I'll jump in. I won't go down exactly the same road that Royal went on, but I say amen to what she just said. I think it's a very difficult thing to be at this age and have to be with some modicum of success. When you look around and you see that your children are going to have to deal with the same things that you deal with and that their children are gonna have to deal with the same things that you've dealt with throughout your life. And that you don't see in to all that has gone on.

For the job that I do at the Seattle Center, it was a lot different. All the events stopped, all the things happen, we did shelters, we did hygiene centers. We did a whole bunch of things to try to help community. And that made some things feel a little better, but the bottom line was that Black men, women and children were still being murdered. And that it, it becomes very difficult to be part of any system to where that can be associated with. And to be able to stand and feel

like you're contributing to something, when what you may be contributing to is a perpetuation of what has happened before, what is happening today and what may happen as you go forward into the future.

So what we have tried to do, and I'll give Mariko a huge shout out for this is to try to bring some of the folks on the cabinet together to try to look at some of the issues that are out there and start to try to figure out different ways to approach things so that we can start to see some different results. And to be honest, that it's not enough for a cabinet to do that, you got to bring whole communities along. You gotta bring whole cities along. You gotta bring whole counties, states, and hopefully eventually this country along, but you gotta start somewhere.

And what has helped me through this last year plus, was the fact that we were actually trying to work towards getting something changed, something done that could help our community and help us be full citizens and full participants in this society. And I'm sorry to say that that was the fight that my mother had. That was the fight that my grandmother had. That's the fight I have. And that's the fight that my kids are gonna have. And that's a very sad commentary on this country.

Kelly: Thanks, Robert. Thank you so much.

Anita: I'll jump in next. And I'm gonna talk more about how our work changed because court is a little bit different. So our work changed drastically because we went from having, full calendars, running all courtrooms, doing everything from jury trials and all in between to literally shutting down operations because of the pandemic. The only court that we kept running of course, was the jail calendar because people that are picked up have a right to see a judge within a certain amount of time. And so that calendar continued to move, but all of our other calendars were closed down.

Then when we figured it all out, we moved to having everybody be on WebEx. All the parties were on WebEx. The only people in the courtroom were the judges and a skeleton staff. And we reduced the number of calendars that we were able to do, including jury trials. We had to shut those down for a while because, you need jurors to come in the courtroom in addition to all the other parties, but this was our way to deal with the pandemic and not having crowds of people in the courthouse. And again, this is a new way of doing business for courts. All people are required to mostly come into court for their day in court. We were able to start ramping back up and even adding jury trials back in.

And then as there was another outbreak of the pandemic. So then we had to go back down again and say, okay, what are we gonna do? So reducing calendars again. So I think this was just a really good opportunity for the court to look at other ways that we can keep, make sure that

people have their day in court and are heard. So even now, even though we have not ramped all the way back up, all parties can still appear by WebEx. They're not required to come in-person. And I think this showed us a way that we could still meet the needs of the parties without having the courtroom doors open because justice delayed many times is justice denied. So I think this was a very great opportunity for the court to come up with a new and innovative way to still keep the business going.

And also it gave us an opportunity to think about ways that we can change and ways that we can change and address many of the concerns that Black Lives Matters have brought to light. And so it gave us that opportunity also to address those issues and with our court resource center. And we figured out a way to still meet needs of those in the community, without them coming into the building. Our court resource center provides clothing and food and things like that to members of the public, not just people who are defendants in our courtroom. So I think it was really a great opportunity to us to see that we could be innovative and still let people have their day in court without having the courtroom doors open and coming in person.

Kelly: Thank you. Thank you very much, Judge Crawford-Willis. I can't imagine just the wider implications for each sector in which you're all in, simply because of all the changes over the last year that will remain with us as time goes on. Just hearing what you're talking about in the court. I just, being an attorney myself, I just couldn't imagine how the court system is shifting and changing with the demand that goes into the criminal justice system, the court system period. So thank you so much.

Who would like to jump in here to answer? Maybe...

Harold: I'll jump in.

Kelly: Okay, good.

Harold: So I'll talk about it on two fronts, one on the department front, and then one personally on how did the pandemic and the protests impact our work and what we were doing. In the fire department, we adopt things out of crisis or just out of a community need. And we've been doing that since our existence. If you look at our paramedic program and how that got incorporated into the department 50 years ago, if you look at our hazmat teams or our rescue teams, there was a need, if you look at our fire prevention bureau, there was a document written called America's Burning in the seventies, and they talked about building construction inspections and all those things. And so there was a need.

That's on the departments, we saw a need once again, when the pandemic landed in front of us and just trying to figure out where could we stand in the gap? Where could we help? And that's

when we engaged in the testing piece. And that's not something we had ever done before, with any COVID testing or any type of testings, and then even transitioning into the vaccination space. That's just not something that, before January of 2020, I would have ever thought we would be actually having a conversation about how to stand up a site for testing. And we weren't alone, with the mayor's support and with FAS and all the other departments, whether it's OIRA with the community connections or the Department of Neighborhoods, and just so many in the community that we partnered with to do that, but that just wasn't working. I would have ever thought we would be doing, but out of a crisis and out of need, it became very important for us to figure out how could we help. And that has been very successful.

And we built so many new relationships in the community through that work and relationships we probably should have had before the pandemic hit, but we didn't, but now we do. So we're trying to figure out how we sustain them, because that way we can actually serve the whole community. And that becomes very important for us as a department. We transitioned to all the other ways that everyone else did with the teleconferencing and changing our practices, moving from paper to electronics and all of that. Essentially some of those things I've been in the city for six and a half years, we've been trying to do for five years. But when the pandemic came, we were able to turn that wheel in a matter of months and transitioned from paper to electronic workspaces. So that worked out really well.

But on the personal side, I think for me personally, the protests impacted me in ways that I never thought that I would experience. And I was living in California in LA when the Rodney King verdict came in and I watched the city of LA erupt as many cities did around the country, never in my life, would I thought I would have seen anything ever to compare to that because, if you drive down interstate 10, that runs through the heart of LA and you literally saw fires burning on both sides of the freeway, as far as the eye could see smoke stacks everywhere, I would have never thought that I would have seen anything that compared to it, but what we saw last summer compared to it, it just in so different ways. And even if we just look at the one space with the CHAZ in the CHOP area, it's interesting having so many conversations with so many different people.

Many people say, well, I've never seen the standoff like this, where does something, how does this happen? And I said, well, no, yeah, you have, you seen Waco, you've seen Ruby Ridge. You've seen the Bundys, you've seen standoffs like this. You probably just haven't seen them in a four to six block radius in the middle of the city. And for me personally, it led me to a place that I never thought I would be. And in the middle of that, and with Mami Hara and Sam Zimbabwe, and just landing in that space. But what I saw was a lot of people that look like me in a very vulnerable space and thinking about how outcomes could be so bad, if something went so wrong and it became a place that I just felt I needed to be, and I never thought I would be there, but it became a place I needed to be. Didn't know how to have those conversations.

Didn't know how to engage with people, to try to help resolve it as best I could. That's not a skillset that I learned as a firefighter.

You just have to put yourself in those positions to try to help where you can. And that's really where my mind was because I saw a lot of kids who were my kids' age, has I have four kids out protesting in a very vulnerable position. And as a dad and as a community leader, as a person, as a person who's involved in community, I thought that was the best place for me to be. And if I can be in some place to prevent people from being harmed in any kind of way, that's the place I need to be. It led to so many new relationships and to understanding, it led to me learning how to listen in new and different ways and learning how to communicate.

But it had a profound impact on me as I talked to my 21-year-old daughter during this time. And she says, dad, I gotta be out there. And I said, honey, I understand, let me just talk to you before he go. And I'm trying to kind of give her the rules of the road because it was important. So profound impact, and it will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Kelly: Thank you so much. Thank you so much for sharing, Harold. Mariko, how was your take?

Mariko: Well, I'm first of all, so moved by this conversation, each of what each of you has shared. And just wanna say something about Harold 'cause he just spoke, which is, I think we all saw true heroism when Harold was out at CHAZ and CHOP and in a way that does not necessarily align with being a fire chief (chuckles). Like you said, building relationships on the ground, being there, being a caring voice, being someone that protestors really trusted and would look to for to be heard.

So I would say that goes to one of my reflections on this past time over a year, which is one, like I heard, Royal and Robert talk about the pain and that's the first word that came to mind when I read that question, is it just brought back a period of time that was so incredibly painful and to try and like for me to say, well, like what my personal experience, my professional experience, like it was all just one big blur of feeling myself very torn about what is the right action for me as a person and what is the right action for me as a Director of the Office for Civil Rights. And I ended up writing a letter about it, having been out in a protest and experiencing, the flash bangs and the fear and the clash and also, hearing my colleagues talk about like, we had been on these protests lines decades ago, right?

This is a continuing struggle. And I think that that's another part of this past experience has been one, a time to reflect on how far we have not come. And also, like how much is up to each new generation to take on. And we may not agree, but as I'm sure our elders did not agree with a lot of things that we did in the ways we protested, but some of that shakeup is necessary for change to happen.

In our role as the Office for Civil Rights, we had a lot of expectations that were placed on us from community, from Black community, from folks who were protesting and a lot of that protest was around what against the institution. Someone else said that we work for and the perpetuation of racism that our institution is responsible for. And so what is our role on the inside and what is our role as leaders within that institution and how do we uplift those voices?

And so I think that was, to the question about sort of how it impacted work. I think it brought it into salience, the responsibility we have as city leaders and also how hard it is, how much pain we hold. And I know it was true for all of the departments, but I also know, like in ours, our Race and Social Justice team being the holders of space for our city employees of color, especially our Black employees, and holding space for that pain was especially hard and really stressful. There was so much stress in the city at that time. That's another memory I have, is like this incredible amount of stress all the time of people feeling cognitive dissonance with like, this is what I thought I was doing in the city, doing good work, with honesty and integrity. And then this is what is happening on the street and how do I reconcile those things?

And so it was an ongoing, for me, it's just ongoing questions about how do we best do that work and hold those voices and uplift them. So that was a bit of a ramble, and then Robert mentioned the work that we did, coming together as cabinet. I do wanna reflect on that because I think one of the beautiful things that came out of that time for me was the comradery and the fellowship among cabinet members, among our department directors and really, coming to see everyone in action and that the admiration I have for each of you is so deep and will also stay with me for the rest of my life. I've never had an experience like that. I have to say of a group of people coming together, all wanting to act from a place of integrity and value and be responsive to the demands for, and acknowledgement of the harm that was being done against Black people and other people of color, and trying to figure out where we fit in all of that and how we could do better. And that was, and continues to be, that those relationships and that shared belief and goal, truly one of the most meaningful experiences of my life.

Kelly: Thank you so much, yes.

Royal: Mariko has just kind of pushed me into a whole, pushed me into a whole nother place and positioning. And I'm beginning to pull out for me salient parts of what I've been hearing from my other colleagues here. And I can say, perhaps I can say this because I'm short of being 90 days in as acting Director in the Office of Arts and Culture. So I truly had to stop for a moment and say, am I in the institution working for the community and with them, or am I with the community and for them working through the institution, and I'm gonna have to say, I'm

the latter and was with every respect in not all due respect. 'Cause that actually means no respect, right?
But with every respect, that's exactly what all my colleagues here are doing within the institution, working for the community and through our lived experiences around social justice, equity and equality, and doing it in the level of equanimity. CHOP was very, very real. And out of CHOP came an elevation of the arts, an acknowledgement of the elevation of the arts, because that reflection and that narrative, from the burn zone to the paint zone, from the burn zone to the justice zone, from the burn zone to the reflective zone, it just this entire circle of being watching this whole new life come out.

And so I had the opportunity of coming into the Office of Arts and Culture and of all the things that were written about me. Of course, while I only look forward to see if my name is spelled correctly and it was, I was happy, but was this big thing that said elevating Black arts and Seattle recovery and having those things be simultaneously and having those things be salient comparables. And so that to me was a hopeful message. And so coming in as the Acting Director of Arts and Culture, I cannot help, but understand the poignant nature of what you all are saying.

And the challenge of how do you make that into behavior change? How do you make that into policy and practice and from there into legislation, et cetera. And so I was talking to a white colleague and I won't say Sam Zimbabwe's name, but my question to all my white colleague is you are so in this working Black and Brown and Indigenous and Asian, what are you doing to retain and educate those colleagues and those communities who voluntarily ascribed as white, not for this conversation, but still part of that whole making of continuing our conversations in visual formats, in formats or symbols, in reflecting. And so out of all of the experiences you all are talking about every time you were talking about something, an artists just popped up in like, my whole space would be populated because I can think of artists who are doing that.

Those who are talking about the valor and rigor, that takes to be a physicality piece, like a fire person, the cognitive cognitive that someone like a Mariko builds, the kinds of social justice, everywhere that a judge brings and the kind of interactive engagement that Robert brings And then looking at someone like yourself, Mr. O'Brien, who's willing to constantly step out front and still be humble enough to let all of us talk. This is the excitement I see in the Office of Arts and Culture that we're able to engage with all of you and engage with our communities, and we're gonna keep pushing that. And so as a Black and unapologetically Black leader in the public sector, I feel that's my responsibility. And so that's just where I sit. So I wanna say that it's not gonna change if I'm 61 days in or 91 days in, that's exactly where I sit.

Kelly: I really appreciate you pulling that all together for us, Royal. I think, it's just really significant everything that you all spoke about. And it actually, it brought to mind the fact that

so much change for the workforce in general, but like by and large, like for BIPOC employees, for Black employees, some of the things you were hearing, first of all, a lot of Black employees were still on the front lines, still going out to work. Going out to work every day. You know what I'm saying? Like that's one thing that happened. The other thing you hear is, folks were like, "Hey, I don't actually have to go into these environments where I get all these microaggressions. And I feel like people, don't really, people aren't really interacting with me in a way that's respectful and stuff. I get to do all the work I need to do from home. And I'm good." That's another thing that we heard from Black employees.

And it's just so much change and so much shifting, but also like so much of things being, coming to our faith that we have to shift, we have to fix it. It just had to happen because of the urgency of the time. So I appreciate you bringing that all together and really sort of is a heavy weight and it leads into my next next question somewhat, because my next question is my Barack Obama question. And I call it my Barack Obama question, because this is gonna be the meat of our discussion today. And I really hope for you all to really like, try to grapple with this thing. But the Barack Obama question is this, when Barack Obama won, I can't remember who the rapper was, but I played, "My President is Black and by Lambo is blue". I play that song over and over and over. I played it loud. I was like everything, everything, there was so much hope, there was so much hope on that.

And a big part of that hope was like, this was a Black man and I'm a Black person. And this might mean there'll be better things for me. It's a very, maybe it's a very superficial sort of thinking. Maybe it's a sort of basic sort of thinking, but it's this sort of thing, like the hopes and dreams of Black folks for Black people in leadership is something that's real and palpable. And often they can't live up to these deep hopes and dreams. And so then there's criticism that comes along with that.

So that's what I call it my Barack Obama question, and it hit closer to home with different folks that we know that are Black leaders in our society. And I wonder how you all grapple with this yourself as Black leaders, as people in position of power, who can be celebrated for where you are and what you're doing, but then also have to like, face really sort of like maybe tougher, tougher standards from Black folks and from communities of color. And I wonder what your take is on that particular question. I don't know who wants to start, who wants a start at it and wants to grab at it? Nobody, I'm gonna have to pick somebody, gonna have to pick somebody. Even when I have to pick somebody. I just pick my director because-

Mariko: Robert's ready, you saw his little hand go up there.

Kelly: Oh, Robert, did your hand go up? Okay, Robert I'll pick you if that's what's gonna happen. 'Cause I always will pick my director. That's what I would do if I ever have to pick, that's what I'll do. You should know that. ou're on mute, Robert The line of the century.

Robert: I was raised not to be bashful. So, when things start to get a little, I'll always go first. And so it's let me see if I can put this in a way that makes sense to people that I feel it very deeply in my soul. We're in the middle of a lot of things. And as a director, you say, well, you have quote unquote power. And I sometimes chuckle at that notion because virtually all the meetings that I have and all the people that I'm meeting and all the folks that I'm negotiating with and all the folks that are coming to us with dollars and cents that are trying to make things happen. Very few of them are people that look like me. Very few of them are people, that are people of color.

And it is, we got 30 organizations on this campus, over 30 organizations on this campus. Only a couple of them are run by people of color. We have a lot of things that go on that suggest that, yeah, you may be the person that I have to talk to, but you're not the one that is gonna make the decision for the city. 'Cause I'm gonna go to the mayor, I'm gonna go to the council and I'm gonna get something, something done. So there's all that stuff that you're dealing with. You're dealing with the push and pull of where the power actually is. And how do you play those games and how do you deal with all that? And then you're... And I don't mean to have this come out wrong, but you feel like you're responsible for being an example for your community and the BIPOC folks that are looking at you as saying that that's where they wanna be, and that's what they wanna aspire to.

So you're trying to make sure that you can help lift people up and that you can help sustain people where they are, that you can help do things that allow people to be able to see themselves being successful. And so you're trying to do that on one side, you're dealing with all the other things on the other side and in the middle, sometimes what can happen is you can lose yourself in all of that. I've been fairly lucky 'cause I've been doing this for 15 years.

And when I started, I would say that I lost myself because I didn't understand what all the things were and how to make things happen in the way that well, if you're gonna not deal with me, you're gonna go deal with the Mayor. If you're not gonna deal with me, you're gonna do a deal with the Council. Then what the hell am I doing it here? You go through a lot of those types of things. I got over that. And what I understood when I kind of came into my own, was that the more that I could be me, the more that I could be the person that my mother raised, the more that could be the person that my grandmother raised the more that I could be the person that my great-grandmother raised, the more that I could be that person and live my life on those terms, the better I was gonna be, not just as a director, but as a person, as a friend, as a colleague and as someone who could help others.

And that's where I come from. I'm looking at how do we bring the next generation of leaders along? How do we bring the next generation of people that helps move this entity, this organization, this community forward. And I hope, I hope that we're opening up enough opportunities for that to happen. I said in the previous question that the same things that my grandmother, my mother and I have been, have dealt with, are the things that my children and their children are going to have to deal with. That's one part of this equation. The other part of that equation is what are we gonna do about that? And how are we gonna help change that? And how are we gonna influence that? And how are we gonna empower people to be able to deal with that?

And that's something that I think that we as directors or anyone in our community that has any sense of some status or something that you should be using that to figure out how to improve and engage with young people and in how to help them navigate and plan to deal with the things that are going to be coming down the road. That's what I love to do. I love to talk to people I love to talk with young people, especially, I love to get energy from them. I go into situations thinking that I know everything because I have some experience because my experience is history. What's happening today and what's gonna happen tomorrow, even though there's gonna be a lot of similarities, it's not gonna be the same thing. I can learn something from them and I can share some of this history with them to tell them how I dealt with it and what mistakes I made and then how that might influence what they do going forward.

And that's in my mind, something that I wished I could do more of, and that I hope that we are all able to try to do and try to help move some of our folks move all of our folks for not so, and my, I guess the last thing that I will say about this is with all that said, I think the biggest burden that's on my shoulders, that's on my back is not what I've done or how successful I've been or what have you. It's how little I feel that, that I have helped move things forward and how much more my kids are gonna have to deal with because I wasn't able to move things forward further. That's the biggest burden that I carry. And I use my kids as just a upkeep of all of us that are coming up in the next generation and so forth. Then people point and say, well, you're successful. And I say, "Based on what?" Because the success, the dollars, the cents, the position that what have you, as a new mayor comes in that says, "I don't want you anymore." Your success just ended. And you're out the door.

So this notion that somehow, some way that people are successful and doing all this stuff, it doesn't sit well with me unless you're using that to build up the next generation. I wish I did more, I wish I could do more. I wish I could point to things that, yeah we've got this in place and do all of that. I just want you to know that that is the biggest burden that I carry with me as I sit in this office as Director of Seattle Center.

Kelly: I really appreciate you getting just a ball rolling on the conversation. And I think people could jump into and just sort of respond. And there's a couple of things that I've heard you say that I think could help us contextualize the conversation a little bit. And the last one being like, basically like you realize, or And the last one being like, basically like you realize, or you wish you could have, you could do more. That's one thing. But the other thing is like getting to a point where you could be more yourself in this job.

I wonder how that speaks for the rest of you as well. And then the last part, why that relates to me is, Royal, remember Royal said, we're all here, as folks from community trying our best to sort of serve and so to me that speaks to that ability to be you, who you are at your core, you know what I'm saying? So, Robert, I know you can ask, but you gotta give me a short answer because then I have to have other people talk, okay? All right, good.

Robert: Just one quick thing, my barometer. And when I get up in the morning, I look, is would my great grandmother, grandmother, and mother be happy with what I did and what I'm going to do. And that's the only barometer I had.

Kelly: Thank you. Thank you so much, Robert. I didn't mean to cut you off, I got a monitor, right? Yes, Royal.

Royal: I think that Robert and I are like the same transactional value or the same transformative value. On one coin, and he's on one side of that coin. I'm on another. And we're navigating that pathway and all those difficulties that you're talking about Robert. But one of the things that I think we all have in common here is that whether we articulate it or whether we simply reflect it, we're asking ourselves on a daily basis, what kind of Black person am I? What kind of Black or Brown or Indigenous or Asian person am I? Because that's how we get up in the morning, identifying who we're gonna be.

And then the challenge that Robert was talking about, and I share this, and that is how are you going to navigate the pathways that you've identified and how are you gonna escalate and get rid of all the barriers that are in the way of the pathways you know that people of color need to go down? What burdens are you gonna be strong enough to identify? And how are you gonna lift them? Which ones can you actually get rid of?

And the conundrum, quite frankly, personally, for me, sitting here with esteemed colleagues is I've been doing this for 50 years, literally. If I've been good at correctly, why am I sitting here? Why are you sitting here? If all the people in my generation were doing it correctly, why are we all still sitting here? However, the other side is a conundrum. Perhaps we all get it correctly. And we are still able to be sitting here in order to keep going forth in the same time of need. So

there is no one perspective on how we're Black or Brown or Indigenous or Asian, the one clear perspective.

And I learned this from Mariko. Thank you, Mariko. And that is the underlying condition every single time, no matter what the determinant it is, no matter what the discussion is, the underlying condition is racism. So deconstructing racism begins to be our call and we do it with different tools, paint, sculpture, poetry, right? The Office of Arts and Culture, looking at an anthropological relationship between how people make things and what they do and why they do it.

But this whole notion of responsibility is something that we have to get out, my perspective, we have to get outside of how we define, how I define my Black self and realize that my responsibility is how I connect with the rest of the people who I'm calling Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian. And that begins to define how successful I am perhaps Robert in defining and doing the work that is still burdensome to our populations in our people. And quite frankly, I hope that every grandchild who sits anywhere in relationship to us can instead go be a rocket scientist, could instead go be a sculptor, a painter, and not major in race relations. They can go and be the best fire chief knowing that Chief Scoggins has done this job already. And they wanna excel beyond. They need to be a Supreme court justice. You see what I'm saying? So that we're no longer having to use our cognitive and our emotional and our amazing brilliance trying to get through life without getting killed.

So that's kind of Robert just kind of riffing that musical term off of what you're doing. And yeah, I had Johnny Masters playing a little bit earlier, turned it down, (laughs) but really, it's hard because it's a hard, difficult environment the years have moved forward, but humanity in relationship to Black people have not, not in the United States of America, that underlying condition that Mariko reminds us about, the underlying condition is always racism, no matter if, if we have joy sadness, success, or however we call it when we have a slight relief from that. So that's kind of the challenge. I see the moment my alarm goes off.

Kelly: The question of why are you all still here? 'Cause I'm not really in your circle yet. So I can't really say we, why are you all still here, that question. It's sort of almost it's related to me in a sort of way the fact that RSJI is almost 18-years-old. And when I came to the city, folks would be like, well, RSJI has been around so long but then nothing's changed. But then when I came in as new eyes, I saw things that were different that were obviously not how things were before in other places. So I knew that something had to change.

And so like, I think in terms of how you're speaking Royal, I wonder what that dissonance is. What are the things that change? The things that don't change because of that position that you're talking about, having woken up in the morning, being the best Black person, but being in

that spot, being in that spot to do what you're doing, like how many what's the dissonance between that change.

And then the other thing that that made me think about was, well change around justice, right? If Black people, just for 50 years, you've been doing this work and still Black people are sort of in the same place that brings me the questions of justice, which I think could get us to have Anita and Mariko sort of like maybe speaking to how it is that the systems around justice and laws and we, in which we encounter laws in our society, which we know are racist, which we know actually hyper surveil, Black and Brown bodies more. How is that sort of playing out in relation to exactly, to like what Royal was speaking about, sort of like the waking up every day and trying to make those changes.

Mariko: Before we jump to that question. 'Cause I know Anita is gonna have lots of wisdom to drop on us. I want to just stick with your original question about, Blackness and power. And I'm finding like this conversation is so deep and meaningful to me. 'Cause I'm hearing things that really resonate. One is like, thank you Robert for bringing me back to think about like, where do I, like, where do all my values, where does all this come from? Well, it's from my parents.

And I do have to remember like the reason I am who I am. And one thing that I always feel and believe is that the most you can do is your best and be true to yourself and your values. And if you try to do things in a way that is supportive of people who need your help and not purposefully harming anyone, then you don't beat yourself up. And I think, some of this conversation is like, if we could have only done more, if we could have done it better, I mean, I think that's not time well spent.

Because we have been in this struggle and we've each done our part, and like Royal said, it could be anywhere. It could be making art and it could be, making laws or putting out fires. It could be so many things that we're doing and it's all contributing in that we're doing it to the best of our ability and we're bringing our perspective and our values to it. And this idea of power and what do we do with this power?

And clearly, it's easy to be in a director position and also feel like I don't have any power, or I certainly don't have the power that, some people think that we have, but it's true. We do have power we're in rooms that other people don't get to be in. We're at tables that other people don't get to sit at. And Barnes, you said Mariko has this clear and consistent message about racism at the foundation. I always think about Kelly saying, I'm there to bring race into the room.

And I'd say part of my journey has been yes, being true to who I was raised to be, honest and true and caring of others and uplifting those who have less or who are being harmed. That's

sort of my upbringing, but being as an adult and being in a leadership position and being particularly Director of the Office for Civil Rights, I've learned a lot in this position and the importance of making sure that race is in the room and being intentional about my own positionality in bringing that into the conversation. So that just every conversation I'm in, I can be advancing that conversation or attempting to.

So I love the conversation about like this personal journey that we're each on, because leadership is very personal and it's very individualized and yes, we're also part of this collective work, and I'm just grateful that we are able to support each other in it.

Kelly: Thank you.

Anita: I'm sorry, Kelly.

Kelly: No you go ahead, you're who I'm hoping to hear from next. Yes, and as you're talking, go ahead. I'm sorry.

Anita: So much of what everyone has said has really resonated with me and Robert, I could, and Mariko, about you know, we all have our piece to do, and it's with everybody doing their piece that we get there and the road, it's not given to those who go fast, but to those who endure until the end. And so we, our parents before us and the ones before us and before us, they all did a piece and we're continuing on that piece and we're gonna endure until the end. So I would say that we should all, it's not that we're gonna say, yay and pat ourselves on the back, but we should know that we are doing our part and to continue doing that.

And we were talking about power and actually, I do have power because when I put on that black robe and I step on the bench, I have power. And I can tell you that as a mother, wife, sibling, friend, and a Black woman, 'cause when I step on the bench, I take all of those things with me. I don't separate those from who I am, that I am profoundly aware of the responsibility that I have when I step on that bench and the weight that I carry because of my position.

And also because I'm a BIPOC person in the community. I'm conscious of the need to ensure that everyone that comes in my courtroom, whatever their racial or ethnic background is, that they feel heard, recognized, and that they feel like in my courtroom, that they have received fair treatment. And that it was just. I also know that, again, my actions are viewed as representative of all BIPOC women and that even other women of color, Black women, they are and in my community, they're viewing me as that and are judging me about how are you doing your work?

And it's difficult because I work in a system that is inherently racist. And so that even heightens the scrutiny surrounding what I am doing. So I'm cognizant all the time of the fact that the people around me and they also, they remind me that they're looking at me through this lens of being a Black woman. And I think that's also challenges that I face in this position is that I'm viewed through those lens, but I take it, I accept that challenge.

And for many of the reasons that you have said, we have to be in there doing the work so that the next generation, I have a daughter who is seven. And so that the next generation, my daughter and your daughters and your granddaughters that as Ms. Barnes said, they won't have to worry about these things that they can worry about just being who they are and who they want to be. They don't have to have these fights. And maybe it won't come in that next generation, but I really believe the work that we are doing is helping to get us there. And so many people say, well, the court system is racist. And that is true. The system was not built. It wasn't designed to be fair and equitable. That's just the way that it is.

But that doesn't mean that us working within the system, that we can't do our part to make sure that people that come before me or come before my colleagues, that they are treated in a fair and equitable way, and that they are treated justly and receive justice. So it's difficult, but it's something that we have to embrace and rise to the level of this challenge. And like, so many of you have said, I always, the two people I represent first and foremost are the people who made me. And that's my mom and dad. And every day, I think, am I making Theodore and Nanny, Are they proud of what I'm doing? Am I doing what they would want? Because they too were very, my parents lived in a time in the south, so they know the things firsthand. They experienced them as my husband grew up in the south and experienced these things firsthand.

So I think that we shouldn't give up hope. We should know that the things we're doing are making a difference and what I do, I don't have staff here at the court because the staff, they worked for the court, but something I'm passionate about is to mentor emerging leaders. And to let them know that yes, you can do whatever it is you want to do. You can take these positions and you take it to the next level and to just encourage them and take them by the hand and push them forward. Because as all you have said, they're the ones who are going to be taking this to the next level.

And so I think that's the other thing that we can do is recognize these emerging leaders, support them, encourage them, but also be truthful with them that it's not easy. It's hard, but that we need you in the race. So I'll stop with that.

Kelly: No, thanks, Judge Crawford-Willis. Before you jump in Chief Scoggins, I was gonna add mentorship 'cause you had listed your things before. And I was gonna say mentorship 'cause I don't know if you all know, but if you pass through Seattle University and if you look like me,

you meet Judge Crawford-Willis. And I'm sure I had more than two or three difficult conversations with you during that time. And so like, yeah, mentorship too. That's another part of what it means to be empowered, to have to like fulfill these expectations. So thanks, Judge.

Chief Scoggins, your take.

Harold: I agree. You guys have framed it well, you've said it well. And I agree with everything that has been said, but it is a heavy weight to carry. It's a heavy responsibility, it's a heavy burden, as a Black African-American fire chief in Washington or in the United States, there's not a lot of us and we lean on each other and we've probably been doing that more since COVID, but we're grounded in our reality. And I do agree that, it's our responsibility to take the optics in the future off of what color you are and focus on the person. And that means that we have to do a good job.

And sometimes that gets a bit challenging because who defines the expectations, they're different by who's defining them. And that determines whether people think you did or did not do a good job, but when you enter these roles, there's a couple of different groups of people out there. Some people don't think you can be successful for whatever the reasons are. Then there's another group don't think you're capable of being successful. And we know those reasons 'cause we've all probably experienced it.

So, Kelly, you led with Barack Obama and unfulfilled expectations and things like that. And that's probably more of the group that don't think you can be because of all of those barriers and road blocks and lack of support that's gonna be put in front of you. And those who don't think you're capable, you can probably do everything right, but they're gonna point out everything that's wrong because it's already framed in their mindset. And we have that responsibility to change that mindset, to do all of the things that have been mentioned.

And I've been walking down this road as firefighter for 32 years now, I've been a fire chief for now since 2008. So I can relate to what Robert said when he first stepped into his role. I was right there with you, but right now, I am totally okay with who I am and where I'm going and what I'm doing and what I'm saying. And I'm totally comfortable with that. And doing the right things for the right reasons matter. And people will see that, but it is a heavy weight to carry. And I try to remember that I am always carrying it. I don't lose sight of that. That's important for me.

Kelly: Thank you. Thank you, Chief Scoggins. I think I really, I mean, I appreciate you all sharing and really willing to go a little deeper and really just sort of ask yourself the question more so than just answer the question. That's really, that's hopeful for me. And I think that this is a perfect segue to the last question today, which is really around hopefulness, around hopes for

this work in the future. Because as you guys have pointed out, you've been here, you've been in your positions, your understanding your positionality more with time and as you're in the spaces that you're in.

So what does the future hold for you and your hopes and dreams for race and social justice work in the city or in your departments? It could be any department specifically. It could be the city as a whole, what is your take and anybody jump in and answer.

Anita: I can start. So I'm really excited about something that, and this is for the whole state that the courts are doing. I'm currently serving on a racial justice consortium, and this was the brainchild of Justice Mary Yu, she is one of the justices on the Washington State Supreme Court and the mission of the consortium. I'm just gonna read it. So I don't leave out anything was developed to identify actions and structural changes that could help in the racism and the devaluing of Black lives within the state judicial system. And so this is a group that Justice Yu has brought together. We are looking at all aspects of the judicial and the court system across the entire state.

And that's big because we have all levels of courts and there were so many courts and everyone is doing things differently. But the idea is to come up with a plan statewide of how we can fight and tear down these structural biases that are built into the court, systemic racism built into the court. And so we have been on this, doing this work for almost a year now. We're nearing the completion of the actual work, and we'll be coming up with a proposal that will be rolled out and then will come from the Supreme Court. So the Supreme Court actually tells all the other courts, gives the marching orders for the other courts, so to speak.

So I'm really excited to be a part of that because as we know, as I've said before, a lot of systemic racism resides in the court system and judicial and the legal system. And so we're trying to tackle it from within. I'm also excited to continue to be involved in our Race and Social Justice team at Seattle Municipal Court. It is employee driven and they're doing an awesome job looking at everything within the court system, seeing how we also can fight systemic racism within our own building. And so I'm really proud to be co-sponsor of our race and social justice. We do a lot of work with Mariko's office and with her staff. So I'm really excited and I plan to just continue that's my pledge is to continue to work towards those ends.

Harold: And I'll go now, I have hope, the opposite of that is not having hope. if that's the case, I shouldn't be in this role, but I am an eternal optimist. I believe we can do better. I believe we can get there. I don't know where there is quite often, but I know we can move the ball down the road a little bit. And that's important. As a department, we're gonna continue to train and try to educate and inform. So people have the information which can lead to better understanding and that's important for us.

I also hope our department our city family, or community continues to educate themselves and do things differently and learn a little bit more so it can lead to understanding. And if I was gonna put a recommendation out there, I would recommend two books. One is "Caste," that's informative, educational and amazing read. And then the other one is "The Color of Law", which is another one that, when I read that book, it told me so many things I didn't know. And it kept leading me to learn more and more and more. So I would hope that we all continue to grow and learn and be better for the future.

Mariko: I'll jump in. I know Robert's always ready, but (laughs) I'll jump. So I am also hopeful. And I wanna say about my office, my department that we have a really powerful team and each in their own roles working to come from a place of anti-racist values and principles. And I've also seen in the last four years such growth, in the skillset and the approach and the relationships and ability to do the work and to bring wisdom and experience to it. So I'm really hopeful about where it can go from here.

And I just, actually earlier today, I was on another panel and we were asked about sustainability of our racial equity efforts. And a couple of things came to mind for me, one of which is like the power of the city-wide network of folks who believe in RSJI, who are working to implement it in their departments, who form part of this at times formal, at a times, informal anti-racist organizing network. And that makes it possible for there to be changes in council and changes in mayors and changes in directors, but that the work continues and continues to grow and evolve. So that's a really critical part of sustainability.

And I believe that will be true in the coming years. And also it's important to have champions. And we have been so fortunate that with, each new council configuration and new mayoral administration, we have continued to get support and champions, supporting the work of RSJI. And then, specifically for the coming year, there is some work done to put RSJI in an ordinance. 'Cause right now it is, it lives in the people and it lives in our office, but it's not, what's the word memorialized, it's not codified as an ordinance. And I think seeing that work continue will be really important. So I'm really hopeful for the work of RSJI in the upcoming year.

Kelly: Thank you.

Robert: Thank you. Very good comments and ideas from everyone. I think I'm gonna go down just a slightly different path. Chief Scoggins mentioned, who defines expectations and I'm gonna go and place that question on to our mayor elect and his administration, because I think it's very, very important that he define the expectations for his administration and that we help him achieve those expectations as he defines them. Once you let someone else define the game or the goal or whatever for you, you're out of whack. You're lost, you're gone.

And so I hope I have tremendous hope for my friend the Mayor-Elect that this is not something that anyone has to tell him. He knows this, and he will define the expectations for his administration. He will define the expectations for us as we work towards helping his administration. And he will help our community define those expectations in ways that make sense to him and hopefully to all of us. And that is my biggest hope right now, because our city is hurting and we need some direction.

Kelly: Thank you, Robert, I guess just to round out this question. Okay. I wanna say this is a preamble. The thing about the future is, and I just hold this whole fundamental belief is that the arts are a pass of our future, like period of the story.

So I really I'm glad that you were like the last, like you're the last sort of word on this particular question Royal, 'cause I that's like the goosebumps are coming up in that sort of way, if you know what I mean. So please, please go ahead.

Royal: Your reputation of not being a fair and equitable person is preceding you, Mr. O'Brien. That's an unfair position to put anyone in, but fortunately, it's okay and it's okay because it's real life.

And I'm gonna unabashedly say, I truly believe that the arts are not simply the fulcrum of an organization like the Office of Arts and Culture, the act, the doing of it, not simply the cognitive process of thinking about it and quote, ideation and conceptualization, but actually having human beings that create art as a living entity and emotion, right? I truly believe that's the purpose of the society. And so when I'm answering your question, I believe that the arts create a civic society because it gives voice, it gives action. It gives emotion, it gets them all those goosebumps you're talking about. And all of you are parts of those goosebumps completely. And I was just listening to Judge Crawford-Willis. And I was thinking, I was just talking to Judge Yu. And I said, I need you to tell me what to do. This is the, not the Royal we but the collective community we, so that we can have a diversion program for young people where, okay, here's your choice. You wanna do this? Okay, keep doing that. And you're gonna wind up doing three years as a muralist. That we're able to move our children to positive from negative activity and thinking to positive activity and thinking, I see that as race and social justice, equity in action, the same thing at Seattle Center, all of that work, you walk around. There's a kid who only wants to cut that perfect line between the grass and the asphalt. They need that opportunity. There's another kid who wants to see how a building burns and what do you do to make sure a building doesn't burn, or if it does burn, it gets safe

That's an art of living. But then again, somebody designs the graphic on your arm, that patch somebody is doing the helmet. Somebody is saying how the tank should be. The arts infuse,

how we live our lives. And so I'm gonna say that as we're all sitting here today, race and social justice, and what makes me as a, I go as you can't be a director and a practicing artist. So as a director excited about where we are right now and with this incoming mayor elect is that art, the mayor elect, you all's leadership, we can heal. We can begin to heal the city so that it is a place where you can actually survive, thrive and flourish, regardless of how you ascribe either by gender or race or any of the determinants that we wanna put to ourselves.

So I don't have any goosebumps for you, Mr. Kelly, because you all are the goosebumps. I'm just one of those bumps on the arm, looking for the vertebrae and looking at filling out what the nerves are, right? Where the nerve point? But our young people CHOP told us what the pain points were. We've got to respond with sensitivity about the nervous system, so we take our lessons.

So I'm a skeptic, which means that I truly believe that everything can be differently, transformatively improved. And that's what we do everyday when we get up. I don't think that's being a skeptic in negative format, but I'm not an optimist because an optimist believes that things are good. and can get better. I'm a skeptic regarding the fact of goodness and the hopes of people, but no goosebumps. I'm a goosebump, new position me that I'm enjoying it.

Kelly: I think enough goosebumps. And I really appreciate you all joining us for this conversation today. We're gonna do it again next year. I think every year we're gonna try to get Black directors together to have some kind of conversation and to actually just come together again and see each other, if we haven't had a chance to during the year.

So thank you so much for sharing your knowledge with us and the RSJI Network. And again, you all enjoy the rest of the summit and have a good evening.

Mariko: Thank you.

Harold: Thank you.

Kelly: Thank you.

Anita: So good to...