

The Way Forward Emerging Strategies For Crime Victims Of Color

JACKI CHERNICOFF: Good afternoon or good morning, everyone, depending on where you're joining us from. Thank you for joining our virtual session today, the way forward emerging strategies for crime victims of color shaping the future with culturally specific innovations. My name is Jacki Chernicoff with the Center on Victimization and Safety at the Vera Institute of Justice and the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims. OK, with that, I want to turn things over to Zoe flowers who's going to introduce herself and the panelist for today's discussion. Zoe, this floor is yours.

ZOE FLOWERS: There we go. Great. Hi, everyone. Zoe Flowers here. Thank you all for checking in. Looks like we have a little over 500 people, so thank you for sharing space with us today. I am Zoe flowers. I am the CEO of Soul Requirements, a healing centered consulting business that merges art, healing, and social justice.

And I am so pleased to be moderating this conversation with two of my favorite people in the world. We are all three of us consultants with the Women of Color Network, a national grass

roots organization that works to center the wellness, the leadership, and safety injustice for women of color, OK?

And so Purvi Shah, I will introduce Purvi first. She is just come on the screen. She and I have been consultants with Women of Color Network now for I think, like eight years or so. And let me read some of Purvi's information to you also you will know what you're in for, OK?

So Purvi Shah is a writer and social justice advocate while serving as the Executive Director of Sakhi for South Asian Women. She won the inaugural Sony South Asian excellence award for social service. In 2017 through a participatory change process, she authored a year-long study called Seeding Generations, which spurred the New York City community-based interventions for people who caused harm and abuse.

She is also the author of two books of poetry Terrain Tracks and Miracle Marks. Both-- I have both of those books, they are both fabulous. We have all of her information so please support her and grab those books, OK? During the 10th anniversary of 9/11, she directed Together We Are New York, a community-based poetry project to highlight Asian-American voices. Her favorite art practices are her sparkly eye shadow, raucous laughter, and seeking justice. And you can discover more about Purvi at Purvi-- Purvi Poets. And I will put her bio in the chat.

And so the other co-conspirator, co-presenter today is the wonderful Maria Franco-Rahman. Maria and I also have been working together for a long time. I think we're at our four or five year mark. And we started working together at the Joyful Heart Foundation, and so I will tell you more about Maria. Maria is a yoga teacher and Dance From the Heart facilitator. Born, raised, and base in Los Angeles.

She is the founder and CEO of Con Todo Corazon where she works locally and nationally offering heart centered holistic healing services designed to support personal and social transformation. Her work centers the healing and liberation of women of color survivors, advocates, and activists, and our fellow communities on the margins. Maria has led sessions at healing retreats and conferences in South and Southern California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Ecuador.

During her time at the Joyful Heart Foundation, she co-authored a holistic healing arts model in collaboration with Georgetown University. The model is offered as a retreat for survivors of gender-based violence as well as those of service to survivors. The model is designed to support resilience and long-term well-being as well as reduce stress related to trauma.

Her 15 years of service to survivors also includes direct service to undocumented violence survivors at a Latinx culturally specific transitional shelter and advocacy at the state level. She currently

serves as a consultant for Women of Color Network Inc. and teaching artists with critical mass dance company. She is a student of cross cultural healing methods, including shamanic apprenticeship. Maria is a Chicana moving through this world honoring her ancestors and the coming generations Con Todo Corazon.

And so you know, one of the things that the three of us have in common is we definitely center healing, we definitely center working with our most enlightened ancestors, our legacy, our lineages. And one of the things that they did ask me to do was to start us off with a short meditation. And so I will do that. OK, I'm going to keep it short and brief.

So what I would ask you all to do is wherever you are let yourself get comfortable. And go ahead and close your eyes if you feel safe doing that. Let your shoulders drop. Let your hands be down by your sides. Maybe this is the first when you've had a chance to calm down today. So this is our invitation to you.

Take a deep breath in through your nose, let it out through the mouth. Let yourself be still in this moment. Let yourself be present to this conversation. Take a deep breath in through your nose. Exhale it out through your mouth. Let yourself receive this information with all parts of your body. Take a deep breath in through your nose. Exhale it through your mouth. We invite you on this journey with us. We're glad you're here. You are perfect,

whole, and complete. When you're ready, open your eyes, and we will start.

And one of the things that our intention for this series, *The Way Forward*, is we want to create spaces where you all can have spaciousness. We are so aware of how hard everyone has been working. And we want these conversations to be different. We want you all to see yourselves in this conversation. We want you to be a part of the conversation. And so we will invite you at certain points to put your information in the chat, put your questions in the chat.

And yeah, I'm going to go ahead and start. Let me make some adjustments to this presentation so that I can actually see you all, so that I can see my friends as they're talking. So see how I can do that. I share my screen and still see the people. I might not be able to. I might need some technical assistance. So for me and Maria, Maria, I don't see you, but I am going to ask you all to just react to this video, to the photo, excuse me.

So Purvi and Maria, our first question that I'm asking is what are some ways of responding to domestic violence that have been born out of community and ancestral wisdom? So that's the first question that I would love for either one of you to chime in and answer. What are some ways of responding to DV that have been born out of community and ancestral wisdom? And if you want to talk about why we chose this picture, you could do that as well.

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: Hello, everyone. Welcome. [NON-ENGLISH] we are in the words of my ancestors. This is Maria. And my lineage is from Mexico and original people of the Mexica. And as I call them into their circle, I also want to honor and name the original stewards of where I'm calling from. I'm based in Los Angeles. And so giving thanks to their original stewards, the Chumash and the Tongva people.

And if you are called to bring into our space the name of the original peoples of the place from where you are connecting in from today, you are welcome to do so. Ancestors an ancestral medicine, we'll be definitely exploring a lot of that today together.

And as we talk about violence and some of the original responses to violence, I think of the healing art of Mexico, Curanderismo. And there's a phenomenal book by a sister in the movement in the '80s. Her name is Elena Avila. And it's called Women Who Glows in the Dark. And she talks a lot about the origins of this ancestral medicine, her experience in the movement, and really wanting to bring in more holistic practices. And again, this was in the '80s. And she has a very mighty, but lean quote, in terms of how Curanderismo came to be.

And she said there was a need to develop a medicine that could heal the pain and the immense [NON-ENGLISH] or soul loss that resulted from the cultural destruction, enslavement, and rape that occurred during the Spanish conquest of the Americas. So

we see that in response to colonization, you have these responses, these community responses from these old ways of being. And it was born out of a need. It was born out of people having experienced soul loss, which pre-dates what many of us now know as, or refer to as disassociation in modern psychology.

And it's a natural response to trauma that protects us from what we experience. So I want to lift that up in terms of these innate ways, these intuitive ways that so many traditions rooted in Earth honoring practices, rooted across tradition, rooted across different ancestral ways, really have set the stage for what most of us use daily in our work with survivors. And I think about something like the word psyche. And we think about psychology. The ancient word for psyche, I can't think of it now, it looks at the life of the soul. And it looks at the soul being represented of the butterfly.

And it also has words rooted in the breath, so this animating force that gave all of us life. And so I just want to really call that forward, that we have these responses. We have these ways that have kept our peoples' resilience for many, many years. And in terms of this photo here in front of us, I see a lot of what I've come to know as survivor needs represented here.

I see a breaking of isolation through the connection in both photos, in both the photography and the illustrated art. I see multigeneration. I see family. I see the needs of children. In the

middle of the photograph, I see perhaps a daughter. In the illustrated image, I see lots of little ones, a couple of little ones, holding on to elders. And in terms of ancestral ways of being, in terms of the illustrated image, I see that there's some blue beings that are present there too, which indicates to me that the spirit world is there.

And when we think about these ways of knowing, these ancient ways of knowing, the individual is never extracted or removed from the community, from family, from the environment. So there's this larger ecosystem. And we see that represented here. And I also see the moon, grandmother moon, which may have significance for many traditions. I know in my tradition, we think of the Mexica or Aztec goddess Coyolxauhqui.

And I can talk a little bit more about her later. And then there's this bird looking on at this flock of people. So when we see a flock of birds, they're usually in this V-shaped form. And that V-shaped form teaches that the importance of also how we can share leadership with one another. So in these V-shaped migration, there is never just one bird that leads. So there's one person here leading the migration. The birds take turns. And so what does that mean in terms of co-leadership models that we can learn from.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much, Maria. This is a perfect stopping point. We just need to pause for one moment. And so I would invite you all to put anything in the chat. I'm pausing.

You all can let me know when to start. Audrey, are we good? Perfect. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Jacki. Thank you all so much as we continue to get everything together. So I see you all are already posting some responses to what Maria shared in the chat. And so please continue to do that throughout the conversation. And I'm going to turn it over to Purvi now-- this question, what are some ways of responding to domestic violence, or just to violence, community violence in general, that were born out of community and ancestral wisdom?

PURVI SHAH: Thank you so much, Zoe. This is Purvi. And so happy to be in community with you all today. I am coming to you from the lands of the Canarsie and Lenape Peoples in Brooklyn, New York. And so grateful to be doing this work.

When I think of ancestral wisdom, one of the ways that I think about it is the shape of it. So one of the ways that I grew up was dancing and doing folk dance. And one of the folk dances particularly that lives in me is called Garba. And it's a fertility dance. It's about the woman. It's about the baby. It's about the goddess. It's about fertility. And recognizing that, again, gender is not binary. That we have feminine and masculine qualities in us.

And with Garba, like with many peoples' dances, it's done in a circle. And so that black and white image here is a photograph by three wonderful artists, who collaborated with us when I was at Sakhi for South Asian Women, when we did a film about what creates change. And that's the title of the film. And so Fariba worked with us to take photographs. And as we interviewed community members, survivors, advocates-- we know these categories are fluid, that we are all of these things at some moment in time.

And what we realized is that, again, there's a connection. And so, there's an interconnection, an interweaving. We often talk about intersectionality, which is such a critical term, codified by Kimberle Crenshaw, but has a long history in terms of thinking about how we see the world, how we experience the world, how we experience oppression. And one way I think about that is also, again, in the shape of a circle.

And that is to say, are the services we provide circular? Are they integrated? Are they reinforcing? Are they collective? Are they connected? Or are they more kind of, as Maria was speaking to, the ecosystem of colonization? The ecosystem of capitalism? Of gatekeeping? Of linearity? Of you get to this point, and maybe I'll support you or not? Or you'll only have access to this amount of support, or people only have access to this amount of resources?

And as we do this work, I think it is really important to think about how are we creating kinship? How are we creating networks and communities? How are we creating modes of support in a very tangible way? So for example, in our communities, one of the common modes of support is through peer support. So peer support groups, as a circle of folks in similar positions being able to offer each other guidance, offer each other strategies.

And yes, advocates are so crucial, but what do we imagine and envision in our responses that are beyond a legal system? That are beyond this sense of like, oh, we'll punish somebody in a particular way? Which are actually about transforming the conditions that make violence possible. So, so many of our groups are working to break this sense of linearity, and to, as Maria also mentioned, work across generations. So this particular photo, this black and white image is also-- again, it's a daughter ensconced by her parents who have supported her in her journey's safety.

And when we think about this, we know that not all families, not all communities do support survivors. And so we need to work at community change. We need to work to change the attitudes, and the structures, and systems that actually perpetuate violence. Some of the ways in which we do that is through intergenerational work. So one of the modalities that we often

see as not available is whole family services, or services that think about extended family members, or services that think about peoples' workplaces, or services that happen in a way that is not just about one on one transactions.

So for example, one of the community-based activities that we did while I was at Sakhi was to have a maela, which is a community festival. It was an opportunity to showcase dance, to showcase community organizations, and to showcase ways in which people connect, and can come together, and feel like it's a community context. And that, to me, is part of what healing is actually about, and what resilience is enabled.

Because we need to understand that our communities have resources, that we have strengths, that we have traditions. And that we can come together and rely on those, even as we challenge patriarchy, even as we challenge heteronormativity. Even as we challenge various things in our community, we can also rely on community modes of gathering, connecting, and support in order for us to really challenge the conditions that create violence.

And within that, we also then need to look at too the structures of larger violence, which is to say like how is it that our work that transforms policy, or that transforms to defund police, but put more resources into mental health or social work, why is there that disparity in funding? Why is it that culturally specific

communities get less resources than others? So we look to the larger history of colonization, racism. And we have to intervene at those levels. Because intimate violence is very deeply connected to the violence in our lives.

So making those connections is, again the work of the circle, the work to connect and to work to have new visions for how we actually create change. I'm also going to drop a couple of resources in the chat that I mentioned.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much Purvi. So, so many things happening. So for one, Purvi, I would love for you to just go back. Someone had a question, I think about patriarchy. And so the person that said that, please let me know if you meant to say patriarchy. And then also, I just want to put a little spaciousness before, Purvi, I have you give that definition. For those of, you all, just to stop for a second.

Oh, the subtitle said patriot. OK, good, that's why we took him off. OK, amazing. All right, so you don't need patriarchy. The subtitles are messing things up. OK. So just take a breath and think about the things that you've heard so far. Taking a deep breath in, exhaling it out. And a few of the things I wrote were over-reliance on linearity.

Maybe thinking about does that bring up an area of resistance for you? To think about dismantling the linear, the systems, the

things that Purvi raised? Breaking apart attitudes, structures, systems, what are your responses to that? Maybe thinking about how you all are benefiting or you have benefited from the linear, from these firm structures.

And then what do you think about when you think about gathering, connectivity, and true support? So those are just a couple of things that I would invite you all to just think about for a moment as we shift into this next question.

And so, again, either one of you can answer this question. What have you seen when people from outside of our communities are put in charge of administering our justice and our healing? Thank you, Sorrell Thank you for that. So powerful. What have you seen? So when folks come in with these ideas that are sometimes linear, with these structures, with these systems, what have you all seen happen? What does it mean to a community? What does it mean to a people? If you all could just take some time to parse that out.

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: So building on what Purvi laid out, in terms of looking at where we are as a movement at this moment in time, looking at who we are within the context of the systems present here in our country, thinking about the legal system in particular, and thinking about how that is an external apparatus, an external intervention that moved into

the way that we're able to be of service or not to survivors. And so our movement is what, 60 to 70 years old at this point.

And somewhere we looked at how do we have this issue be looked at as a social issue? And in that process, there was a big move and push to have a criminal legal response be a part of saying this is a social harm, versus just an issue between two partners.

And so in terms of the long-term view, you had a lot of advocates, particularly someone like Beth Richie, who talked about, well, let's look at the long term effects, again within the context of this country, and within seeing how the criminal system can affect those on the margins, and may affect survivors, survivors of color in particular, who are now going to be moving through the system. And her cautioning was absolutely prophetic, because we fast forward to now, and we look at dual arrest. We look at retaliatory cases.

And those who are most affected are women of color, majority Black women, in the 60 percentile, Latina women in the 40 percentile. And so we're now here, fast forward to 2020, and we are looking at what does it look like in terms of things like police brutality? In terms of reform to defund law enforcement? And in particular, bringing it into our movement, we see something like 85%-- FreeFrom reports that 85% of federal funds for domestic violence are given to law enforcement.

So when we look at who are these outside forces, or sources that have come in and perhaps taken the place of community solutions, we're at a really ripe time to look at these things as a movement, and within the context of the conversation, and the divestment proposals that we're seeing from spaces like the Movement for Black Lives.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much. Purvi, I see you and I are in a race to put these resources in the chat. I love it. So why don't you go ahead and just continue this conversation Maria was talking about. I know you're going to have some amazing things to say.

PURVI SHAH: Yeah, thank you, Zoe. This is Purvi. And one of the - there's so many organizations out there doing amazing work, so I just want to lift up a few of them. And I want to return us back to why do we do this work. For me, I do this work because I believe that joy and love is our human right. And that we should be able to experience beautiful relationships.

And so we have to work to model that, to make that an actuality in the world. We have to invoke that. We have to work towards it ourselves. Because we are human. And we will make mistakes. We will harm. And we will also need to learn how to repair. And so in that vein, I believe that the work that we are trying to do is to actually create both the conditions for love and joy, and also to enable examples of that.

One of the organizations I think of is Freedom Inc, which is a Hmong and Black led organization in the Twin Cities area in Minnesota. They have been doing amazing work in terms of community change. And they really, again, see the community as the heart of the work that they're doing. They have elder circles. They have circles in terms of working across Hmong and Black communities. They have circles to really talk about the next generation and youth circles. And so there is a way in which their work, again, has a wholeness, has a context, and has, again, these different generations involved.

Similarly, an organization that many of y'all might know here in New York City, Black Women's Blueprint, also does a lot of community focus change work. And I remember so vividly when we were in a meeting one time, Savannah Brown, the deputy there, said, the work that we're doing is not just healing ourselves and the future, but also healing the past. Healing what our ancestors wanted for us.

And so when we think about the work in this way, that we're healing this moment, but we're also healing before and after, we see the work in a different context. And then when we think about so much of the work-- I know there was a question about patriarchy, what does that mean? And I see patriarchy, which is the lineage of patriarchs, or men, having power is part of the condition of what we would say is oppression and misogyny.

Of course, patriarchy also affects men. And in many ways, it affects men by what a call to men calls the mailbox, the man box, like what does it mean to be a man. And so in that vein, not only are boys who experience violence in the home affected, but they're also affected by cultures of creating conditions of perpetuating violence. And not being able to actually address normal human emotions, like anger, or frustration, with the strategies of response.

So you'll see also in the field so many ways in which we're talking about healthy masculinity. And again, this is to say that as we think again that gender is a binary. It's not one thing or another, we all can have masculine traits. We all can have feminine traits. And so how do we have these behaviors, how do we have these essences in a healthy, productive way.

And so part of that, in terms of looking at responses that are doing amazing work to address also contexts of violence, I think of the National Compadres Network, which does healing circles. Which looks at also colonization and the force and brutality experienced by indigenous and La Raza communities, and the ways in which men have perpetuated violence as well within the community.

So you'll also have organizations like Caminar Latino, who again serves across the family. And so we're not trying to remove parts of our family, parts of our community, we're trying to heal our

communities and family. So those are some of the organizations that I think of, folks that are doing amazing work.

And I'll add just one more, which is the Alma Center, which works in Milwaukee, which also is a community which is very over-policed. Particularly, has a disparity in terms of Black and Latinx community members. And they have a Wisdom Walk that they do for folks with perpetuated violence and caused harm. And so there are ways that, again, in the work that I did in Seeding Generations, I talk about healing with accountability.

And the point of healing with accountability is to say that accountability is crucial. We need accountability for causing harm. And we want that accountability to also be restorative. We want it to actually lead to more wholeness. And we want to then be able to have somebody be in conversation, be in productive relationship, be able to heal also into the next generation.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you both again. Let's just take a quick break for an interpreter switch. And please put any questions you all have in the chat. Thank you. Thank you for that. This is Zoe, thank you.

So thank you all for everything that you have said so far. And we are going to just keep it rolling. We have put resources in the chat for you all. We would love to hear any questions that you all have. There was actually a question, Maria, for you about that

law enforcement stat. So if you want to put that information in the chat, Maria, that would be great.

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: This is Maria. Karen went ahead and provided the FreeFrom website. So for more information, I invite folks to visit their site.

ZOE FLOWERS: And there is a question about-- Purvi, I am guessing this is for you-- the name of the New York organization that you mentioned. Maybe it was Black Women's Blue Print. And Purvi actually just put that in the chat. So we would love any other questions that you all have.

How do you encourage-- oh, wait, OK, we have two. From Sorrell-- is there more data or research about Black women and police brutality? I do believe that Insight-- I'm going to get that web link and put that in the chat. I do believe that Insight has information about Black and Brown women and police brutality. Let me turn it over to Purvi and Maria to answer that as well.

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: A couple of sites that provide resources on this would be Survived and Punished, and Free Marissa Now. They have some pretty helpful information there.

ZOE FLOWERS: Great, thank you. OK, so Survived and Punished.

PURVI SHAW: This is Purvi. I just want to say, I'm so sorry, Freedom Inc is in Wisconsin. Thank you for noting that. And I do want to say that they've done some really amazing work in terms of the Minneapolis uprising right now. Again, because often communities of color are pitched against each other as part of white supremacy, and so the work that they are doing, particularly in terms of bringing Asian and Black communities together is really crucial. So thank you for asking that and clarifying.

ZOE FLOWERS: Great. Thank you so much. OK, so we've got a couple of questions. What are some strategies or guidance you all have for campus/higher education advocates as we look to ensure we are centering the healing needs of our survivors of color? So any campus strategies or guidance you all have.

PURVI SHAW: This is Purvi. Thank you so much for that question. So I think for me, I think back to so much of my awakening around issues of intimate violence. Partly came from my family. My mom is the eldest of four daughters. And so having a lineage of women has been so crucial to my life. And then when I think about my time at university, student activism, like Take Back the Night, and Work Around Sexual Assault has been so crucial.

And so I think, again, in a similar way, campuses are microcosms of the world around us. And I think it's really important to have health counseling. It's important to have services. And it's

important to have peer networks and the possibility for community organizing. In that, I think also, similarly, conversations around healthy masculinity, around healthy sexuality, around what that can look like, what that can be like is really crucial in a campus context.

And again, I think it's really important to center that different communities who are coming, whether it's first generation college folks or folks who may have come from households where some of these conversations were never allowed to happen, that you have entry points for these conversations, so that the experience of becoming more awake is one where it's led with information, led with connection, and led with a chance for choice, as opposed to an experience of just imposition, and being moved into like a normative American violence.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you. So we have a couple more questions, all right. So some I wrote down. And then we will get to the-- and I feel like this is going to actually lead us into our next guiding question. So this one question comes about defunding the police. And so folks want to know what is your understanding about what folks are talking about with that? So either one of you can talk about what is your understanding about this call to defund the police. I don't know if Maria you want to jump in?

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: Sure. So in terms of my understanding the call for Movement for Black Lives is when we

talk about defunding the police, it is to redistribute these resources into community programs that can provide interventions that do not use lethal force, that do not come from a system rooted in violence, violence that has disproportionately affected Black lives.

And so we look at other options, like mental health services. We look at other options like substance abuse programs, perhaps education. And we look at how can we create communities that are restorative, a lot of what Purvi was talking about. And we can do this also through ways of healing through accountability, again, as Purvi walked us through, without having met the threat of violence be centered in all of this.

So that's from a greater context. And in terms of the movement, I would, again-- I really love the piece that FreeFrom put out in response to the uprisings, and in terms of the Movement for Black Lives, and supporting what we're seeing on a national level, and really looked at how can defunding support survivors, how can it support our work for those of us who are of service to them, and how it has moved resources away from our community.

So I would really encourage folks to look at their work and how they've outlined how we can reimagine. And I think that's a big part of what we're being called to do at this moment in time, to reimagine a different world, to reimagine different responses that

we don't have to be rooted and we don't have to center a system that again holds a constant threat to the lives of our community members, to our Black communities. And that ultimately when any of our communities are not free, none of us are free.

ZOE FLOWERS: This is Zoe. Thank you so much, Maria. And please, you all, continue to put your responses in the chat. If you know of resources, we invite you to do that as well. So we do have a question about restorative approaches, and how they are-- how can restorative justice approaches be utilized if folks are expecting a law enforcement response. So I think that this is also-- and then we have another question about the Black Lives Matter Movement, which I'll circle back around to, Rachel. I have not forgotten.

But I want to go into this third question about some of the models that you have seen develop, that offer holistic approaches. Because I think that we can include this restorative justice conversation in this conversation about some of the models that we're seeing. So Purvi, I don't know if you want to jump in and talk about some models that you've seen, or develop, that offer holistic approaches. You've already talked about so many organizations. Are there any others that you want to just give a little bit more attention to.

PURVI SHAW: Thank you, Zoe. This is Purvi. And one of the frameworks that I really want to highlight, and this also connects

to, Ana Paula your question, which is so important, about language, and how do we ensure that we are reaching communities who speak multiple languages. And may also have different-- I think of also language as a way of being in the world. And so I draw inspiration from organizations, such as Deaf Dawn, which work with deaf and hard of hearing communities.

And Shazia Siddiqi and Najma Johnson-- Shazia used to be one of the directors at Deaf Dawn, and Najma is one of the directors still-- they really like gave a way in which the work is seen as being trauma informed and about transformative justice. And so, again, coming from within communities experiencing violence, needing access to language and services around language access, there's also, again, this framework of healing.

Like, what does connection look like? What does trauma look like? What does it mean to understand and reflect trauma? And what is the language that we use around that? How do we even access that? So I think those contexts are really crucial in terms of thinking about, again, how do we have a restorative approach.

When we think about also-- when we think about, yes, that over-reliance on the criminal legal system has meant that that's often where folks may turn, except who are we really talking about there? We know that Black and Brown communities don't necessarily call police. And that's because when we were-- when I was working in terms of thinking about immigrant communities,

when folks come Sakhi, they came wanting the abuse to stop, totally understandable.

They didn't necessarily come in wanting to have their partner deported or wanting to have their partner criminalized in some way. And so when we think about how do we create cultures and responses, we know that some survivors will want to have police intervention. That is a reality. And part of that reality is because we haven't built up other options.

So when we look at, say, for example at the Audrey Lord project, their project Safe Outside the System, it's actually a community-led effort to really be able to, again, when something is happening to your neighbor, when something is happening to your friend, how do you intervene? How do you make it possible to be safe outside the system?

So in some ways, our under-funding in other modes of response is making it so that, again, we're reliant on criminal legal responses. This is particularly, for me, or something that strikes me, because crime in general in New York City has gone down, but domestic violence, intimate partner homicide is still going up. And so what does that mean?

It means that often folks who are very vulnerable and dangerous contexts are actually never reaching out to organizations. They're not reaching out to criminal legal systems. They're not reaching

out to organizations. And what we have seen, though, is sometimes folks have been reaching out to other government agencies, whether that's through NYCHA or public assistance.

And so it also again begs of us, as Maria mentioned early on, if we see this as a health response, If we see this as a community issue, if we see this as a social issue, that means we would be intervening and talking about intimate violence in our religious communities, in our health care communities, in our friend communities, in our workplaces. It wouldn't just be-- right now what it is is the responsibility of survivors to come forward and heal violence being done within their ecosystem.

So in this very hyper Western individualized context, again we're placing the onus of change on folks who are experiencing the harm. And so, yes, we need to build other alternatives. We need to build these systems. And also, so many organizations are doing incredible reconceptualizing. And I'll end just by sharing one more innovation-- Sasha in Detroit, which again reenvisioned healing from sexual violence with an Afrocentric frame-- hula hooping, various modalities, that again restore that connection to who our peoples are, who we can be in the future generation.

Thank you, Purvi. This is Zoe again. And we are going to just pause for an interpreter switch. Hello, we ready? OK, great. So thank you all. I mean by all of the questions, all of the responses,

we knew that this was a conversation that we all have been so wanting to have.

So a couple of things. Please make sure that you register for all of the VOCNs and upcoming webinars, because they're all going to be amazing. Purvi and Marie are going to be having another conversation about issues like this. So please, register if you haven't yet, or whenever the link goes out. And also, we're asking so many questions. I want you all to track the questions that you're asking. Because some of these questions, we are not going to have answers to.

Some of these questions are born out of a global pandemic that we've never experienced before. So remember that this is a time for raising questions, and pulling these things apart, and looking at who can you look to in your community, who can you collaborate with. Because we are experiencing something that we've never experienced before. And so, that's why we also wanted to wait before we had this conversation. Because we wanted to see where we were going to be by June. So again, this is a time for asking these questions.

All right, so the question here is, I'm curious your take on the Black Lives Matter movement. We have a lot of victims that stand with the movement, while others are still frustrated that it is a movement that was given by people in power to still control the movement. So I'm not sure what you mean about given by

people in power. Because I actually just saw a post the other day about when the Black Lives Matter movement was actually started.

And it started after George-- Lord, I must have blocked his name out of my head. The man who killed Trayvon Martin.

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: Zimmerman.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you, I literally must have blocked it out or dissociated. So George Zimmerman was released. And there was a post calling for the end of it. And I'm going to find that post. And then another woman tagged in, and was like this ends now. We're tired of dying. I'm paraphrasing. And she hashtagged it Black Lives Matter.

So the person who posted that Black Lives Matter, that kind of started this movement, was a Black woman. I don't look to her as being a person in power. I believe she was an advocate or maybe an educator. So it was not started by someone in power. Like many movements, people who have power may have signed on to it. But there are not people in power controlling the movement to my knowledge.

Because I would-- it was largely started by Black women. So I don't know what-- Black women certainly have influence over certain areas. But when it comes to power, when I think about

power, I think about people who have the power to end systemic racism. So I would just love more clarification on the question so that I can answer it fully. Purvi, I see you nodding. Do you want to say something?

PURVI SHAW: Yeah, Toni Morrison said that racism is a distraction from us doing the work that we're meant to do. I'm paraphrasing. But I think questions like this can sometimes be a distraction from, again what is-- our goal is wholeness. Our goal is, again, to ensure that folks have access to resources, and that we can end racism and end structural violence.

So we may disagree on how that happens. But I think sometimes-- like to me, the question is not does this part of the Black community disagree with another part of the Black community, because you can be Black in different ways, and you get that. The question to me is like, how do we end violence? And particularly, why is it that we so often don't talk about white male violence? Which leads to mass shootings, which leads to often police violence, which leads also to intimate violence, which leads to militarization.

All of these things are connected. And so I think sometimes, not that these questions don't matter, but I think it's like, it's different to have the conversation for me as Black folks having a conversation with each other, than folks who are non-Black having this conversation. And so I would just say, to me the

question is how do we end the structures of violence and communities can disagree on how that happens.

ZOE FLOWERS: So, yes, yes, and yes. And I will say that I've been having this conversation, what we call kitchen table talk in the Black community. And my thing is whatever issues we have, even intra-racially, and like literally I was saying yesterday, we can circle back and talk about the anti Blackness in other cultures. We're going to get back to that.

We're going to get back to the violence enacted by Black men against Black women. We're going to circle back around to that. But right now, we have a common enemy that we're addressing. And that enemy is white supremacy, patriarchy, and those things. And the root that comes out of that that original tree is the mass shootings, is domestic violence, is what people want to call Black on Black crime, while ignoring white on white crime.

OK, that is the root. So we're talking about the root right now of these things. We're going to trust and believe, we're going to get back to all those other things. And so thank you so much for the people that said this truly feels like a way forward conversation.

Because one of the things that our team, myself, Purvi, Maria, Junetta-- who you're going to meet, Junetta Jamerson when she does her webinar, Anikka Leonard, when she does her webinar, and our ally, Lori and Castelle, when they have their

conversation, one of the things that we felt was so important, and one of the things that we were in alignment about is we need to be different coming out of these six months that feel like six years, that we've all gone through together. We're not going back to norm-- like, we must be different. And so that's why we're calling it The Way Forward.

Because we have been transformed. We have watched 120,000 of our people die. We have watched murder of a police-- on television, murdered of a Black man on television. We have been through so much. And I just said yesterday, we are still grieving as a country. And it is a miracle that we're still showing up to work every day. It's one of the things I said yesterday. And so we must be different coming out of this. And so at this group, we felt like these are the conversations we want to have so that we can all be different.

There was also this question about defunding the police and talking about social workers going into situations. OK, this was another kitchen table talk that I had yesterday as well. I also have those concerns. We had this conversation about who's coming. So we also-- we all have to lift our voices and really talk about once we do that, once we start this defunding, we need to be real careful about who's coming, and not sending our social workers and things like that into harm's way.

So again, these are conversations that we need to circle back around to. But the issue at hand is redistribution of some of these things. OK? There was nothing normal about what we're dealing with in the way we're living before. Exactly. Transformation is important. We must be different, because the world is different. Absolutely.

How can we help the very people that are more afraid to reach out for help from the authorities than they are from their abusers? These are the questions that we are going to continue to ask, that we are going to continue to grapple with individually as people, and as our collectives. So Maria, I just wanted to turn it over to you to see if you had anything to say.

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: Sure. I love that you talked about-- this is Maria. I love that you talked about the root as we were guided by the question of holistic approaches. And that that's what we're looking for. We're looking for what is the root, and how do we work to transform it.

And something that I really love that started building from this conversation we were just having is also to pull back, in the context of systems, in the context of our shared experiences, and individual experiences of violence, to sit with ourselves and see how these systems, and how these effects may now live inside of us. And how we can work to transform and heal those.

So again, Purvi, she gave so many great-- and I love that she's a keeper of so many of these community-based programs, and shared their stories and their wisdom with us about really working to returning towards wholeness and becoming whole once again. So one of the program that I had an honor and blessing of working with you, Zoe, on, is the Holistic Healing Arts Retreat that came from our work at Joyful Heart Foundation together.

And it really was an opportunity. It was a five-day retreat, three full days, two half days, where either at any given program, survivors came together, or those of service to survivors, and we came to find out many of us who are of service we too come to this work because of our survivorship and all of those intersections.

So really pulling back and having an opportunity to be in circle for five days, to be in community for five days, to be reconnected to the spiritual world. And when we say spiritual world, we're not talking about religion. When we look at holistic practices, we look at mind, body, spirit. And for some of us, that spirit could be a conduit to our creator, the great spirit, the great unknown, or not. It could also mean something different for those of us who do not believe in a higher source.

But just that piece of us, that sort of spirit being that energy, that aura, that peace that we can feel from somebody else. And so

giving folks the spaciousness to really turn inward, and giving the spaciousness to really have an opportunity to reconnect with their soul, with their divine purpose, with why are they here, what are their gifts that they can share with the world.

So in the greater context of the conversation we're having, and looking at what are the services that we offer to survivors, to those of us who are on the front lines or offering different types of service in the movement, how can we support one another in having the opportunity to go within and to really have these opportunities to heal, to transform, to look at how we may be a microcosm of the macrocosm.

And I think of the ancestor Gloria E. Anzaldúa when she says I change my self, I changed my world. And there's many different interpretations of this. A lot that I've heard come from particularly scholars of color, women of color scholars, queer scholars. So it's both. It's our work on an individual level and on a healing level. And what does that mean for this greater work that we're looking to collectively build.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yes, thank you. Thank you so much. This is Zoe. And again, I just want to encourage all of us that are advocates to be a part of these larger conversations that are happening, to make sure that our voices are at the table when these decisions are made as much as we can. We have another question.

Can you touch on Black immigrant leaders/organizations, and their alternatives to healing from violence experienced going through the US immigration system? So do you all know of any Black immigrant leaders or organizations and their alternatives to healing?

I'm thinking about, actually there is an organization in Atlanta. The executive director's name is Doris Macuga Let me look it up real quick. I will put it in the chat. She works specifically with African immigrants. Let me look it up real quick, and I'll put that in the chat. Please, Purvi, Maria, if you all have any other resources.

PURVI SHAW: So this is Purvi. And I see in the chat that folks have referenced Kemba here in New York City, also UndocuBlack. I think too of community-based organizations, like Sauti Yetu, which is based here, again, in New York City, and works with African communities. So there are different organizations, again working at a community-based level, and recognizing again that the history of immigration has also its own kind of trauma.

So again, going back to a trauma informed perspective, again even with working with the South Asian community and immigrant survivors, we see that we need to think about the violence of intimate partner violence. But we also need to think about the trauma of migration, and what that can lead to, and whether that's increased isolation, worries around access and

deportation, worries around visa status. So the actual microcosm and contexts.

And again, for us at Sakhi, when I was there, the post 9/11 context or survivors was also part of the trauma that they were working with. And one of the other traumas that is linked, again, to all of this, is trauma around economic access, trauma around even maybe having skills and certifications that aren't translated into an American environment. So all of those things are part of when we talk about the violence of immigration and immigration systems that are important to think about.

And certainly, as we see with the continuing ongoing restrictions around asylum, part of that is also a concerted barrier for survivors of gender-based violence who are fleeing their home countries to come here. And we see, again, this link of mass incarceration to also immigrant detention. Detention of migrants, and also detention of folks who, again, are coming to escape violence from their home communities.

So all of these are really crucial. I know that we're also running out of time. There's so many great questions around coalition building, working across communities. I wanted to shout out and say that, again, as Zoe mentioned, we're going to have more Vera conversations. And in my work with the Women of Color Network, Zoe, and Maria, and I are also going to be leading a lab around economic justice issues for survivors of color and

Indigenous survivors. So I'm going to send in the chat some information about that for folks who may want to apply to be part of that.

ZOE FLOWERS: Wonderful. Purvi, this is Zoe. Thank you so much for that. And Brandi, please put your question in the chat. I know you had your hand raised. So I want to make sure that we answer your question if we can. So we're at 3:21. Just checking the questions here. Yeah, we have a couple of minutes left. So Purvi and Maria, quickly, what are you excited about that you're seeing? Maria, I will ask you first, what are you excited about that you're seeing?

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: I'm excited about having more conversation like this. I'm excited about dialoguing, and from that dialogue, more questions emerging. And for us to come together and build long-term solutions together. So I see, and I'm invigorated by everything that has transpired here this morning, here in Cali time-- after noon in the east coast.

Something that I've been really excited about that I saw born out of the pandemic was to really look for how can we continue to lift up and build mutual aid for one another. And for me, growing up in the Latinx community, whenever one of our community members was in need there with a coperacha. There was all of us pulling our funds together to be able to support whoever needed that financial assistance at that moment in time.

And it was like a community grant. And we just-- we trusted whoever the money went to that that would be used with their-- it would be used in the most effective way that that family or that individual thought they needed. And again, I'll reference FreeFrom's work during the pandemic. They had direct cash amounts go to survivors. And it was somewhere in the 100,000 range that they were able to distribute these funds directly.

So again, as we look at how has funding worked in the past, how have we supported survivors, and what are ways that we can directly support them. And once again, in retrospect, look at where are we 60 to 70 years into the movement, what has worked, what hasn't? Did somewhere along the way we de-center the needs of survivors as described by survivors? And how can we continue to bring them into the center?

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you. Thank you so much. This is Zoe. Again, Purvi, rounding us out, what are you excited about?

PURVI SHAW: Well, first I just wanted to say-- this is Purvi. I wanted to thank Audrey, Christina, and Raylene and Hana, and Sandra, who've been interpreting and doing captions. Thank you for your energy and labors. And I am excited by what, Zoe, you mentioned, which is we're not returning to normal.

There are, again, organizations like API, DVRP in DC area doing healing arts workshops, healing is not linear. And as Arundhati

says, the pandemic is a portal. And so we are building the new future from this portal. And I am excited for us and all the suggestions in the chat that have been coming. We are part of this ecosystem, building a new future.

ZOE FLOWERS: Ashay, ashay to that. I am going to turn it back over to Jacki. I'm excited just to keep having conversations with my wonderful friends. And I'm so happy that you all joined us. I'm excited about that. And I'm going to turn it over to Jacki. Thank you, all.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: This is Jacki. Thanks so much, Zoe, and everyone, for creating this space for us today. And as Zoe mentioned, this is the first of a series of four conversations that she and her wonderful team are pulling together. So if you haven't registered already and are interested in, please do so by going to reachingvictims.org and registering for those feature sessions.

And as we close, we just want to ask that you complete a brief evaluation, which will open automatically after you leave the session. We'd really appreciate it if you could take a few moments and share your thoughts and reflections, so that we can best continue to meet your needs. I know, there were probably a lot more questions than we maybe were able to answer today. So we will pull those questions. We will get those to Zoe. And we will be able to follow up with you all. And you can also connect directly

with us at reachingvictims.org at Vera.org. And we can make sure that Zoe and her team get those questions and get connections to you all.

So thank you, again, everyone, for sharing space with us, and giving us your time today. And we look forward to many more impactful conversations like this coming up. So thank you, and have a wonderful rest of your afternoon, or morning, or evening, again depending on where you are in the world. Be well.

ZOE FLOWERS: Bye, everyone.